
A critical discourse analysis of selected print media reports on insurgency in Nigerian newspapers

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Received: 20 March 2023 | Accepted: 09 April 2023 | Published: 21 April 2023

Abstract: Insufficient studies have considered critical studies to explore diverse discourse patterns that arise from print media reportage of insurgent actions in the country. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to examine an investigation of the insurgency coverage in Nigerian media through the Critical Discourse Approach with a view to identifying the various ideological roles present in the coverage. van Dijk's (2006) Socio-cognitive approach to Critical Discourse Analysis was adopted as the theoretical framework for this study. The study used a qualitative method to analyse twenty (29) reports purposively. Data were selected from three National newspapers, namely: The Punch, This Day and The Guardian. Findings revealed the presence of six discursive strategies which are labeling, number game, evidentiality, lexicalisation, metaphor and categorisation. These strategies are utilised in news reports to construct polarity as well as social inequality and bias. This paper also revealed that the presupposition of the ideologies found is to increase the information deliveries and acceptance in the written reports of the insurgent actions in Nigeria. Most importantly, the ideologies are used to present two major groups, namely the in-group and the out-group. While the in-group refers to Nigerian citizens who were portrayed as victims and innocent, the out-groups refers to the various insurgency groups who bring about tears, pains and bloodletting among the Nigerian people. The study concludes that newspapers are often bias especially in their reportage of insurgent operations as revealed in the data analysis.

Keywords: Banditry, Critical discourse analysis, Herdsmen, Insurgency

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1. Introduction

Insurgency as the unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence by an individual or an organized group against property or even people, with the intention of intimidating societies or governments, often for achieving certain ideological, economical, and political reasons. Metz (2004) considers insurgency as a strategy used by groups which cannot realize their political aims through conventional means of seizure of power. This strategy used, according to him, is characterized by violence, ambiguity, the use of complex terrain such as jungles, mountains, urban areas; psychological warfare, and political mobilization which are designed to protect the insurgents and eventually affect the balance of power in their favor. In addition, Jones and Smith (2015) submit that insurgency is a political-military campaign by non-state actors who seek to overthrow a government or secede from a country through the use of unconventional and sometimes conventional military strategies and tactics. It can simply be considered as an armed revolution against the established political order.

Insurgency becomes illegal, when it constitutes an attack on defenseless citizens, individual or state property resulting into injuries, loss of lives and properties as well as forced or massive internal displacement of people out of their habitual places of residence. According to Powell and Abraham (2006), insurgency becomes criminal and a threat to national security when it drives business/investors away from an insecure area. Furthermore, insurgency can be characterized by domestic and international crimes punishable by law such as treasonable felony, terrorism, murder, crimes against humanity and genocide. Insurgency is therefore, an unlawful use of force or violence to intimidate or coerce the civilian population or government to further political, social or economic objectives through acts of insurgency and other crimes such as kidnapping, terrorism, murder, crimes against humanity and genocide. In the process, Human lives and property are always threatened or affected and afflicted.

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In Nigeria for instance, various groups have emerged with varying degrees of militancy in pursuit of their own goals. Among them are the Odua People's Congress (OPC) among Yorubas, the Bakassi Boys and Movement for Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) among Igbos, the Niger-Delta Militant, Boko Haram. If not all, these groups have demonstrated at least one form of insurgent activity or another as insurgencies, ethno-religious crises, and various forms of self-determination movements have resulted from these groups. These issues of insurgences are transmitted to the audience through media. The human language plays a major part in the process of social construction of reality and this is the realm in which the language of the news operates predominantly. The language of the news assists in the creation of a set of public discourses through its selection of narratives and the language it employs to project them. Just as language is a socially constructed form of communication, so is news with its own varieties of language in use. This is achieved through language manipulation, discursive lexical choices, transitivity choices and structural pattern of sentences. The Nigerian media reports, therefore, use specific discursive choices and lexical variations in their reports to reinforce or create ideological perspectives among readers.

The mass media are naturally inclined to crisis situations; they thrive in crisis reportage (Ekwueme & Obayi, 2012) and are brought to prominence during crises. Also, they create news by deciding what is newsworthy and what is not, therefore they have the ability to shape public discourse. Because crises in most cases usually escalate into varying degrees of violence, the mass media may be torn between a choice to abide by the principle of objective reporting, and a choice to acknowledge the emotional realities such crisis situations evoke in them (Allan & Zelizer, 2004). This is in line with Thomson's (2006) perspective as he opines that journalists do not only present reports of event that are entirely true and objective, but they also employ rhetorical strategies in their writings which is aimed at persuading readers to adopt their (journalist's) point of view.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is one prominent strand of media discourse study that is concerned with taking a critical approach towards the analysis of media discourse. Keffee (2006) adds that Critical Discourse Analysis has more potential as a framework for newspaper analysis, and there have been a number of significant studies in this field. CDA provides a highly strong technique for analysing how newspaper texts frame issues through time when used with corpus linguistics. This approach to language study is an interdisciplinary pattern to the study of discourses which views language as a form of social practice. It plays a vital role in mediating inequality, injustice and oppression in the society through the use of language. van Dijk's approach to CDA holds the view that media discourses can be systematically analysed with focus on its structure, such as lexicon, syntax, topics, metaphor, actor description, social identities, and rhetorical figures and so on, in order to expose the motivation behind such discourse format. Based on this, this paper examines the discourse pattern of Nigerian newspaper reports of insurgent activities in Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives are to bring out discourse pattern of newspaper reportage, examine media bias and determine the discourse techniques used in insurgent reports of Nigeria newspapers

2. Literature review

2.1. Critical discourse analysis and news reports

Communication can be considered an activity because it is an active process that requires action. As a result, language use as a mode of communication is a deliberate activity, a social action, and a practice (Richardson, 2007). According to Gee and Green (1998), as mentioned in Odeunmi and Ajiboye (2016), news is written with the purpose of doing something. Interactions that take place through a broadcast platform, whether spoken or written, in which the discourse is aimed at a non-present reader, listener, or spectator are referred to as media discourse. Despite the fact that the discourse is aimed at these recipients, they are frequently unable to respond immediately to the discourse's producer(s), but this is changing with the arrival of new media technology.

Journalists, according to Rodin and Steinberg (2003), not only report on civil society and public discourse events, but actively shape them. As a result, they believe that when examining public discourse, the pertinent issues to ask are whether the craft as a whole is serving the public interest, rather than whether the journalists' ability or professionalism in reporting events. Public affairs, policies, disputes, and other public concerns are frequently presented by the press as an active participant in public life. Journalism is often regarded as the primary source of information about current events and issues in society. Journalists in most civilizations regard the reporting they provide for their audiences as authentic or factual. Similarly, Kieran (1998) claims that the goal of journalistic news reporting is to persuade the audience that their descriptions and interpretations are reasonable and appropriate. Thomson (1996), on the other hand, says that journalists use rhetorical methods in their writing to persuade people to embrace their point of view. He also emphasises that an analysis of ideology in modern society must be properly aware of the nature and effectiveness of mass media in the production and distribution of ideology. Scholars have attempted to address non-literal speech from a critical viewpoint since the inception of CDA. CDA's analytical projects include media discourse, as well as other forms of mass discourse such as advertisements and official fields. So far, media discourse has consistently topped the list. News stories, like other discourse, contain or demonstrate the reporters' perspectives and positions as a result of a social activity. By implication, there is no way that media discourse could accurately reflect and report on reality and society. This explains why White (2006: 37) dismisses the media's claims of objectivity. He posits that the media's discourse is designed in order to evaluate the producer(s)' point of view, with the goal of "influencing its audience's preconceptions and views about the way the world is and should be". Apparently, the media decides what they believe is in the public's best interests. As a result, they discursively structure their findings in order to impact public discourse and influence readers' interpretation and perception; this could include bringing an issue to the foreground or placing it in the background (van Dijk, 2001). According to Olowe (2003), Nigerian newspapers purposefully manipulate

language usage. Nigerian newspapers producer(s) choose language patterns that meet the audience's ideological expectations, which is an ideological empire on the one hand, and the mass media house's ideological expectations, which is an ideological empire on the other.

Given the foregoing, one important strand of media discourse research, namely critical discourse analysis, is preoccupied with taking a critical stance on media discourse (CDA). It is critical that we evaluate the messages we receive from our manufactured mass media on a regular basis. Because media discourse is open to the public, it attracts the attention of many conversation analysts who study it as a type of institutional talk that may be compared to other types of talk, both mundane and institutional. The fact that media speech is documented appeals to discourse analyzers, and this appeal is growing as newspapers, radio stations, and television shows become more accessible online. Technology advancements have considerably reduced the ephemerality element that used to be associated with media discourse, particularly radio and television in that these productions are accessible anytime and any day.

3. Theoretical framework

The study adopts van Dijk's 2006 socio cognitive Model.

3.1. Teun Van Dijk's a socio-cognitive model

van Dijk is one of the most frequently referred and quoted CDA practitioners in critical studies of media discourse, even when the studies do not necessarily fit within the CDA paradigm (Ammour, 2013). In order to illustrate the assumptions made by the stronger of the less powerful, van Dijk integrates diverse linguistic theories and methodologies in developing social and discursive processes. Three components of van Dijk's (2001) model of critical discourse analysis show how discourse can reflect social ideologies: discourse, cognition, and society. The background of the social analysis is the overall societal structures, whereas the discourse analysis is mostly text-based (syntax, lexicon, local semantics, topics, schematic structures, and so on). In this way, van Dijk's method combines the interpretative (text-based) and social tradition (context-based) approaches to media education into a single analytical framework for studying media discourse. However, another element of van Dijk's approach that sets him apart from other CDA approaches is his use of cognitive analysis. Personal/social ideas, understanding, and evaluation in speech are examined here, whereas society refers to local interlocutor relationships or worldwide societal institutions such as political systems and group/subgroup ties. van Dijk's cognitive phenomena are linked to discourse structure and the ways in which social inequity, dominance, and ideology emerge. The relationship between the discourse structure and the structure of society must be examined in order to uncover social actors' social representations, attitudes, and ideologies. According to van Dijk (2009), white dominance leads to socioeconomic inequality, racism, and dominance in some countries.

Furthermore, the CDA top-down paradigm is emphasised because discourse reveals a common kind of social injustice. van Dijk also considers the comprehension, "memorization, and reproduction" of news content in his other level of analysis. The relationships between the three levels of news text production (structure, production, and comprehension processes) and the wider social context in which they are entrenched are what van Dijk's media analysis aims to demonstrate. van Dijk's study takes place on two levels: microstructure and macrostructure, in order to identify such correlations. The semantic links between propositions, syntactic, lexical, and other rhetorical aspects that offer coherence in the text, and other rhetorical features such as quotations, direct or indirect reporting that lend factuality to news stories are all examined at the microstructure level. The examination of macrostructure, which is concerned with the thematic/topic structure of news articles and their overall schemata, is central to van Dijk's analysis of news reports. These models explain how language reveals social and personal characteristics in itself, as well as how discourse differs depending on the social setting. Also, the macrostructure reflects the common ideological strategies of positive and negative self-presentation. Positive self-presentation is the strategy that shows the writers in positive attributes as "us" while negative self-presentation is the strategy used by the writers to describe the "out group's" negative position as "them". The semantic macro-ideological strategies used in creating division between "good" and "bad", "superior" and "inferior", "us" and "them" are the framework which represents positive self-representation or in-group favoritism and negative other-representation or out-group derogation (Igwebuke, 2018).

4. Research methodology

The paper is a qualitative content approach to analyse the form and function of the newspaper discourse reports of insurgent operations in Nigeria. Three nationally published and distributed newspapers are used. These include: *The Guardian*, *The Punch* and *This Day*, from January 1st, 2021 to April 30th, 2022. Different reports were extracted from each of these Nigerian newspapers covering insurgency-related topics and reports were selected in all. The reports used in each of the newspaper comprise of straight news, headlines, feature stories and editorials selected from each of the three newspapers. These reports were selected based on accessibility, availability, regularity, distribution and contents which are relevant to the subject matter under study. The data were analysed using van Dijk Socio-cognitive approach to Critical Discourse Analysis.

4.1. Data Presentation and Analysis

Discursive strategies deployed by Newspaper reports on (in)security in Nigeria are headline, negative labelling, evidentiality, number game, hyperbolism, victimization, metaphor, euphemism

Negative Labeling

Datum 1

Gunmen kill DPO, kidnap mother, child in Katsina, Bauchi
Terrorists have killed the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) in Jibia Local Council of Katsina State, Abdullahi Rano. They also injured another officer during another attack yesterday.

The Guardian, February 10, 2022, p 8

Datum 2

Bandits raid Kaduna LGs, highways, kill eight, abducts 20 residents steal motorcycles.
Bandits have invaded the Igabi, Chikun and Zango-Kataf local government areas of Kaduna State, killing eight persons.

The Punch, January 3, 2022. p.5

Datum 3

How **killer** Fulani herdsmen invaded Benue community, killed, maimed in midnight attack- Victims.
The small wee hours of Sunday, May 30, 2021, suspected killer Fulani herdsmen in large number invaded three boarder communities of Benue state, killing and inflicting gunshot and machete injuries on the residents.

The Punch, May 30, 2021, p. 37

Datum 4

The gale attack by bandits in Kaduna

The gale of attacks by bandits, now classified as terrorists, in the Northwestern part of the country especially Kaduna and Niger states, was sustained all weekend, leaving in its trail, bodies, arson and displacement of citizens.

The Guardian, January 31, 2022, p.2

Datum 5

Declaring bandit's terrorists: Reps, ACF, CNG, back senate.

A Federal High Court in Abuja under trial Justice Taiwo Taiwo has ruled that activities of bandits, as well as other similar groups, by whatever names they are called, in any part of the country, amounted to acts of terrorism and subsequently declared them terrorists.

The Punch, October 1, 2021. P. 7

The data above show various ways in which the actors in each of the reports are represented and labeled. People are labeled based on how they are perceived in the society. When people do what is perceived to be culturally right, they are given positive label while perceived negative act in the society attracts negative tag or label to the actor. In the data above, negative words such as "bandits", "gunmen", "terrorists" coupled with certain lexical verbal choices such as "attack", "killed" are used to indicate the negativity of these groups. The deliberate use of the negative label by news writers is to identify the labeled as an "out-group" and to associate the group with danger and threat to the community and the entire nation. Specifically, the label "bandits" (datum 2), (text 3), (datum 5) denotes a group of people or anyone who robs others in a lawless way. Datum 3 goes further to attribute the word "killer" to the Fulani tribe. This is because it is largely believed that the Fulani herdsmen are the ones called bandits due to their nefarious activities in different parts of Nigeria. In the same vein, datum 3 and 5 emphasize "bandits" as "terrorists". A terrorist is a person or group of persons that use violent actions or the threats of violent actions to affirm political goal. Referring to bandits as terrorists therefore implies that, beyond fight for land and water with land owners, there is a political mission that the herdsmen try to achieve. Generally, the negative labels semantically portend danger and violence and as such, the various groups carrying out insurgent activities in Nigeria are depicted negatively in the reports. From the ongoing, any insurgent group which is seen to work against the socio-political and socio-cultural order of the nation is referred to either as terrorists, bandits, gunmen, killer or Boko Haram because their activities are perceived as evil in the community as they are characterized with killing, abduction, bloodletting, kidnapping and so on. The negative labeling suggests their activity as violent.

Number Game

Datum 6

Insecurity: **10,366 killed** in 2021, Buhari pledges change in N'East
The Gale of attack by bandits, now classified as terrorizing the Northwestern Part of the country, especially Kaduna and Niger States, was sustained all weekend, leaving in its trail body, arson and displacement of the citizen.

The Guardian, February 3, 2021

Text 7

Owo Massacre: Church confirms **38 deaths**, plans mass burial

Authorities of the Diocese of Ondo on Tuesday said 38 persons have so far been confirmed dead in the Sunday terrorists' attack on St. Francis Catholic Church, Owo, Ondo State.

The Punch June 8, 2022. P. 11

Text 8

S' East crisis: **175 soldiers**, cops, others killed in 72 attacks
Our correspondents gathered that the killings took place in 72 attacks by hoodlums across the five states in the region, namely Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Ebonyi and Abia.

The Punch, January 12, 2022. P.5

Text 9

Bandits **kill 93** in Zamfara, gov calls for self defence, suspends emir.
Bandits have again killed 93 people in Kadawa village of Zurmi Local Government Area of Zamfara State, while many others were severely wounded.

The Punch, June 12, 2021. P. 8

Text 10

Plateau Attack: community buries 106, LGA says many missing

At least 106 bodies were buried on Monday following the recent attacks on communities in Plateau State.

The Punch, April 15, 2021. P. 8

In representing the degree of killings ensured by insurgent groups in Nigeria and the several clashes that have taken place between the insurgent groups and Nigerian security agencies, the Nigerian newspapers' reporters constantly resort to the use of number and figure to report the events. It is important to state that, number game can both be used positively or negatively depending on the ideologies the news writers intend to foreground.

As reflected in the excerpt above, expressions such as "10,366" (text 6), "...38 deaths" (text 9), "175 soldiers, cops, others killed" (text 10), "bandits kill 93 in Zamfara" (text 11), "terrorist have massacred no fewer than 63 persons..." (text 15) and so on are deliberately used to bring to the realization through figures, the extent of killings, kidnapping and displacement caused by the various insurgent groups to the Nigerian people. The use of number here is not mere coincidence but an effort to foreground the number of people who are constantly being killed, kidnapped or displaced in Nigeria by these groups. Certain adverbs are also employed strategically in this regard to show that many people have become the victims of the members of the insurgent groups in Nigeria. For instance, in text 12, the use of "many" is a strategic tool to bring to the mind of the readers the large number of people who have been displaced as a result of the violent activities of the suspected insurgent group. Also, the use of adjective "mass" in text 9, to qualify the word "burial" is obviously a manipulative tool to bring to the mind of the reader the nature of burial that will be put in place for the victims who lost their lives in the attack. The continuous use of number also portrays the fact that the lives of the people living in the areas where these killings took place are no longer safe as "many" people are reported to have lost their lives in those areas.

More so, there is a show of number and statistics in text 8 in order to emphasize the continuous killings of people by the insurgent groups. While text 8, presents the record of the total number of people who have lost their lives to gunmen and rebels as 10,366 in 2021, text 14 uses the number game strategy between the phrase "in three month", and the clause "bandits kill 323 in Kaduna State" to obviously bring to the mind of the readers the rate at which people become victims of the bandits. The juxtaposition between the number of months/year and the number of people killed within its period is a strategic way of presenting the rate at which people lose their lives rapidly in the area struck by bandits. With this statements and the use of the game of number, news writers aim at appealing to both the emotion and reasoning of the people and force them to wonder if many more lives are not still at stake in the hands of bandits.

Furthermore, there is a positive use of number in text 16 as the report attempted to portray the progress of the Nigerian security agency have made in their attempt to contain bandits and their nefarious activity. It therefore implies that journalist can either play the number game positively and negatively, however, based on the evidence found in the data, journalists play the number game mostly in negative ways while reporting cases of insurgency in their reportage. From the ongoing, it can be seen that the reports as a whole is a collection of facts and figures, giving a touch of realness to the report's account of the crisis being reported. It is likely that the report produces figure and statistics in order to rouse readers' emotions and reactions towards the crisis' casualty figure.

Evidentiality and Authority

Text 11

Killings in Nigeria hits 2,085 in Q4 2021, says SBM report.

In a report released yesterday by SBM intelligence, a socio-economic research firm, in its Media Reported Killings in Nigeria report for Q4 2021 (October to December 2021), it said at least 2,085 persons were reportedly killed in Nigeria in the fourth quarter of 2021 in violent incidents, including attacks from Boko Haram, militia herdsman, abductions, gang clashes and terrorists, raising the tally of deaths to 10,366 in 2021.

The Guardian, February 3, 2021, p. 3

Text 12

Army confirms killing of two soldiers, four gunmen in Anambra

The Nigeria military, yesterday, confirmed that two of its officers died in a shoot-out with unknown gunmen in Ihiala Town, Ihiala Council of Anambra State.

The Guardian, February 10, 2022 p. 6

Text 13

Headline: Gunmen murder eight, abduct one in Benue.

Confirming the report, the Police Public Relation Officer (PPRO), Catherine Anene, said six persons were killed while two were injured and one abducted.

The Guardian, August 26, 2021

Text 14

Bandits raid Kaduna LGS, highway, kill eight, abduct 20 residents, steal motorcycles

Bandits have invaded Igabi, Chikun and Zango Kataf local government area of Kaduna State, killing eight persons. The state Commissioner for Internal Security and Home Affairs, Samuel Aruwan, who disclosed this in a statement on Sunday, said the attack left many others injured.

The Punch, January 3, 2022. P.5

Text 15

In Fresh Attacks, Bandits kill dozens in Kaduna, Niger

In Southern Kaduna, the center of persistent attacks suspected Fulani militia, at least 10 persons were killed, while many houses ablaze. Atak Mawai community in Zaman Dabo Village in Zangon Kataf Council came under heavy gunfire by the attackers in the early hours yesterday "Most of those killed were burned in their houses as they were also set of people were fast asleep at the time the gunmen struck," an eyewitness Chairman, Zangon Kataf Local Council, Francis Angwa Sani, confirmed the attack. "For now, I cannot confirm the number of those killed. I am still waiting for the official report.

The Guardian, January 31, 2022. P.2

Text 16

Terrorists Invade Niger Communities, kill Several Villagers, Kidnap Catholic Priest

Also, the State Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria, Niger State Chapter, Reverend Mathias Echioda, confirmed the kidnap of the catholic priest and others. "We are trying to get the identities of other clergymen with the kidnapped priest," Echioda said.

The Nation, March 29, P. 42

Text 17

Zulum confirms 32 killed in Borno

Zulum confirmed that 32 persons were killed by Boko Haram/ISWAP fighters in an attack on a village in the state. A statement by his spokesman, Mallam Isa Gusau, yesterday, said the 32 persons were killed last weekend by Boko Haram/ISWAP fighters around Mudu village, some 45 kilometres away from Rann, and headquarters of Kala-Balge Local Government Area of the state.

Daily Trust, May 26, 2022. P.42

In news reportage, the data above show the presence of Evidentiality and authority where the news writers constantly resorted to citing the relevance authority to support their claim and presenting some evidence or proof to accentuate their own opinions. This is done by providing empirical data, reporting what eyewitness has said or quoting directly someone else's speech. This gives credibility to the news report and by implication influences the mental model of the recipients/readers by persuading them to accept the provided reports as true and authentic. For instance, text 23, 24 and 25 cite the authority such as SBM, the army and the police respectively.

Text 23 puts the reports that at least 2,085 persons were reportedly killed in Nigeria in the fourth quarter of 2021 in violent incidents, including attacks from Boko Haram, militia herdsmen, abductions, gang clashes and terrorists, raising the tally of deaths to 10,366 in 2021, while citing SBM. In this reportage, authority is achieved. First in the headline, while the news report claims that 2,085 people were killed, it is quick to mention its source with "says IBM report". Being Nigeria's leading geopolitical research consultancy that is perceived strong in the area of primary data gathering, and analyses of data that provides clarity relating to political, economic and social issues in Nigeria, SBM is worth mentioning in the news report so as to back up and validate the claim. Text 24, 25, 26 on the other hand make constant reference to the relevant authorities specifically with words such as "the army", "the Police Public Relation Officer (PPRO) Catherine Anene" and "the state Commissioner for Internal Security and Home Affairs, Samuel Aruwan" in their reports. Excerpt 29, goes ahead to portray the notion that, the news being presented is particularly the report of the governor of Borno State through his spokesperson, Mallam Isa Gusau. The ideology behind this is that through the

reports from "authority's" point of view, public opinion will be shaped and the report would be considered as true and real. Also, through the use of direct quotation, as evident in text 27 and 28, evidentiality is foregrounded. In text 27 for instance, the news quoted directly from an eyewitness. In crisis situation in Nigeria, the eyewitnesses are seen as omniscient as they are believed to have firsthand details concerning any incidence. Therefore, in an attempt to make the news claims look as authentic as possible, an eyewitness (Francis Angwa Sani) as well as Chairman, Zangon Kataf Local Council, was quoted by the news writer.

From the data above, it could be seen that providing information with reference to eyewitnesses and authorities is a strategic way of substantiating the news reports as it provides strong proofs and verifiable details. Apart from this, evidentiality and authority is also used as a tool to emphasize the negativity of the out-group by allowing the readers to focus more on their victims. For instance, excerpt 23 "Killings in Nigeria hits 2,085 in Q4 2021, says SBM report" allows the readers to realise the number of people killed so far and therefore provokes empathy for the affected.

Lexicalization

Text 18

Inspector, two others die in Ogun as police engage bandits in gun duel

There was **heavy** gunfire during the battle as Saala Orile forest, Yewa North Local Government Council of Ogun State. "At the end of the encounter which lasted about 20 minutes, two of the bandits were shot dead while others escaped with gunshot injuries. **Regrettably**, an inspector of police, Omolayo Olajide, lost his life during the gun duel.

The Guardian, January 27, 2022. P. 6

Text 19

Again, gunmen attack bullion van, kill two in Ondo.

Gunmen suspected to be armed robbers have **again**, for the third time within six weeks, attacked a bullion van in Ondo and reportedly shot two people on the spot

Daily Trust, August 26, 2021. P. 6

Text 20

Also, about five gunmen **stormed** the Lafia residence of the secretary to the Nasarawa State Independent Electoral Commission (NASIEC).

Unknown gunmen numbering over 9, Tuesday, kidnapped a journalist with the state owned media, Nasarawa Broadcasting Service, Salisu Maki in Lafia, the state Capital

The Punch, August 25, 2021. P. 5

Text 21

Jos in 24-hour shutdown after **a fresh attack** leaves 36 dead, burnt houses

Hours after President Muhammadu Buhari met behind closed doors with Governor Sulaimon Lalong of Plateau State in the Presidential Villa, Abuja, some gunmen on Tuesday night turned the state to a theatre of war as they attacked Yewan Zangam community close to the site of the University of Jos (UNI JOS) killing about 36 people and burning houses

The Guardian, August 26, 2022

Text 22

Hundreds of Kaduna residents flee as bandit's attack

Several villagers trooped to Kagaro, Kafanchan neighboring Jos in Plateau State, Kajuma and Kaduna metropolises to avoid further attack by the armed men

The Guardian, August 8, 2021

Text 23

Schools and Nigeria killing Season

If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. (The killing season, by Mason Cross).

The Guardian, August 8, 2021. P. 2

News writers, from the text provided above, usually make the insertion of certain words in order to emphasize meaning. This discursive tool enables the writers to, through the choice of words foreground their ideological belief when reporting crisis situation, particularly. There are manifestations of this concept in the data gathered whereby certain words or group of words explicitly condemn the insurgents act while also emphasizing the lasting effects of their act on the victims.

Within the reports examined, certain lexical items are deliberately inserted for the purpose of emphasis. For instance, words and group of words such as "again", "a fresh attack", "several", "killing season", "states cry for cops", "massacred", "brazen new onslaught", "killing season", "massacred" are all linguistic choices used to emphasise the rate of violent activities by the insurgent groups in different areas of Nigeria. The use of again "again" and "fresh

attack" suggests the continuity of insurgent activities. The words also suggest that the various insurgent groups had been carrying out several attacks in the area and that the area could be considered as centre of attacks. The lexical choice "several" in text 18 connotes the number of people displaced by the insurgent groups in their locality. In the same vein, the phrasal "brazen new onslaught" presents the attackers as fierce in their pursuit, bringing about killings almost all the time. At the same time, the deliberate use of the word "massacre" in text 38 powerfully underscores the murdering of a large number of people. These words are strategically put in place to take sides with the victims as well as arouse pity among the readers while condemning the attacks and their perpetrators.

The use of certain verbal choices especially to qualify the nature of killings goes a long way in determining the subjectivity of the news reports. Verbal choice "slaughtered" is used strategically to call the attention of the readers to the nature of affliction imposed on the victims. And the reports further go on to say that "state cry for cops" which is a way of portraying the mourning state in the area. The choice of lexical items in news report leans towards subjectivity. This technique appears to seemingly impose the reporters' mental model of the situations being reported on the reading public, by subtly guiding them to see the social situation from the perspective of the report. Therefore, they are capable of creating sentiments among readers.

Metaphor

Text 24

Headline: How Zamfara Terrorists invaded our villages, over 200, burnt houses

"...These terrorists are not ghost. Their movements, logistics and supplies can all be traced..."

The Punch, January 8, 2022. P.5

Text 25

I won't negotiate with bandits, Niger Governor vows

"The bandits are Fulani that have no one to control them, even their parents"

The Guardian, January 7, 2021. P.3

Metaphorical data found in the data are not many. However, using this discursive strategy, the reporters in this regard try as much as possible to make a comparison between the various insurgent groups and other unlikely images. Text 24 argues that the terrorists humiliating the Nigeria states are not faceless individuals who could not be arrested by the federal government. It goes on to foreground that the federal government is lagging in the quest to conquer the various insurgent groups as their "movement, logistics and supplies can all be traced". Furthermore, it goes on to explicitly state that the long battles between the federal government and the insurgent's groups is uncalled for and since their movement can be traced and since they are not ghosts, the federal government should take actions against the terrorists.

In the same vein, text 40 employs naming as a technique through the use of metaphor where the bandits are metaphorically referred to as the Fulani who have no one to control their excesses. This report takes sides with readers who also believe that the bandits are the Fulani herdsmen. However, being a Fulani does not automatically translate to being a herdsmen and herdsmen are not by nature Fulani's. Although, the claim puts forward in this report supports the popular opinion which is believed to be true that the Fulani's are the bandits threatening the lives of the people in Nigerian states. The idea present in excerpt 40 particularly is to portray the "us" vs "them" notion where the Fulani group are seen as the out-group and given negative assertions.

Categorisation Strategy

Text 26

Why we can't shoot repentant insurgents, by FG

The federal government yesterday cautioned against spewing negative and false narratives around **Boko Haram members** who are surrendering to the Nigeria military in the insurgency-ravaged North-East.

The Guardian August 21, 2021. P. 2

Text 27

Boko Haram, ISWAP Terrorists Now Resort to Video Propaganda, says Army

Faced with the obvious reality of defeat and inability to carry out attacks that have hitherto been their strategy to assert relevance in the eyes of the public, army authorities have said that Boko Haram Terrorists (BHT) now resort to cheap propaganda to seek relevance.

The Guardian, August 7, 2021. P.12

Text 28

How Boko Haram seized us as teenagers, turned us to shekau's fighters, mechanic for over seven years

The returnees, mostly teenagers when they were abducted, explained that they were abducted alongside other family members, adding that some died along the way while they lost contact with the others when they got to the camp.

The Punch, October 10, 2021. P.14

Text 29

Finally, Court Declares Bandits Terrorists, FG to Gazette Ruling.

A Federal High Court in Abuja under trial Justice Taiwo has ruled that activities of bandits, as well as other similar groups, by whatever names they are called, in any part of the country, amounted to acts of terrorism and subsequently declared them terrorists.

The Punch, November 27, 2021. P. 51

The categorisation of positive self and negative others also manifest in the data examined. It was observed that this strategy, in news reports is aimed at expressing other groups' social attitudes or ideologies by making claims for certain activity on the bad image. For instance, in excerpt 26, there is a group of surrendering Boko Haram members. This group of people comprises of Boko Haram members who are surrendering themselves to the Nigerian authority and are being rehabilitated and recruited into Nigerian military. Following the agitation of concerned Nigerians that this group of people should be punished rather than being recruited into the Nigeria army, the government in this excerpt, cautioned the people who were speaking ill of this set of people as they claimed to have repented and apologised to Nigerians. Therefore, while the federal government regarded them as in-group, the news writer through this discursive strategy considered them as out-group.

Text 28 maintained that the Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgent groups remain the out-group as they still pose threats to Nigerians by adopting a fresh strategy. Text 27 on the other hand portrays another group of people regarded as "the returnee" from the Boko Haram's den. These were the people abducted by the Boko Haram group for about seven years. These people are labeled as returnees because of their experience in the hands of the Boko Haram insurgent group. However, they are still regarded as in-group members. Text 29 on the other hand emphasises the need to regard bandits as terrorists, using evidentiality as a technique. This further portrays bandits as out-group due to their activities in the country and how they are perceived by the people of Nigeria.

5. Findings

It was discovered from the analysis that writers of news predominantly use certain discursive techniques to increase the information deliveries as well as aid the acceptability of news reports among the audience. The discursive techniques are used to create two different groups, namely: the in-group and the out-group. The constant reliance on the discursive strategies separates the various insurgent groups (out-group) from the larger Nigerian society (In-group). Such discursive strategies present in the data examined include labeling, number game, Evidentiality, authority, Lexicalisation and victimisation strategy. For instance, through labeling strategy, Boko Haram and other insurgent groups are portrayed as out-groups and are consistently given such negative linguistic labels as "criminals", "killers", "gunmen", "terrorists" and so on while herdsmen are also stereotyped and attributed such negative names as "killers", "killer herdsmen", "attackers", "bandits", "evil doers" and so. On the other hand, the Federal Government and security agencies are seen as the protectors of the masses. Also, through the use of number game as a discursive strategy present in the data, news writers emphasize the evil deeds of the insurgent groups through the use of figures. Figures are shown in order to bring to the mind of the audience the number of people that have been killed, injured or displaced by the insurgent groups. The use of evidentiality and authority also tried to make readers see from the point of view of the authority and witnesses the nefarious acts of the insurgent groups and therefore further portray them as enemies of the society. Victimization strategy presents Nigerian citizens as the victims of the various insurgent operations while categorisation performs a stereotypical function by seeing the perpetrators the same and grouping them as one. Repetition as a technique work in the same expectation but being used to emphasise the negative acts of the insurgent groups. This further goes a long way to emphasise their bad deeds as illustrated by van Dijk. The twelve identified discursive strategies in the data examined showed that journalist predominantly rely on the pattern of these strategies in their reportage of insurgent operation.

6. Conclusion

A language which is an integral part of news production has in this study, been given a critical analysis in relation to reports on insurgency in Nigeria newspaper outfits. Contrary to the objectivity claim of the news writers, this study has revealed that news reports are embedded with certain linguistic ideologies which are used to covertly express the opinions of the news writers and not the natural occurrence of event. From this case, it could be seen that the mass media has a role in constructing the readers' point of view and contributing to control other's minds.

van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach to Critical Discourse Analysis was used as the theoretical framework of this study. Through the application of the discursive strategies, it was observed through the ideological tools that the insurgent groups are regarded as the out-group and their portrayals through linguistic tools depicts them as killers, enemies, trouble makers, and riot-loving set of people while the security agencies are given images of protectors of the citizens and guardians of the nation. More so, the various insurgent groups (Boko Haram, herdsmen bandit, Niger Delta militants) are, through the use of language, given the image of perpetrators of crimes, violence and other social vices while stating the extent to which they posit threat to the lives of Nigerians across different states and regions while Federal Government and her allies are portrayed as good people who belong to the in-group.

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