

**LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATIONS OF PRESIDENT MUHAMMADU
BUHARI'S ADMINISTRATION IN SELECTED NIGERIAN
NEWSPAPERS' EDITORIALS,
2016-2021**

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CERTIFICATION

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DEDICATION

To the Only True God whose love is eternal

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ABSTRACT

The representation of political leaders in editorials provides insight into the media organisations' perception of their policies, activities and socio-political reforms of these leaders. Previous studies on Nigerian presidents' administrations have explored their socio-economic reforms, policies and progress, as well as their effectiveness, with little attention paid to their media framing and linguistic evaluation. Therefore, this study was designed to examine the representation of the Buhari administration from 2016 to 2021 in Nigerian newspaper editorials, with a view to determining the media framings, ideologies and strategies deployed.

Teun van Dijk's model of Critical Discourse Analysis and James Martin and Peter White's Appraisal Theory were adopted as the framework, while the descriptive design was used. Eight Nigerian newspapers were purposively selected through quota sampling. Six were from the Lagos/Ibadan axis (*Punch*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *The Sun*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard* and *ThisDay*), while two were from the Kaduna axis (*Daily Trust* and *Leadership*). Ninety-eight editorials on President Muhammadu Buhari's administration were selected from the newspapers: *Punch* (16), *Nigerian Tribune* (12), *Leadership* (8), *Daily Trust* (12), *The Sun* (14), *The Guardian* (13), *Vanguard* (12) and *ThisDay* (11). The selection of the newspapers was based on their wide circulation, while matters of insecurity, economy and corruption informed the choice of the editorials. Voyant, a digital tool for text analysis, was employed to analyse the excerpts. The data were subjected to critical discourse analysis.

Four representations of the administration were identified: tactful retardation, mendacity, reticence and disdain for the rule of law. Tactful retardation and mendacity were used to capture the administration's approach in handling matters of insecurity, especially in the degradation of Boko Haram. Reticence describes the administration's selective judgment on corruption cases, and disdain for the rule of law captures its disregard for legal institutions. Propagandism, passivism and absolutism were the three ideologies evident in the editorials, and monoglossic and heteroglossic positionings were the two forms of engagement strategies utilised in negotiating meaning with readers. External sources whose views corroborated editors' perspectives were cited, while authorial presence was fully pursued by others using bare assertions. Minimal engagement tools were explored by *Punch*, *The Sun* and *ThisDay*, while *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *Leadership* and *Daily Trust* engaged the readers effectively with interrogatives, deixis, modal and comment adjuncts, conditionals and cohesive devices. Similarly, *Punch*, *The Sun* and *ThisDay* predominantly conveyed negative perception of the administration with occasional appreciation of its achievements, whereas *Nigerian Tribune* and *Vanguard* consistently offered counsels on how to reclaim masses' confidence. *The Guardian* also used the negative affect randomly, but *Daily Trust* and *Leadership* were more cautious and discreet in the appraisal of the administration.

Through the media representations, ideologies and engagement strategies deployed to negotiate meaning with readers, Nigerian newspapers' editorials reveal President Muhammadu Buhari's administration's efforts to deliver on democratic dividends and the attendant challenges with governance.

Keywords: Nigerian newspaper editorials, Media framing of governance, President Muhammadu Buhari's administration, Heteroglossic positioning

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Newspaper editorial is fundamental to the agenda-setting role of the media and it aids opinion formulation that influences public perspectives on trending issues. Editorials are opinion-based (Bhatia, 1993; van Dijk, 1995; Hall, 1980; Bal, 2009; Ahmadi and Asl, 2013), as they convey the ideologies of newspaper editorial board on a matter, and appear on a specific page in the newspaper with no authorial identification (Biber and Conrad, 2009). Editorials can adopt either persuasive or propaganda techniques to reach readers and their major roles can be classified into reinforcement and clarification (Akpan, 2017). While clarification provides further information to buttress an issue, reinforcement elucidates on an already held view in order to draw attention or mobilise support for a perspective through persuasion, tribute, explanation, or criticism.

Editorials thrive mostly on arguments that are designed to persuade readers and make them perceive an issue through their lens, and their opinions and views are explicitly stated; even though, their intentions are not to appear defensive but persuasive (van Dijk, 1995). Most editorials examine different issues on a constant basis and adopt a polemical approach towards analyzing events, policies or actions under review. They could sometimes condemn or offer solutions they believe should be implemented while providing a broad evaluation of the proposition to readers. This critical evaluation is geared towards connecting with readers in a personal manner beyond the news reports, as readers are expected to draw conclusions from the editorials' standpoint (Ekeanyanwu and

Jokotade, 2009). Editorials remain the major lens through which opinions are formulated and the public relies on their assessment to gain a better grasp of events and issues in the country. However, they are not fundamentally targeted at readers who rely on their opinions to construct political acumens but as political actors, possessing likely answers to bothering national challenges, the government draws from their analytical perspectives in tackling crises (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2008).

Topics often discussed in editorials focus on varying subjects such as government's policies on education, health, finance, economic developments, security challenges. These and other topics are cross-examined to bring about transformation in the society. In editorials, prospective readers are considered in the writing process, with deliberate choices of lexical items that adequately capture and drive editors' evaluation. Thus, language, a distinctive feature of communication, becomes a veritable tool in creating perspectives, viewpoints and paradigms that frames or shapes identities. The representations of editorials' opinions/assessments of the proposition or event are either inferred or explicitly conveyed. As a result, editorials empower the media to explicitly provide their views on politics, economy and other aspects of governance which confers autonomy since their opinions reflect the publishing outlets' stance (Eilders, 1997). This study, therefore, investigates the media deployment of linguistic tools in the representation of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration, as well as the ideologies and strategies adopted.

1.2 President Muhammadu Buhari

Muhammadu Buhari was born on December 17, 1942 in Daura, Katsina State, Nigeria into a Fulani family (Abdullahi and Danjuma, 2019). He served in the Nigerian Army between 1961 – 1985, and later became a Federal Commissioner of Petroleum and Natural Resources between 1976 to 1978. In 1983, he seized power, through a coup that truncated the democratic system in the nation at the time, and emerged as a military ruler. After his regime, he became the chairman of the Petroleum Task Fund (PTF) under General Sani Abacha's regime.

1.2.1 Major General Buhari and the Third Republic

On December 31, 1983, Major General Muhammadu Buhari coordinated a military coup to overthrow Shehu Shagari. The latter had been accused of mismanagement of the economy through huge importations that hampered local products and resulted in the depletion of external reserves of the nation (Studyhq, 2021). It can be averred that the growing concerns among the public against the impunity of corrupt public holders during that time, the massively rigged election of 1983, the constitutional breaching of the law, and the undocumented public funds lavished on lawmakers and other public officers, were exploited by the military to seize power from the first democratic president, Shehu Shagari. Dummar (2002) notes that the central justification the Buhari regime provided for staging the successful 1983 coup was to rescue the nation from an impending disintegration, which this study describes as economic reforms. These reforms were to address the economic woes imposed by the Shagari administration, enforce stricter disciplinary measures in every ramification in order to stall public funds misappropriation, mitigate illegal oil transactions by oil merchants, control allotted funds for government projects through the development of a structured monitoring process that ensures that allocated funds are judiciously utilised for proposed projects and not abandoned as was previously recorded (Dummar, 2002).

The activities of the Buhari regime shared similarities with the Murtala/Obasanjo administration which focused on developing local products, averse to the massive importation policy the Shagari regime had embraced. Several interventions in African nations' liberation were recorded during the regime, national security was enforced, investment was made to develop and improve the defence department (Air and Armed Forces), so as to produce military explosives and arms, as well as develop a research department to coordinate military operations (Bakare, 2019). Some other achievements of the Buhari military regime, according to Abdullahi and Danjuma (2019), were the enforcement of land border closure and partial closure of international airports across the country, which lasted for some days, in order to boost patronage of locally produced goods and mitigate dependence on importation.

Another measure introduced by the Buhari regime was the replacement of old naira notes, the introduction of tough exchange-control regulations, reduction of government spending

on consumer subsidies, salaries, capital imports, among other things, were some of the successes the regime recorded. However, by the middle of 1985, his reputation and influence had waned among the populace, especially his allies who felt alienated from that government, due to policies that restricted cash flow. This resulted in a palace coup masterminded by General Ibrahim Babangida in August 1985. Dummar (2002) records that the regime's failure derived from the economic woes recorded from the persistent fall of oil price and domestic unrest resulting from his stringent policies. His personality was described as strict (Dummar, 2002; Studyhq, 2021) and the attempted introduction of Sharia law at the federal level weakened public confidence in his regime.

Dummar (2002: p. 75) presents an evaluation of his military rule as follows:

Buhari had been a strict Muslim that believed that recovery of the economy and stern discipline were the answers to Nigeria's problems, however draconian the means needed to be. His main problems were that he was a strict Muslim and he was a strict military man; both of these characteristics made him too strict for his country and his army.

This description was revealed in other studies on the Third Republic in Nigeria, where Emmanuel (2014) describes the regime as repressive. Also, Studyhq (2021) avers that it is "one of the most authoritarian regimes in the political history of Nigeria" and highlighted the five draconian measures informing such description. The measures are illegal arrest, trial and conviction of corrupt public office holders, the introduction of War Against Indiscipline (WAI) to curtail cases of indiscipline among the populace and the massive retrenchment of civil servants across the country (Oyeniya, 2015). Also, the imposition of taxes and fines, forced payment of hospital and school bills, and the inclusion of formerly exempted local manufacturing companies in tax payments, were some of the measures developed to revive the economy. Oyeniya (2015) reveals that oppositions were clamped to inhibit involvement in the regime, and students' unions were proscribed in tertiary institutions engaged in protesting the reinstatement of school fees. However, Obioha (2016) alludes a different reason for the failure of the regime. He claims that the non-inclusion of a transition plan to democratic government in his ten-point agenda resulted in lack of public support.

1.2.2 The 2015 general election

During the general elections of 2003, 2007 and 2011, Buhari contested for the office of the President but was unsuccessful. However, in 2015, he ran for office against the incumbent, President Goodluck Jonathan, and won. Oludayo (2021) claims that the frustration of Nigerians at the ruling party's pervasive corruption resulted in the successful election of Muhammadu Buhari as the sixth democratically elected President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria during the 2015 general election. This achievement was lauded and received with heightened optimism that the nation would experience exponential growth in a matter of months. It was anticipated that by the second quarter, economic and political sectors would have been stabilised. The reason is that the nation had never been unanimously agreed on an issue as it was with the 'Change' mantra which rocked every street in major cities.

Nwofe (2016) attributes the success of the All Progressive Congress (APC) to the fair coverage it enjoyed in the media, due to the influence some members of the party had with major news outlets within and outside the country which accounted for mass awareness generation and the positive portrayal of the President. Fight against corruption, war on insurgency/terrorism and fixing of the economy were the three major campaign promises that characterised the activities of the ruling political party (Peoples' Democratic Party – PDP) and the opposition party (All Progressive Congress – APC) in 2015 (Buharimeter, 2016; Oludayo, 2011). Some believe that two out of the promises – fighting of corruption and putting an end to insurgency (most especially Boko Haram) are responsible for the victory of PMB. These were the major problem facing the country by then (Omilusi, 2016).

1.2.3 President Muhammadu Buhari's administration

The evaluation of the administration of President Buhari kicked in immediately he was sworn into office in 2015. On resumption to office, he was said to have relocated the Chief of Army Staff to Maiduguri in Borno State, to establish an Army Division in the quest to overrun the insurgent group, Boko Haram, who had been on the rampage since 2009 (Abdullahi and Danjuma, 2019). Other remarkable interventions were the measures developed to combat corruption, which included the execution of the Treasury Single

Account, the Biometric Verification Number (BVN) and on the Whistle-Blowing policy. These developments have resulted in the “recoveries of looted funds, blocking treasury leakages through the Treasury Single Account and jailing some corrupt former governors” (Oludayo, 2021:1). However, contrary to the two hundred and twenty-two (220) promises compiled and advanced during election campaigns (Buharimeter, 2016), the Buhari administration has recorded more challenges than victories. The protracted period it took the administration to elect ministers into various parastatal for the first six months met with massive criticisms among the populace but Abdullahi and Danjuma (2019) provide two justifications for this delay in their study. The first was the insufficient money in government coffers to pay appointees and the thoroughness the process would require to select the most qualified individuals for each position.

Oludayo (2021) points out that the insecurity rate has spiked across the country and the economy is unstable, resulting in an increase in the figures of poorer people. The World Bank (2021) equally reports that in 2020, Nigeria recorded its worst recession in two decades, due to the Covid-19 pandemic but a measure of growth was regained in 2021, following the ease of restriction and implementation of economic-inclined policies. This gradual economic recovery will have little or no impact on the number of people living below the poverty line, which is projected to increase by 12million between 2019-2023 from its initial 133million recorded in 2018 (World Bank, 2021). This rise in poverty level has been attributed to lack of good job opportunities, political instability and the unstable inflation constantly experienced in the country.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Newspaper editorials have gained global attention in the academic (Bhatia, 1993; van Dijk, 1995; Hall, 2003; Bednarek, 2006; Belmonte, 2007; Biber and Conrad, 2009; Bal, 2009; Bonyadi and Samuel, 2013), with notable studies on the formation of opinions and expression of ideologies (van Dijk, 1995; 2000; Lagonikos, 2005; Ahmadi and Asl, 2013; Viboonchart and Gampper, 2014; Firmstone, 2019; Marques and Mont’Alverne, 2019), the didactic implication of editorials to learning (Akdemir, 2012; Afzal and Harun, 2013; Tafida, 2014), the manifestations of linguistic properties in editorials (Bonyadi, 2011; Masroor and Ahmad, 2017; Malah, Tan and Rashid, 2017), the sociopolitical aspects of editorials (Schoenfeld and Griffin, 1979; Fasold, 1990) the contrastive textual analysis of

headlines (Bonyadi and Samuel, 2013), and the systematic linguistic analysis of media language (Bednarek, 2006). However, few studies on editorials exist in the Nigerian academia, compared to the copious works on newspapers as a broad genre.

Studies within Nigeria have focused on the sociolinguistic (Babalola, 2002; Ekeanyanwu and Jokodola, 2009, Jegede, 2015; Akpan, 2017), pragmatic (Lawal, 2015; Imo, 2020; Omo and Idegbekwe, 2020) and linguistic (Olaniyan, 2011; Ariyo, 2017; Murana and Abdul Wahab, 2019; Oloruntobi, 2020; Ishaya and Jen, 2021) aspects of the editorial, but have paid less attention to the establishment of solidarity between editors and prospective readers through deliberate processes of lexicalisation capturing their respective framings and ideologies.

Similarly, studies abound on the activities of President Muhammadu Buhari, since his swearing-in to the office on 29th May, 2015 (Onuoha, Ichite and George, 2015; Omilusi, 2016; Nwofe, 2016; Ekwueme, 2017; Olajimbiti, 2017), his inaugural speech (Sharndama, 2015; Osisanwo, 2017), his anti-corruption war (Onuigbo and Innocent, 2015; Ojo, 2016; Onya and Elemanya, 2016; Olijo, 2017; Oriola, Ojomo and Ajilore, 2017; Okon, 2018; Akpan and Eyo, 2018; Edmond and Wilson, 2018; Thompson, Afolabi, Raheem and Onifade, 2020; Oludayo, 2021); his foreign policies (Mimiko and Mbada, 2015; Olakunle, 2017; Gamawa, 2018; Bakare, 2019; Ozden and Onapajo, 2019; Tyona, 2020), and media representation has been examined using social theories and non-linguistic tools with exception to studies on his inaugural speeches.

In all, the representation of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration in Nigerian newspaper editorials, the linguistic evaluations and ideologies underpinning the editorials have not been given adequate attention. Likewise, the engagement strategies employed in revealing the framing of the administration have not been sufficiently explored. This study, therefore, examined the representation of the administration in selected editorials from 2016 to 2021, with a view to determining the media framings, ideologies backgrounding those representations and the various engagement tools deployed in the process of negotiating meaning with prospective readers.

1.4 Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this study was to investigate the representations of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration in selected Nigerian newspapers' editorials. The objectives were to:

- a. identify the representations of PMB's administration in the selected editorials,
- b. examine the engagement tools used in negotiating meaning with readers in the editorials,
- c. explore the ideologies and the strategies used in backgrounding them; and
- d. analyse the attitudinal evaluation of the representations.

1.5 Scope of the study

The study covered newspaper editorials on the activities of the Buhari administration addressing matters related to insecurity, economy and corruption, from 2016 to 2021, because the administration came to power based on these three cardinal topics. This period spans from the first term to the middle of the second term of Muhammadu Buhari as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and not as a military Head of State in the Third Republic. His representations in the Nigerian newspaper editorials, as well as the strategies employed in framing his administration, were explored.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study furthers the efforts of scholars in media discourse, especially works targeted at exploring editorials in the Nigerian print media. It provides an appraisal of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration from a linguistic standpoint and will assist linguists in evaluating the multifarious dimensions employed by media institutions to explicate their ideological leanings through various representations. It will also aid the comprehension of the engagement strategies, preferably adopted, in negotiating meaning with prospective readers. Similarly, experts and researchers in media studies will find this study relevant in their linguistic evaluation of social actors. Similarly, scholars and students interested in investigating newspaper editorials can find those useful linguistic tools to assist in the analysis and understanding of their study. The study offers insight on the handling of issues related to insecurity, economy and corruption during the Buhari administration and how they impart on the electorate's perception of the administration.

The representation of these themes are discussed in the study and readers can understand how ideology shapes the framing of social actors, as well as the implication of such representations in the media. Major cases on corruption, insecurity and economy which emerged during the Buhari administration between 2016 to 2021 were discussed in the study and readers can examine the representations of these events in selected Nigerian newspaper editorials with a view to determining media roles in political activities.

1.7 Summary

This chapter has provided a background to the study, the statement of the problem, stated the aim and objectives, the scope, as well as the significance of the study. It also provided a biography of President Muhammadu Buhari, an assessment of his military rule and his civilian engagement in Nigerian politics. The next chapter shall provide detailed information on conceptual and empirical review of concepts related to the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Overview

This chapter is a review of relevant works and theoretical framework used in the study. It provides background to previous works on editorials and their relevance to the current study.

2.1 Conceptual review

Prior to the examination of previous studies on editorials and ideology, it is expedient that a basic conceptual evaluation of the newspaper as a genre, its history and components be examined to provide a backdrop to the broader study.

2.1.1 Newspaper as a genre

Newspaper has been defined as a text or publication that is constantly produced, mostly daily, which exemplifies language use in context; it reflects current activities, targets a large population of people concentrated in a geographical location and (mis)represents people's opinion on an issue (Alo and Ogungbe, 2012; Sunday and Fagunleka, 2017). It is believed that the most important and dynamic aspect of newspaper history is its language, and since language is a complex social activity, newspapers expand such transactions beyond face-to-face discourse to capture a broader and extended imagined community (Conboy, 2010).

Genre is a subcategory of a discourse community (Martin-Martin, 2003) that is conventionalised within a communicative setting (Bhatia, 2002). It is an explicit structure of discourse element designed to perform and achieve a particular communicative function recognisable by a group of language users with broad descriptions/categorisations. As a form of text, genre has been described as a social process that encompasses various generic processes, such as describing, explaining, instructing, arguing and narrating (Knapp and Watkins, 2005). It is a “set of generative and interpretative procedures, a horizon of expectations against which any specific generic instance must be set” (Montgomery, 2019: p. 51).

Genre studies assert that texts can be classified based on the following shared elements: cognitive, situational and linguistic (Pennock, 2002) and the newspaper has been categorised as a form of genre different from other forms of written text, such as academic writing and literary writings such as fictions (Crystal and Davy, 1969; Bell, 1991; Bhatia, 1993; Pennock, 2002; Biber and Conrad, 2009) due to its organisation, structure and language dynamism. Pennock (2002) argues that the difference between newspapers and other genres does not primarily lie in its language choice but its structural formation; however, considering the components of the newspaper that transcend arrangements and extend to linguistic peculiarities, this assertion cannot be substantiated since writers’ ideologies are also embedded within the ambit of linguistic characterisation. In essence, language plays a crucial role in characterising the newspaper as a genre. Editorials constitute a sub-genre of newspapers (Montgomery, 2019) and convey peculiar views that shape readers’ perspectives. A major objective of editorials is that they are opinion-based (Bhatia, 1993; van Dijk, 1995; Biber and Conrad, 2009; Bal, 2009; Ahmadi and Asl, 2013; Akpan, 2017), considering the agenda-setting role the media plays.

2.1.1.1 History of newspapers and editorials

The newspaper, traced to the eighteenth century (Black 1991; Conboy, 2010), has developed in form and structure over the years and extended to capture other aspects of daily lifestyle. The first regular English daily newspaper was *The Daily Courant* of 1702, notable for its frequent appearance (Conboy, 2010). Before that time, other forms of printed news had existed but they were unsustainable. The nineteenth century recorded the development of various language styles motivated by the increasing specialisation within

newspapers; such as editorials, feature articles, background commentaries, and sport event reports (Conboy, 2010). Black (1991) observes that 1792 was a monumental moment in the development of newspaper language, arising from Fox's Libel law that permitted the jury to determine what is libelous or not, rather than the judge who previously had absolute authority. This paved way for a wider scope of language dynamism in newspapers without fear of prosecution.

The newspaper has, since that time, served as a major medium of circulating information and even though it has undergone various forms, it has proven its relevance in the news business across the world. The decline in its circulation, in the wake of the proliferation of electronic news media and dynamics in readers' preferences, has resulted in the development of new strategies, models and adaptable survival mechanisms to meet the increasingly pressing demands of a competitive market. Although classified as a traditional medium, the newspaper still plays a crucial role in the dissemination of information, despite the reduction in patronage. To this end, most newspaper companies, in recent years, have struggled to retain their reputations, readership base and have been forced to restructure their models of rendering service so as to survive the constant pressure mounted by an ever changing society (Allan, 2010).

During this period, the editorial played a major role as an instrument used to enhance the independence the law granted them. Black (1991: p. 281) notes that

“the leading article started to become part of the increasingly distinct editorial positioning of newspapers. This editorializing came to lead the identity and opinion of the newspaper and was carefully designed to fit into both the newspaper's sense of its own identity and the identity of its readership imagined as a whole. It was a powerful commercial tool as well as a potent political weapon”.

Editorials became a crucial aspect of print media due to the detailed information it provided readers. Besides the general news coverage and its peculiar nature as opinion-based, it was a medium to express publishers' ideological stance and was easy to locate being situated in a fixed position. Also, the credibility of the press was dependent on the quality of their editorials (Black 1991) and this spurred many of them to employ skilled writers who could effectively convey the ideals of those printing institutions in order to expand their reader base. In contemporary times, newspaper editorials continue to play

significant roles in assessing, evaluating and x-raying socio-political and economic discourse with a view to engaging readers

2.1.1.2 Criteria for categorising newspapers

Nigerian newspapers can be classified into two broad groups: daily newspapers (*Punch, Nigerian Tribune, Vanguard, The Sun, and Leadership*, among others) and weekly newspapers (*National Network, Urhobo Vanguard, and Triumph*) (Babalola, 2002). These newspapers report and analyse salient issues in the country. Several criteria exist in the classification of newspapers according to their category, which are according to size or format, frequency or periodicity, distribution time, content or focus, scope of coverage and cost of the newspapers (Reeves and Keeble, 2002). These are discussed sequentially.

Size and format: Newspapers often appear in two forms – broadsheet and tabloid. The broadsheet is twice bigger than the tabloid and it has a factual approach pattern but the tabloid is less bulky, employs an exciting style and appears in a small format. Most newspaper institutions in Nigeria use the tabloid and its dimension is 28cm x 35cm. The standard format, common in developed countries, appears in 38cm x 58cm. The format might also be in print forms (traditional model of newspaper) or digital forms (the new media) some of which are free or with fewer subscription charges.

Frequency or periodicity: This deals with the regularity of production, whether they appear as dailies, weeklies, bi-weeklies, monthly or semi-annual. Other newspapers besides those published on a daily basis are targeted at a limited audience to discuss issues peculiar to their needs. They are not primarily aimed at reporting breaking news as dailies are designed to function but they accommodate for detailed analysis of events or exclusive interviews of renowned personalities in a particular field.

Distribution time: This refers to the period of publication, which could be morning (am) or evening (pm). Most Nigerian newspapers are produced during the day into the night and distributed very early the next morning. Those circulated in the evening are often produced in the morning or afternoon and are complementary forms of newspapers circulated before dawn.

Content: This relates to the subject matter that constitutes the focus of the newspaper. This can be broad or specific. The former discusses general information and is predominant in most newspaper dailies in Nigeria (*The Nation, The Sun and Punch*) while the latter addresses specific issues, such as sports (*Complete Sports*), business (*Business Day*) and entertainment (*Entertainment Express, Ovation*).

Scope or coverage: This addresses whether the newspaper is national, metropolitan, local, regional, community-based.

Cost: This refers to the attached fees that could either be a free or a require payment. However, in few cases, it could require subscription.

Peterson (2009) identifies five classifications of newspapers, and they are based on content, audience, distribution, design and layout. In most developed nations, the broadsheets and tabloids are considered as forms of newspapers, and tabloids are conservative and entail more information. The visual format is flashier, containing less information, even though it does not share similar contents: news reports, editorials, film and theatre reviews, advertisements, cartoon strips (Pennock, 2002). Historically, the tabloid was developed in the nineteenth century to address rising needs among the literate working class and it soon became the most accepted because of the detailed analysis it provides (Hargreaves, 2005).

2.1.1.3 Structure of newspaper contents

There are different distinctive aspects of a newspaper – news stories, editorials and feature articles – which are required to be included with other information. These constitute the newspaper structure and are divided into two major classes: hard news and soft news (Tuchman, 1972; Sunday and Fagunleka, 2017). Hard news discusses major activities, disasters, or events that require prompt and high levels of engagement, while soft news does not demand equal urgency in publication, as its “substantive informational value” (Lehman-Wilzig and Seletzky, 2010: p. 38) is considered low. Sunday and Fagunleka (2017) observe that the soft news, otherwise referred to as feature stories, have an appealing content to readers than the average news reports because of the human interest approach they employ and their “high entertainment value” (Montgomery, 2019: p. 55). Babalola (2002) notes that a major difference that exists between hard news and feature

stories is that the former, represented in news reports capturing the events of the moment, appear daily while the latter, featuring issues considered less pressing, are published weekly or monthly to provide detailed analysis on the previous concerns raised in the news reports.

2.1.1.3.1 Hard news (news reports)

This is a form of news that captures events or incidences that have occurred or are happening, or are about to take place. They are significant in the newspaper and their contents are arranged in order of relevance (Reeves and Keeble, 2015), targeted at providing newsworthy information. Since newspapers focus on current events, news stories simply narrate the news items as they appear with no additional information. They are known for their “seriousness and timeliness” (Montgomery, 2019: p. 55) and there are no overtly expressed opinions, no suggestions for next steps, no discussion of hypothetical situations or possibilities for the future; as such, modal verbs and conditionals which are present in editorials are not used in news reports which have complex sentences, nominalisations and syntactic structures uncommon with other forms of discourse (van Dijk, 1995; Biber and Conrad, 2009). They are seen on the front pages (Reeves and Keeble, 2015) and are essentially time-based with demand for content. The information presented in hard news can take the form of direct or reported speech, with minimised or no authorial presence. They provide facts and can be categorised under informative relevance (Marin Arrese and Perucha Nunez, 2006).

2.1.1.3.2 Soft news (feature articles)

Feature articles, also known as soft news, feature writings or feature stories are a detailed account of events that are factual and rigorously compiled to accommodate human interest, they provide information embedded with captivating and provoking thoughts aimed at analysing events/issues (Ricketson, 2004; Oyero, 2006). It was in the mid nineteenth century that the distinction between hard news (mainly for accurate and objective information) and feature article (more for entertainment purposes) was made (Reeves and Keeble, 2015). Feature stories discuss original ideas, not necessarily reporting an event or discussing an issue, but reporting skill is a fundamental requirement in writing a good feature story (Scanlan, 1991), and it follows a narrative pattern. Writers of soft news are knowledgeable about the story they share, and they research, plan, revise and edit

their stories to ensure conformity with consumers' need (Scanlan, 1991); hence, selected topics are germane to daily living which could be historical or contemporary. They seek to connect with readers on a personal level by recounting real-life experiences of perceived public matters and conveying reality beyond their day-to-day experiences with various focuses – from basic lifestyle issues to intricate or multifarious aspects of life (Scanlan, 1991; Sunday and Fagunleka, 2017).

The writers of feature articles enjoy autonomy in generating and developing stories, although these are required to comply with the editorial policy of the newspapers and are not under pressure to communicate the ideological stance of their employers. Feature stories have pictures or illustrations but do not employ an analytical stance or proffer comments on events as editorials do. The informal, colloquial language style is employed in their writing, so that readers can easily connect with their emphasis, since they possess the ability to connect with readers (Ricketson, 2004). Murray (1991) in explaining reasons for high patronage, submits that the handy nature of features which enable readers to clip, pass around and make photocopies have been alluded to this. Feature stories lack seriousness and timeliness and they possess high entertainment value even though they also educate; their flexibility allows for preservation till a later production time (Niblock, 2008; Montgomery 2019). This flexibility helps them in predicting what future news will be and the direction the news would take in the days ahead, as they forecast trends and observe changes that would ultimately become news (Murray, 1991).

2.1.2 Newspaper editorials

Editorials, occupying a highlighted position with a specific heading capturing a topic of interest (Montgomery, 2019), constitute an aspect, a subsection of the newspaper which projects the opinions, reflects the ideology and expresses a writer's/publisher's assessment of an issue, central to national development. They have been termed the “anonymous public voice of the newspaper” (McNair, 2008:69), and their relevance have, over the years, been registered in the media. They largely shape the identity of a newspaper (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2008) through the explication of publishers' perspectives regarding an issue, and the authorial presence is significantly projected to make prospective readers engage those views on a personal level. They appear on a specific page, present the official point

of view of the newspaper and lack authorial identification, thus fostering anonymity (Biber and Conrad, 2009).

Bal (2009: p. 261) defines the editorial as writing that "represents opinion articles written by the publisher, editors or columnists of newspapers" and it serves as "ideal sources for outlining views on events and analysing how they are perceived...". Editorials present the perspective of the publishing firm and seek to express ideological inclinations either implicitly or explicitly. The author describes it as the managements' subjective views on subjects of discourse attracting public interest and eliciting debates or proffering information to prospective readers. He admits that editorial writing constitutes a major aspect of national newspapers in the country and globally, and the dearth of resources to establish its historical development has made it difficult to precisely state when it was first featured in the Nigerian newspapers. Akpan (2017) argues that there are more functions of the editorial beyond providing opinions and there are cases where an editorial is void of opinion but merely analyses and clarifies. The insight provided by the editorial board on discourse can, in some cases, elucidate and provide clarity or provide an analytical approach that evaluates it. However, regardless of the adopted approach, the goal of editorials is to shape public opinion. An editorial, as Akpan (2017) claims, expounds, interprets, clarifies ambiguity, and draws patterns, meanings and significances from undiluted issues that are unrelated. The limitation of this assertion lies in the fact that as the editor performs his duties, as listed above, his supposed expositions, interpretations, clarifications and analysis are largely reflective of his views; they are inseparable.

In editorial writing, facts are incorporated to enunciate a view and establish solidarity with readers. Although opinion is a crucial aspect of editorials, the incorporation of facts is sometimes to reinforce the authenticity of editors' views, with an intent to validate certain aspects of the evaluation. For instance, opinions are exclusive to the editorial board and can be subjective but facts are accurate information; accuracy in this context is predicated on the authenticity or verifiable affordances such statement(s) attracts. Due to that reason, an editorial is designed to clearly express an opinion and alter or construct readers' judgement but facts, represented in news reports, are required to provide a realistic representation of the event with little or no bias (Biber and Conrad, 2009).

Essentially, facts are peculiar to news stories while opinions are distinctive of editorials; however, the two can interweave and be observed in editorials. While news reporters are not permitted to share their views, editors can appropriate their skills in writing. Bal and Saint-Dizier (2009:228) differentiate between the two: “opinions... are characterized by the evaluative expressions of various sorts” while facts are “characteristic of certain verbs like ‘declare’ and different tense and number forms of the verb ‘be’ etc.”, accompanied by a reliable authority to provide evidence of the claim. They agree nonetheless that there are cases when the distinction between facts and opinions becomes blurred as facts could become concealed in opinions; in such cases, the verification of the author’s intention and the reliability of information must be evaluated. They, therefore, propose six gradations to aid in distinguishing facts from opinions, and opinions within opinions (Bal, 2009).

Table 2.1: Gradation of opinions

Opinion type	Global definition
Hypothesis statements	Explains an observation
Theory statements	Widely believed explanation
Assumptive statements	Improvable predictions.
Value statements	Claims based on personal beliefs
Exaggerated statements	Intended to sway readers
Attitude statements	Based on implied belief system

Source: (Bal, 2009)

Their submission aligns with others (Hall, 1980; Bhatia, 1993; van Dijk, 1995; Bal, 2009; Ahmadi and Asl, 2013) that opinion is integral to editorial activities and cannot be divorced from them. There are instances of the representation of future events and their prospective consequences in such situations, in cases like this, modal verbs are mostly used to serve predictive functions and identify preferred actions (Biber and Conrad, 2009). Similarly, it is not impossible to have a high concentration of conditionals in forecasting events under discussion. Editorials have carved out and established abstract relationships between publishers and readers due to the consistency in the positions they share and the

constant analytical techniques utilized in the critical assessment of popular issues; in consequence, they have influenced perspectives and attitudes of people on certain national topics.

2.1.2.1 Contents of the editorial

The contents of the editorial are not fixed but they are drawn from various pressing matters locally or globally. Contrary to Akpan's (2017) position on the content of editorials that expands on issues in the news stories reported on a daily basis, some editorials do not always draw content from pressing matters of the day. Rather, they draw from trending issues in the nation which could have been reported on previous days in the news stories and are still relatively current. There are some cases where selections could be made from the news of that day but this is not always the case. Editorials provide wide-ranging insight, with a comprehensive approach to the issues identified but the aptness of such opinions is determined by multifarious factors outside the purview of the current study. For this reason, the readership base of editorials in Nigeria cannot be adequately measured or said to be at par with those who read the news stories since some readers are merely interested in the headlines and might not essentially be concerned about editorials opinions regarding a story they have read; besides, some readers have preferences in the selection of what they read. While some are interested in business/economy-oriented news, some are fascinated with the political updates and a few concern themselves with sports or entertainment news.

Editors have the liberty in writing than news reporters whose explicit representation of events is constrained to available information and this autonomy critically informs the selection of topics that are random and highly dependent on the publisher's ideological leaning (Akpan, 2017). Although editors' independence in relation with their owners has been queried (Parenti, 1986; Hanlin, 1992; Keeble, 1998) as non-existent, they still enjoy a degree of freedom compared to those below the hierarchy, even when the topics selected for discussion are expected to align with publishers' political or economic interest. Many studies (Bhatia, 1993; Afzal and Harun, 2013; Akpan, 2017) postulate that the length of editorials is between 200-500 words with a three-layered structural arrangement, categorised into definition, evaluation and conclusion; while the latter is accurate, the former is not always the case, as some Nigerian editorials exceed the 500-word limit (*The*

Guardian: 800-1,000; *Punch*: over 1,000; *Daily Trust*: over 600, and *ThisDay*: over 600). Nevertheless, they cover the analysis of the topic, the discussions, opinions and perspectives on a central discourse and can include other sections of the newspaper such as reviews and opinion articles.

2.1.2.2 Classification of editorials

Newspaper editorials focus on political, social and economic matters that are of different types – civic, policy, big news and obituary editorials – which aim to state the subject matter, evoke responses from readers and provide reasons for their arguments. Hall (2003) classifies them into seven categories - criticism, attack, defense, endorsement, praise, appeal and entertainment. One or more forms of these can be employed in an editorial to convey a stance.

Editorials can also be classified into news editorials, social editorials, policy editorials, special editorials, and tribute editorials (Ate, 2007; Akpan, 2017). However, news editorials can be further divided into *speculative* editorials, which provide a general perspective on an issue but void of facts and figures; *expository* editorials, which elucidate on a matter, provide in-depth and precise information on issues, clarify terminologies and demystify concepts in the process. This form of editorial can describe, analyse or provide the historical background required for the comprehension of the subject matter and less emphasis is on persuasion. It is different from *interpretive* editorial because of its emphasis on facts and figures (Ate, 2007; Akpan, 2017). The last form is the *persuasive* editorial, which Ate (2007) terms *controversial* editorial, and it is designed to convince readers to shift grounds as the it optimises arguments with elements of pathos, intended to influence readers' decisions.

Sackstein (2018) also identifies four types of editorial – argument and persuasion, information-oriented and interpretation, tribute, and entertainment. These are similar to Akpan's classifications. Argument and persuasion editorials adopt a firm position on an issue and aim to convince readers to support their editorials' views. They make suggestions and propose solutions that can likely tackle the identified problem(s). Information-oriented and interpretation editorials provide explanations on the pertinent issues identified in the editorials, by providing background information that assists readers

in comprehending what is being discussed. Tribute editorials take the form of appreciation or commendation that acknowledge an individual's contribution and role in national development. Entertainment editorials focus on humour and satire. The former addresses light topics while the latter treats serious subjects with the aim to improve on them (Sackstein, 2018). Burton (2015) expands on these classifications with two additional forms - editorial commentary and leadership editorial. Most editorials in Nigerian newspapers employ persuasion editorials and information-oriented editorials, with occasional instances of satire for embellishment.

2.1.2.3 Structure of an editorial

Every editorial is written with a specified pattern required as a form of conformity. This pattern shares features with an essay; however, with few specifications that communicate the gravity/force of the subject addressed. According to Ate (2007), the structure of an editorial follows this order: introduction, body, solutions, and conclusion. The first and most essential part of editorial writing is the introduction which provides a succinct background to the topic of discourse and the problem is expected to be clearly stated here. The second is the body of the editorial which addresses the identified problems and provides further information required in readers' comprehension of their emphasis. The next is the proffered solutions to the problems addressed, and the final aspect is the conclusion which restates the main issue and wraps up the opinion of the editor (Ate, 2007).

It is also expected that some other resources should be considered when writing an editorial, for instance, the objective explanation of the issue should answer the questions of what, when, where, why and how. To achieve this, the editorial has to clearly state the problem to be addressed before revealing contrasting views to his opinions and it can draw inferences from other fields, such as religion, anthropology, science or arts. An exploration of opposing claims can aid in the presentation of opinions, even though some editorials do not share external sources but maximise authorial presence to reveal editorial stance on matters identified for discourse; however, it is pertinent that solutions are proffered at the end of the evaluation.

2.1.2.4 News reports and editorials

Media exposition (ME, henceforth), comprising editorials, comments and opinions, differs structurally from news reports. While ME provides opinions based on the hard news, develops a perspective on an argument and extensively relies on conjunctions to develop, link and conclude such views, news stories merely provide information about people or event with elaborated meaning, not necessarily leading to a conclusion. News reports merely recount events, describe what happened, and do not provide any form of interpretation but ME aims to convince readers on authorial views rather than merely stating or recounting events, and arguments follow a consistent pattern/progression that makes it difficult to rearrange information or alter argument structure, contrary to the flexibility obtainable in news reports which permits elaboration of meaning (Iedema, Feez and White, 1994).

Although editorials and news reports are included in the same publication and may be read by the same audience, they have distinct communicative purposes. The distinction between news reports and interpretative articles, also known as editorials, is that they provide clear reports of the news analysis (Biber and Conrad, 2009), focus on human interests and writers' opinions are not expected. Meanwhile, editorials solely depend on the ability to develop opinions and ideological stances, discuss and dispute contrary views, evaluate the situations, as well as proffer likely solutions to them (van Dijk, 1995; Montgomery, 2019).

2.1.2.5 Columns and editorials

Columns are different from editorials; although they share similarities in form and structure, their divergence lies in their narrative technique. While editorials express the views of the publishers, otherwise known as organisational views, columns express an individual opinion and are more flexible than editorials. Columnists present arguments with highly analytical skills due to the independence they enjoy since they differ from news articles (Burton, 2015). McNair (2008) notes that most columnists are non-journalists whose expertise and reputation exist outside the media; they put to use their wealth of experience, reflected in the approaches they adopt while writing, on subjects of their interest. They assume a pundit position that enthrals readers and engages them in the

informative process. Given that, readers are often attracted to effective language use, analytical and logical presentation of arguments, and the organisation of linguistic elements in marshalling views (McNair, 2008). Effective language use, together with selected topics under discussion, determines the sustainability of readers' interest in a column.

Columns are early forms of infotainment in journalistic practice, which sometimes buttress or interpret the news and also entertain. Columns can be polemical (columnist assumes various identities and roles), analytical/advisory (detailed attention is paid to an aspect of the news with likely solutions proffered) or satirical (social actors in the news are mocked or ridiculed) (McNair, 2008). They can be further categorized into opinion column, which addresses public-related affairs, local or foreign socio-political or economic policies, government activities and civic engagements; entertainment column, which includes gossip columns, trends in fashion, music and arts across the world; humour column, a section that amuses and can include the cartoon section, and others, which includes other aspects such as advice, tips on life issues among other things.

2.1.2.6 Linguistic features of newspaper editorials

The language of editorials differs from the observable patterns in news reports and other sections of the newspaper. The language is often analytical, complex and at times, intimately intricate due to its engaging nature, as well as its aim to persuade and convince readers regarding the truth value of a proposition. By intimate, editors endeavor to establish a connection between readers and the advanced stance so as to jointly or collectively critique, analyse, sympathise and consent to the evaluative proposition. The first person pronominal singular and plural forms are used to establish authorial presence compared to news reports, void of personalization. Readers' emotions and feelings are targeted through the evocation of lexical items suggesting negotiation and formal expressions characterize editorial writing to trigger a level of seriousness that resonates with readers' analytical sense.

To achieve this, several linguistic forms are adopted, reflective in the selection and arrangement of words (lexis), sentences and clauses (grammar), contextual application of words (pragmatics), as well as embedded meanings (semantics); besides these forms, two

major features are essential to editorial writing – cohesion and coherence – without which the thoughts of the editors would appear elusive. Coupled with these two are other elements, such as deixis, interrogatives, modal and comment adjuncts, conditionals, among others. As long as these linguistic elements are present in writing, readers stand a chance to comprehend editors’ stance and engage in the negotiation of meaning.

As earlier established, the writing structure of editorials is complex and intricate, this form thus requires the use of complex sentences with developed clauses, capturing essential aspects of the information intended to be disseminated. The limited number of words required, due to the competition between advertisers and editorials, also informs the choice of condensed language to maximize space and aid readers’ swift maneuver through the pages (Keeble, 1998). As such, compound-complex sentences and multiple-complex sentences mostly characterize grammatical structures with occasional simple sentences to augment. Compound words, attributive noun groups and verbal constructions such as gerundives and infinitives are also used to ensure brevity and precision. In sum, language is contextualized in editorials and primary implications are sometimes evaded to communicate secondary meanings.

Cohesion and coherence

Cohesion is another aspect of editorial writing that deals with the arrangement and connection that hold several segments of a text together to produce coherence in a text (Degaetano-Ortlieb, 2015). It possesses explicit markers of relations existing within a text, clearly connected with grammatical and lexical tools (Menzel, Lapshinova-Koltunski and Kunz, 2017). The relationship between parts of speech are revealed through these cohesive ties (Tamunobelega, 2018) that perform the sole function of ensuring that the various bits are connected so as to communicate meaningfully to readers. Cohesion can be discussed under the classifications of grammar and lexis. Under lexical cohesion, Halliday and Hassan (1976) discuss two broad categories – reiteration and collocation.

Reiteration deals with the repetition of words and it can feature as repetition, hyponym or synonym but collocation is concerned with the movement of related words in discourse and it features as antonym, complimentary, part/whole, converses, part/part, links, and co-hyponyms (Halliday and Hassan, 1976; Osisanwo, 2003; Tamunobelega, 2018). Lexical

cohesion considers the semantic connection of words divided into five essential forms. These classifications are reiteration with reference identity, reiteration that is void of reference, reiteration by means superordinate, systematic semantic relation, and non-systematic semantic relation (Halliday and Hassan, 1976; Morris and Hirst, 1991). Collocations are words used to describe the way words are grouped in texts and examine the analytical tools employed in those grouping, their significance and implications. They are lexical items with high cases of occurrence within a stretch of other items. However, context is pivotal to collocations and the meaning of larger word units are derived from individual words (Tucker, 1998; Barnbrook and Krush, 2013). Collocations can be the combination of various content words, such as adjectives and adverbs, adjectives and nouns, verbs and nouns, nouns and nouns, verbs and adverbs. They are used to establish familiarity with readers who have a background understanding of such collocates.

In addition, the grammatical category is divided into four classifications: reference (exophora or endophora and this subdivides into anaphora and cataphora); substitution (nominal, verbal or clausal); ellipsis (nominal, verbal or clausal); and conjunction (coordinating, subordinating, compound or continuative). Conjunctions deal with the transition that occurs between messages and could appear in forms of additive, adversative, temporal, or causal explicit markers. Reference, ellipsis and substitution deal with the status of the proposition which could be evaluated through semantic or lexical modes (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). Each of these cohesive devices further extends into other subgroups, which are not the focus of this study. Editorials are meant to ensure precision, accuracy and clarity to minimize bias and avoid ambiguity or vagueness. As a result, cohesive devices are used to present opinions to readers, although their selections and frequencies are dependent on the adopted structure but every editorial has one or more of these devices.

Coherence deals with the lucidity and rationality of a text, that is, how much sense a text makes. Menzel, Lapshinova-Koltunski and Kunz (2017) describe it as “a cognitive phenomenon” that depends on subjective mental textual evaluation. According to Rysova (2017), coherence cannot be examined in isolation but within different interconnected linguistic relations, involving sentence information structure, reference, anaphora or

discourse. Coherence is realised within clausal or sentence arrangements to express elaboration, exemplification, cause or support (Morris and Hirst, 1991).

Interrogatives

Another linguistic characteristic of editorials is interrogatives, which are effective engagement tools used in journalism, medicine, legal, education, trade and other daily communicative transactions. Clayman (2010) points out their earlier use in journalistic practice as a basic means of generating and gathering information, but has over the years become the vehicle of transacting and presenting information to the media audience. As a crucial journalistic tool, they have become useful in inquisitive journalism (interviews) and morphed over the years through various forms of modification (Clayman, 2010). These forms are determined largely by what genre of journalism is under focus; for instance, most questions in editorials are rhetorical, geared towards eliciting engagement from the readers and not intended to be directly answered but all questions embody presuppositions about the states of affairs to which they are directed (Heritage, 2010). They are used to stimulate interest and enable readers to carry out an investigative inquiry, alongside the writer, in arriving at a definite conclusion regarding an argument (Hyland, 2005).

There are five expressions of the *wh*-question (Ciardelli, Groenendijk and Roelofsen, 2019); *mention-all wh-questions* which require the specification of involved persons with attributed property and its extension within discourse domain, *mention-some* which requests for a particular case of a linguistic property and presuppositions are used in this question type. The third is the *single-match wh-questions* which request for specific information about a particular property, as it is assumed that only one option addresses such questions, the fourth is *multiple wh-questions* which occur when more than one *wh*-question is asked in a phrase, and the last is the *explicit domain restriction wh-question* which places a limitation on the response options to the questions asked. In conversational or institutional settings, interrogation is a means of distinguishing between the more powerful and the less powerful audiences (Thornborrow, 2010). Editors, therefore, engage readers through the elicitation of questions that are not necessarily required to be directly answered but pondered upon to arrive at a mutual understanding regarding the evaluative value of the proposition under inquiry. Interrogatives can be at

the beginning, middle or end of the editorial but they are always strategically positioned to achieve a similar aim.

Conditionals

Conditionals are linguistic devices employed in negotiating solidarity with readers and engaging them in a proposition. They increase writers' objectivity and establish inclusiveness.

Deixis

Deictic expressions, also known as indexicals in Philosophy (Abbott, 2010), are spatio-temporal linguistic devices peculiar to all human languages. They are used to distinguish objects within the context they appear, and as pointing expressions as pointing expressions (Hanks, 2017; Macrae, 2019). Their referent values are not fixed but meanings are situated within a contextual framework involving demonstratives (that, those, this, these), tenses, pronouns (first and second person), and adverbs (time, place) which can be broadly classified into person, time, place, or discourse deixis. The referential value of each word changes with use and meaning cannot be detached from context (Macrae, 2019).

Hedges

Hedges, also described as epistemic modality (Hyland 1994), are forms of dialogic expansions utilised to signal the value position readers are drawn to engage. Often realised through modal adjunct, comment adjunct or verbal processes, they establish distance, amplify views and reinforce the reliability of a proposition. Modal or comment adjuncts express writers' attitude or judgment to a proposition and they might indicate any of the following: usualness, obviousness, probability, persuasion, opinion, validation, prediction, presumption (evidently, apparently, no doubt), desirability (unfortunately, hopefully, regrettably), admission (frankly, to be honest), among others (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004).

Hedges are employed to reduce the force of a speaker/writer's argument and invite readers to participate in providing inference to the proposition and establish mutuality with them. They "indicate the writer's decision to withhold complete commitment to a

proposition, allowing information to be presented as an opinion rather than accredited fact” (Hyland, 2005:174), while boosters increase the force of a proposition, enhance speaker/writer’s objectivity and aid writers’ expression of certainty and involvement. Both hedges and boosters “represent a writer’s response to the potential viewpoints of readers..., balance objective information, subjective evaluation and interpersonal negotiation and emphasise that such statements don’t just communicate ideas but also the writer’s attitude to them and to the readers” (Hyland, 2005:175). Hedges are forms of dialogic expansions utilised to signal the value position readers are drawn to engage. They can be to establish distance or reduce confrontational lexical choices.

2.1.2.7 Stance taking in editorials

When people speak or write, the position they take on matters is almost unobscured through their lexical choices which define their perspectives. The stance of a speaker/writer is largely shaped by his values, environment or judgment/disposition to life which ultimately influences his ideological positions; thus, it becomes natural to pull people who share similar views and opinions to reason in a parallel trajectory mapped out through the overt or covert meanings implied in the speech/writing. An important aspect of stance is the fact that interactants frequently use, borrow and recycle each other’s linguistic units (morphosyntax, lexis and prosody) when they negotiate and take stances. This happens regardless of whether the meanings of the co-interactants’ utterances are parallel or opposing, agreeing or disagreeing, a process Du Bois (2001) calls ‘dialogic syntax’.

A newspaper expresses stance in various forms and the degree of these expressions is based on the type of articles involved. For instance, a news report merely represents events as they are, though with an occasional injection of ideological leaning, its stance level is highly limited to referenced sources (Biber and Conrad, 2009) because it is captured under the fact taxonomy. The concept of stance has been examined under broad topics as evidentiality (Chafe and Nichols, 1986), affect (Ochs, 1989), stance (Biber and Finegan, 1989), hedging (Hyland, 1998; 2005), evaluation (Thompson and Hunston, 2000) and appraisal (Martin and White, 2005). Classifying evidentiality (information on the propositional content) and affect (feelings and attitudes associated with participants or events) under stance, Biber and Conrad (2009) combine the dual properties and offer that

the writer/speaker and reader/hearer are participants in a text. They emphasise that in spoken registers, most of the speakers are easily identified compared to written texts where animosity can be guaranteed.

Gray and Biber and (2012:18) observe that “the term evaluation is often used in explaining the meanings of stance markers” since they provide writers’ position and there are numerous ways of assessing and evaluating discourses. Bednarek (2006) identifies nine of these parameters which she considers as sets of values that divide between the positive and the negative polarity: Emotivity (good or bad), Importance (important or unimportant), Expectedness, Comprehensibility, Possibility/Necessity, Reliability, Style, Mental State and Evidentiality. Stance relates to the manner of interaction a writer adopts to project his views; it is “writer-oriented” (Hyland, 2005) as it is contextualized in interaction, either in written or spoken discourse. To determine a speaker/writer’s representation of judgement (stance), the engagement procedures adopted become focal to analytical processes and subjected to various positionings which can be dialogistic (Bhaktin, 1981), attitudinal or intertextual. Engagement in itself relates to the manner speakers/writers express appraisal or engage in the presentation of a proposition. This engagement can be monoglossic (speaker/writer directly expresses the appraisal) or heteroglossic, (reference is made to other views as a source of information).

2.1.2.8 News reports and the pursuit of objectivity

The opinions shared in editorials are expected to be objective but objectivity often eludes the editorial writers whose feelings, judgement and attitudes are inseparable from their analysis and assessment of the discourse. Achieving objectivity in most news reports, according to Sabao (2013), can be daunting as reporters, regardless of efforts to remain unbiased, inscribe authorial evaluations which weigh in on reports, and the ‘strategic use of impersonation’ achieved through attributive resources provides alternatives to invoked authorial evaluations. Reporters strategically express objectivity referencing other sources, a tactical approach that unsuccessfully conceals authorial voice from the attributed submissions, to dissociate from the external sources through quotations while maintaining a standpoint (Sabao, 2013).

Appraising the drive for objectivity in the United Kingdom press, Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery (2013: p. 3) aver that “national newspapers function as more than mere mirrors of reality. Instead, they have the role of constructing ideologically motivated versions of reality, which are aimed at persuading people that certain phenomena are good or bad”. This self-ascribed role places a huge demand on news outlets to produce unbiased representation of reality so as to guide readers and clearly fashion their thoughts. As indispensable as ideological filters are in the representation of life, the pursuit of objectivity should be premium, void of bias and prejudice. However, in a context where news sources are primarily dependent on information supplied by officials and government authorities, except in cases of breaking events or natural disasters (Bennett, 2004), maintaining balance poses a challenge. Regardless of this, if alternatives can be sorted to alleviate the reliance on those sources, the drive for objectivity might be achieved.

It is inappropriate to assert that objectivity is elusive and cannot be attained in the light of various factors militating against media production. As critical as these limitations are, efforts can still be made to ensure fairness and transparency in the journalistic process. One of the major challenges in the drive for objectivity is the case for revenue generation which has been largely derived from advertisement (Hargreaves, 2005; Meech, 2008) and this contributes largely to defining the drive for objectivity. Often times, the sponsors determine what is suppressed in the news and what is foregrounded, they define the limits of the producers, influencing editorial judgment as well as determine the depth of evaluation to be engaged in the presentation of a news item (Parenti, 1986). To this end, it is encouraged that media outlets develop other sustainable means of financing their operations and minimise reliance on revenue generated from advertisement so as to exercise control over what is published as news.

Another determinant of objectivity is censorship which derives from the owners or producers whose individual perspectives to life are shaped by various factors that ultimately reflect their ideological positioning (Meech, 2008). As such, editors and news reporters undergo censorship processes that deny the quest for the pursuit of objectivity in order to conform to the standards of the publishing firm achieved by foregrounding viewpoints that correspond with official standpoints and relegating opinions considered

unimportant to the background (Parenti, 1986). Due to such constant demand for conformity, journalists self-censor themselves (Hargreaves, 2005); this is what Parenti (1986: p. 42) calls, “anticipatory avoidance”; a process where opposing responses from superiors are pre-empted in conformity with publishers’ ideology and removed before review.

This form of censorship in itself betrays objectivity as there exists a background consciousness informing choice of emphasis and manner of approaching discourse. The hierarchical organisation of most newspaper outlets enhances self-censorship as substantial influence resides at the top with chief editors and producers who are saddled with the responsibility of deciding what news are published on a daily or weekly basis and those beneath the rank see themselves as weak and dispensable (Parenti, 1986). Journalistic autonomy is thus restricted, subjected to the opinions of editors who are likely to edit, modify or ultimately remove certain aspects of what news writers have developed.

Some have to endure a delay in their promotion, suffer seeing their stories distorted or embellished, or sometimes, unpublished and to avoid being tagged as ‘cranky’ or miscreants; they censor themselves and adhere to the demands of their superiors to maintain relevance in the industry (Keeble, 1998). It is believed that the system of operation in news institutions is autocratic and does not foster writer-autonomy as the connection existing among the ranks transcends work relations to power and class relations (Parenti, 1986); however, to achieve effectiveness and productivity, Hargreaves (2005) submits that a team of assiduous editorial workforce, consisting of prolific writers and editors, experienced reporters, skilled photographers and graphic artists, with appropriate working conditions and managerial support, will deliver and achieve so much within a stipulated time frame.

The media reproduces the information retrieved from other sources, as they lack the originality of information and their accounts of events are dependent on what they are supplied (Bruck, 1989). It is in the process of redrafting the news that biases set in, modifying the entire discursive process to capture peculiar ideological inclinations. Hardly can a person speak or write without a conspicuous position suggestive of the speaker’s or writer’s authorial import. As Bednarek (2006: p. 5) states, "it is difficult, if not impossible for human beings (and perhaps not even desirable) to speak with a completely 'objective'

voice, not to impose evaluations on one's utterance, and not to communicate value judgements". This connotes that underlying the objectivity of a speaker/writer is the persuasive tool employed to drive or influence the audience/readers to respond in a certain manner. Information is not void in itself; it is a volume of instructions designed to elicit a form of response, change in attitude or alter perspectives on a matter.

To this end, the media, a fundamental vehicle for information dissemination, provides the public with reports on global and national events which are not void of impartiality that fully captures the event/proposition in its entirety. Baker et al. (2013: p. 3) state that "such representations are often restrained by space and time limitations; as journalists need to prioritise particular events, as well as certain people's perspectives or opinions, over others". This has further entrenched the complexity of the relationship existing between newspaper firms and readers as media influence on the audience gradually builds up through the consistent flooding of contents, images and ideas designed to achieve a long-term effect (Baker et al, 2013).

2.1.2.9 Editorial values

There are journalistic values every media house is expected to uphold while discharging its responsibilities to the public. Many news institutions have a list of ethical rules they published on their website; however, the need for ethical conformity has been queried.

Yet the dominant attitude in the mainstream press prioritises 'getting the story' and the demands of the deadline above all else. Ethical and political concerns are secondary, if they are ever considered at all. These are balance, fairness, credibility, independence and accountability. Although these may vary with media houses, an essential underlying requirement however, is truth. As long as the public have reposed confidence in the news firm, constant patronage is guaranteed. News credibility is an essential aspect of journalism and this is always clearly stated in the policies of the news outlets and abiding by the editorial policies thus becomes imperative for editors. These values, such as balance, fairness, credibility, independence and accountability, shall be briefly discussed and connected with its implication to newspaper editorials.

Balance: This is a fundamental requirement of journalism that allows for objectivity. This value requires that attention is paid to the views of the parties involved in a news story to

avoid tilted representation of information. To this end, sources representative of both sides in a dispute should be clearly stated and accorded an equal level of prominence. In most cases, as Parenti (1986) notes, when various views are presented, they lack equal framing and space, and the few cases where balance is being achieved have equal blame levels apportioned to parties that are not equally guilty. This betrays the tenets of good journalism and should be considered while journalists carry out their responsibilities to the public.

Fairness: This is similar to balance but differs in form. While balance requires that journalists present equal representation of events, fairness demands impartiality in apportioning blame or the commendation of a party against the obvious. It requires neutrality and justice in the treatment of information so that readers are not misled. It is admittedly difficult to ascertain the truth in some cases but essential facts related to a news story must not be misplaced. As much as possible, attention should be paid to the facts available on a story with minimal attention paid to speculations; cases of conjectures should be explicitly expressed and clearly stated for readers to decide what they want to believe. Omission and suppression do not promote fairness, they only constitute strategies of misrepresentation; adequate information should be supplied to provide a broad range of views from which opinions can be personally formulated by readers and conclusions drawn without news writers' interference (Parenti, 1986).

Credibility: It has been suggested that the source and veracity of information are not a priority to most journalists but the story itself (Frost, 2011). This betrays journalistic representation as the validity and source of information are as crucial as the news itself. The news media must be reliable through consistent production of trusted news which boosts the public's confidence in their operations. The suppression of news is another bane to journalism, which, if not well addressed, will further dampen reputation as well as hamper acceptability in the public domain; as such, core to the delivery of their duties should be the need to build and develop reliability through the establishment of trust with readers. News sources should be credible and misleading information should be avoided as much as possible to ensure integrity is sustained in the face of competition. Winning credibility derives from trust and confidence built over time in the process of information delivery and objectivity is fundamental to establishing credibility (Dunham, 2015).

Independence: Editorial independence should be fostered to allow for flexibility and ingenuity that would maximally impact the development of the news agency. Liberty should be given to news writers to represent events as they appear with little editorial encumbrance so that the representation of information would not promote a particular interest at the expense of another.

Accountability: There must be a sense of responsibility and commitment to the masses who are targets of the information published. In cases where inaccurate information is published, prompt and sincere efforts should be made to amend broken edges to re-establish trust and confidence.

2.1.2.10 Roles of editorial values in newspaper editorials

Editorials define readers' perception about events and social actors, and a breach in any of these values would result in misinformation that could hamper the formation of opinions. Inaccuracy in news production does not only affect negatively the publishing institution, but also adversely influence the public who are final consumers of the product. Conformity with journalistic values promotes trust, enhances confidence, and builds lasting credibility. News must interest the public (Frost, 2011; Dunham, 2015); however, achieving that goal must not be at the expense of truthful journalism; ethics and values should be sustained while developing ideas that would interest the target groups.

Frost (2011) identifies two major challenges to truthful journalism: time or resources constraint and pressure to increase readership base. These two limitations can obscure transparency and truthfulness in delivering accurate information to the public. As essential as it is for journalists to keep to time in news production and improve their reach, these values should not be compromised. Of the two factors, the quest to increase audience reach can be compelling since journalism is primarily business-driven and revenue generation is dependent on wide coverage. This largely impacts news quality, reducing news selection to the audience's preference rather than the required news items meant to be covered; thus, marketability often drives unethicity.

The representation of events and social actors by news institutions is largely shaped by their respective ideological leanings. It is difficult, if not impossible, to find an ideology-free journalistic writing, internally or externally influenced; by internally, producers and

editorial board, while external influences emerge from advertisers or sponsors who could be politicians. This interference informs readers' engagement positioning in the negotiation of meaning, the evaluative stance of writers and selected linguistic tools in the presentation of ideas and events. Therefore, the above values should guide the borders of journalistic practice. News practitioners should strive for fairness, accuracy, objectivity, credibility and independence, in order to promote trust and enhance productivity. Their business-oriented dimension to journalism should not hamper the production of credible information or foster bias, truth should not be compromised or traded at the expense of meeting financial obligations but transparency and fairness should underlie every representation as much as possible to ensure balance.

2.1.2.11 The concept of ideology

Ideology, as a form of representation (van Dijk, 2000; Fairclough, 2006; Machin and Mayr, 2012), plays a crucial role in the formulation of social relations that define power and domination. It is generally perceived in a negative sense even though commonly used in the fields of social sciences, politics and media studies. Language is ideologically-embedded, as no communication is void of ideologically-based views (van Dijk, 2000) intended to indoctrinate other people. Holland (2006: p. 39) submits that the term has undergone contradictory and complex descriptive forms but it captures "system of beliefs about social life and organisation which lays claim to some rational or scientific basis." He claims that ideology has suffered negative connotations in Western discourse and when contextualised in culture, the latter attracts positive assessment than the former. Four broad categories of ideological conceptions were identified by Payne (1996). According to him, ideology can be perceived as a set of false impression sustained mostly in capitalist societies. However, they are a set of beliefs, world views, and attitudes held by a social group (van Dijk, 1998), with an abstract/restricted conscious system of ideas, and a practical, expanded unconscious attitude.

The mass media, considered mainly as a channel of reproducing ideology, play a crucial role in society, and since ideology deals with the fundamental beliefs governing the lives and actions of groups or institutions, connected with power, force and domination, the media provide a template for its dispersal. It can be stated that ideology, in its broad sense, deals with the description and interpretation of a belief peculiar to a group or people but it

is first generated by individuals who advance and publicise it, until it becomes adopted as a peculiar means of assessing an aspect of life. Ideology is power-driven and seeks to influence, as well as dominate the perception of others within a community.

The acquisition of ideology is largely dependent on exposure to major issues that shape daily perception and assessment of one's environment. van Dijk (2000) categorises the structure of ideology into cognition and society. The former, according to him, captures the mental dimension relating to knowledge and opinions shared socially among a group, while the latter captures all aspects of socio-political, historical and cultural dimensions of power and dominance. Within a broader social representation of belief, it is possible to have sub-groups or variants of the same model where members are divided along lines embracing their beliefs but on a broader scope, they are considered as being connected by a similar ideology. There are various forms of ideologies sustained by groups across the world; and feminism, racism, welfarism, among others, are examples. A number of global movements were shaped by respective ideologies

2.1.3 Politics and the media

The 21st century is characterised by rapid communication and the power of communication media which constantly evolves, (Olayiwola, 2013; Brunello, 2014), ensuing from a dynamic society given to continual transformation and digitalisation processes. The prevalence of the media in almost every nation of the world has provided avenue for effective circulation of information and millions of people can connect to a similar news channel, at the same time, without barrier, except in few communities such as China and North Korea, where there are rigid policies against the activities of free media. The government controls most media outlets in those countries and high censorship is observed to influence what is dispersed as news. However, in recent times, such bans have been reconsidered consequent upon North Korea's decision to end the over six-decade cold war with her neighbour, South Korea and embrace the global community. This access has made the world a global village, and taking a cue from Electoral Knowledge Network (2012: p. 22), the world has become "a single, undifferentiated information society" consequent upon technological developments.

The paradigmatic configuration, instinctive stance and fundamental knowledge most humans possess are largely shaped by the activities of the media. In the modern world, the

media is a vital driving force in political and socio-economic development (Haruna and Ibrahim, 2004; Asiru, Ogutu and Orwenjo, 2018), and while other institutions have a significant role to play in defining their boundaries, they do not exist outside the information and access supplied. Together with the government, they shape social events (Asiru et al, 2018), set the stage and shape the agenda of political actors, while the government influences the information disseminated to the public. This suggests that the activities of the two institutions flow into the other and as much as the government would desire to alienate its activities from the media, the consciousness of its ineffectiveness curtail such attempts; the alternative, often adopted in dictatorial government, is to hijack the media and control its operations/activities. Essentially, factors determining media representation of discourse include but not limited to institutional affiliations, predilections, news values and they develop the ways other social actors organise their claims and draw attention to issues (Carvalho, 2005).

Locksley (2009) notes that the integral components of media over the years have morphed, through various stages which reflects its perpetual expansion and coverage to accommodate for changes in technological developments. Tracing the development of media from the first printed book in China, to the Gutenberg press in Germany, to the first English language newspaper, the London Gazette of 1666 (Barber, 2001; Locksley, 2009), it appears that with every century, the developments that occur in technology permeate into media and influence their production/packaging; the form and the medium of their presentation. However, their focus and coverage remain constant – politics, economy, social development, education, art, entertainment – through the years, except in approach.

Every civil society has a political structure that governs and coordinates the affairs of its citizens, and the appointment of leaders to power is inherent in the favoured attention they derive from the media. Since a crucial element of democracy is the people, the electorates rely on the fair representation of their motives and manifestoes to the public by the media. The autonomy of the press has been debated as many aver that the media is a powerful tool in the hands of influential people, “big powers, international corporations and big agencies” (Hadeshian, 2006: p. 23), to shape discourse and set boundaries for packaged content to advance private agenda (Osisanwo, 2011).

The significant impact of the media in a democratic government is entrenched in their ability to influence public opinion to follow the course charted through news reports and this is essentially why many politicians court the press. Technically, it can be said that media practitioners are somewhat political considering the role they play as middle-men in political discourses that shape their countries nationally and locally (Rothman 2005). This is why the relationship between the media and politics appears to have progressively deepened due to its significance in national development and stability. This interdependence, contextualised within a democracy where freedom of speech is central to governance (Zguri, 2017), once adequately exploited, often creates a system of accountability and commitment to the fundamental principles of democracy and facilitates the communication between the leaders and the governed; thereby, enhancing productivity.

In contemporary politics, the essential means of communicating with the electorates is the mass media as they deconstruct the information disseminated in order to arrive at critical decisions which shape their assessment of the government. Actions, voice modulation, words and demeanour of politicians, facial expression and body movement, are often assessed by them to pitch their perceptions of political representatives, and their intuitive responses to circumstances and crisis (Bull, 2012; Bennett, 2004).

2.1.3.1 Evolution of newspapers in Nigeria

Many studies (Ige, 2013; Ibraheem, Ogwezzy-Ndisika and Tejumaiye, 2016; Santas and Ogoshi, 2016; Abubakar and Fadeyi 2017) have traced the advent of newspaper in Nigeria to 1859, when Reverend Henry Townsend established *Iwe Iroyin* at Abeokuta. This was intended to communicate to the people in their indigenous language, the activities of the colonial rulers who were considered oppressive and inhumane in their administrative affairs and operated till 1867 (Dawodu, 2016). The major newspaper at the time, *Iwe Iroyin*, addressed issues ranging from the movements and transfers of religious ministers, parish activities like baptism and confirmation, politics restricted to Abeokuta, the publishing location and its environs, economic-related matters that include trade reports, statistics and produce price, the activities of the colonial administration, foreign news, advertisement, among other things and its stance against anti-slavery was flagrant (Salawu, 2004).

In the eastern part of the country, the *Calabar Observer* founded by Rev. Hope Waddell and other newspapers (*Unwamma Efik* and *Obupong Efik*) written in indigenous languages also sprang up and ‘kept close heels’ with *Iwe Iroyin* in the West (Nwanolue and Ude-Akpe, 2011). The challenge with these foremost newspapers was their adopted language of communication (vernacular) which appealed mostly to their environments and this resulted in the loss of readership to emerging papers produced in the English language; by the time they realised their error, they had lost their readership (Nwanolue and Ude-Akpe, 2011).

The activities of the press in the primitive days were politically oriented as prominent nationalists across the country were “either journalists or owned media industries” (Abubakar and Fadeyi, 2017: p. 34) and this helped their clamour for a transition from foreign control to self-administration which came with grave consequences. The nationalists stirred awareness among the people and political parties emerged consequent upon these activities which enhanced their operations (Omu, 1968; Duyile, 1987), as observed by Iredia (2015), at independence, there was a full complement of the print media (newspapers since 1859) and the electronic media (radio from 1932 and television since 1959) which means independence only expanded and consolidated the development of local contents in the media.

The Nigerian media played a significant role in the attainment of independence in 1960 as the inexorable activities of nationalists such as Herbert Macaulay, Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikwe, Anthony Enahoro generated agitations for self-rule across the three regions in the nation (Ibraheem, Ogwezzy-Ndisika and Tejumaiye, 2016; Iredia, 2015). The activities of the earliest newspapers during the colonial rule built up to independence (Ibraheem, Ogwezzy-Ndisika and Tejumaiye, 2016). *Lagos Times* established in Lagos in 1862 by Beele Blaize, *Lagos Observer* was established in 1882 in Lagos by J.B. Benjamin, *Eagle* and *Lagos Critic* was set up in 1887 by Herbert Macaulay and many more. All these played significant roles in the fight for emancipation and even after the battle was won, the newspapers continued to serve as a tool to demand accountability from national leaders across the country. The next section will address the Nigerian press from the First Republic to present-day democracy.

2.1.3.2 The Nigerian media in the First Republic (1960-1966)

The First Republic kicked off immediately after independence and the press was a veritable tool to sensitise the masses and bridge the gap between the polity and the governed. The press fared well during the first six years of independence, enjoying a cordial relationship with the government, but they eventually wrecked more damage than foster national integration, due to their unpreparedness for the demands of a new nation following the departure of the colonial government (Sobowale, 2002). Their active participation led to the regional politics that divided the nation along ethnic disparities. Akashoro, Okidu and Ajaga (2013) extend this narrative by stating that these nationalists did not further national interest but advanced their personal course which meant that the media industry they established were committed to promoting their owners' interests and did not accommodate diverse voices of the society but the egocentric paradigms of their owners were published. All these threatened the stability of the nation which ensued in the first military incursion into politics.

There has been a controversy on the appraisal of governance and democracy in the First Republic. Some scholars (Sagay, 1996; Agbaje and Adejumobi, 2006) believe that the altruistic efforts of the nationalists in the First Republic have not been matched by any administration in the Nigerian history and the avaricious tendencies among the military led to the first military intervention; thus, blaming the coup on the military. In contrast, however, political instability and cases of misappropriation of funds, corruption and tribalism among other factors had trailed that government and this created a chasm for external intervention (Ogbeidi, 2012; Iredia, 2015). The intervention of the press was a respite to the impending sequence of chaos that affected independence.

The activities of the preceding colonial rulers were at par with the new administration who just assumed office and this sparked flames of criticism from the media who fervidly condemned the emerging government. For instance, there were records of discrepancies in the elections held across the country both at the executive and the legislative arms of government. Following the first state of emergency in the Western Region arising from political upheaval, the military intervened (Iredia, 2015) and that became the bane of instability in the country.

2.3.1.3 The Nigerian media in the Second Republic (1966-1979)

This was the first military intervention in the country which many applauded (Hadesian, 2006) as a significant stride towards nation-building since most of the founding nationalists had become consumed with narcissistic instincts and the corporate passion of building a strong African nation, which had consumed them before independence, appeared waned. The media celebrated the intervention of the military (Iredia, 2015) but their excitement was short-lived due to strict sanctions and proscription of media activities.

There were a number of decrees promulgated between 1967 and 1993 during the military regimes (Hadesian, 2006). The first among them was the Newspapers (prohibition of circulation) Decree No.17, 1967, that empowered the Head of the Federal military government to proscribe the circulation of any information perceived as a threat to any part of the country. The next is the Public Officers (protection of circulation) (validation) Decree No.11, 1976 which was reproduced in 1984 as Decree No.4 and this decree made it an offence for any person to publish any false allegation of corruption in relation to any public officer. Another is the Newspaper (prohibition of circulation) (validation) Decree No.12, 1978 which formalised the ban on the circulation of some issues in the *New Breed* Magazine; with the banning of *Concord* and *The Punch* from being published and circulated in any part of Nigeria in 1993. The last is the State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree No.2, 1984 which empowered the Chief of Staff, Supreme headquarters to order the detention of any person he deems to exercise control over and this was later amended to inhibit the court from requesting the presence of such individuals in court (Hadesian, 2006).

These were forms of subjugations that enhanced dictatorship. Boix (2009) defines dictatorship as any regime where at least one of the two conditions is not met. The conditions are free and competitive legislative elections and an executive that is accountable to citizens, either directly via elections in presidential systems or indirectly via the legislature in parliamentary systems. Boix (2009:19) further posits that in autocracies, the ruler "... also retains all the power of the state vis-a-vis its subjects (that is, that part of the population excluded from making political decisions)" with the intending to maximize power and governing alone. Nevertheless, due to constraining factors that

restrain his activities as a tyrant, he relies on the support of an elite or a set of allies to retain power. To secure his government and ensure a cohesive administration, he strategizes to get rid of groups, organisations, or individuals with a firmer grip by imprisoning, killing or adopting a more gradual tactic to suppress potential insurrection or rebellion.

During the military rule in Nigeria, as expected, the press could not freely operate as they were repressed and their reports were subjected to critical censorship; activities and events of the government had to be reported in the way the government prescribed and personal feelings/judgement were not permitted. Individuals who rebelled and decided to stay true to the oath of their profession did so at their peril and risked the loss of their job or ensuing death penalties (Okeke and Chukwuka, 2007).

2.1.3.4 The Nigerian media in the Third Republic

There were copious instances of media subjugation and suppression during the Third Republic. The media was said to have experienced their worst days in Nigerian history during this period which spanned over a decade. The despicable rate of injustice meted against the media during this period has been considered gruesome; from the letter bomb served The *Daily Times* Editor-in-Chief, Dele Giwa, the abductions and arrests of countless media professionals (reporters and journalists), the illegal detention and eventual sentence of media practitioners, to the ultimate closure of media houses across the nation. This debilitating condition was amplified when an editor noted that the press suffered a great deal under the Babangida regime (*The Guardian*, 15th June, 1990). Kalejaiye (2009: p. 77) reports that during the regimes of Generals Ibrahim Babangida and Sanni Abacha, media houses were proscribed for their audacity in bringing to public awareness, the operations of the government. He adds that,

As if closing down would not do, arsonists, hired killers and hit squad (Strike Force) were let loose on the press, to burn media houses (arsonists were caught setting *Guardian* Newspapers' office on fire in 1996 or thereabout), kill journalists (Dele Giwa got 'parcel bombed' in 1986 while Baguda Kaltho of the Newsmagazine is still missing till today (2007) about twelve years after he was declared wanted by the police) and to maim (Alex Ibru, the publisher of *Guardian* newspaper may not have fully recovered) (Kalejaiye, 2009: p. 77).

The brutality of the military government has been revealed in Nwanne (2014) and relatives and immediate family members of the press men were not spared during this period as they also partook of the grievance of the military juntas. Agbaje (1990) stresses that prior to the Third Republic, agitations had arisen from numerous quarters to grant the press exclusive freedom to own and control media-related activities as their profession demands and it was during General Ibrahim Babangida's regime that the successful Political Bureau was produced in 1986. Examining this view, one would almost conclude that the press enjoyed significant freedom during the Babangida's regime which contradicts Kalejaiye's argument but the implementation of the findings and conclusions of the Bureau would justify the population of displeasure and critique of the administration.

Aghamelu (2013) further corroborates this when he observes that the Supreme Military Council (SMC) during the General Buhari's administration attempted to "stifle the traditionally vigorous criticism" (Seng and Hunt, 1986:86) of the government by the press which contravenes the background of liberalism the country has been claimed to have. As Abayomi (2004) also argues, the media facilitated pro-democracy coalitions across the country during the military regimes and the despotic nature prevalent at the time could not have been successfully defied without the efforts of the media.

2.1.3.4 The Nigerian media in the Fourth Republic

May 29th, 1999 is often credited as the day the Fourth Republic kicked off with a transition to civilian rule following a vicious cycle of military administrations in the country. The activities of the press prior to this period are often attributed to the eventual transition process (Kalejaiye, 2009; Santas and Ogoshi, 2016). While some African countries "fought for their independence on the battlefield, Nigeria's independence was fought for, and won on the pages of newspapers expending millions of words, instead of ammunition, in the process" (Kalejaiye, 2009). This suggests the rejections, rebuttals and disapprovals members of the press were subjected to during this moment of fierce battle for the freedom of the press. The military incursion into Nigerian politics truncated democracy and impeded the freedom of speech. Even though the media still functioned but their inactiveness during the period can be traced to huge sanctions and hostility from the various military regimes. Despite the interventions of military governments, the media stood their ground and persisted in mobilising the public on the need to advocate for

democratic rule and their agitations were met with a positive outcome when the military handed power to the civilian government in 1999 (Santas and Ogoshi, 2016). The conflict between the media and the military rulers lingered and came at a price, with constant reprisals from the military juntas that occurred in the forms of the assassination of many media professionals, closure and withdrawal of license, among other things (Kalejaiye, 2009).

By 1999, the nation transitioned to democratic rule, and since that time, restrictions on the press have been relaxed and high levels of media productivity have been recorded through legislation and other protection rights (Jebril, et al. 2013). This has largely promoted the freedom of the press, although conspicuous discoloration of opposition parties exist and the embellishment of government activities are often lopsided to suit the demands of political figures who pull their weight around in the country. As expected, these reports are packaged in a way that will arouse the interest of readers across board and pacify their pathos in political criticism. Kalejaiye (2009) commends the absence of media repression since the transition to democracy. He states that the forms of intimidation the Nigerian press experienced under military governments have dissipated and the rule of law has enhanced their liberty with little or no constraints. Such a form of freedom is anticipated under democracy which empowers the right of the people to freely express themselves.

2.1.4 Media ownership

The restrictions placed on media activities in the country, especially during the Third Republic, limited several private media firms from obtaining license that would permit them to operate independently. The transition to democracy necessitated the passing of the Freedom Bill, despite the protracted process involved and this gave rise to many private media outlets in the country. Government, however, still strives to control, through censorship, the contents generated by these media institutions. They are always controlled by the political party in power (Ojo and Adebayo, 2013). The party naturally would influence the contents churned out to the masses, jeopardizing truthful reportage and churning out misleading information to garner positive publicity among the governed. Thus, the authors advocate for media independence which favours fairness and accuracy, considering the drawbacks such would have on the development and the consolidation of democracy in a nation.

Major personalities that always influence media action, despite occasional unsuccessful attempts in swerving the masses, are the advertisers. They have a huge impact on manufacturing consent. Since the advertisers double as primary sponsors, they define what is produced in the news and construct dominant ideological inclinations. Their imposition, therefore, restricts media freedom and makes the production of imbalanced information inevitable. Perhaps, that is the reason Chomsky (1997) earlier queries the pragmatism of free speech in a supposed democratic system of government, with adept consideration of the press gag and restrictions they endure at the hands of democratically elected leaders. According to him, (1997: p. 6)

the role of the media in contemporary politics forces us to ask what kind of a world and what kind of a society we want to live in, and in particular in what sense of democracy do we want this to be a democratic society? ...a democratic society is one in which the public has the means to participate in some meaningful way in the management of their own affairs and the means of information are open and free...

However, the freedom of the press from the control of political elite has constantly been elusive with threatening implications on the stability of democratic principles. The emancipation of the press from political parties or individuals affiliated to those parties is universal and not peculiar to African States; in fact, media politics (Zaller, 1999) stem from Western civilisation. Stifling the activities of the media will limit their productivity and efficiency; however, providing an enabling environment where information can freely be disseminated without fear of closure or intimidation will unveil the untapped potentials the media possess as the Fourth Estate (Rothman, 2015).

2.1.4.1 Press freedom in Nigeria

Press freedom, a fundamental basis of democracy, has gained the attention of scholars, especially when contextualised within the various administrations and regimes a nation as Nigeria has gone through. A fundamental aspect of democracy is the freedom of speech which includes access to information (Dawodu, 2016) and affects various spheres and systems of a nation. This stems from the right of individuals to freely express a view to the corporate right of an institution to also freely disseminate information. Organisations saddled with the responsibility of pushing information to the public to help the masses

keep abreast of government's activities and actions should in no less manner be constrained from enjoying this liberty.

Within a larger framework, press freedom in Nigeria has suffered several vicious blows from various administrations, traceable fundamentally to the political instability that has produced four different republics in the nation (Nwanne, 2014). Each of these Republics had at least two to three administrations that ruled and developed policies, including the passage of bills, suitable for its operations. The media has not been left out in the formulation of these policies as it is believed that the representation of the administration in the media is crucial to determining their sustainability as a government. Prior to the passage of the freedom of information act in 2011, the state of media ownership was nothing enviable (Dawodu, 2016). The activities of the press were stifled and constricted, and only political party members and allies of the government were granted the liberty to access, receive and share information. Most of the contents churned out were controlled by the government and limited to convey only the things the power moguls decided to be made public, while information was not based on objectivity but on partisan interests.

The transitions from one Republic to another have jostled the press in Nigeria, as well as sent shockwaves with various significant levels of impact on the Nigerian press. While a few media firms survived the pressure, many ran out of business after suffering various degrees of loss in the firm; some experienced total clampdowns that drained their manpower and a few had to compromise and become state-owned (Oloyede, 2005). During the military regimes, the operations of the press were far from blissful; those days were very cloudy days, anyone who dared to publish outside the supposed frames provided, faced the wrath of the juntas with kangaroo justice. There were no formal legal proceedings and the term 'perjury' became an anthem for those in power to condemn to death or imprison those who were considered rebellious. The few who were charged to court were convicted without thorough process since the law had no absolute stance in the military system of government and those in power took the law into their hands; this resulted in the gagging of the press during this period.

It is believed that since 1960, the Nigerian press cannot be said to have enjoyed unrestricted freedom (Nwanolue and Ude-Akpe, 2011). This implies that since the First Republic, which was short-lived, the supposed freedom granted the media differs less

from the generic status it avails every citizen. There has been no legally specified acknowledgement of the media as the fourth estate. An abysmal situation was recorded during the military regimes as the freedom of the press was constricted. On several occasions, the government debated granting the press further access and right to information beyond the commonplace boundaries afforded every citizen as stipulated in the constitution. With every plan for transition to democratic government, the military dictators were known to speculate better days for the media. The anti-press legislations passed during the military regime cannot be compared with the current state of liberty enjoyed by the media.

This speculation began with General Obasanjo (Nwanolue and Ude-Akpe, 2011), who called for media professionals to clearly delineate the meaning and boundaries of press freedom which he claimed would not constitute the focus of the constitution-drafting committee whom his administration had set up to oversee the affairs of developing a constitution for the transition to civilian government). Eventually, when the committee concluded their findings, the recommendations were never implemented for reasons best known to him. The same applied to General Ibrahim Babangida, who developed the Political Bureau which was to serve as a template for subsequent governments for steering the affairs of the nation.

The press, at this time, assumed things were going to get better on his assumption of office, going by the plans his regime strategized to achieve. Unknown to them, their worst moment was yet to be unveiled. It was observed that the Nigerian press was limited in expression during the military regime and their doggedness proved to be instrumental in the retention of the "low degree of freedom" they were granted (Oloyede, 2002). Their resilience manifested in how they fought back suppression, which resulted in the limited transaction of their activities during those times. Had they not done so, nothing would have been achieved except by the government-controlled media outlets. Even though the military regimes lasted more than three decades, the experiences of members of the press during these periods were suppressive and very challenging (Adeniyi, 2016). The quest for press freedom was heightened with every regime (Layefa and Johnson, 2016) despite the obnoxious laws passed to stifle media expressions. The press remained undaunted and managed to survive the vehement assaults (Layefa and Johnson, 2016).

Seng and Hunt (1986) provide a historical background to press freedom in Nigeria and note that the media Nigeria was one of those who enjoyed press freedom in the developing world. They reveal the long-standing history of press freedom in two areas. The first was the diversification of the press and the right of private individuals to own media industries while the second was the relatively free expression of reporters to address government-related issues and sometimes involved criticisms.

This perspective about the Nigerian media is not a common opinion shared by many scholars who have written about press freedom, they uphold a contrary view to this as they believe that the Nigerian press has not experienced the liberty other media institutions in developed countries enjoy. Surprisingly, the study was conducted during the military regime and press proscriptions were the order of the day at that time; a deeper examination of their conclusion on press freedom in Nigeria reveals that they delimited that judgment to the First Republic because further in the work, they express concerns about the state of press freedom in the country during the military incursions into politics, evaluating the torture members of the press suffered during those periods.

They examine different military regimes and their relationships with the press. They note that in 1963, the constitution was amended and the rights of the press were included. Concerning Major General Yakubu Gowon's regime, they (1986: p. 90-91) observe that:

Gowan signed Decree No. 17 of 1967, which gave the head of the military government power to prohibit the circulation of any newspaper it felt was detrimental to the interests of the Federation or of any State... The detention of journalists continued, ...the offices of the Nigeria Standard were ransacked by police looking for "vital documents," and the editor of the Sunday Standard was beaten by a state legislator.

They also remarked on Major General Muhammadu Buhari's relationship with the press and note that on his assumption to office, he promulgated Decree No. 4, a decree and introduced a developmental journalism tailored to reflect local contents rather than the previous Western models the press had earlier embraced. According to them, the Buhari regime totally redefined the goal of the press. Consequently, these restrictions and press gag affected the media during the military regime and exacerbated with each military regime.

The Decree No 4 promulgated by the Buhari Military junta was designed to clip the wings of the press and restrict their influence (Nwanolue and Ude-Akpe, 2011). In that decree, press freedom was not clearly spelt out but the government's involvement in media activities yielded intolerable enactments through election into the Nigerian Union of Journalism's leadership positions at every level (State and Federal). In assessing the freedom of the press since the beginning of the Fourth Republic, Nwanne (2014) submits that there has been a reasonable form of improvement in the freedom the Nigerian press and even though the press has experienced forms of relaxed sanctions, there is still much to accomplish. A major challenge with free press is the resistance from the political class and their preference for sycophantic press rather than engaging media that critique their actions/policies. As incumbent administrations get wary of reports that fail to capture them in a positive light and term them as threats or 'security risk' (Nwanne, 2014).

This view however contradicts Nwanolue and Ude-Akpe (2011) who hold that the situation exacerbates with every administration. Nsereka and Ammanah (2014) evaluate the link between the Freedom of Information Act and media practices in Nigeria. They discuss the specifications of the information bill; the processes of press restrain the media encountered and they establish that the Freedom of Information Act can promote effective media practice if effected and not restricted to the pages of papers.

2.1.5 The challenges of the media in contemporary Nigeria

Nwanne (2016:86) asserts that "journalism in Nigeria has continued to grow immensely in line with global trends despite strong infrastructural challenges". The plausibility of this assertion would be taken to lie in the media content and not in other factors constituting the operations of journalism which include; freedom of expression, pressure from opposition parties, denial of access to crucial information, among other things which their counterparts in developed countries do not encounter. Although, media institutions in each country across the globe have peculiar challenges that characterise their operations and expressions, the peculiarity of the Nigerian media stands in suppression and stifling of their activities, a paradox that belies press freedom in a democratic government. For instance, since independence, many publishing houses have folded up and become extinct in the Nigerian newspaper industry and this condition was spawned by the nature of ownership/management, socio-economic, political and technological inadequacies, as well

as government intrusion. A few, however, have surmounted the crises and weathered the storms – *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *The Nation* and *The Vanguard* (Ige, 2013) which have also had their share of misfortune and setbacks but have succeeded to pull through.

Copious studies have been carried out to examine the myriads of challenges confronting the Nigerian media (Alemoh, 2011; Ojo and Adebayo, 2013; Ige, 2013; Santas and Ogoshi, 2016; Jatula, 2017) and besides the prevalent tenor of ethnicity and religious bigotry identified and discussed in most works, corruption in the media has been distinguished as the bane of truthful reporting in the media whose cancerous grip has withered the reposed confidence of the masses in them, arising from recurrent reports of bribery and fraudulent activities among media professionals and organisations.

Olayiwola (1991) observes that prejudice has always rocked the boat of the Nigerian media since its emergence, as almost all key newspapers have been affiliated to a political party. He adds that the activities of the press during the colonial rule were to criticise the excesses of that period and advocate for self-rule government. Olukotun (2009) also records low wages, lack of payment and shortage/lack of advanced technological gadgets/equipment required in the effective production of news compared to foreign counterparts as challenges confronting media practitioners in Nigeria. To expand this view, Ojo and Adebayo (2013) point out the lack of training and deficient skill among staff. Ige (2013) identifies profit pursuit, threats of closure by government officials, confiscation of copies, and demand for 21st-century printing equipment, inflation which affects sales, among other factors as challenges confronting media practitioners in contemporary Nigeria which have resulted in the jettison or compromise of journalistic principles.

Picard (1989) examines the media in the United States and his conclusions are in consonance with the prevailing force of the market system that influences its operation even in Nigeria. The conspicuous needs of the four categories of benefactors, he stated, create an endless web of dependence on the media outlets and salvaging the situation would definitely require them to sometimes compromise their stance. These categories according to him are: *the media owners* who seek for the continuity of their business, *the audience* who places demand for robust content, *the advertisers* that intend to reach the target audience at a considerably low cost, and *the staff* who desire an increase in

remuneration (emphasis added). All these have ultimately led them in search of other sources of funding in order to meet these incessant demands.

Drawing from the Nigerian context, Ige (2013) and Santas and Ogoshi (2016) corroborate this. They claim that the demand for alternate sources of funds has grossly impacted on "professionalism and traditional media practice" (Ige, 2013) and the need for profit generation has become a crucial aspect of the media profession; thus, blurring the line between journalism and business. More often journalists demand *brown envelopes* after undertaking an assignment and some even sacrifice the ethics of the profession on the altar of bribery and corruption by either killing news stories or writing fictitious stories just to promote the image of a political figure (Santas and Ogoshi, 2016).

In Nigeria, measures of government control of the media have varied from arrest, torture, trial denial, and killing of journalists or media professionals to total closure of media houses, purchase of major shares in the company, censorship restrictions, among others. These attempts have consistently stifled press freedom and incapacitated the productivity of the press. Although the pressure has abated compared to military regimes when news professionals (editors and journalists) were tried in a military tribunal and sentenced to either life imprisonment or death but the dissociation of the government from press control or interference is far from the norm and the subtle influence they (government in power especially) wield on the Nigerian mass media persist till date.

During the Boko Haram insurgency, several media houses were blown up. *ThisDay* newspaper outlets in Abuja and Kaduna, *The Moment* and *The Sun* newspaper among others came under vehement attack from the insurgent group. This has been abated and the activities of the sect have been grossly curtailed by the PMB administration. Patronage of newspapers is another challenge in contemporary Nigeria. In a survey conducted to determine the knowledge and attitudes of people to Yoruba newspapers and how it impacts national development, Salawu (2004) discovers that most respondents have a positive attitude to the indigenous newspapers but a limited few purchase the papers while others either borrow or read from a vendor's stand. He attributes this to the incessant inflation rates that do not correspond with the income of the masses.

2.1.6 The challenges of generating media contents

A major challenge of generating content is resources – human and capital. Most media houses lack the capacity to constantly meet the insatiable need created by their audience. For instance, Zaller (1999) and Black (1991) observe that the media is placed under pressure and expected to inform the public of the breaking and developing events at such moments because they (the public) cannot by themselves experience that first-hand and these reports consequently inform their actions and subsequent dispositions. Bennett (2004) attributes this to the evolution of the round-the-clock media production which has given rise to excess repetitions of stories recast from various viewpoints with a resultant effect on the production of news items.

Due to this vacuity, the media toss and stretch news items beyond proportion in order to fill the space. This responsibility leaves the media with an outrageously huge millstone that becomes preponderant in times of war, terrorist acts, violence and political crisis, regime collapse, etc. Oates (2008) holds the view that in some cases, rather than rebroadcast as observed by Bennett (2004), their attention is on feature stories and entertainment at the expense of grave political discussions that demand urgency, and this is a strategy adopted to douse tension or at other times, present sensitive and complicated topics in a somewhat light and eventual convoluted manner. This alternative distracts the focus of the people from the real topic of discussion (Jowett and O'Donnell, 2012; Horniak, 2016).

Another challenge that inundates media content is the standpoint and perspective from which to report. Bennett (2004:25) notes that “beyond natural disasters and breaking events, the news tends to portray events as they are defined by officials and authorities, based on information that is produced and spun by public-relations professionals...”. This is not inappropriate in itself as long as further investigations are carried out to corroborate the information supplied; however, due to debilitating factors as financial constraint, lack of infrastructure and lack of skilled personnel, among other things, some reporters often opt for such absolute sources and relay them to the public without questions. Jatula (2017) points out other instances where bribery shades and obstructs true journalism and further investigative attempts. This alters the presentation of their reports because they assume their survival is dependent on such gratifications. Needless to say, this contravenes the rule

of fair coverage, and results in the omission or the manipulation of details germane to such reports.

Mock and Rettich (2003) assert that to boost ratings or ensure relevance and visibility, media practitioners repulse and set boundaries for reporting; thus, embracing audacious trajectories (Horniak, 2016). Mock and Rettich (2003:246) cite a case in the U.S.A when the need for cutting-edge information surfaced in the 1991 Iraq war, “the older, more experienced journalists with commitments to journalistic traditions” were ousted and the “the marketers” who cared less about journalistic ethics were appointed to replace them because the former were bent on adhering to journalistic values which were considered insolvent to the organisation at the time. The adopted approach of the experienced personnel was constraining but the marketers could devise means of filling the vacuum rather than constant rebroadcast.

Within the Nigerian clime, the challenges are aggravated by the stifling of the press and it is necessary that the government begin to create a viable environment where press activities can be carried out with less sense of trepidation. Similarly, obligation must be placed before profit, media institutions must recognise the necessity and the demand for accurate dissemination of information to consumers and must not compromise journalistic values for gain so that the nation can enjoy the dividends of democracy.

2.2 Empirical review

2.2.1 Review of studies on newspaper editorials

Various works have examined the content of editorial writings and their expected contribution to national development, the various strategies employed in editorial writings and how they aid language use, as well as linguistic features and their roles in the comprehension of editorial writings. This section shall review some of these studies on newspaper editorials.

2.2.1.1 Studies on editorial ownership and contents

Several studies have been conducted on editorial ownership and contents. For instance, Akhavan-Majid, Rife and Gopinath (1991) examine chain ownership and the case for

editorial independence; comparing the editorial positions of 56 newspapers produced by the Gannett group on three public issues in 1989 with other newspapers. Their study observes that news reports from the Gannett newspapers tilted towards taking positions and maintained similar views on the identified issues. The significance of their work is in its evaluation of chain ownership and likely observable connections connoting potential interference in news coverage and reports. Their study finds that there was “a high level of homogeneity within the chain and there were significant differences between the Gannett and non-Gannett newspapers as they were more likely to have editorials on each of the three identified issues than the non-Gannett newspapers. The various four forms of editorial control identified in their study – *potential, actual, direct and indirect* – constitute a background to the present study, providing insight into likely factors that could influence editors’ views and opinions.

Iedema, Feez and White (1994) explicate three sub-types of journalistic argument genres – media exposition, media challenge and media discussion – aimed at arguing for the merit of the authorial proposition; however, while media exposition presents an argument to persuade readers, media challenge repudiates a counter view but media discussion provides various available views with no intention of convincing readers. They establish a departure between news stories and media expositions, positing that the former is event-specified, relating with persons, locations and time, and involves more verbal processes while the latter focuses on issues and opinions with a broader scope in the provision of insight into the proposition and assessment of the reasons an argument should be perceived in a light. Instances of logical conjunctions, causal conjunctions, and conjunctions expressing contrast, intended to elaborate and develop the argument abound in media expositions.

Ekeanyanwu and Jokotade (2009) evaluate the content of Nigerian newspaper editorials and aver that the newspaper is the masses’ voice while editorials are the publishers’ voice. They affirm the quality of Nigerian editorials but advocate for an increased reflection of the masses’ welfare rather than the representation of a specified ‘privileged’ group in editorial writings. The study, situated within the social theoretical framework, addresses the responsibility of an editorial, providing a detailed overview on editorials and their forms but the data does not provide a flexible adaptation of challenges underlying editorial

production. Some of the issues raised in the study cannot be adaptable to present-day challenges experienced in the representation of opinions; however, new studies could explore contemporary issues affecting the nation's dynamic needs, drawing from the paper, since media in the Nigerian clime undergo significant changes that impact on editors' evaluation and such prevailing challenges will require dynamic approaches to tackle.

In differentiating between facts and opinions, Bal and Saint-Dizier (2009) develop text annotation and linguistic criteria designed to differentiate between facts and opinions. Adopting Opinion Mining, a sub-discipline in computational linguistics, they identify the challenges characteristic of opinion mining as an approach in analysing editorials and arising from the difficulties that arise when demarcating between facts and opinions, they propose six gradation levels of opinions which are hypothesis statements, theory statements, assumptive statements, value statements, exaggerated statements and attitude statements. They also determine the strength of opinions to know whether they are weak, strong, mildly weak or mildly strong and developed intensifier and pre-modifier lexicons that consist of adverbs and pre-modifiers. The study premised on editorial discourse, differentiates between facts and opinions, using a computational linguistic approach and elucidates on the divergence of news reports and opinion-based writings in the newspapers.

Bal (2009) attempts a manual annotation of samples of editorials based on specified semantic tag set which was a proposal of a computational model he intends to develop. This model is predetermined to develop methods to be used in analysing opinions shared in editorials. He differentiates between facts and opinions, stressing that opinions project an attitude towards a discourse and this can take the form of a judgment, view, conclusion or "an opinion about an opinion(s)"; whereas, a fact is determined by the adoption of specific lexical selections and various tense and number of verb forms and they are backed up with certain forms of reliable authority that supplies adequate evidence to the assertions/claims.

Afzal and Harun (2013) engage in a comparative analysis of editorial contents from two newspaper editorials published in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. They examine rhetorical and persuasive strategies the editors employ when writing and how these tools can facilitate

the teaching and learning of the English language in such communities. Their study reveals that the selected editorials were identical in their use of rhetorical manoeuvres and there appeared to be the preponderance of persuasive techniques to project the ideology of the respective newspapers and influence readers' opinions. They submit that the use of editorials will aid the teaching and learning of English language as they are viable teaching tools whose application to language learning can yield a positive result. The applicability of such strategies in an EFL environment might be unlikely due to the peculiarity of such communities whose values and beliefs are largely shaped by religion and culture. Although they observe that language use in newspapers is fresh, topical and current, importing such patterns into EFL teachings would sufficiently improve students' performance in the English language since fresh linguistic data on various topics are derived from such writings.

Ahmadi and Asl (2013) examine how ideology and opinion are expressed and represented in newspaper editorials, they examine three newspapers in Iran to determine the expression of ideology and opinions. Their study reveals that the editorials in Iran Daily highlighted the leftists and their ideals while the other two newspapers, Keyhan International and Tehran Times, lacked equal explanation and description about the four candidates their study examined but their focus was towards the right-wing candidates. They conclude that understanding ideology will assist citizens to adjust to the realities around them and increase their awareness of the existence of sub-cultural diversity.

In a study designed to investigate media roles, Akpan (2017) assesses the management of editorial information and its social responsibility to the public. He selects from local tabloids in Akwa Ibom and analyses 10 percent of the total local newspapers in the State. Adopting the Social Responsibility theory, he identifies four major purposes of editorials and submits that the editorial page has gone awry and masses have lost confidence in its ability to convey their feelings to the government which has relatively impacted the readership base and efforts are being made to restore this trust. He recommends partisan-free editorial boards across the country and the employment of professionals who would appropriately communicate the challenges of the people with all sense of devotion to the masses. His work is related to the current study, as it addresses aspects of newspaper editorials that are contextualised in small groups. However, his approach provides a

pedagogical dimension to the various purposes and functions editorials serve in a newspaper with no attention to their linguistic relevance and how editorial views are represented to create identities that shape readers' opinions. The strength of the paper lies in its robust evaluation of editorial as a broad concept, the attention it paid to the discussion of the various forms of editorial and the comparative analysis of the selected data.

2.2.1.2 Studies on strategies in editorial writings

There are few studies on the strategies in editorial writing. For example, Bonyadi and Samuel (2013) conduct a contrastive textual analysis of selected headlines and explored the textual and rhetorical strategies adopted to communicate the ideologies of the editors. They posit that the thrust of headlines in newspapers is to aid readers' comprehension of the meaning conveyed in text, and not just to itemize topics in the news. They also adopt the editorial of criticism in the study so as to identify the hidden social and philosophical commitment of the publisher to ideological positions. The study reveals that the newspaper headlines introduced the topic of the editorials and also presented the subjective attitude of the writers to the topic through the use of textual and rhetorical strategies.

Elyazale (2014) examines the features of newspaper editorials in selected Arabic and Moroccan newspapers. While providing a succinct background to opinions in newspaper editorials, she establishes that opinions can be complex; combining facts, feelings, beliefs, norms and context which can either be social or cultural, and avers that there exists a higher chance for editorials to influence people's decision than other forms of newspaper due to its opinionated structure that allows readers interact with publishers' views on issues. She observes that editorials are characterised by various structural patterns which include the introduction, the intermediate section and the conclusion, the types of strategies used to express opinions determined by popular beliefs and evaluation; and the positioning of opinions which address the prominence of information. Her paper subdivides into two: a background examination of the characteristic of newspaper editorials and the data analysis. She highlights the various language strategies employed by newspaper editorials and how they affect the roles of language in meaning. The current study will draw from this paper as it addresses aspects germane to its concerns.

2.2.1.3 Studies on linguistic features in editorials

Linguistic features in editorials have enjoyed an appreciable scholarly attention. For example, Olaniyan (2011) undertakes a linguistic enquiry to determine how cohesion and coherence are used in editors' comments to achieve meaningful discourse. His study reveals that cohesive devices amplify the message editors convey through their lexical choices and aid comprehension. His work further examines the nature of editors' comments and concludes that they aim to review critically important issues and events and advocate for a solution-inclined approach to comments rather than the problem-identification method predominantly observed. His work elucidates on the discourse value of cohesive devices and how they can assist readers in developing critical views on salient issues, these cohesive intricacies amplify the nexus that exists among lexical selections and their implication in generating meaning in discourse.

Another linguistic enquiry on editorials is observed in Bonyadi (2011) who assesses modality as a property of language employed in editorials and considers their relevance in shaping social reality. He selects his data from The New York Times which represented American English and Tehran Times, a Persian English newspaper to represent Persian English, and focused on the editorials of criticism. His findings reveal that the editorial writers did not just report and give information on news items (facts) but also provided readers with their own judgement and comments (opinions) using modality and modality was realised through modal auxiliary verbs, adjectives, certain reporting verbs, adverbs and some generic expressions. His paper provides a linguistic dimension to the analysis of newspaper editorials and their pedagogical application in an EFL setting with no emphasis on the opinion/agenda-setting role of the media, which is the focus of the present study.

Ani and Anyandike (2013) discuss the modalities and affordances of editors, adopting a qualitative approach, they examine three newspapers. They identify five concepts that are revealed in newspaper editorials and can be considered in the development of theoretical explanation. These concepts, according to them, are content and context-specific: timeliness, contempt, Personality-issue, Audience-specific and change. This paper is similar in scope with the current study as it addresses editorials in Nigerian newspapers. However, the current study is not on the development of emerging theories but on the representation of PMB's administration in the newspapers.

Analysing the cohesive role lexical features plays in editorial comments, Ariyo (2017) explains that they provide a linguistic connection which are used in constructing meanings in a text. He applies Halliday and Hasan's (1976) Lexical Cohesion Theory to selected editorials comments from TELL magazine and his study reveals that these comments, expressed in a simple style, adopt features like synonyms, antonyms, repetitions and collocations which enhance the text's meaning. His examination of these lexical resources is crucial for the comprehension of linguistic choices by editors in their comments.

All the above works have examined editorials from a conceptual and contextualised perspective; thus, providing in the process, various environments and modalities that influence the production of editorials. The modification of linguistic resources to shape social realities has also been assessed with keen attention to properties essential for opinion formation. However, the interaction between writers, editors in this context, and their prospective readers have not been. Equally, the processes involved in the establishment of solidarity, where the latter is drawn into the world of the former to develop views and perspectives that shape attitudes towards a particular proposition, been evaluated. This becomes the focus of the current study – to critically examine the representation of editorials' views regarding a proposition, the techniques and strategies employed in the establishment of solidarity with prospective readers and the engagement techniques that facilitate these strategies.

2.2.2 Studies on ideology and media representations

A robust scholarly attention has been paid to ideology and media representation. For instance, Uche (1991) posits that ideology in Africa should reflect local needs and be a means of solving problems rather than being imported. He attributes the dearth of societal values to the deficiency in an ideological direction which has resulted in the dominance of external values which inform people's attitudes and perspectives to life. His study advocates for a media rejuvenation of the African value system which requires a concrete knowledge of the African environment and the ideological contexts of respective societies that should inform the construction of social reality.

Taiwo (2007) selects three hundred Nigerian newspaper headlines to examine how vocabulary and rhetorical devices are used to identify language, ideology and the

construction of power relations. He posits that expression selections in newspapers are deliberately made to evoke feelings and capture the attitudes and opinions of issues raised in the news. He also establishes that every news report is lined with ideology and lacks transparency. Adopting Critical Discourse Analysis, he reveals that besides the graphological and the rhetorical tools, there are underlying ideologically-embedded meanings that characterise reporters' choices and the people can sometimes agree on ideologies that foster national interest. The study provides a robust insight into the implication of ideology in shaping writers' perception. The limitation of the study lies in its scope which mainly addressed newspaper headlines, with no application to the news reports. The evaluation of the news would have provided an extended overview of how ideologies are constructed and formulated. This, however, could have been reserved for further studies that seeks to investigate the ideological constructions in news reports.

Sunday (2009) examines the ideological representation of a ruling by the Gubernatorial Election Tribunal in Osun State, Nigeria. He notes that the judicial arm of government in Nigeria has sustained the tenets of democratic values and has consequently earned the commendation of the public. He adopts Critical Discourse Analysis to capture the ideological and the linguistic relevance of the ruling. His findings reveal that the judges often explicate their decisions in order to appear fair and transparent in their decisions, while striving for objectivity. As such, their rulings are considered irrevocable as they establish their autonomy and independence in the process. His discussion on the judicial procedures and the contextualised linguistic framework provide a robust approach to the study. An additional theory in forensic linguistics could have provided an extended analytical framework for the study, to account for the proceedings of the court rulings and how they impact on the ideological framing of the election tribunal.

Oyeleye and Osisanwo (2013a) analyse the ideologies in two magazines and how they are employed in the construction of identity to control and influence consumers. They establish that the electorates' perceptions of the politicians are shaped by the media and this determines the outcome of the electoral process. According to them, language in the news does not reflect reality but creates it as the choices of expressions communicated projects the ideological stance of the writer/editor. They reveal that instead of cover stories to represent writers' objective positions, the magazines reflect the clear stance of the

publishing firms and these were revealed in the lexical selections which were not neutral. This theoretical framework adopted for the study provided essential tools for the analysis of data, thus, enhancing the objectives of the work.

Similarly, in another study, Oyeleye and Osisanwo (2013b) examine the ideological expressions of media accounts of the 2003 and 2007 general elections in Nigeria and state the same story/report cannot be captured and rendered the same way arising from the ideological variance between the print media. They posit that writers construct realities based on their ideological affiliation and this shapes consumers' perspective. They point to the fact that print media are not "ideologically neutral" as they often swing towards the ideological angle that favours them and, because members of groups have ideological commodities they promote, giving support to shared perspectives becomes easy. These studies evaluate the notion of objectivity and present a concise perspective on the challenges news writers encounter in striking a balance between objectivity and subjectivity.

Ellah (2014) undertakes a linguistic appraisal of ideological representations during industrial actions in Nigeria. Adopting the CDA framework to analyse two newspaper dailies. He identifies subtle and blatant representations of the ideologies of the employers and employees often encoded in their linguistic choices. According to his findings, ideology and identity shape discursive practices and the lexical selections of the employers depict dominance, authority and superiority, while the employees' linguistic choices were expressive of protest, collective bargaining, struggle, and resistance against the supposed dominance of the employer. This work addresses the ideological representations of the Federal Government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities during those industrial actions and provides a background overview of the tacit tension existing between them. This study departs from the current study in its focus, as it only examines the implication of the linguistic selections made by the two social actors without attention to how meaning is negotiated in the process.

Osisanwo (2016) examines the discursive representation of the insurgency group, Boko Haram and identified thirteen representations the Nigerian press projected. He elaborated on the discursive strategies employed to depict the sect as a social actor and their representations in the selected e-newspapers. These strategies include labelling,

collectivism, passivity, and condemning, identifying and specifying, avoiding position-taking, among others. His study reveals that agenda-setting is a crucial aspect of news reporting and the selected newspapers negatively presented the sect's activities to readers; however, the application of transitivity as a theoretical framework gained less prominence compared to the lexico-grammatical examination of linguistic items which aided the representations. The study can be further expanded to accommodate for this gap, as it would make for a robust examination that extends beyond the scope of discourse analysis to discourse semantics.

Asiru, Ogutu and Orwenjo (2018) also examine the event and actors' representation in selected Nigerian daily newspapers. They posit that the media influence political processes and situated it within the 2011 presidential election newspaper reports, that were imbued with underlying ideologies and power play. This, according to them, resulted in the emergence of the incumbent president as winner of the election. They establish that the polarity in the representation of the actors through the presentation of arguments in the newspaper was skewed and uneven as Jonathan, the former President, received more voice projection in the reports than his then opponent, Muhammadu Buhari, which resulted in his victory. Their study identified the polarisation system of arguments and revealed bias in the representation of social actors. The relevance of this study is in the subject matter which addressed the media representation of a former Nigerian President during the election but the current study differs from this paper in other ways. The first is in scope which addresses post-election activities of the incumbent President and not the electoral processes that brought him to power. Another divergent point is in the theoretical framework they adopted. While the current study adopts textual and interpersonal metafunction (Appraisal Theory) this study adopts the interpersonal (transitivity) system.

The ideologies and representations explored in the above studies are somewhat distinct from the objectives of the current study. Besides their focus on ideology as a broad concept representing a system of belief of a group/society, and their specific attention on media representations of national events, they did not address the import of prospective readers in the evaluation of meaning nor the deliberate discourse strategies employed in the formation of editors' representations of a proposition. This study aims to fill this gap and explicate these choices.

2.2.3 Studies on the roles of the media in democracy

A number of works exist on the role the media play in the society. For example, Ibraheem et al. (2016) regard the media as a vital agency that play decisive role in deepening democracy. This role has defined the intricate connection that exists between the two units. (Santas and Ogoshi, 2016). Also, Oates (2008) admits that the media have facilitated the communication, sharing and awareness of political events and their role in politics globally cannot be underestimated as they play a crucial and indispensable role in circulating major ideological representations and classifications in the development of democracy (Hall, 1980; Electoral Knowledge Network, 2012). In explaining the function of the media. Locksley (2009) identifies their significance in national development by pointing out their duty in driving a nation's economic growth through the generation of considerable revenue for the government, the provision of employment opportunities, the improvement of literacy rate which boosts productivity through human capital, among other roles. The media are not just influencers of national development but are vehicles that mirror the political, social and economic organisation and pattern of the society (Abubakar and Fadeyi, 2017).

In a report designed to determine the roles of the media in transitions to democracy, Jebril, Stetka, and Loveless (2013) analysed transitory periods in three regions across the world - Central Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Arab world. They examine the activities of the media in those places during elections and identify five challenges prevalent at those periods. The first difficulty was in constructing a discipline for examining mass media and democratisation processes in the selected regions; the second was the sparse researches that explore the extent to which the mass media have lived up to her 'normatively ascribed role' and contribute to the development of democratic institutions; the third challenge was the blurred demarcation between media's instigation of democratic change and their compliance with the transitions and development of political processes they are caught in. The fourth was the generically positive role the media is assumed to play in democratic transitions and the scattered nature of empirical data on this position, while the last challenge was the little support the perspective of the influence the new media wield in initiating revolutions and mobilising the public in democratic transitions has generated in the academia. They conclude by suggesting a theory-generating investigation rather than a

theory-testing approach for researchers to provide succinct information about the socialisation processes and operations of the media within a non-Western context.

Although their study was in media discourse, much attention was given to evaluate media involvement during democratic transitions, especially in the Arab world. The current study differs from this report in many respects. First, it is a report on the activities of the media in non-Western regions of the world and the limitation of the supposed roles they play. Next is that it advocates for the development of a theoretical framework that will cater for the lapses of the media in such a process of socialisation; and thirdly is its pure journalistic orientation which contrasts with media linguistic affordances in representing political actors as examined in this study.

In describing the role of the media in contemporary government, Fasakin, Oyero, Okorie and Amodu (2017) note that just as the media can positively influence the public by showcasing and promoting cultural heritage as well as defining the political climate, they can also negatively impact on the public through the promotion of promiscuity in entertainment or hate speech before or after the election. This conclusion calls for a closer observation by the public in order to decipher when the media begins to churn out unwholesome content. Media roles in Nigeria have been classified into setting the agenda, creating and developing perspectives on political debates, demanding accountability from government officials, formulation of opinions which become widely accepted by the public and defining what holds sway among the masses through wide coverage (Omoera, 2010; Amodu, Yartey, Ekanem, Oresanya and Afolabi, 2016; Ibraheem et al, 2016). From a broader assessment, the Nigerian media have served in adequate measure, their obligation in circulating relevant and developmental information across the country, with consideration to the volume of information they disseminate on a daily basis to keep the masses abreast of government activities and other national developments (Omoera, 2010) and the responsibility lies on the citizenry to seek for information from the volumes of churned out resources.

2.7. Related empirical studies on PMB's administration in print media

Several works have been carried out by various scholars generally on President Muhammadu Buhari and many of them have been on his policies and the

accomplishments of his administration since resumption to the new office (Onuoha, Ichite and George, 2015; Omilusi, 2016; Nwofe, 2016; Ekwueme, 2017; Olajimbiti, 2017; Nnamdi-Eruchalu, 2017). Some others have examined and analysed his inaugural speech (Sharndama, 2015; Koussouhon and Dossoumou, 2015; Koutchadé, 2015; Osisanwo, 2017), while many more have evaluated his anti-corruption campaign and the achievements he has recorded as well as media commitment to ensure the success of the campaign (Ojo, 2016; Olijo, 2017; Onuigbo and Innocent, 2015; Oriola, Ojomo and Ajilore, 2017; Akpan and Eyo, 2018; Edmond and Wilson, 2018). This section will briefly examine a few studies from the assumption of the President into office in 2015 and review a number of these works; particularly, the ones pertinent to the focus of this study.

SBM Intelligence (2016) assesses the first year of the Buhari administration and reviews the campaign promises made to the masses. The agency identified 175 promises, contrary to the figures indicated by Buharimeter (2016) despite the fact that the surveys were conducted the same year. Such inconsistency in figures depicts misleading information that could inform false opinions spread among the public. According to SBM Intelligence, 25 of these promises had been fulfilled, 45 were underway, and the rest were yet to be initiated. The basis for judging the effectiveness of the administration were not provided and the agency's report can be considered quite early. It was conducted in May 2016, only a year after the President was sworn into office and many challenges still confronted the administration, despite efforts to retain a positive outlook among the populace to ensure re-election for another term.

At the time of the report, cases of insecurity were very predominant in the media, especially reprisal attacks by communities in the Middle belt states and farmer-herdsmen clashes. Even though these were acknowledged, emphasis was placed on the nation's overdependence on oil as the bane of economic woes in the country. SBM Intelligence (2016) blamed the ineffectiveness of the Buhari administration on the crises inherited from the preceding administration and the economic recession that had aggravated the condition of lives of the masses. In their assessment of the Buhari administration, SBM Intelligence (2016: p. 4) writes,

... on many important categories that directly affect the Nigerian people, the Buhari led administration has performed rather poorly,

and in some cases abysmally. In some areas, things appear to have largely deteriorated since he took office. These include: power, economy, health, job creation/housing and social welfare, constitutional amendment/legislative framework.

Although it could be argued that this report was quite early and an assessment of the administration's performance could have been more appropriate after the second year but it must be pointed out that the research was carried out to serve as an appraisal of the administration's first year in office as well as serve as feedback which could be employed in formulating effective policies that could enhance the performance and productivity of the Buhari-led administration.

In reviewing the leadership of the President from 2015 to 2018, Abdullahi and Danjuma (2019) admit that there were still gaps between the promises and the unfolding events in the nation; however, their appraisal of the administration's efforts in curbing insurgency in the Northeast and herdsmen/farmers conflict appear ungrounded. With reference to the incessant reports on bandits' rampage across the nation, kidnappers' audacious operations and growing influence at the time and increases cases of clashes between farmers and herdsmen, a scorecard for the administration on security matters could be considered insensitive, as their conclusion contradicts the findings of many studies on the administration's achievements, especially on security (Buharimeter, 2016; Oludayo, 2021; World Bank, 2021). Oludayo (2021) observes that within the six years of the administration, insecurity has morphed beyond the Boko Haram crisis to include bandits' kidnapping for huge ransom from victims and armed herdsmen attacking helpless farmers for cattle grazing. The level of vulnerability has heightened, resulting in the mass emigration of Nigerians to other countries.

In his evaluation of the President's first tenure and mid-term in office, Oludayo (2021) reveals the gap existing between the campaign promises and the obvious state of affairs across the nation. For instance, the fight against corruption is believed to be selective, as proven in the statement of a former chairman of the APC, Adams Oshiomole, who "had asked defectors from opposition parties to join the governing party and have their 'sins' forgiven," and the failure to investigate corruption charges against stalwart members, such as the case of Ibrahim Magu, the acting head of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, who was only suspended from office (Oludayo, 2021).

Olijo (2017) assesses PMB's anti-corruption war as framed in selected newspapers to determine its coverage in two national dailies. He observes the vagueness of newspapers' coverage on the fight against corruption and calls for detailed attention on the subject to assist the PMB's campaign against corruption. Olijo's incapacity to clearly differentiate between the summary of a paper and its recommendation was not hidden. He fails to establish the relevance of the news framing and draws a definite conclusion that would address the activities and roles of the Nigerian newspapers to the public in relation to their commitment to the PMB's administration reveals his weakness in tackling the matter. His weak conclusion which generalised corruption as a major setback in the country fails to provide direction as to his opinion about the function of the media in publishing the activities and information central to the polity.

Ojo (2016) examines the paradox of anti-corruption crusades in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999-2014) and critiqued each administration since the emergence of the Republic till 2014. He points out that the "convergence of two variables, that is, ethnicity and politics provide a plethora opportunity for political elites to loot public resources". He also observes that the "anti-corruption institution (EFCC) was created by the corrupt ruling political class and managed by the looters". This study only addresses an aspect of the present study, anti-corruption crusade – one of the themes to be examined but it differs in the spectrum as it does not extend to PMB's administration and it does not use a similar methodology or theoretical framework.

Oriola, Ojomo and Ajilore, (2017) compare the link between PMB's anti-corruption crusade and the public. They extracted 1,169 front-page anti-corruption stories published in four national newspaper dailies. Their findings reveal that issue-specific frames were the dominant report style the newspapers adopted, rather than the generic frames and respondents considered the press as fair in their coverage. They observe that there exists a relationship between newspaper framing and societal-level consequence. This study focuses on the depiction of the anti-corruption war by the media under the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, which is just an aspect of the themes the current study will examine, and the choice of theory is also different.

Ekwueme (2017) investigates media coverage of the economic recession of the Buhari administration and decried the evasive stance adopted by the selected newspapers, *The*

Guardian and *Vanguard*, in their respective coverage of news related to economic recession and diverted attention to information on national and international interest at the expense of the plights of the citizens during the economic recession. He advocates for objectivity in reportage in order to intimate the government on the plight of the people as the responsibility of publishing information reflective of their predicament is core to their service to the public. The present study and Ekwueme's paper differ in the theoretical framework and in scope. Although he addresses an aspect of this work to a length, his findings are limited to two newspaper dailies contrary to the four selected for the present study. His paper fails to address the editorial stance of the selected newspapers to identify any element of unfairness or chauvinism expressed in their respective views, which is a major thrust of this study but merely examines the degree of attention the recession reports garnered in those dailies.

Chime-Nganya, Ezegwu and Ezeji (2017) investigate the framing of the President's medical trips to the United Kingdom in three Nigerian newspapers, with emphasis on the genre of the reports, patterns of framing, frequency and prominence of the reports, as well as the dominant frame across the selected newspapers. They admit that feature stories and editorial reports are more appropriate for thorough examination of issues compared to news reports. Their paper identifies seven frames employed in the coverage of the President by the media; among which are: political, response, human interest, powerlessness, religious, economic and death-rumour frames with a political frame as the most used in the selected newspapers. Besides the occasional grammatical inconsistencies that filtered the paper, their examination of newspaper framing appeared to be limited in scope as they were not fully buttressed and elaborated. However, their admission that the need for a detailed investigation would require the choice of feature stories or editorials appeared plausible though their findings reveal that only 2% of the reports on the President's medical trips appeared in the editorial columns.

These assessments of the President's administration serve as a form of evaluation to judge the performance of the administration and the degree of support received from the media to champion the specified objectives of the administration.

2.7.3 Studies on President Muhammadu Buhari's 2015 inaugural speeches

Relevant to this study is Ademilokun's (2015) who assessed aspects of attitudinal meaning in PMB's inaugural speech and identifies various forms of interpersonal meaning employed by the President to establish a strong form of connection, specifically, with his audience and generally, with stakeholders in the country. Through the deployment of affectual meanings, judgements and appreciations, the president reaffirmed his decision to deliver on campaign promises and criticised some government sectors which he hopes to rejuvenate. The evaluative polarity observed in the paper conveys a bipolar appraisal of the event, judging commendation and criticism. The connection between this paper and the current work is that it addresses the subject of the study (PMB) and adopted one of the major theoretical framework earmarked for the study but the divergent point is the focus of the paper. While his paper addressed PMB's inaugural speech, the current study focused on the administration of the president and his representation in the Nigerian media.

Osisanwo (2017) investigates the pragmatic acts in President Buhari's inaugural speech using Jacob Mey's Pragmatic Acts theory. He identifies nineteen practs from the ninety-nine total acts found in the speech and establishes that these practs achieved four goals: revealing intention, admitting and appreciating, giving direction/directive and providing details on issues. He posits that that the speech allayed the anxiety of the masses and engendered tranquillity; drawing from the propositions, promises, acknowledgement and appreciation of political opponents and the reaffirmation of his commitment to his campaign promises, major forms of anxiety generated during the election period were doused.

Nnamdi-Eruchalu (2017) also analyses the personal pronouns in the two inaugural speeches of Muhammadu Buhari as the military Head of State in 1984 and the civilian President of the country in 2015. Using Critical Discourse Analysis, she posits that the linguistic choices were used to present different identities and ideologies which were informed by the different backdrops of the Nigerian government during those times; as his linguistic constructions reflected the military/authoritarian system characteristic of such regimes and the civilian/persuasive frame peculiar to democratic governments. She observes that the 2015 inaugural speech was aimed at persuading the masses to embrace

his political plans and concludes that the linguistic choices of speakers and writers are shaped by the context and the identity of language users.

2.8. Theoretical framework

Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal theory and van Dijk's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) were employed in the analysis of data. While CDA investigates the discursive representations and ideologies in the editorials, Appraisal theory addresses the linguistic tools used in negotiating meaning within a social space; therefore, these theories combine to examine the social interaction between editors and readers through texts within a social space to negotiate meaning.

2.8.1 Appraisal theory

Appraisal theory, an aspect of discourse semantics in Systemic Functional Linguistics, was developed in the early 1990s, through the works of James Martin and Peter White. Since that time, the theory has "gained increasing recognition as a useful framework for analyzing evaluative phenomena in discourse" (Fuoli 2015). The theory focuses on the interpersonal metafunction (meaning) and it evaluates language and the enactment of the relationship that exists between writers/speakers and readers/audience and the expected (re)actions intended to be generated. It examines the construction of identities, assesses the linguistic choices employed to convey feelings, opinions and facts by the expressor (Biber and Conrad, 2009). Also, it probes how these opinions and attitudes are represented to make audience/readers align with a propositional value, and explores the degree of feelings involved in the negotiation of meaning. Martin (2000) stresses that the theory explores how attitudes, judgments, and emotional responses from speakers/writers are explicitly presented or expressed implicitly in texts.

The framework focuses on the construction by texts of communities of shared feelings, values and the linguistic mechanisms employed in the sharing of emotions, tastes and normative assessments (Martin and White 2005) and Oteiza (2007) notes that the need for the development of the theory arose with the need to extend the conventional approach to analysing speaker/writer evaluation, the textual persona's authorial stance which directly or indirectly elicit targeted/desired responses from audience/readers. Khoo, Nourbakhsh and Na (2012) avers that the "framework defines each chunk of text (e.g. noun phrase,

verb phrase or clause) that implies one instance of appraisal as an appraisal group". Two major actors are usually involved in each instance of appraisal, namely the appraiser and the object of appraisal.

The Appraisal Theory is categorised under the system of modal assessment, especially epistemic and evidentiality modality (Matthiessen, Teruya and Lam, 2010). Language meaning is derived through the enactment of attitude, engagement and graduation. Attitude in the Appraisal framework can be classified into emotive, ethical and aesthetic regions; where the emotive reveals the writer's inner feelings towards a proposition, the ethical refers to the writer's evaluation of a proposition which can be societal norms (Martin and White, 2005). Graduation has to do with the force or the focus of the argument.

Attitude deals with the feelings evoked by the writer/speaker towards a proposition and can be classified into: Affect (emotive), Judgement (ethical) and Appreciation (aesthetic region). The emotive dimension reveals the writer's inner feelings towards a proposition, the ethical dimension refers to writers' evaluation of a proposition which can be societal norms realised through lexicalisation, mood or modality; this subdivides into social sanctions (veracity, propriety) and social esteem (normality, capacity, tenacity). The third region (aesthetic region) deals with appreciative appraisal, relating with writers' reaction to a proposition and its components, whether it is balanced, complex or worthwhile (Martin and White, 2005) that evaluates semiotic and natural occurrences that examine writers' reaction to a proposition and its components.

Engagement examines the participants involved in the negotiation of meaning whether it is from a monoglossic or heteroglossic perspective. The textual voice can choose to share other opinions and views (heteroglossic) or can sustain his views through the negotiation process (monoglossic). Heteroglossic can be dialogic expansion which subdivides into entertain and attribute, or dialogic contraction that extends to proclaim and disclaim. While stance is writer-oriented, engagement is reader-oriented and there are two forms of writers' engagement – monoglossic and heteroglossic

Graduation has to do with the force or the focus of the argument and it examines evaluation degree. Appraisal can be explicitly or implicitly represented in a text to convey

positive or negative feelings. Arising from overt representation of information, the feelings of the writers can be perceived and assessed at a quick glance, drawing from the preponderant lexical selections (explicit appraisal); however, implicit appraisals are indirectly represented and they require comprehension of the sentences or even the paragraphs in order to pass judgement on its polarity. As such, identifying implicit appraisals can be problematic and they are clear to the audience who share mutual understanding with the author on the topic (Tupala, 2019).

Martin and White (2005) provided a framework that can be used to capture the elements of their proposed theory. This is hereunder represented:

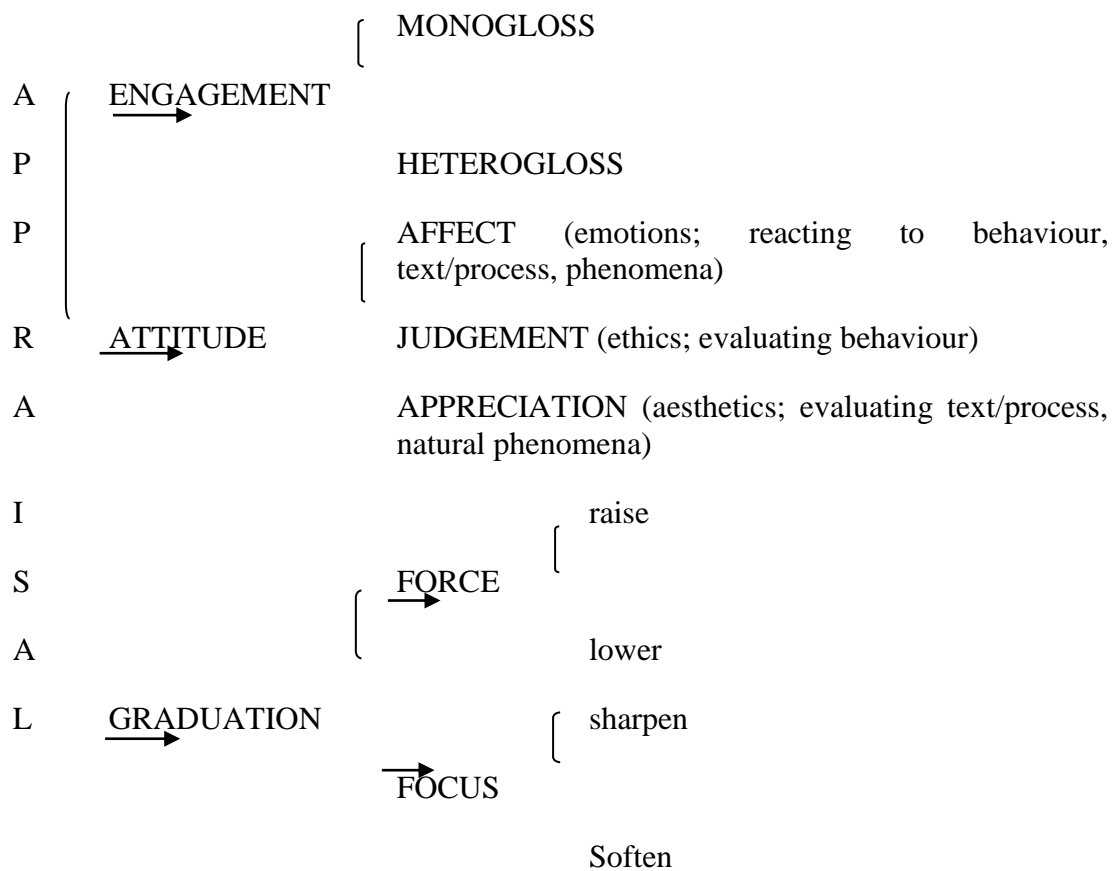


Fig.2.1: Systems in the Appraisal Framework, Martin and White (2005:38)

Several studies have adopted the above framework and elaborated on the theory's relevance to their works. For instance, Wang (2016) holds that the theory is used to analyze the discourse resources to negotiate social relationships by telling listeners/readers how they feel about relevant persons or things. It evaluates language, adopts stances, constructs textual characters and probes how judgements, opinions and attitudes are communicated to align with readers/audience who share similar perspectives on the discourse or disapprove of those who fail to share their views, distance themselves from those who do not. Wang (2016) examines the application of the theory to critical reading and how this helps students to identify and understand authors' value affect, writing positioning and engagement procedures. He stresses the relevance of the concepts of the theory – Attitude, Engagement and Graduation – and the theoretical support it can create for teaching the English language while boosting students' language competence and comprehension of discourses. He avers that the theory is “conductive in improving the quality of critical reading teaching and is beneficial for the reformation and innovation of the English teaching”. The paper would have been more engaging if more attention were devoted to the application of data to how students can comprehend authorial intents in texts and develop a broader understanding of the contents, than the analysis of data.

In their study, Aloy-Mayo and Taboada (2017) evaluate the editorial stance of selected articles from the Cosmopolitan website, an online magazine that included a new section prior to the US elections to endorse candidates they consider supportive of women's rights. They adopted Appraisal Framework and Transitivity to identify the ideological positions of writers and the responses of readers. Their results established the presence of evaluation in the new online genre of readers' comments and explore the evaluative nature of political discourse. They further establish the relevance of applying the Appraisal theory to evaluate the responses of readers to the opinions of the magazine editors and how that can facilitate the contextuality of text. Their paper provided

Khoo, Nourbakhsh and Na (2012) applied the appraisal theory to the analysis of a sample of political news articles that discussed two Presidents on issues of economy and Iraq war. They identify a few challenges in adopting the Appraisal theory, among which are: difficulty in identifying appraisal groups and attitude categories arising from the subtlety of expression in political news articles, the obscurity between the mental and the

behavioural affect, the difficulty in identifying what attitude is expressed in political context especially, the tense used and the classification of the type of emotion conveyed.

Sabao (2013) investigates the notions of reporter voice and objectivity in a cross-linguistic reporting of controversial news in two English reporting Zimbabwean newspapers. According to her, explicit authorial attitudinal properties are not reflective in news reports as the evaluative resources are mostly inscribed in the newspaper's ideological positioning. She contextualises the 'reporter voice' within the theoretical framework of Systemic Functional Grammar and Appraisal theory.

A major limitation of the theory in analysis is its focus on lexis which does not accommodate for contextual evaluations. For instance, the monoglossic engagement fosters repetition with emphasis on either bare assertions or presuppositions. Such restrictive procedures in the evaluation of authorial stance fail to capture aspects of self-reference in multiple analysis of texts. Context and intention are blurred in the theory's application to discursal levels of analysis. Similarly, while the engagement system provides an elaborate sub-system of tools for analysis, the evaluation of attitude and graduation is limited to lexical choices revealing emotions, passing judgement or appreciating a proposition. The constraint these provide is their application to cultural dynamism and the relevance of what is appropriate within one culture and what is unacceptable in another. A gap in cultural implications will affect the outcome of analysis, considering the multifarious dimensions to language. Definitions of morality are changing and in the times ahead, clausal appendages to previously conceived values would pose a challenge to the appropriateness of such elusive concepts.

This study adopts the systems of engagement and attitude in the data analysis, with specific attention on the monoglossic and heteroglossic positioning defining the form of strategies employed by editors in negotiating meaning with prospective readers. It also addresses the expressed emotions of the editors towards the propositions; and to achieve this, judgment, affect and appreciation, the sub-systems of *Attitude*, were found relevant to the study. Therefore, this study did not employ the tools of *Graduation* in the data analysis.

2.8.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA, henceforth) is ‘a loose combination of approaches’ linked with the works of notable authors, it is a broad field (Beaugrande, 2004; Machin and Mayr, 2012) encompassing several branches of linguistic and interaction studies – pragmatics, sociolinguistics, conversation analysis, systemic functional grammar, among others. It is a multidisciplinary approach to Discourse Analysis which examines language use in text and how grammatical features are employed in language to construct meaning and influence people to examine language events in a particular manner (Machin and Mayr 2012). It also examines social interactions in communicative events, and combines critical perspectives with discourse analytic techniques to examine social phenomena (Ainsworth and Hardy, 2004). It is not attached to a particular social theory but to a broader field of critical concerns formed by the nexus of language, discourse and social structure (McKenna, 2004).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), traced to the 1970s, developed from early studies in Critical Linguistics (CL) borne from the need to create a social approach to analysing linguistic processes, takes a critical stance towards how language is used in textual analysis and other discourse types in order to identify the ideology and values backgrounding them. CDA analysts posit that there are ideologies embedded in texts, images and other forms of visual representations and language and grammar are the instruments used to determine these underlying systems of belief. Since CDA shares three concepts of *critique*, *power*, and *ideology*, it seeks to reveal the interests and power relations in any institutional and socio-historical context through analysing the ways people use language.

In CDA, the notions of ideology, power, hierarchy, gender and so on, are considered relevant for text interpretation. It is founded on the premise that there is unequal access to linguistic and social resources, which are controlled institutionally. Therefore, van Leeuwen (2006a, 2009) argues that it is founded on the insight that text and talk play a key role in maintaining and legitimating inequality, injustice, and oppression in the society as it employs discourse analysis to show how this is done, and seeks to spread awareness of this aspect of language use in society. He adds that CDA argues explicitly for change based on findings. Language does not just exist in a vacuum, neither does it only perform

linguistic functions but it represents social practices that define human interaction with their environment while naturalising certain values, practices and ideas. The nexus that exists between language, power and ideology is revealed in CDA as communication is not void of power relations though these could be embedded in covert linguistic choices that appear loose but a critical examination unfolds underlying political or religious ideologies and even the least linguistic details reveal such constructions (Machin and Mayr, 2012).

Fairclough (1989) provides an introduction to the critical study of discourse by carefully stating its intentions, goals and basic tenets as well as providing a model for analysis and he describes CDA as discourse analysis aimed at systematically exploring often opaque relationships of causality and determination between discursive practices, events, texts and wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes. CDA investigates how discursive practices, events and text arise out of discourse and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles for power. In CDA, language use is affected by its relationship within a certain frame of cultural or social practice, and the use of language shapes the social and cultural context it finds itself in.

2.8.2.1 van Dijk's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

The model of van Dijk in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) addresses the relevance of the socio-cognitive aspects of analysis and focuses on the macro-structure of texts with only some attention paid to what he calls *local-semantic features*. In his model, CDA is concerned with identifying power relations in institutional and socio-historical context and analysing the language used in projecting ideology, power, inequality, abuse, gender, race in social and political context (van Dijk, 1988). He unravels the social relations of power as represented in texts covertly or explicitly and language to him is a means of social construction and dominance (Machin and Mayr, 2012). van Dijk (2000) defines CDA as a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. He describes it as dissident research whereby critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality. Dijk (1988) opines that science, and especially scholarly discourse, is inherently part of and influenced by social structure produced in social interaction. He adds that instead of denying or ignoring such a relation between scholarship and society,

analysts demand that such relations be studied and accounted for in their own right, and that scholarly practices be based on such insights.

Teun van Dijk's approach to CDA accounts for the relationship within discourse, cognition and society (not often direct), the connection that exists between language, social attitudes and actions, the combination of the micro-structure (discourse, communication, verbal interaction) and the macro-structure (power, race, dominance, inequality) in analysis and how they aid the understanding of ideological patterns involved in discourse (van Dijk, 2000). Cognition is focal to the formulation of ideologies and seven levels aid the analysis of ideology: actor description, authority, categorisation, lexicalisation, polarisation, vagueness, victimization.

In CDA, texts are considered as connected in a chain of texts and there are basic requirements it is required to meet in order to achieve its goals as a multidisciplinary approach that addresses social problems and political issues (van Dijk, 2001a; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997) and these are:

- a. Critical Discourse Analysis performs an ideological work and it integrates the society and culture.
- b. A description and explanation of discourse structures in terms of notable features of social communication and framework.
- c. Focuses on the ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, and challenge relations of *power* and *dominance* in the society.

Teun van Dijk's approach will be employed in the data analysis to explore aspects of media representation and ideologies identified in the first and the second objectives of the study. Martin and White's Appraisal theory will discuss the third and the last objectives of the study since it addresses issues related to the engagement strategies employed by writers to engage readers and how meaning is negotiated in the process of establishing a relationship.

2.9 Summary

The review shows that previous studies have provided insight into the structure, linguistic properties, and the content of newspapers and newspaper editorials, with an application to data sources different from President Muhammadu Buhari. This study shall investigate the representations of President Muhammadu Buhari in Nigerian newspaper editorials from 2016 to 2021, with a view to determining the framing of the President in the media.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

In this chapter, the methods employed in the research are discussed. These include the research design, size, techniques, and the inclusion and/or exclusion criteria used for the study.

3.1 Research design

The descriptive design was used in the analysis of data. This provided a discursive evaluation of editorials' assessment of the Buhari administration and the stance and engagement techniques employed in negotiating meaning with readers. A qualitative approach was used in the analysis of data to explicate the various representations of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration in the media, the underlying ideologies backgrounding such framings and the engagement techniques employed in negotiating meaning with readers.

To achieve this, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was employed to examine the various representations, ideologies and discourse strategies in different Nigerian newspaper editorials, while the Appraisal Framework was used to evaluate the linguistic tools used in establishing solidarity with readers in the process of negotiating meaning.

3.2 Study population

The data for the study were sourced from news editorials from eight Nigerian newspapers (*Punch, Nigerian Tribune, Leadership, Daily Trust, The Sun, The Guardian, Vanguard* and *ThisDay*). The selections were limited to those that addressed matters of insecurity, economy and corruption in the eight newspaper editorials. The collection was earlier made

from online sources; specifically, the websites of the respective newspapers before the archives of an educational institution (Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan) was visited to gain access to the hard copy of the dailies and check for consistency of publication dates and editorial titles. Other newspapers that were unavailable at the University library had their website links included in the references of each editorial extract.

3.3 Sample and sampling technique

In order to achieve the goal of the study, which was to examine the representation of the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari in the editorials and the strategies used by editors to engage readers in the process, a purposive sampling method was adopted in the data sampling to ensure the precision of the study. The three matters that constituted data for the study (insecurity, corruption and economy) were reviewed and discussed by the selected newspaper editorials and independently examined. The sampling technique used in selecting the newspapers was quota sampling, due to the locations of the publishing firms which were from the Lagos/Ibadan axis (*Punch*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *The Sun*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard* and *ThisDay*) and the Kaduna axis (*Daily Trust* and *Leadership*). A major reason that influenced the sampling was the presence of the three subject matters in the selected newspaper editorials. The criteria for selecting the newspapers was based on their wide readership base, geographical appeal and national coverage (Ojebuyi and Chukwunwike, 2018).

3.4 Sample size

Ninety-eight (98) editorials were purposively selected from a corpus of one-hundred and twelve (112) newspaper editorials, and these addressed matters related to security, economy and corruption, published between 2016 and 2021, and this period covered both the first and the second terms of the Buhari administration. The distributions of the editorials were based on the recurrence of the subject matters in the newspapers: *Punch* (16), *Nigerian Tribune* (12), *Leadership* (8), *Daily Trust* (12), *The Sun* (14), *The Guardian* (13), *Vanguard* (12) and *ThisDay* (11). The selected editorials were based on the attention they garnered in the media.

3.5 Method of data collection

The collection of data for the study comprises of newspaper editorials from *Punch*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *Leadership*, *Daily Trust*, *The Sun*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard* and *ThisDay*. The selections were primarily made to represent major geopolitical zones in the country in order to provide a robust assessment of the administration's representation in various newspaper editorials across the country. Studies have categorised the Nigerian press into the southern and the northern press (Maringues, 2001; Ojo, 2013; Amenaghawon, 2016). To achieve this, the study made selections from the southern and northern press, representative of the Lagos/Ibadan axis and the Kaduna axis, because the Nigerian press was divided along ethnic lines after independence and that led to the creation of these axes in the press. More editorials were selected from the Lagos/Ibadan axis, otherwise known as the active press, since they are known to largely construct and shape the nation's narrative to the world (Okonkwo, 2010). Most newspapers in Nigeria are also situated around that route, accounting for about 65% of national newspaper dailies in the country.

3.6 Method of data analysis

The editorials were read to ascertain the areas that focused on topics of insecurity, economy and corruption. The aspects that captured these themes were extracted and subjected to critical discourse analysis. The data analysis commenced with the identification of the representations of PMB's administration and discussed the engagement techniques the editorials used in negotiating meaning with readers. The linguistic properties used in the process were examined and the ideologies employed in the representations were uncovered. The attitudinal evaluation of the media representations was also examined. Teun van Dijk's model of Critical Discourse Analysis was used to investigate the media representations and ideologies in the editorials, and Martin and White's Appraisal theory was used to account for the engagement strategies and the linguistic features used in negotiating meaning with readers. These two theories combine to aid the analysis of the study and uncover the social interaction that exist between editors and putative readers through the establishment of contextual solidarity to negotiate meaning. Some aspects of the extracts were emboldened and italicised to aid the identification of relevant aspects in the extracts.

A digital text analysis tool, Voyant, was used to aid data analysis. It has a word cloud that displays predominant linguistic items, depicts frequency of word patterns, and contextualises trends, as well as other features. Lexical items, excluding grammatical words, appear with different colours and various font sizes in the cloud, with the latter depending on the number of recurrences and the former on unspecified patterns. Paragraphs capturing the representations were purposively extracted and subjected to digital analysis.

3.6.1 Voyant and its application to data analysis

This is an online and offline digital text analysis tool developed by Stéfán Sinclair and Geoffrey Rockwell in 2003, to facilitate interpretive procedures of texts adaptable for researchers, media personnel, market analysts and others. Potter (2018) describes it as “a set of out-of-the-box tools” that allows for the analytical interpretation and comparison of texts. It provides textual, visual and tabular representations of data in text analysis (Alhudithi, 2021). It has a word cloud that displays predominant linguistic items, depicts the frequency of word patterns, compares multiple documents, contextualises trends, indicates collocations, as well as performs other functions (Anderson, 2018; Potter, 2018; Brown and Tor, 2019). A major textual analysis procedure requires data provided by users which could be a directly pasted extract, a link containing the text or a direct upload from the computer. Various document formats can be used with the software: plain text, PDF, HTML, MS Word, RTF, ODF, XML among others, and changes can be made to settings of the word cloud.

Voyant has five primary tools: Cirrus, Corpus Reader, Trends, Summary, and Context tools. These have other features that assist in textual analysis and they provide information on collocates, distribution, repetition, contexts, correlations, frequencies, and many other features. The textual tools offer information on collocates, summary, phrases, terms and documents. It also has movement tools such as Bubbles, Links, Mandala and TextualArc to provide detailed analysis of the data. Voyant has twenty-nine analytical tools and this study used only four of the tools to aid textual and visual representations of the data. The justification for this selection derives from the complementary role Voyant as a computational textual tool is meant to play in the quantitative data analysis of the study.

These selections are considered relevant to the current study and are discussed within the framework of critical discourse analysis. The selected tools are discussed below:

Cirrus

Cirrus, a word cloud, provides visual representation of the most frequently used words in a document, appearing in different colours, positions and sizes. Lexical items, excluding grammatical words, appear with different colours and various font sizes in the cloud, with the latter depending on the number of recurrences and the former on unspecified patterns (Anderson, A. 2018; Brown and Tor, 2019).

Links

This provides a highlight of the connection existing between the most frequent lexical items through a network (Alhudithi, 2021).

Collocates

This offers a list of connections existing between words

Word tree

This provides a network of words and their relationship in texts.

Regardless of the few setbacks experienced in managing the software, its flexibility and user- friendly tools have registered it as a handy digital textual analysis tool (Potter, 2018). Sentences that revealed the representations from selected newspapers were purposively extracted and imputed into the application to generate the word cloud. These were then subjected to critical discourse analysis. Voyant was used in this study to present a visual caption of the media representations and it was only utilised in the sections that discussed the media framing.

Fig.3.1. below is a screenshot of a page revealing Voyant tools after the uploading of a text:

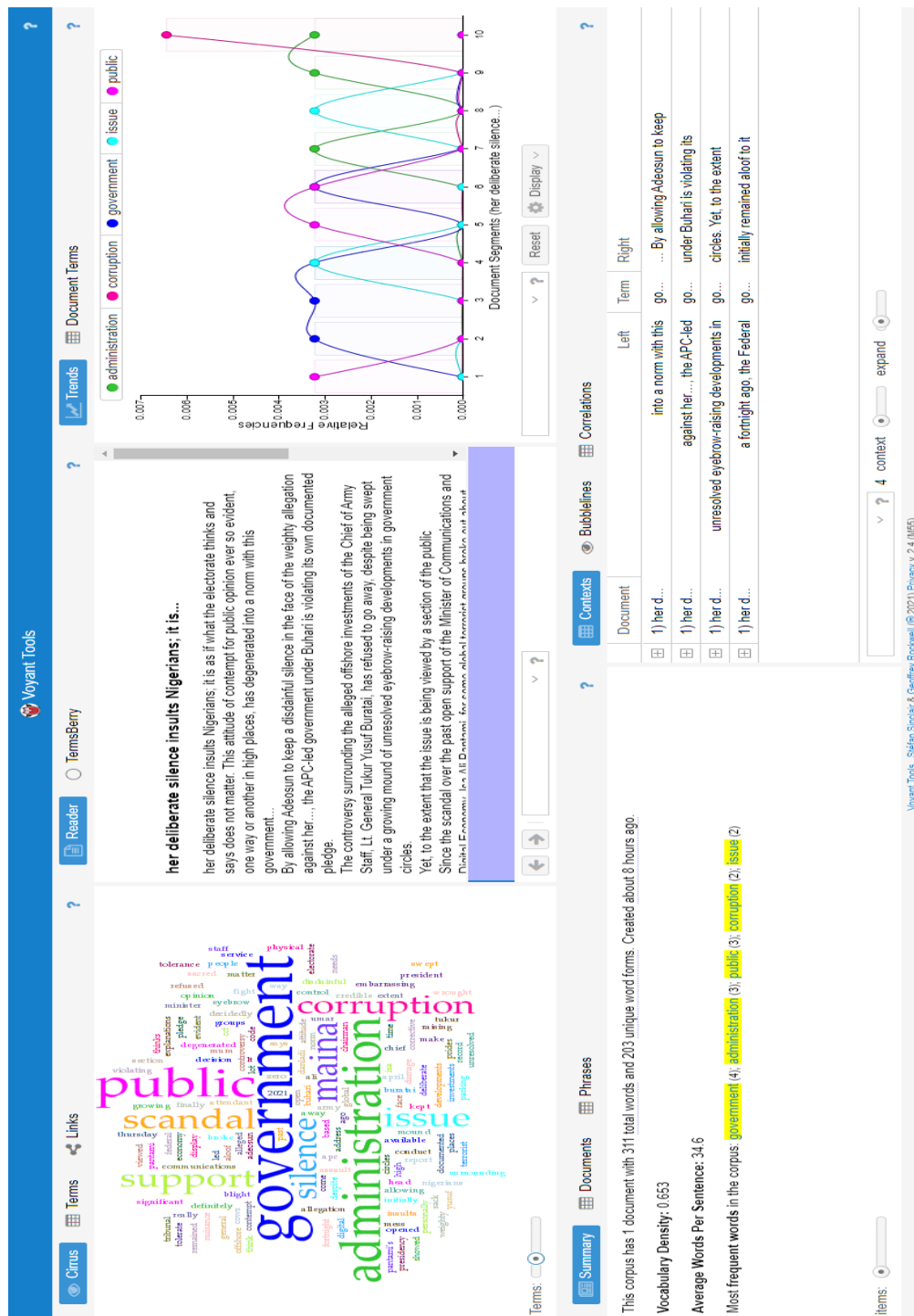


Fig.3.1: A sample image of Voyant page with a mini-corpus

The first section has the adjustable Word Cloud revealing the analysed data. This is the colourful visual representation of lexical items in the text. The second compartment consists of the texts used to generate the word cloud, while the third section reveals the trend graph of the data. The fourth division has the background information and textual

overview of the corpus. The last section provides the context of words and the recurrences recorded.

3.7 Summary

This chapter explored the methodology for the study. It discussed the sample size, method of data collection, method of data analysis and the tool used to provide a visual overview of the media representations (Voyant). The next chapter will discuss the analysis of data.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Overview

This chapter examines the representations of the Buhari administration in the editorials, explicates the ideologies and the various engagement strategies employed to negotiate meaning with putative readers. It also discusses the attitudinal values of the representations.

4.1 Representations of PMB's administration in the editorials

Four major representations of the President's administration were identified in this study and they were enhanced through the deployment of various strategies such as labelling, blame-shifting, exclusive strategies, activation and backgrounding. These representations (tactful retardation, mendacious, reticence, and disdain for the rule of law) were embedded with ideological leanings that foregrounded the editorials' assessments of the administration.

4.1.1 PMB's administration as tactfully retarded

Retardation, as used in this study, refers to the process of delaying the progress or development of a process that could have been tackled otherwise, and the linguistic selection of 'tactfully' collocates with diplomacy. The selected data shows that the editorials represented PMB's administration as being tactfully retarded in the issues related to corruption and threat to security. They are discussed one after the other:

4.1.1.1 Retardation on response to threat to security

The *Punch*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *Daily Trust* editorials identify that the Presidency has been slow in its fight against insurgency and terrorism. The reprisal attack suffered by the Nigerian Army at Metele, Borno State and the period it took the Presidency to respond are central to their discussion in the editorials discussed in this subsection. Before the 2015 general election, a major campaign promise of the administration was to crush the insurgency in the North East and three years into the first tenure of the administration, the Nigerian Army suffered a deadly blow in a reprisal attack from Boko Haram, killing scores of soldiers. The extracts below from the *Punch* and *Daily Trust* editorials describe the Buhari administration as being slow and a visual representation was provided below in a word cloud and context feature to depict this. The relevance of this is to reveal the collective opinions of the editorials in a textual and visual representation of important linguistic elements. Words in larger fonts featured across the selected editorials and were foregrounded through repetition (more than twice), while those in lesser fonts appeared once or twice. The analysis only focused on the larger fonts based on their relevance to the representations identified. To generate the word cloud below, the first three extracts used in this section were used and two of the editorials were from *Punch* (Extract 1 and 3), while one was from *Daily Trust* (Extract 2).

The word cloud in Fig. 4.1a above illustrates the linguistic elements the editorials used to construct the administration's delay in response time to terrorist's attack on the military. Overall, the President's name was repeated across the selected editorials more than twice and that accounts for the foregrounding of his identity to signify his relevance within the communicative context. This depicts him as an active social actor around which the discourse revolves, given his duty as the Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces. The cloud draws attention to his influence as the democratically-elected leader of the nation. Also, the foregrounding of his appellation distinguishes between his previous status as a military Head of State and his current position as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. He is therefore expected to act in respect of the attack on the military forces. Such consistent mention is attributive of the derived authority his office controls and this results in the evocation of his obligation. His name, Buhari, was also foregrounded to make prospective readers understand that the focus is not on members of his cabinet or other loyalists but on him as a leader who has the final say regarding any matter of national concern.

The next focus was on the location of where the meeting was held, 'Chad'. This was required to represent the collaboration among other nation-States in West Africa suffering similar attacks of insurgency. The meeting summoned by the President was in relation to the Metele attack that took lives of several gallant soldiers and it was designed to map out plans on how to tackle insurgency. Emphasis was also placed on the word, army, to denote the victims in the editorial, and the cadres of the participants of the meeting held in response to the attack (service chiefs) was also highlighted in the cloud to signify the severity of the attack. The service chiefs are leaders in the military ranks and their decisions with the President would determine the next step of actions to be taken. Similarly, across the three editorials, there appeared to be a unifying criticism of delay in *Punch's* portrayal of the President's response to the attack through the foregrounding of the words, took and days; whereas, *Daily Trust* presents the actions of the President following the reception of the news. Its emphasis is on the words, summoned and attended, to signify the efforts made with respect to the terrorist attack. This, regardless of the concession with the eventual efforts of the President in tackling the attack, did not in any way absolve him from being criticised for the protracted period in taking action. It was expected that he would match the insurgents' action with force and retaliation but the

opposite was the case; thus, his subjection to numerous vilifications. The context feature represented in the Links network below present a collocation of the lexical items in the corpus.

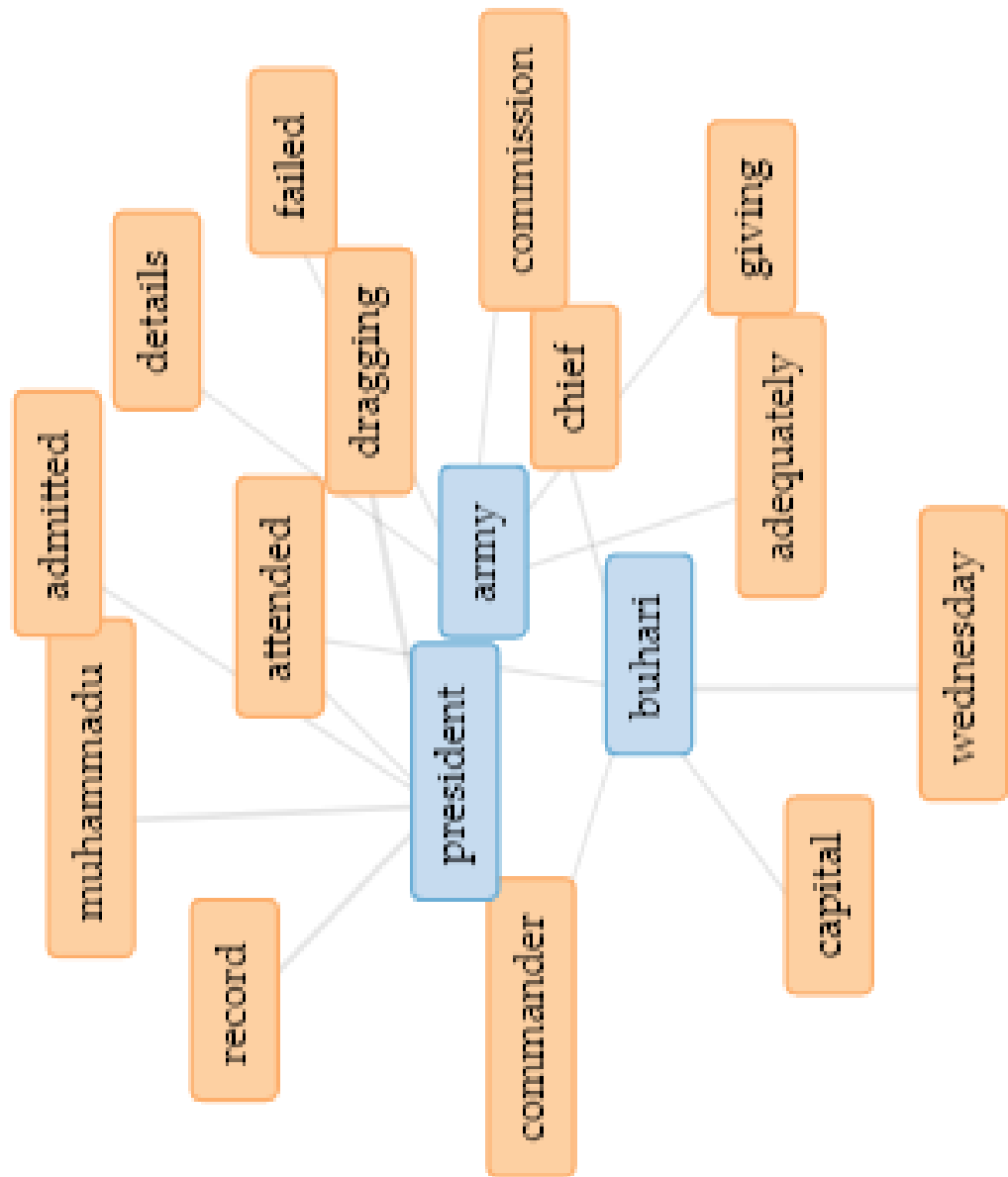


Fig. 4.1b: Links feature revealing the collocations in two *Punch* and one *Daily Trust* editorials

Fig. 4.1b above presents a network of linguistic items and their collocations in the editorial. It draws attention to the most significant words: president, army and Buhari. From the editorials, these words represent the core of the corpus and there are a number of words that collocates with them. For instance, the word President is captured in the network and the following words are attached with it: Muhammadu, to signify his first name and the actions he took in respect to the insurgents' attack. These are represented in verbal elements: dragging, admitted, attended and record. The proper noun, Buhari, collocates with chief, commander, capital, Wednesday, attended to suggest that Buhari as the Commander-in-Chief attended a meeting on a Wednesday at the capital with service chiefs on the attack. The collective noun, army, captures the leadership of the military operations in the Northeast and presents a collocation of words such as: failed, details, commission, giving. These are used to depict *Daily Trust's* opinion about the attack. Attention was moved to the Army leadership who failed to give details on the reprisal attack suffered by its members in Metele, Borno State. It should be stressed that *Punch* editorials also observed the actions the President took in response to the attack but focused on the protracted period it took before steps were taken to address the crisis.

The extract below is one of the editorials that was used to generate the Word cloud and the Links context features above. It shall be further explicated:

Extract 1: *It took five days* before the President admitted the debacle, *and a week* before he summoned the Service Chiefs to a meeting. This shows lack of seriousness (*Punch*, August 8, 2018:18)

The Nigerian Army suffered a reprisal attack from Boko Haram, a proscribed terrorist group in Nigeria who had killed numerous Nigerians and had audaciously wreaked havoc in various parts of the Northeast (Adelaja, Labo and Penar, 2018; Familusi and Oshomoh, 2019). On December 5, 2018, newspaper reports revealed that scores of soldiers were killed at Metele Borno State when members of the proscribed terrorist group, Boko Haram, struck to attack them but the Nigerian Army failed to disclose the numbers of soldiers killed during the attack. Unconfirmed figures were reported by various newspaper agencies, and news reports (*Punch*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *The Sun*, *Vanguard* and *ThisDay*) stated that the President did not respond immediately the attack occurred and they denounced the slow response. In extract 1, for instance, The *Punch* editorial posits that protracted response has been a pattern peculiar with PMB's administration,

especially in matters regarding his stalwarts and such retardation has been characterised with grave consequences. Expressions such as, “...*dragging his heels, took a while, took five days... and a week*” were used to negatively represent and convey an inactive leader who dawdles in decision-making processes related to his political allies but is swift in attacking oppositions. The clausal element ‘*this shows lack of seriousness*’ communicates to readers an ineptitude administration. They project this as a constant pattern with the President who appears to be indecisive in the decision-making process attached to his camp but swift in responding to any confrontational action from the opposition.

The evaluation of Buhari’s leadership style has been described by Abdullahi and Danjuma (2019) as “slow but surely”, as it required that in order to achieve success, an officer, according to the science and art of military, must be tactical and strategic. However, the editorials reveal that such a tactical approach might be unneeded within democratic clime as some actions require swift responses. In this same editorial from *Punch*, a parallel was drawn to the preceding administration whose delay fostered the flagrant activities of the Boko Haram sect that has become a menace to civility. Its lexicalisation of ‘*same careless detachment*’, ‘*abduction*’, ‘*that administration irresponsibly refused to act*’, ‘*cruel incompetence*’ ‘*discredited*’, among others, depicts a negative emotive affect towards that administration. It posits that a recurrence of similar action – slowness in developing combative measures that would finally degrade the Boko Haram sect – would lead to chaos and devastating consequences.

The editorial pronounces the administration as a signal of incompetence in handling matters of national interests. A leader is expected to be swift, energetic and prompt in responding to and in tackling insurgency and other matters threatening citizens’ lives and properties. This representation, thus, depicts the President as unenergetic, hesitant and slow as revealed in its representation as a passivist who lacks strategic planning abilities in handling insurgency in the Northeast. *The Punch* editorial stressed that such delay shows a lack of seriousness and could lead to further complexities that might incite the insurgency group to carry out more attacks since they have realised that the government protracts in decision-making processes.

Daily Trust presents a construction of the representation as shown in Extract 2 below:

Extract 2: *The Army was slow* in giving details of the attack ... *Many things quickly followed* the Metele incident... President Muhammadu Buhari ... attended a *hastily convened meeting* ... (*Daily Trust*, 2018:17).

The *Daily Trust* editorial, in its evaluation of the social event, employed blame-shifting strategy to transfer attention from the major social actor, the administration, to the Army, a minor actor and noted the ‘spontaneity’ of the President to the attack through the choice of the indefinite pronoun, *many*, and the modal adjuncts, *quickly* and *hastily*. This combination conveys a speedy response from the Presidency to connote that there was no delay as reported by other editorials; however, the time frame provided by *The Punch* (five days) justified the latter’s argument of a delay. Other editorials were mute on the ensuing actions of the President following his eventual response, focusing only on the delay in response time. As far as *Daily Trust* editorial was concerned, the responsibility of communicating the attack to the public lies with the military chiefs and not the President. Its report records swift actions by the President as soon as he knew about the crisis. This depicts the multifarious views expressed in different editorials, informed largely by the opinions of the editorials who either support or oppose a proposition. *Daily Trust* represents the President as a strategist who takes his time to strategically plan before taking a decision; as such, the President’s supposed delay was described as a time required to mobilise and plan a coordinated attack, contrary to the views published by other editorials. A comparative evaluation of editorials provides a robust overview of representations that can shape opinions and perspectives about a proposition. The next sub-heading reveals data on how the administration’s tackling of corruption is represented in the editorials.

4.1.1.2 Retardation in handling corruption-related issues

The administration of President Muhammadu Buhari has also been represented as retarded in matters relating to corruption. Although fighting against corruption was a major promise during his campaigns in 2015 and 2019 respectively, the selected editorials hold that his judgment has been selective and not objective and transparent. *Punch* and *ThisDay* editorials discussed the cases of Lawal Babachir, the former Secretary to the Government of the Federation and Abdurashheed Maina, the former chairman of Pension Reform Task Team. These will be examined one after the other:

Lawal Babachir and the alleged misappropriation of public funds

This section examines the handling of the corruption charges levied against the former Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), who had been indicted for the misappropriation of funds assigned to internally displaced persons (IDPs). Boko Haram attacks on communities in Northeast Nigeria rendered many people homeless and many of them settled in camps (Lenshie and Yenda, 2016). The government provided some amounts to clear the area but the official responsible for the disbursement of the amount misappropriated the funds.

Excerpt 3 elaborates this sub-theme:

Extract 3: The President *has a record of dragging his heels* over matters of impropriety concerning members of his close circle of aides, as was the case with Babachir Lawal. *It took quite a while for the President to make up his mind* after the former Secretary to the Government of the Federation was alleged to have soiled his hands in the award of contracts worth N220 million for the clearing of grass in the Boko Haram-infested areas. (*Punch*. July 27, 2018:18)

The *Punch* editorial presents retardation in prosecuting corrupt officers close to the President as an emphasis in this extract. The predicate, *has a record of dragging his heels* suggests a trend in thoroughly processing the prosecution of the President's close aides. The editorial activates both the personality and office of the appraised personality in order to foreground the proximity of the social actor to the President and his office as a member of the Executive cabinet. Readers are expected to evaluate the proposition through this actor activation in order to evaluate the commitment of the Buhari government to tackling corruption, drawing from the involvement of a senior executive member in corruption cases. The editorial isolates the President in its evaluation through the emphasis on his delayed decision. The focus on him foregrounds his influence in determining the fate of the Secretary to the Federal Government and the commencement of his prosecution.

Abdulasheed Maina's decade-long prosecution

The prosecution of the former chairman of Pension Reform Task Team (PRTT), Abdulasheed Maina, took a protracted time compared with the apprehension and trial of other social actors indicted for corruption. In extract 4, the editorial reveals the processes involved in the trial of Abdurashid Maina:

Extract 4: After a decade of high drama and powerplay, the law has finally caught up with the seemingly untouchable former chairman of the Pension Reforms Task Team (PRTT), Abdulrasheed Maina ... The Maina saga is a long-running one (*ThisDay*. November 12, 2021. www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/11/12/finally-maina-goes-to-jail).

ThisDay editorial begins its evaluation of Maina's jail sentence by noting the period it took for the accused person to be prosecuted and describes the process as embedded with political influences that resulted in the delay of the trial. It labels the period as one laden with what it describes as *high drama* and *power-play* to denote the intricacies and complexities preceding the final arrest and prosecution. The celebration of the triumph of the law is evident in the adverbial phrase *finally caught up*, which suggests an anticipated step. The description of Maina as *untouchable* amplifies his immunity from the grip of security personnel tasked with arresting him. The editorial reveals the safety measures the administration had provided him to evade his arrests and the attempts to defend his actions as a witch-hunt, even though the editorial does not agree with that stance. The editorial suggests that the Buhari administration had shielded Maina from being prosecuted and had successfully evaded several court injunctions but expressed delight at the eventual arrest and successful prosecution of the former chairman. It describes the entire prosecution as *a long-running one* to denote the period it took for justice to prevail on the case.

4.1.2 PMB's administration as mendacious

Every civilized government informs the electorates of their activities with a view to keeping them abreast of developments and achievements recorded in their administration, knowing that their actions could be impugned and subjected to national debates. 'Mendacious' as used in the study means a strategic lying technique to mislead or disorient the public about the activities of the government. The editorials discussed under this section suggest that the Buhari administration provides misleading information on several issues of public concerns. These are discussed in turn below:

Mendacity on security issues

The editorials suggest that the Presidency misleads the masses and project a different situation report contrary to the state of events in the Northeast where most acts of terrorism have been recorded in the country. The Buhari administration has constantly

declared the war against insurgency as over and the editorials point out that the report is contrary to the consistent invasion of terrorists in the region.

Extract 5: *Sadly*, military rescuers... were reportedly *killed in another Boko Haram ambush*... For some time now, *the government has been celebrating what it calls the degrading of Boko Haram*. Time and again, Nigerians have been *bombarded with the claim* that Boko Haram has been “technically defeated.” *It has thus given Nigerians a false sense of security*...the government must stop mouthing the regular platitudes about Boko Haram... *Perhaps*, it is because the Nigerian government *prefers to live dangerously in denial* (*Nigerian Tribune*, 2018:13).

In Extract 5 above, the editorial labelled the PMB administration as being economical with the truth, claiming the administration provides misleading information to the public at the expense of the masses’ safety. The expression, ‘*celebrating what it calls the degrading of Boko Haram*’ suggests the editorial’s cynicism at the administration’s claims. It further points out that assertion to readers as well as stress the consequence as negatively hindering the military from developing active measures to assess the situation objectively. The emotive adverb, *sadly*, denotes a negative connotation suggesting a tragic occurrence, and readers can preempt the subsequent information in the extract as disheartening. The editorials used words such as: *killed* and *ambush*, to foreground the setback recorded by the military. The prepositional-headed phrase, *for some time now*, presents a protracted period the administration had engaged the rhetoric of Boko Haram defeat. This is to establish that the peddling of the news on the defeat of the insurgent group had been ongoing and the adverbial phrase, *time and again*, stresses this incessant declarations of victory against the insurgents.

The ideological leaning of this representation constructs the administration as a propagandist who provides inaccurate information to mobilise support from the electorates as expressed in the rhetoric regarding the degradation of the insurgents and the medium certainty degree of epistemic marker ‘*perhaps*’, conveys this assessment. Evaluating government’s obligation to the electorate, the editorial demanded accurate reports on the administration’s activities in the Northeast rather than the popular ‘*technically defeated*’ platitude which has given a false sense of security in the volatile region, through the use of modal adjuncts (*perhaps*) and comment adjuncts (*sadly, for some time now, time and again*). Several active markers were inscribed to evoke negative feelings and convey

attitudinal expressions in the assessment. The editorial affirms that the peddling of such information has resulted in what it describes as “a false sense of security”, due to the challenges people from that region encounter.

Daily Trust further explicates on this representation:

Extract 6: The November 18 attack by Boko Haram terrorists... was *a major setback that scoured anguish and anxiety*... *Many reports allege* that the military is short of weapons of the right caliber, *If this is true*, the Buhari administration must take the most urgent steps to procure these weapons from any available source. (*Daily Trust*, 2018:17)

Conversely, the *Daily Trust* editorial in Extract 6 shifts the emphasis from the administration to the various media reports on the equipment of the military, with an emphasis on the lexical choice ‘*allege*’, to disprove contradicting opinions but proceeds to clear the air by importing the conditional ‘*if*’ to subtly avoid taking an absolute stance regarding the proposition. Judging from other reports, however, this position depicts a repudiation of the obvious, with a preference for blame-shifting. Other editorials such as the *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Punch* noted on the administration’s failure to fully equip the defense department through the following lexical descriptions: *rotten underbelly of military operations, obsolete equipment, insincerity of the military high command, operational deficiency, repeated complaints among the troops*”. The certainty epistemic marker ‘*must*’, signals the high value of necessity placed on the demand for objectivity regarding the administration’s reports on insurgency, but truthfulness, a fundamental aspect of leadership, as represented by the *Nigerian Tribune* editor, could be elusive, if not relative, when subjected to dynamic complexities of political constraints.

Vanguard editorial also provides an evaluation of the Buhari administration’s efforts to curb insurgency:

Extract 7: Why is it that Boko Haram, *which Army and Federal Government officials had consistently insisted* no longer occupied a single inch of Nigerian territory, are still able to do this to us? *Weren’t we told* that Boko Haram had been “technically defeated” back in December 2015 when this regime was barely six months in power? *What is the veracity of the unconfirmed claims* in videos posted by soldiers in the front lines that they were outmanned and outgunned by the terrorists? What happened to the \$1billion withdrawn from the

Federation Accounts by the Federal Government...? (*Vanguard*, November 28, 2018. www.vanguardngr.com/2018/11/probe-the-metele-boko-haram-massacre)

In extract 7 above, the editorial employs interrogative markers to query the contradictory reports provided by the Buhari administration in degrading the insurgent group and the rhetoric peddled by their spokespersons. The questions call to mind the accomplishment formerly advanced in the media, regarding major exploits in the region and the reprisal incidence claiming over 118 soldiers with about 150 others still missing after the attack. Aligning with putative readers, the editorial draws connections and establishes solidarity through the us-them dichotomy (van Dijk, 2002) where it assumes the authorial role of representing the masses. The government is depicted as the 'them', while the editorial and the masses are classified as 'us'. The activation The person deixis in the expression *able to do this to us* defines the class he belongs – the oppressed – while 'they' refers to the oppressors, in this case, the government. He appears to provide strength and voice to the disadvantaged through his alignment with their plights. This corresponds with Yuval-Davis (2000)'s study on the construction of identities where she reveals that the us-them dichotomy is often evident in cases of conflicts, wars, encounters with state agents or civil society members, and in such instances, elements of negation and exclusion are observable. She further posits that identity constructions are informed by similarities shared based on a range of categories such as gender, class, sexuality, even though their political values could differ. The editorial alignment with putative readers is derived from citizenship rather than socio-political conformities.

Extensive negotiation of meaning was explored in this extract and bare assertions, through interrogative tools, actively revealed the editorial's vehement grievance with the false information the Army and the Federal government were advancing regarding events in the Northeast. Negative attitudinal value was implicitly conveyed to reveal two likely things; first is the editorial's premeditated evaluation of the short period it took the administration to declare victory in a terrorist-dominated territory and the second is the implied ineptitude of the government in handling matters of such grave consequence, expressed in the sarcastically-laden clause '*when this regime was barely six months in power*'. Also, the evaluative forms of the interrogatives were of rhetorical significance (Martin and White, 2005), with no direct response required. The editor expresses doubt in the next question

about the defeat of the soldiers due to being underequipped. Through the negotiation of meaning using interrogatives, readers become aware of the challenges Nigerian soldiers are confronted with which reveals the corruption in the military agency. The revelation of the huge investment made to the defence department and soldiers' clamour for insufficient weapons triggers sets of fresh questions regarding the management of disbursed finance, which further suggests to the government's insensitivity to the masses' plight. The truthfulness of the claims presented cannot be verified as information on the progress of the Army in the Northeast is only available through their spokespersons whose constrained capacity disallows personal views except that which is offered by the military heads.

Mendacity on economic issues

The importation of goods from both foreign and neighbouring African nations have provided economic opportunities for many, despite its enormous impacts on national economy. The Buhari administration, in a bid to revive the economy, resorted to border closure in order to revive the economy and encourage local rice producers. The editorials did not condemn the efforts to salvage the economic crises but decried the abrupt border closure without appropriate provisions to cater for challenges that could emerge in the transitory process. The policy on border closure had been proposed since 2016 but its eventual implementation took effect in 2019, and the consequence has been the skyrocketed cost in goods and products across the country. The excerpts below capture the Buhari administration's defence of the report on the sufficiency of rice production in the nation before the decision to effect the border-closure policy:

Extract 8: Government should have considered making the local rice available in sufficient quantities before shutting the borders. But it did not do so. **The claim that we are sufficient in rice production has been proved wrong** (*The Sun*, October 14, 2019. www.sunnewsonline.com/the-review-of-border-closure).

The editorial decries the administration's insensitivity to the masses' plight and points out the falsehood the PMB's administration projected regarding the attainment of self-sufficiency in the production of local goods, especially rice through the evocation of negative affect to depict inconsistency in the administration's defense of its policy. The modal element, *should, but it did not do so*, captures the normative subsection of the judgement system that depict the step the administration was meant to have taken before

considering border closure, if it was sympathetic to the masses' plight. The editorial queries the administration's assertion and provides a presupposition that indicates that a claim had earlier been published. A mutual communicative stance to engage readers is revealed as the editorial provides normative values describing what concerned governments do to ensure self-sufficiency in food production. The consequence of the communicative gap is further revealed in other sections of the editorial as a step that impacts on the cost of living since the low supply of local rice production fails to meet the gamut demand in the market. The extract is still up-for-discussion and readers in aligning can readily concur or contract with this view even when the monoglossic stance was adopted in the editorial. Bare assertion was employed to affirmatively declare that prior preparations to accommodate for the eventual ensuing crisis is untrue as a huge gap was left by the action and the autonomous capacity in rice production is a departure from the obtainable.

Vanguard editorial evaluates the nation's recession and the reports released by the President's top economic policy makers who stated that an economic recovery was imminent. The editorial pitches two different views on the state of the economy – the President's team and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) – in order to present the divergent information supplied in defense of the administration's efforts in reviving the economy. The excerpt below provides insight on the government's handling of economic-related matters:

Extract 9: Incidentally, a month ago, two of Buhari's top economic policy managers were reassuring Nigerians and the global community that there were signs that an economic recovery was underway. The report by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) not only puts the lie to such re-assurances, it also leads to the question: does this government have any credible plans for economic recovery? Nigerians have been promised a Blueprint for Economic Recovery in December, 2016. We need this blueprint pronto, because most indicators look really gloomy (*Vanguard*. November 30, 2016. www.vanguardngr.com/2016/11/awaiting-buharis-economic-recovery-blueprint).

The hedging element, *incidentally*, denotes editorial engagement through a discourse marker to inform readers of an existing claim from the Presidency regarding the state of economic recovery in the nation. The reported speech conveys information to allay fears

among the masses. The declarative sentence the editorial used to describe the information as misleading and untrue serves as precursor to the interrogative structure that demands the government's plan to revive the economy. Reader engagement is heightened with the rhetorical question and punctuations are significantly employed to connect the interrogation to the preceding statement. The administration's stance on the nation's economic state is captured with the definite article denoting the actual frame of event. The representation of the nominal phrase, *the lie*, reveals the editorial's assessment and evaluative value of the report. Propositional alignment is evident in the support for the National Bureau of Statistics' opinion on the economic state than the statements of the President's economic policy makers. Readers are implicitly encouraged to share similar value position on the reports.

Mendacity on the whistleblower policy (Anti-corruption)

The Buhari's administration, in its anti-corruption campaign, developed the whistleblower policy to expose corrupt leaders who stash money in unseemly locations. This development was lauded by the editorials but the payment of the whistleblowers has been inconsistent and many reports revealed the administration's default in payment after retrieval of funds from the exposed locations. One major excuse for this non-payment was that whistleblowers could go insane on payment of the 'huge' 2.5% commission. This is revealed in Extract 10 below:

Extract 10: The agreement had stipulated that “any recovered amount from N5billion and above attracts a flat/definite reward of two-and-a-half per cent of the recovered sum,” which must be paid within 30 days of the receipt of the recovered/looted funds. But the government has defaulted in meeting this obligation to the whistleblower ... Since the anti-corruption war thrives on openness, sincerity, and transparency, the government should keep its word. This is not the first time the government is failing to honour its agreements with whistleblowers as at when due (*Leadership*, 2019. www.leadership.ng/fg-and-the-whistleblower-policy).

The *Leadership* editorial in the excerpt above activated the positive affect by commending the administration for its efforts in developing policies to combat corruption; one of which is the Whistleblower Act that grants the recipients about 2.5% of the recovered loot (Oladayo, 2021). The editorial's effort to draw readers' attention to the compensatory package designed to encourage whistleblowers, as well as the specific mention of the time

frame is reinforced through the discourse structure depicting the government's failure. The first mention of an existing agreement engages readers in the quest to know the level of progress attained by the policy which enjoyed huge publicity and the contrasting conjunctive tool, *but*, indicates an opposite step in the fulfilment of the agreement. The lexical selection of the discourse structure, *the government has defaulted* depicts the failure of the social actor to fulfill the conditions for releasing funds to the whistleblowers. The representation of the compensation as an obligation strengthens the propositional value to depict that the government cannot rescind its decision but must pay concerned beneficiaries their share in the recovered loot. Readers can draw inference from the backgrounded detail on the increased successful cases in exposing locations of stolen funds to depict that whistleblowers have been committed to releasing vital information but the Buhari government was yet to fully make payments from the recovered money. Flagging the principles of democracy (openness, sincerity and transparency), the editorial evokes meaning through the nominal constructions to proffer a solution to the problem. Active descriptive tools were utilized to stress that it was a pattern with the administration not to fulfill promises made to the public.

4.1.3 PMB's administration as reticent

The building of a sustainable democratic system is contingent on effective communication between the government and the masses but when there exists a vacuum, the spread of speculations becomes inevitable, leading to the breakdown of law and order in a society. Silence is choice-based, either by speakers or other social actors, associated with the political or social assessment of right and wrong, thus, revealing discursive operations within social engagements. Silence can be achieved through unwanted, self-imposed, complied-in, or unrealized means (Thiesmeyer, 2003) but whatever form it takes, it is still oriented towards achieving a social or political aim. The choice of 'reticent' as used in the study depicts silence or unwillingness to communicate about a matter to the public. The Word cloud below provides a textual and visual representation of the selected editorials used under section 4.1.3.

The focus of Fig.4.3a above is on the silence of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration on issues and the generated criticisms of his presidency across the country. For instance, his muteness on the allegations of certificate forgery by former Minister of Finance, Mrs. Kemi Adeosun generated waves of criticisms, and due to his anti-corruption campaign, the integrity of his administration became focal to public inquiry. Another concern was his silence on probing military high command in the Northeast region, which is believed to ensure transparency in the disbursed funds to the Nigerian Army in their fight against insurgency. The case of Pantami's appointment and public concerns regarding his ministerial appointment was also depicted in this section. Abdurashid Maina's corruption scandal and the muteness on prosecuting the exposed sponsors of terrorism in Nigeria. The Word cloud identifies the words government and administration as the most recurrent lexical item in the corpus to establish that the Buhari presidency is the subject in the discourse. It also highlighted public to represent the electorate who are involved and concerned about the state of events in the nation, regarding the government's silence in handling corruption cases and other related scandals. One of these cases was revealed in the cloud to stress the government's reticence on that particular issue and the efforts it made in keeping the scandal away from public discourse. As a result of such contempt for public opinion, the editorials aver that the administration was losing its support.

The Links feature as shown in Fig. 4.3b provides a network of the connected lexical items in the corpus:

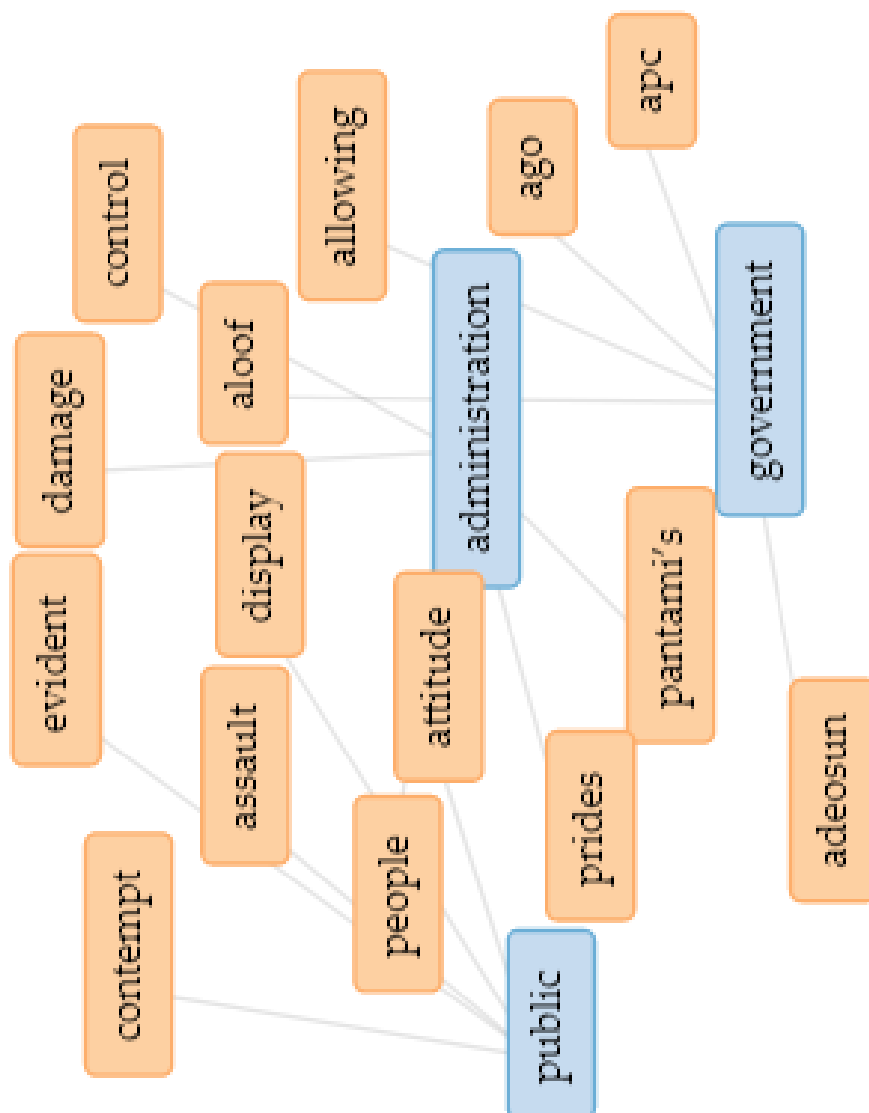


Fig. 4.3b: Links feature revealing the collocates in the corpus

The network above provides three main lexical items that are the focus of the corpus – the public, Buhari’s administration and government. Collocates to the public are people,

contempt, evident assault, display, attitude; collocates of the administration and government are aloof, APC, prides, control, damage, allowing, Adeosun, Pantami. The word selections from the editorials as represented in the Links feature suggest a deliberate attempt by the Buhari government to stand aloof on cases related to Adeosun and Pantami which could result in damage of its administration's integrity. Emphasis is placed on the political affiliation of the government – All Progressive Congress (APC) to reveal the particular political party in power. The editorials attribute the administration's action to pride which has resulted in evident contempt for public opinion in its handling of matters related to its allies, and this, according to the editorials, is doing damage to the administration.

The WordTree in Fig. 4.3c provides a lexical connection between the significant items in the corpus:

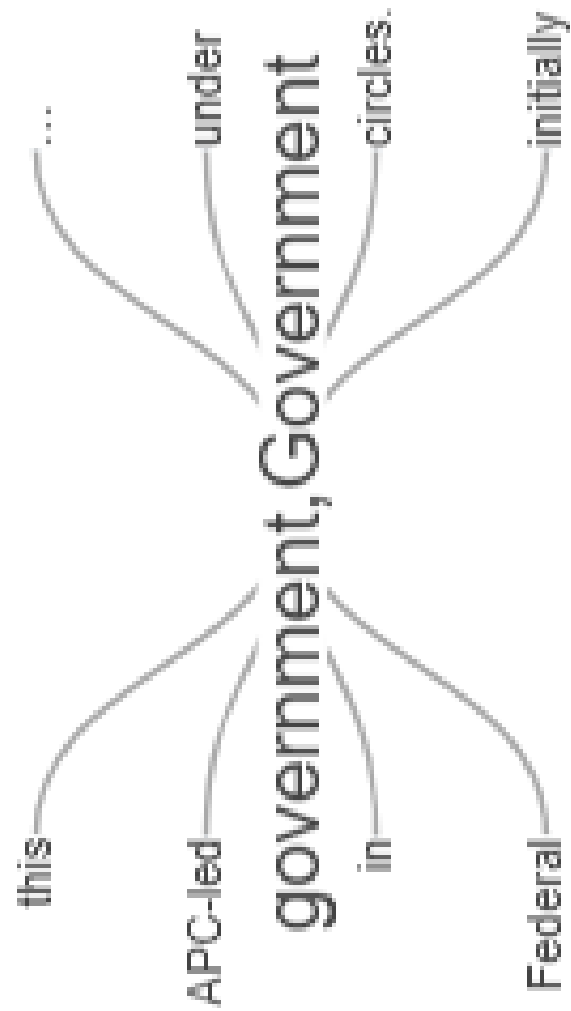


Fig. 4.3c: WordTree from the corpus tools revealing the connection of the significant lexical items

The diagram in Fig.4.3c highlights nine words that constitute the WordTree. These words are Government, repeated once, APC-led, this, in, Federal, under, circles, initially. The lexical items in the branches correspond with the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. This can be re-arranged in this manner: *under this APC-led government, the Federal government ... circles...* but the complete information this WordTree is conveying will be incomplete if restricted to the nine items it reveals, a connection to the Links feature will therefore be necessary to generate a complete perception of the editorials' opinion on the Buhari administration. It is clear that the editorials have an intended information about the government which constitute the focus of the WordTree by taking the root position and the nominal phrase *this APC-led government* suggests the peculiarity of the administration to the discourse. However, pulling resources from the Links features, the context provided in the network can offer resources to aid the semantic application of the WordTree.

4.1.3.1 Silence on matters related to close allies

The Buhari administration has been accused of being silent on corruption cases concerning members of his cabinet and supporters of his government. The issues involved are Kemi Adeosun's certificate forgery, Tukur Buratai's foreign investments, Isa Pantami's ministerial appointment, Abdulrashid Maina's alleged corruption case and sponsors of terrorism. The selected editorials address the government's handling of these cases when they emerged in the public space and they are discussed in detail in the sections below:

Kemi Adeosun's certificate forgery'

Kemi Adeosun was a former Minister of Finance during President Buhari's first term in office. She was accused of using a forged National Youth Service Corps exemption certificate which she had used through her political appointments at the State and the Federal level. When the news was leaked, for a long period, the Presidency and the Minister were silent about the scandal and provided no information in support or against the Minister. It was after much pressure was mounted that she was suspended from office.

Extract 11: ...her **deliberate silence** insults Nigerians; it is as if what the electorate thinks and says does not matter. This attitude of contempt for public opinion ever so evident, one way or another in high places, has degenerated into a norm with this government... *By allowing*

Adeosun to keep a disdainful silence in the face of the weighty allegation against her..., the APC-led government under Buhari is violating its own documented pledge. (www.guardian.ng/saturday-magazine/chronicle-of-adeosuns-certificate-saga)

The editorial begins by providing a complete appraisal of Kemi Adeosun as being deliberately silent on the certificate forgery case. Such absolute evaluation is characteristic of monoglossic positioning that permits editorials to express personal opinions to show the value position of an appraised object or event. The activation of the qualifier *'deliberate'*, that the silence was intentional and strategic rather than unpremeditated. It was a tactical measure to sweep the scandal off the media space and the description of the act as *'disdainful'* reflects the editor's negative affective value towards assessing the situation. The editorial also assumes an omniscient role to reveal the impact of the silence on Nigerians through the lexis, *insults* and extends the argument to reveal the administration's disregard for masses' views on national matters. The gerundive phrase, *'allowing Adeosun'*, clearly implies that the administration was working towards abetting the Minister and retaining her with the hope that keeping mute over the scandal could reduce the pressure in the media and, ultimately, among the masses. The editorial posits that, due to this action, Nigeria has made herself a laughing stock before other nations and her reputation as a nation committed to the sustenance of democratic values is fast eroding.

It is believed that the administration did not just delay in responding to the matter but made no public statement to either confirm or condemn the act, rather the discussion was left for open debate in the public space for a very long time. Eventually, when the government's spokesperson was going to give a statement, he noted that there was nothing else to say besides the information the respective agencies involved in the scandal had divulged. That response was grossly frowned at as unacceptable, considering the expectation of the masses after such a protracted period of muteness. According to the editorial, it has become characteristic of the administration to act in such ignoble manner, adopting a self-imposed silence to tackle matters considered speculative. The phrase, *"this attitude of contempt..."* captures the editorial's frustration and disappointment with the administration who is said to be accustomed to disregarding public opinion; however, after much pressure was mounted, the administration eventually advised the Minister to resign rather than subject her to the required legal proceedings that would have seen her spend time behind bars, this step was rather considered belated.

The editorial avers that the actor – APC-led government – is required to abide by its documented pledges rather than flouting them through compromise. From a different perspective, an assessment of this strategy suggests that silence can be a useful tool in certain instances but not always the best option in cases where agitation is brewing. The administration is depicted as employing silence, a form of propaganda to purposively redirect masses’ attention from the pressing matter of Kemi Adeosun’s certificate forgery to other things and this was adopted as a calculative medium to influence the electorates rather than take a decisive stance towards handling the situation. The result of this was the pitching of masses’ views against one another, a division along party lines, where the opposition demanded her resignation if those allegations were veritable and her loyalists clamored for her stay in office. The administration handled the matter in a way that seemed as though accountability to the masses was not an obligation but an option, and it was up to them to decide what, when and how, the information would be divulged; this does not stand consistent with the principles of democracy where masses’ demands are prioritized above personal ideologies.

Tukur Buratai’s alleged foreign investments

The Chief of Army Staff was indicted for purchasing two buildings in Dubai with public funds and the Presidency left the discussion in the public space unaddressed. The military head failed to also provide clarifications on the information but remained mute. Extract 21 below provides insight into this representation:

Extract 12: The controversy surrounding the alleged offshore investments of the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. General Tukur Yusuf Buratai, has refused to go away, *despite being swept under a growing mound of unresolved eyebrow-raising developments in government circles*. Yet, to the extent that the issue is being viewed by a section of the public that the federal government is harbouring some sacred cows in its much-vaunted anti-corruption war, it is one scandal that needs to be properly addressed (*ThisDay*, July 28, 2016. www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/07/28/the-allegation-against-buratai).

The description of the information on Buratai’s foreign investment as controversial by *ThisDay* editorial denotes the publicity of the discourse in the news media. The editorial’s inscribed emphasis on the debate that emerged from the leak is employed to imply that a response from the involved social actors – the Presidency and Buratai – would have

resolved the issue in the public space. The editorial personified the leak by attributing human quality to assert that the information has decided to remain in the media and inference is made to the administration's effort to control and mitigate its spread. The concessional elements, *despite* and *yet* are used to achieve contrast in the outcome of the administration's activities to be silent on the information. The lexical construction, *swept under a growing mound...*, buttresses the denotation of the administration's attempt to keep the discourse from public sphere. The editorial describes the event as a scandal requiring attention and it presupposes that the masses are concerned about the integrity of the President in his fight against corruption.

Isa Pantami's appointment

The appointment of Isa Ali Pantami generated fierce debate in the media as myriad opinions emerged regarding the appropriateness of his inclusion in the president's cabinet following his pasts public supports for global terrorist organisations and his inflammatory comments on the declaration of jihad on 'infidels'. Increased pressure was mounted for his resignation from the appointment as the Minister of communications and digital economy. The response of the Buhari administration was initial silence before a response was provided in defense of his 'transformed' state, averring that his past statements or affiliation are insubstantial to define his current personality.

The *Vanguard* editorial in Extract 13 reveals some elements of this representation.

Extract 13: Since the scandal over the past open support of the Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Isa Ali Pantami, for some global terrorist groups broke out about a fortnight ago, the Federal Government initially **remained aloof** to it. On Thursday, April 22, 2021 the Presidency, which had also decidedly **kept mum** over the display of public nuisance and physical assault of a parking lot attendant by the Chairman of the Code of Conduct Tribunal, CCT, Danladi Umar, finally opened up in Pantami's support (*Vanguard*. May 16, 2021. www.vanguardngr.com/2021/05/presidencys-defence-of-isa-pantami).

The *Vanguard* editorial provides bare assertions regarding the administration's position on Pantami's appointment through its description as a scandal following the contradictory stance projected by the administration who claims to fight terrorism. Perhaps, the effrontery of the Buhari administration to bring onboard a former stalwart of global

terrorists, whose exposure and connection with terrorist organisations cannot be ascertained, to steer national administration that grants access to Nigerians' data informed the outburst. This critical stance reveals displeasure and contempt at such an action and evokes negative appreciation. The editorial's description of the event as a *scandal* and *nuisance* denote the gross attention the case enjoyed in the media as the administration's support followed a wave of criticisms about the appointment which elicited apprehensive feelings and outrage revealed in the selections, *worrisome, unfit to be our minister*. Arranging attitudinal meanings to align with readers, the ensuing response of the administration was inscribed to share similar values that entrench provocation against the support for Pantami and identify with the masses, especially opponents of the appointment.

An absolute judgment was evident in referring to other social actors' role who were involved in the decision to garner support for the Minister. This form of appraisal depicts that the editorial did not open the discourse for discussion and authorial influence was activated to express disapproval at the appointment of the Minister. The lexical choices suggest that the administration purposefully chose silence before reacting to the outcry, following mass actions in the social media requesting his resignation. The eventual response provided by the administration's spokesperson was that he has been transformed and no longer shares those vicious ideologies on terrorism and that his ability to deliver on the job should override personality credibility which the media was projecting. The inclusion of the administration's silence regarding actions of Danladi Umar, the Chairman of Code of Conduct Tribunal (CCT) against a parking lot attendant heightens readers' propositional evaluation as a trend with the administration whose responses are often a disregard of public demands and inquiries.

Abdulrashid Maina's alleged corruption case

Extract 14 reveals the handling of the corruption case filed against Abdulrashid Maina, the former chairman of Pension Reform Task Team, by the Buhari government:

Extract 14: For this administration to control the damage already done, **we think that the president really needs to address the issue personally** and come up with credible explanations about how the whole embarrassing mess was wrought. He should make the report from the Head of Service upon which the decision to sack Maina was based

available. The Maina scandal has definitely become a significant blight on the record of an administration which prides itself on being a corrective one, with zero tolerance for corruption. The fight against corruption cannot tolerate sacred cows and it is time the administration showed the people it has none (*Nigerian Tribune*, October 2017. www.tribuneonline.com/the-maina-scandal)

The editorial initiates this extract with a presupposition to state that a damage had occurred as a result of the mishandling of the Maina case, and so, calls for action from the administration on the matter. Its explicit demand for a response from the Presidency to clear the air on the corruption case evokes authorial influence. His asserted authority informs readers of the media role to demand accountability from political leaders. The discourse structure, *control the damage already done*, evokes elements of provocation and disapproval of the President's support for Maina. Putative readers can infer from this assertion that certain damages had occurred and the President would need to respond in order to repair the damages. Abdulrashid Maina was a former chairman of the Pension Task Team, alleged of misappropriation of funds to the tune of two billion naira. He was believed to have been aided by the Buhari administration, who reinstated and promoted him two steps above his previous level in the civil service. The provocation of the editorial at such an act of injustice, where allies to the government are not penalised for their actions but pardoned while members from the opposition are haunted, was implicitly captured as it questions the integrity of the Buhari administration who promised to fight corruption. The condemnatory stance the editorial adopted in critiquing the administration's handling of the case reveals its discontentment at the management of the scandal. Its authorial influence was conjured when it demanded a credible explanation from the government, especially the President, in its defence of the scandal to the public. The major role of the press in holding public officers accountable is demonstrated here and even though a direct reply is not required, it is assumed that such an act would resonate with the government that its actions are being monitored and the press will not be gagged.

The silence of the administration on the case, coupled with its steps in increasing Maina's cadre, reveals an avoidance strategy to restore normalcy without observing a due legal process that would have remanded him in the corrective facility he was appointed to supervise under the Ministry of Interior where he was posted. Identifying the

administration's attempt to undermine judicial decisions on the matter, the authorial stance rejects the presidency's attempt to encourage Maina's judicial evasion which emboldens similar corrupt officials in the vice and fosters impunity. The appropriate action was to serve jail term as sentenced by a Federal court rather his escape was masterminded and championed by the administration who promoted him on his return from asylum. The illegitimacy of his upgrade is explicitly conveyed in the editorial through the evocation of lexical items, such as *embarrassing mess and damage*, to sound alarm on the administration's detour from its fight against corruption. The editorial evoked a presupposition at the beginning of the extract to assert that a damage had been made which would require a personal clarification from the President on what they define as an embarrassing mess. Through the evaluation of the administration's mantra of zero tolerance to corruption, presumed readers are drawn to evaluate the social event, using the provided propositional assessment. The nominal phrase, "*a significant blight on the record of an administration*" is preceded by the booster '*definitely*', to state irrevocably the inevitable damage the scandal had yielded to an administration *which prides itself* as averse to corruption. This relative clause connotes cynicism and captures distrust in the administration's campaign against corruption.

Sponsors of terrorism

The public demanded to know the financiers of Boko Haram after a list of names was released by the United Arab Emirate (UAE). This is buttressed in Extract 15 below:

Extract 15: The name of a Nigerian government official reportedly involved in sponsoring the terror group has not been publicly declared The disturbing fact is that the Nigerian government appears not too willing to deal decisively with this insurgency. A retired Nigerian Navy Commodore, Kunle Olawunmi, recently accused Nigerian government officials of knowing the sponsors of Boko Haram. So far, no serious action has been taken to investigate this allegation (*The Sun*. September 23, 2021. www.sunnewsonline.com/prosecuting-the-sponsors-of-terrorism-in-nigeria)

The Sun editorial states that the Buhari government had chosen to be silent in revealing the name of a government official known to be among the sponsors of terrorism in the country. This, in its opinion, indicates the administration's reluctance to fight insurgency, and its unwillingness to prosecute other people accused of sponsoring Boko Haram is

captured in the adjectival phrase, as a *disturbing fact*. It further selects from the heteroglossic positioning to draw solidarity with its views on the administration's delay in prosecuting sponsors of the insurgent group, Boko Haram. The dialogic expansion subcategory was used to attribute the statement to a retired Navy Commodore, Kunle Olawunmi. The editorial supports the external source's opinion and indirectly aligns with its value position by showing that the source conveys its opinion on the proposition by stating the failure of the administration to respond to the accusation. The editorial establishes that the source's statement was an accusation but required that there would be a response to debunk the claim but nothing had been recorded. The attributive acknowledgement was employed to reveal that even the names of the sponsors released by the United Arab Emirates were yet to be acted upon. The editorial presents to readers that the silence tactic the administration has adopted creates uncertainty regarding the prosecution of the arrested financiers. The adverbial phrase, *so far*, shows that no action had been taken since the release of the names except for a random temporal arrests without prosecution. The epistemic probability shows that the administration had not revealed reasons for its silence on the prosecution of the identified names and the proposition was left for engagement among readers to share in its appraisal of the social event.

4.1.4 PMB's administration as disdainful of the rule of law

A basic democratic value required for governance is compliance with the rule of law, which is also one of the universal features of democracy. The selected editorials reveal that the administration has jettisoned this tenet and prefers to act outside the boundaries of the law. The representation of the administration as 'disdainful' in this study connotes a state of disregard for legal procedures and the rule of law. Voyant tools reveal this representation and the links subunit provides the context of the words in a network. These are represented below:

Extracts from *The Guardian*, *Daily Trust*, *Punch*, *The Sun*, *ThisDay* and *Vanguard* editorials were fielded into Voyant to generate the word cloud above. These extracts are further discussed one after the other in this section. From the word cloud, the following words were featured repeatedly: democracy, Buhari, judiciary, Nigeria, president, Muhammadu, government, regime, invasion, orders, justice, public, country, Nigerians. These lexical items capture the focus of this section, which addressed the President of Nigeria and his handling of the judiciary, the perception of the public who perceive his government as a regime with countless orders of invasion that threatens the sovereignty of democracy in the country. The representation of the President is captured in the subdivision of the corpus tools known as collocates and this is revealed in the Links features below:

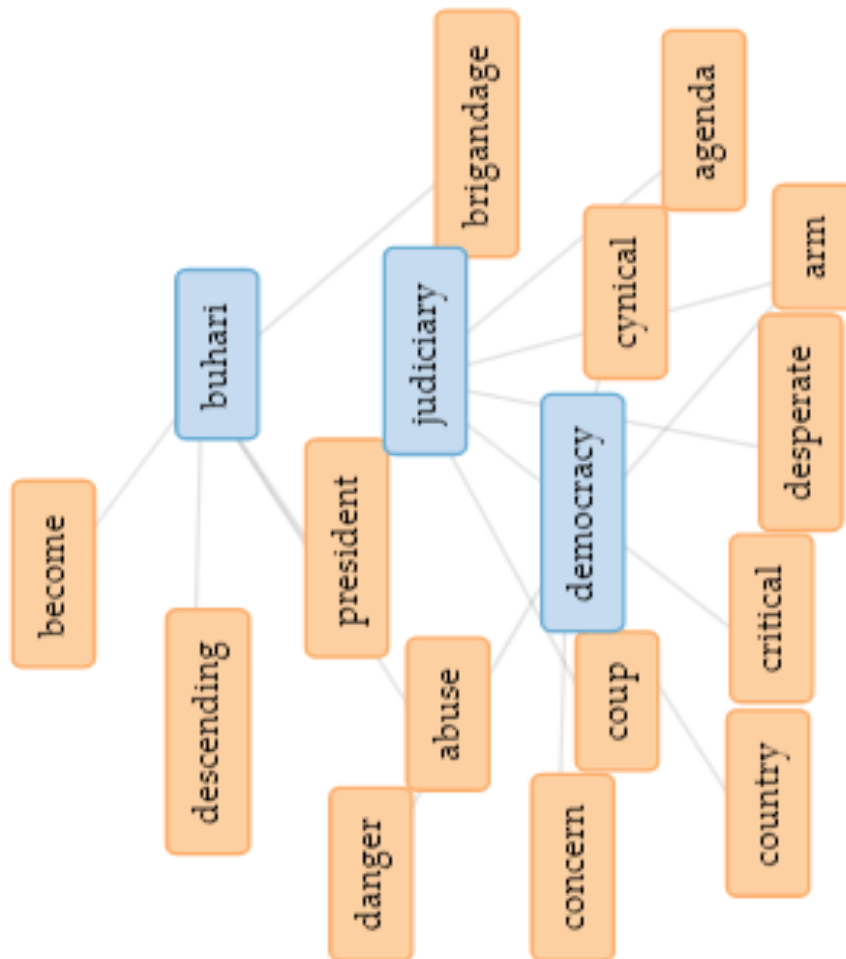


Fig. 4.4b: Links feature revealing the collocates in the six selected editorials

Source: This Researcher, 2021

In the above network, the Links reveal the connection among words. The three words in blue (Buhari, judiciary and democracy) are the central words that generated the network.

They constitute the focus of the corpus and the branches are collocations to foreground them. Buhari collocates with president, descending, become and brigandage. His handling of the judicial arm of government collocates with cynical, critical, desperate and country. Democracy collocates with concern, coup, abuse, danger. All these words provide a visual representation of the editorials' opinion of the Buhari administration. The Links network depict a list of collocations that captures the outputs and consequences of the actions of the president.

Fig. 4.4c provides a WordTree that buttresses the representations.

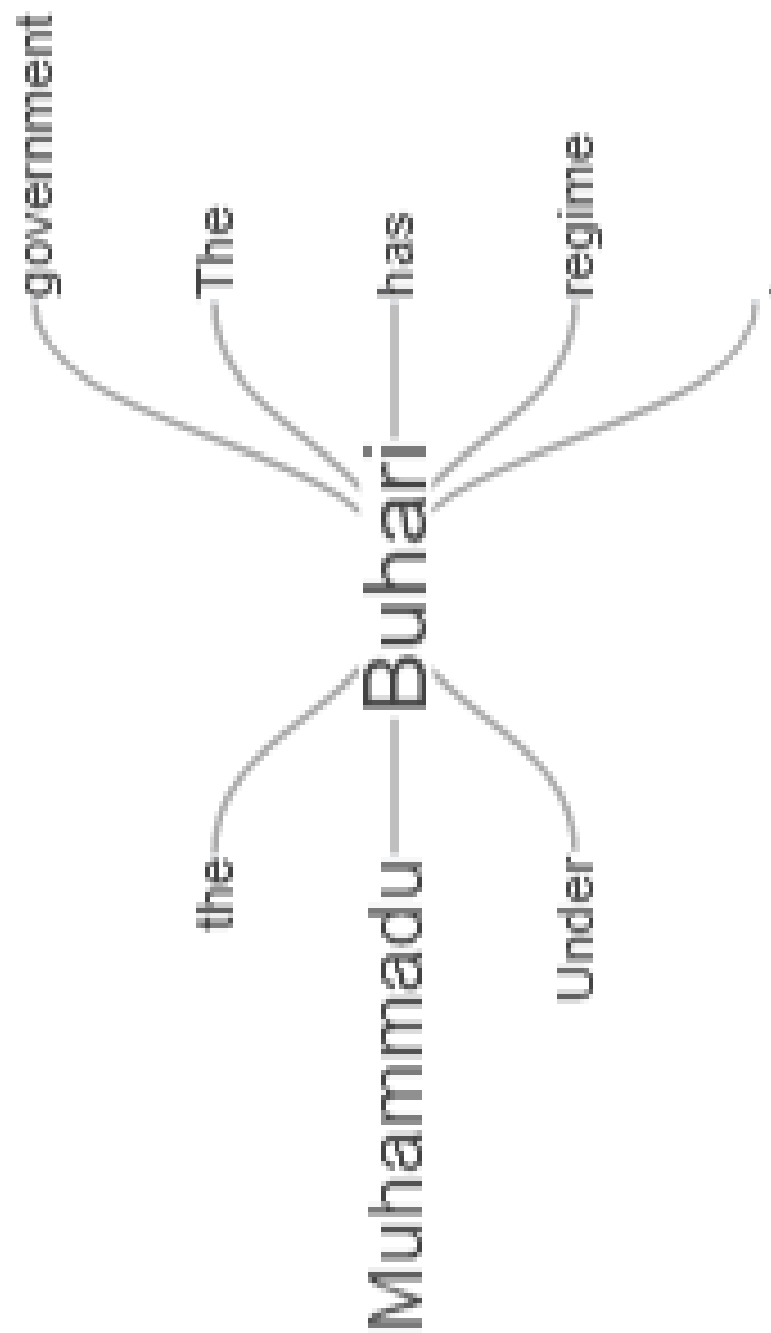


Fig. 4.4c: Word Tree illustrating the context of the selected corpus
Source: This Researcher, 2021

Fig.4.4c depicts the tree diagram for the corpus fielded into the Word cloud. The context of the information is provided to present the following words: under the Muhammadu Buhari government, it has become a regime. This textual representation reveals the opinion of the six editorials on the President's management of affairs with reference to the judiciary and the legislative arms of government. The WordTree illustrates a network of the connected lexical items within the context of the provided corpus. This shows a unanimous opinion of the editorials on the activities of the President which is believed to have transited to a military regime. The editorials aver that the operations of the President are synonymous to those experienced under a military regime. The contrast in the placement of government and regime, as revealed in the WordTree, suggests that the Buhari government has both elements of democracy and autocracy, where the rule of law is not sovereign. In the diagram, there is an emphasis on the name of the President, Muhammadu Buhari, and the branches above provides a chain of nominal phrase, the government, while the branches beneath reveal a predicate, has regime. This entrenches the dual operations of the administration as captured in the editorials.

The corpus used in the generation of these text analysis will be fully discussed in the subsections below:

4.1.4.1 Disdainful of the rule of law

The administration of President Muhammadu Buhari has been described as a return to military rule in Nigeria; a system that lacks regard for the rule of law. The editorials have identified that the administration makes some decisions without the approval of the appropriate quarters. They establish that the gap in observing bureaucratic procedures and legal proceedings are precursors to the breakdown of law and order in the nation. This theme is further discussed in the following sub-headings:

National Assembly invasion

Some armed men from the Department of State Service (DSS) barged into the premises of the National Assembly (NASS) during a house session in 2018 and the mace was reported stolen after the incidence. There were speculations on who directed members of the Department of State Service to interrupt the operations of the legislators and the Director-General was said to have given the orders. In what appeared as a swift response, the

Acting President, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo suspended the Director-General. The editorials addressed the invasion as an affront to democratic practices. The action of members of the DSS was described as disruptive by the editorials. They observed that the presidency claimed to be oblivious of the action, averring that Lawal Daura, the Director General of the agency was acting on his own. All the editorials condemned this act and referred to similar cases when PMB's administration had disregarded the rule of law. For instance, this representation is captured below:

Extract 16: *Democracy is on trial in Nigeria...* It is as if what the electorate thinks and says does not matter. This *attitude of contempt for public opinion* which is ever so evident, has degenerated into a norm with this administration... (*The Guardian*, August 14, 2018:16)

In Extract 16 above, the editorial describes the state of democracy in the nation as being on trial, consequent upon the actions of the President. The lexicalization of democracy being on trial conveys a state of despair among the electorate, due to the administration's interface with the judiciary and the legislative arm of government. Its stance is encoded in the direct speech used to assert the weakening of democratic practices under the Buhari administration. The editorial engages readers actively by evoking negative feelings to establish solidarity by observing the despicable responses of the administration to their (masses) opinions. Such activation of neglect and contempt is enhanced by the nominal clause that suggests that the opinion of the masses has become irrelevant and inactive. This is used to present a state of unaccountability peculiar with the Buhari administration. Negative emotions were evoked towards the attitudinal targets (the Presidency and Lawal Daura) in the Extracts and the ethical value of the expressions was explicitly inscribed.

The PMB administration was central to the attitudinal assessment as the editorial connected the crises in the executive and judiciary arm to the ineptitude of the administration. The judgment value of the appraised was explicitly raised as the editors selected attitudinal lexis, which constructs interpersonal meaning through the use of adjectives and modal adjuncts such as *sadly*, *undoubtedly*, *uncharacteristically*, *tragically*, among others to describe the actions of the administration. Similarly, the experiential materials foregrounded in the extract were used to evoke negative assessment of the administration, in order to trigger responses from putative readers through attitudinal inferences. The unlawful incursion of the DSS operatives was explicitly labelled for readers to share in the assessment of the entire communicative event.

Daily Trust editorial also discussed this:

Extract 17: Hope no longer lies with the judiciary because *the Executive has a well-earned reputation for serially disregarding legal restraints, and habitually refusing to pay judgment debts or obey court orders* (*Daily Trust*, 2018:17)

In Extract 17, *Daily Trust* editorial laments the state of despair in the judicial arm of government and asserts that the administration has developed a pattern with breaking the law. The selection of the noun clause, *a well-earned reputation*, literally suggests a positive appraisal but embedded within it are negative assessments of the activities of the administration. The explicit actor description used in defining the executive arm represents it as engaging in unlawful actions that contravene legal procedures. Readers derive opinion from social actors' representations and the adjective *serially* evokes a high evaluative appraisal to describe consistency in flaunting laws and weakening judicial influence. The autocratic model of government adopted by the president is under focus in this extract and it suggests a state of despair for the masses. The editorial presents the Presidency as the force behind the lawlessness in the nation, and suggests to readers that the culture for impunity has weakened the influence of the judiciary. This state of helplessness encourages cynicism among the masses whose confidence in the judiciary is consistently undermined.

Similarly, the *Punch* editorial provided insight into the invasion in extract 18 below:

Extract 18: The horizon is looking *ominous* for Nigeria... cases of *abuse of power* by the Buhari government had become *more prolific and severe*... For masked SSS officers to have locked out legislators... was *reckless and unconscionable*... (*Punch*, August 8, 2018:18)

An explicit evaluative stance was noticed in *Punch* editorial. The editorial uses bare assertions prevalently to convey its stance on the consequences of the actions of the Presidency, who emboldens impunity among law enforcement agents. Its description of the future of democracy as under threat under the administration, with constant reports on power abuse, reveals the impunity of the Buhari government in its failure to constrain the influence of the DSS. The gradative force of *more prolific and severe* amplifies the continuous nature of such cases, and suggest to readers that the degree of occurrence is high. The violation of the rule of law by DSS operatives who invaded the National Assembly was outside their jurisdiction as lower members of the judiciary. The editorial sanctioned the DSS operatives and labelled their actions as *reckless and unconscionable* to reveal its displeasure at the invasion. The prominent

ideology expressed in this representation is absolutism where the President is believed to have imported tenets of military government into democratic processes which have impugned his administrative model. Despite the absence of the President at the time of the event, previous acts of impunity had been recorded and that accounted for the editorial's outburst. The editorial believes the President's contempt for democratic principles has an ominous tendency and discourages further attempts to weaken democracy. Its representation depicts the administration as acting above the law and not operating in conformity with the rule of law. *The Sun* editorial also condemned the security operative's invasion in Excerpt 19 below:

Extract 19: We strongly condemn the April 18 invasion of the Senate Chamber of the National Assembly by thugs... The unwarranted invasion was a desecration of all that is noble and civil (*The Sun*. May 2, 2018. www.sunnewsonline.com/the-invasion-of-the-senate)

There were elements of labelling in *The Sun* editorial where the DSS agents were described as *thugs, invaders, hoodlums, intruders*, judging by their unlawful invasion into the National Assembly, and while other editorials blamed the administration for its role in fostering the operations of the security agents, *The Sun* provides a likely social actor assumed to have masterminded the invasion. As the puzzle becomes complicated, arising from the Acting President's alleged ignorance of the action and the unconstitutional operations of the department outside presidential approval, the editorial provides a discourse up-for-discussion, which is made opened to readers to conclude as it fails to establish a concrete perpetrator contrastive to other editorials who blamed the Buhari's administration. Selecting from mental processes depicting attitudinal assessment of the operative's incursion, readers can perceive the bureaucratic gap existing in the Presidency, judging from the various reports emerging after the invasion. Similarly, the monoglossic positioning expunges external sources and opinions regarding the propositional value of the discourse as the editorial maintains negative affect and judgment represented in lexis such as sad incident, ugly incident, worse outcome, very troubling development, unwarranted invasion, brazen and premeditated attack, etc. to convey displeasure at the incursion. Establishing solidarity with readers, person deixis are observed in the editorial, *the rest of us, our security forces*, to negotiate meaning through identification that suggests shared experiences.

Invasion of Justice Odili's residence

The residence of a senior justice of the Nigerian Supreme Court, Justice Mary Odili, was raided by unknown armed security operatives. The editorial made reference to previous invasions of judges' residences which began in 2016. The invasion under discourse has been described as unlawful in Extract 20:

Extract 20: The consensus now is that some operatives of the current administration seem desperate to destroy the judiciary in pursuit of sinister agenda ... it came as no surprise under *an administration in which security agencies whimsically disobey orders from the courts*. Yet, what should not be lost on the authorities is that when a critical institution like judiciary is destroyed for political reasons, our democracy will be imperilled and everyone loses. *The growing recourse to lawlessness and brigandage should worry President Muhammadu Buhari* (*ThisDay*. November 2, 2021. www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/11/02/the-invasion-of-justice-odilis-residence).

The editorial promotes the view that certain entities are committed to destroying the judicial arm of government. The temporal deixis, *now*, indicates that the conclusion was drawn after a period of close evaluation of the administration's efforts to weaken the influence of the judiciary. Readers can agree that its conclusion was not baseless but derived from conscientious observations. It presupposes the existence of what it describes as a *sinister agenda*. Justice Mary Odili is the second in rank in the Supreme Court of Nigeria and an invasion of her residence has been described as a recourse to lawlessness and brigandage. *ThisDay* editorial suggests that under the administration of President Buhari, security officials disregard the rule of law and fail to honour its sanctity. The modal adjunct *yet* provides a consequence of such act. It presumes that the raid was politically motivated and such selfish ambition could jeopardise the supremacy of the law. The editorial aligns with readers by evoking identity with them through the lexical selection of the nominal phrase *our democracy*. The Buhari administration is implicitly captured as impervious to the security matters in the nation as the editorial states that it is becoming a trend.

The suspension of the Chief Justice of Nigeria (Justice Walter Onnoghen)

The Chief Justice of Nigeria was suspended from office without appropriate legal procedures due to the failure to declare his assets. The *Vanguard* editorial reveals the administration's handling of the issue in extract 21:

Extract 21: The purported suspension of the Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Hon. Justice Walter Onnoghen by President Muhammadu Buhari has put our hard-won democracy in great danger. It was a coup against the judiciary, the third arm of our presidential democracy; a cynical violation of the principles of separation of powers (*Vanguard*, January 29, 2019. www.vanguardngr.com/2019/01/onnoghen-our-democracy-in-danger)

The editorial discusses the inappropriate dismissal of the Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Hon. Walter Onnoghen, by the Buhari administration, due to failure to declare his assets. The power play exerted by the administration is decried through the selection of *purported* which suggests inappropriateness in the administration's decision to suspend the Chief Justice. Power is derived from privileged access to position, wealth, knowledge, affiliation, education, etc (van Dijk, 1993) and authority is often asserted due to such influence. The president was considered to have acted due to the power he draws as the head of the executive arm of government. However, the editorial condemns the act and establishes in other parts of the editorial that the presidency does not possess absolute right to suspend the Chief Justice but as the legislative arm was instrumental in his appointment to office, in like manner should his dismissal be. The condemnation of this approach, void of legal procedures, was to engage readers and present a fair evaluation for them to conclude or assess the propositional value of the text. According to the editorial, the decision to suspend a Chief Justice of the federation lies within the power of the legislative arm of government who would assess the allegations levied against him and if found culpable, they would apportion the appropriate punishment. The risk such swift decisions pose to what the editorial called *hard-won democracy* is grave as it undermines the invested power of the judiciary whose roles are well defined in the constitution.

The editorial attitudinal evaluation of the phrase, *coup against judiciary*, evokes elements of judgment that conjure memories of military incursion into the Nigerian politics that spiraled whatever achievements founding fathers recorded into a reverse route. Described as "armed politics" (Olorungbemi, 2015), he provides and differentiates between two forms of coups.

First is the overthrow of the government by an external group desiring a change of power and the next is the violation of constitutional laws by a constituted administration breaking its own laws using available resources. The latter is evident in the extract above where the administration contravenes its law in order to achieve a non-constitutional action by sidelining the influence of the judiciary to enforce its authority, and the editorial describes such act as a *cynical violation of the principles of separation of power*.

Alluding to the administration's failure to adhere to constitutional provisions, the threat of arriving at an edge became evident. Also, the deletion of the president's office to address him by name depicts a deliberate attempt to emphasise his departure from his statutory roles as the President meant to comply with constitutional provisions. A contrast was later observed in the editorial when the *president's action* was used rather than *Buhari* and that was mentioned in the ambit of the consequence of his illegal suspension which he claims possesses the ability to set an edge on the nation. The meaning was negotiated to establish identity with readers through the taken-for-granted stance provided, as readers were presupposed to possess a similar community of shared values regarding the proposition. In the expression, *further cast a shadow of doubt*, readers are expected to possess mutual contextual information about previous actions of the administration leading up to this final development where there appears to be no remedy to its image repair.

Attack on #EndSARS protesters

Nigerian youths took to the streets to protest the harassment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) in a coordinated manner but the government clamped down on the peaceful protesters. Efforts were made to disband the notorious Police division but the replacement provided by the government was rejected by the youths who claimed severe torture and harassment while interfacing with this Police unit. The brutal attack on the defenseless protesters, whose peaceful walks were interjected by government-sponsored agents, were decried in the *Punch* editorial below:

Extract 22: If there is anything the retired Major General Muhammadu Buhari regime has displayed as remarkably as its obvious ineptitude, it is its aversion to public criticism. And for all its deficiencies in bettering the lot of Nigerians, it has surprisingly shown effectiveness in clamping down on dissenting voices ... *Under Buhari, Nigeria is fast descending into a full-blown dictatorship. His increasingly authoritarian style of leadership* provokes some

concern about the future of democracy in the country and well-meaning Nigerians must rise against anything that will take the country back to the Dark Ages. The vibrant energy the regime is displaying in its clampdown on protesters can better be used to meet their demands, which are serious, genuine and long overdue (*Punch*. November 12, 2020. www.punchng.com/harassment-of-endsars-promoters-should-stop/).

The *Punch* editorial activates the central social actor who doubles as the appraised and addresses him by his former title as a military Head of State, President Buhari had served during the Third Republic and his policies at the time had been described vicious and stringent. However, a deliberate attempt to describe him as a retired Major General, eliminating his current office under a democratic rule connotes the editorial's decision to address the situation at hand as it appears. The description of the Buhari administration as a regime recalls the activities of military rulers and the editorial suggests to readers that the current actions of the President do not differ from those he exhibited during his autocratic rule as Nigeria's Head of State. Negative connotations are evoked through the authorial stance that provided evaluative assessment of the proposition.

The extract is not up-for-discussion and the monoglossic positioning is adopted to convey grievance and frustration at the actions of the President. The editorial suggests that the administration is unskilled in handling public criticism at every level and a solution often adopted is to silence voices that might contradict or protest against its policies and actions. The normative subdivision of judgment is foregrounded through intertextuality, where similar protests are handled without government's intervention. The editorial assesses the duties of what he describes as a civilised government; thus, implying that the Buhari administration is crude and uncivilised. Further bare assertions are evoked to establish unmediated inscribed judgment (Martin and White, 2005) in the discourse structures, fast descending into *a full-blown dictatorship, increasingly authoritarian style of leadership, Gestapo-style*.

The freezing of donors' accounts by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) was one of the items the editorial raised as a means to silence the protesters and another was the unleashing of open fire at protesters who remained undeterred on numerous occasions. The threat to democratic practices in the nation was highlighted in the editorial as they could restore ominous moments such as were experienced during the military rule. The editorial employs a sarcastic expression to convey the administration in a positive light

through the nominal phrase, *the vibrant energy*, to admit the strength of the administration but the ensuing statement contradicts the surface meaning to imply that the exertion of this strength is only geared towards dissidents.

This description of the administration as a regime does not only reveal lexical representation but also unveils a pragmatic evolution of the innate military tendencies of the President. High evaluative values were evoked through the word *Gestapo*, the official name of the secret police force in Germany during the Nazi regime, notable for brutality, violence and ruthlessness, to describe the Buhari's precedence for violation of democratic rules. The similarity drawn between the two appraised actors was deliberately utilised to reveal the severity of the state of lawlessness in the Buhari presidency. The gestapo was a dreaded group in the Nazi regime, whose fearful reputation was first established by enforcing masses' control through fear and intimidation instead of encouraging compliance to law and order (Lauerman, 2000). Putative readers' judgment is shaped by this transition and they share the propositional representation of a lawless government whose aversion to public opinions and criticisms are no longer concealed.

The comparison with the Nazi police was made in relation to the administration's reaction to the clampdown of the #EndSARS protesters whose clamour to end the police division notorious for violence and extortion were met with the vehement response that resulted in the death of many Nigerian youths. The editorial avers that PMB's administration was plummeting the nation into the dark ages when it attacked the unarmed peaceful protesters. Generally, protests depict masses' displeasure and grievances (Burke, 2015) against the government's policies and this is fundamental to democracy as it is classified under a citizen's democratic right to engage in rallies and marches against the government's acts of injustice and insensitivity. Although perceived as a threat to governance, the editorial through intertextuality cites instances of developed countries where riots and protests are prevalent and how such are handled. The labelling of PMB as a dictator and those who hijacked the protest as hoodlums, terrorists, criminals and rioters creates a polarization between the protesters described as peaceful and the government with their paid intruders as violent.

4.2 Engagement tools in the negotiation of meaning

In negotiating meaning with readers, the selected editorials utilized various engagement strategies, likely to determine readers' agreement or objection to the value position. The editorials can contextualize their views using dialogistic, attitudinal or intertextual positionings reflecting the angle views are projected. Since editorials are characterized by an embedded internal authorial voice expressing the positioning of a writer's viewpoint towards a proposition, objectivity often becomes inconsequential and the stance adopted in editorials is dependent on their personal assessment of the subject matter. In the data, the editorials utilised various forms of engagement to negotiate meaning with readers. Both monoglossic and heteroglossic engagement strategies were used to communicate opinions, condemn policies, commend certain developments, acknowledge positive efforts the administration had made, demand for justice and conformity with the rule of law.

Similarly, various linguistic tools are used in engaging readers in the negotiation of meaning and these include deixis, interrogatives, hedges and boosters. These will be fully discussed in the subsequent subsections.

4.2.1 Authorial influence in negotiating meaning (monoglossic positioning)

The monoglossic form of engagement is used to negotiate meaning with readers and maintain a polarized affective value which can be positive or negative. This form of engagement is observed in the excerpts below:

Extract 23: However, while *we believe* that these and many other issues really need to be addressed and *we are of the view* that the fundamental lesson of the attack in Metele, Borno State, is that the counter-terrorism operation in the North-East is basically flawed if not a hoax (*Nigerian Tribune*, December 6, 2018:13).

In Extract 23, the monoglossic engagement technique was used to capture the *Nigerian Tribune* editorial's assessment of the PMB's administration in tackling insecurity in the Northeast. In a monoglossic engagement, authorial judgment is prominent and opinions formulated by editors are evidently stated with no reference to other sources. For instance, the editorial clearly established its position against the activities of the administration in the Northeastern region and its assertive stance represents commitment to the truth value of the proposition. The verbal selections – *believe*, *affirm*, *insist*, *state* – reinforce the

editorials' affirmative positions and its stance towards the actions of the administration. Less emphatic choices could have replaced these selections but in order to commit to the propositional value, the degree of affinity is emphasized. The authorial presence communicates to readers that the information is directly a representation of the editorial board's views and not referenced from a source, thereby subjecting such opinions to personal judgment. The assessment provided derives from the ideological leaning of the editorial board that establishes the need for the government to resolve issues of insurgency. The editorial provides an appraisal of insecurity issues in the Northeast and concludes on a specific lesson emerging from the evaluation – the Buhari's activities in tackling insurgency still remain unproductive. Readers can share in the presentation of the evaluation and judge the war on terrorism as ineffective.

In Extract 24, the editorial reveals its opinion:

Extract 24: *We want to affirm*, without any fear of contradiction, that the lawlessness demonstrated by Daura, assuming that he actually acted alone, was fostered and nurtured by the government itself (*Nigerian Tribune*. August, 2018:13).

The editorial expresses its stance on the Director-General's order of Department of State Security (DSS) operatives to invade the National Assembly. The authorial voice activates judgement on Daura's action, which it describes as an act of *lawlessness* and inferred that the Buhari administration fostered the decision. The skepticism expressed by the editorial depicts disbelief and doubt in the reports stating the Director-General was unaware of the invasion. The assertive voice employed denotes the editorial's certainty and confidence in the evaluative process. The clause, *we want to affirm*, is used to denote the collective opinion of the publishing firm on the event and a clear stance is maintained to reveal confidence in the shared opinion. The assertive voice employed by the editorial reveals assurance laden with fury at the action of the Director-General. The violation of the rule of law is believed to undermine democracy.

Similarly, this view is shared by the editorial in the excerpt below:

Extract 25: All told, *as we noted here the other day*, to make democracy safe, man must not be allowed to rule. It is the law that must rule because it is above all. (*The Guardian*, August 14, 2018: 16)

The authorial assertion of the editorial in extract 25 above is emphasized to inform readers of its norm in providing information on national issues. The discourse structure, *as we noted here the other day*, employs both person and place deixis to describe the editorial board and the editorial page. This presupposition suggests to readers that the editorial has a practice of addressing issues and something related to the discourse has been earlier addressed. This is further activated to presume that readers going through the specific editorial have also read previous editorials. The editorial positions the proposition to connect with readers and establish solidarity with them. The epistemic modality to signal the necessity for the prioritization of the law above humans entrenches the authorial influence. Even though within democratic practices, the law should be placed above personalities, the contrary circumstances emerging warranted the statement.

In denouncing the slow response of the President to Maina's corruption scandal, *ThisDay* editorial provides its opinion in the extract below:

Extract 26: We therefore feel that the Maina scandal and the issues it has thrown up make this period a defining moment for President Buhari. He has, for so long, paid lip service to the fight against corruption. This is a golden opportunity for his administration to demonstrate its commitment to that cause (*ThisDay*, October 25, 2017. www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2017/10/25/the-maina-recall-scandal)

The editorial's position on the scandal is encoded in the pronominal plural subject, *we*, to express the perception of the board on the matter. The verbal element, *feel*, denotes a mild assessment of the implication of the scandal on the President. However, subsequent sentences in the extract reveals stronger judgement values that invoke social sanctions on the administration's handling of the anti-corruption war. The deixis, *this*, constructs the time of the communicative event as significant in defining what steps the President would take in prosecuting Maina.

The Sun editorial expressed its stance on the discourse related to border-closure in the extract below:

Extract 27: All the same, *we believe* that the indefinite closure of the borders should be quickly reviewed to stem the rising prices of essential food items. The latest Consumer Price Index (CPI) shows that food prices across the country have risen by over 65 per cent. Prices of staple

foods affected include rice, frozen chicken and others. The closure of the borders has pushed food prices above the reach of most Nigerians (*The Sun*, October 14, 2019. www.sunnewsonline.com/the-review-of-border-closure).

The Sun editorial shares its board's stance on border closure policy, which it believes should be quickly addressed. Its presentation of data to corroborate its analysis provides a detailed evaluation to readers. Much attention was paid to the state of events in the nation and the consequence of the administration's policies in order to help readers comprehend the deepening challenges in the nation. It establishes solidarity with readers by supplying details through the process of negotiating meaning. Its position focused on the implication of border closure on food supply in the nation.

In the extract below, the *Daily Trust* editorial clearly expresses its authorial voice on the silence of the Buhari administration on Kemi Adeosun's certificate forgery:

Extract 28: *Daily Trust* has summarized where matters stand... *Let us state it firmly* (*Daily Trust*, 2018:17)

Daily Trust in Extract 28, clearly asserts and reiterates that the editorial was condemnatory of the administration's way of handling the various issues that have been raised in the editorial. By standard, the administration is expected to act based on its documented pledge to the nation during the campaign and maintain law and order, as well as fight corruption but the contrary has been recorded and the monoglossic positioning explicitly conveys the editorial's position on the state of affairs in the nation as well as guide readers in drawing inferences from the entire issues raised. Another expression of the monoglossic positioning where editorials pitch their stance towards a proposition is revealed in the *Daily Trust's* editorial on Kemi Adeosun, where a brief overview of the Minister's career was provided, averse to other editorials who reported the online newspaper's account of the scandal. This form of writing presents the editor as an omniscient character with all necessary information about the appraised person without referencing any source and conclusions are drawn based on the information supplied to readers as would be obtainable in a direct speech. Such a form of engagement draws readers into the meaning-making process where details are provided for judgment and assessment to be made. By presenting a background to the certificate forgery, readers are permitted to draw conclusions on the evaluative value of the proposition.

The *Leadership* editorial presents a positive appraisal of the Buhari administration's efforts in improving the economy through the development of policies that enhances local production of rice. This stance is discussed in the extract below:

Extract 29: *This newspaper commends* the resolution of the rice farmers and millers because *we believe* policy makers can make the price of local rice competitive with that of smuggled ones. It will also encourage farmers and millers to produce more and make rice affordable to the average consumer of the product (*Leadership*, 2019. www.leadership.ng/curbing-rice-smuggling).

The Buhari administration had enforced border closure in order to encourage local production of rice in the country and discourage national reliance on importation of goods from both foreign and neighbouring African countries. The *Leadership* editorial evokes an appreciative value to acclaim the administration's effort in encouraging local farmers in rice production in order to boost the economy. The activities of rice farmers and millers in Nigeria, to work unanimously to ensure that the demand for rice production commensurate with its supply, are acknowledged. The editorial backgrounds the Presidency and directs appraisal to the farmers and millers of rice. The efforts of these social actors would have been evident if the Presidency had not created an enabling environment for them. The depiction of the rice farmers and millers' collaboration in growing the economy by processing rice that could be of good quality as those previously imported suggest to readers that efforts are ongoing in the improvement of local rice production. The editorial indirectly admits that smuggled rice are on high demand and the price of locally-produced ones could similarly become competitive.

Similarly, in the *Leadership* editorial, the extract provides warning as a means of establishing solidarity with readers:

Extract 30: *We caution* that any attempt to forcibly gazette and commandeer the ancestral patrimony of any Nigerian community will worsen the already existing bloody conflicts rather than solve the situation (*Vanguard*. December 9, 2019 www.vanguardngr.com/2019/12/ruga-by-another-name)

The editorial evaluates the decision to enforce the grazing bill and cautions the action. The pronominal plural, *we*, connotes the editorial board's stance on the Buhari government's plan on RUGA. The predicate, *will worsen the already existing bloody conflicts*, provides

a background for the clashes existing between farmers and herdsmen across the nation. The evaluative value of the extract suggests a current state of unrest that should not be fostered. The editorial warns against the intensification of the growing security challenges and adopts mild evaluative values to assess the policies and actions of the Buhari administration.

The *Punch* editorial reveals the editorial stance on what it describes as the President's dictatorial tendencies and this is represented in the excerpt below:

Extract 31: While we will be the first to assert the bedrock principle that no one is above the law, the recent events have crossed the line from law enforcement into a brazen intolerance for dissent (*Punch*. August 8th, 2018:18).

In another editorial, *Punch* editor claimed to be the first to advocate for the supremacy of the rule of law in relation to the unconstitutional actions of Lawal Daura, the Director-General of DSS and blatantly criticized the administration; thus, presenting a strategic propositional analysis expressing the opinions of the newspaper. The preponderant use of the subjective and objective first person plural pronoun, 'we/us' reflects the monoglossic dimension of the statement as the editors clearly established their authorial influence, defining the content of readers' alignment with no entertainment of multifarious views that could expand on the shared values. It is often taken for granted that the editorial writers know more than the readers and the information provided would suffice in enhancing solidarity; thus, their preferred active role. In the above, the editorials clearly expressed their positions and maintained a condemnatory stance towards the actions of the administration.

4.2.2 External voices in the negotiation of meaning (heteroglossic positioning)

Editorials often cite external sources to support or distance themselves from propositions that are in alignment with their opinions.

In defense of Kemi Adeosun

The editorial in the excerpt below utilizes heteroglossic positioning in the excerpt below to defend the former Minister of Finance, Kemi Adeosun:

Extract 32: In the words of a former director-general of the NYSC, Brig-Gen. Maharazu Tsiga (rtd) ..., a retired NYSC director of mobilization, Mr. Anthony Ani **said** ..., reacting to the issue, Prof. Itse Sagay, a professor of law, **said** ... *...ostensibly* concerned that she might *run into trouble* for skipping the mandatory scheme, she, *procured a purported NYSC exemption certificate* (*The Guardian*, September 15, 2018:16).

In this extract, the editorial does not endorse the information supplied but uses the attributive dialogic expansion similar to Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia, to reference other sources. The absence of authorial presence signifies the distancing of the editor from the supplied information and refusal to take responsibility for the sources' views; thus, attributing the opinions to other actors. Drawing from van Leeuwen's social actors: personalisation, identification, specification, grouping and status, the editorial identified the names of the sources – Brigadier-General Tsiga, Mr Anthony, Prof. Itse Sagay, and Sagir Gezawa, Lai Mohammed – and specified their status and high level of influence as an apposition to the subjects (*former Director General of NYSC; former Mobilisation Officer; a professor of law; a lawyer and the Minister of Information*, respectively) in order to affirm their submissions as well as connect with readers in a personal way. He could have left their names unreferenced but the identification of their names and status was aimed at connecting with readers to trigger sentiment while leaving them to draw conclusions from the provided alternative view.

In cases like these, readers' engagement is heightened as the writers step aside and have less authorial presence, even though the projected statuses are meant to influence readers to be in alignment with editorial position but this is mostly implied. Similarly, Prof. Sagay's interview on Kemi Adeosun's certificate in *The Guardian* editorial was meant to provide a legal perspective to the entire scandal but its positive assessment and insistence on retaining the Minister on the grounds of her astuteness and commitment to the job did not conceal the editorial's preference of a negatively-implicit judgement value to denounce the Minister's action. The choice of the comment adjunct depicting obviousness, *ostensibly*, and the lexicalisation of '*purported*' correspond with the disclaims of '*run into trouble*', '*purported NYSC exemption certificate*' which reveal the tokens of the implied connotations, as the editorial condemns, first, the action of the Minister who was expected to be an ambassador of the 'anti-corruption' crusade of the administration she served, and secondly, her 'disdainful silence' on the scandal.

#EndSARS donors' frozen account

In 2020, a nationwide protest was organised against Police brutality, especially, the Special Anti-Robbery Squad and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) froze donors' accounts to inhibit the operations of the protesters. Rotimi Akeredolu, the Governor of Ondo State, made some comments in support of this stringent development. The *Punch* editorial refers to the statement and cites it as an external source in its appraisal of the proposition. The extract below provides detail on this:

Extract 33: Ondo State Governor, Rotimi Akeredolu, got it all wrong when he said, "It was clear that some people were getting to fund this for reasons other than #EndSARS. So, if we know money moved from some accounts that were suspicious, do you say the government should keep quiet?" It is all witch-hunt! Has any financial sponsors of the protests complained of being swindled? (*Punch*. November 12, 2020)

The editorial criticises the statement of the Governor of Ondo State, Rotimi Akeredolu, on the Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) freezing of donors' account. The contract disclaim subdivision of the engagement system was used in the assessment of the proposition. The editorial reveals its stance on the action of the Governor in the predicate, *got it all wrong*, by combining elements of authorial influence with reference to his statement, to signify heteroglossic expression of the proposition. Tokens of inscribed judgement are revealed to denote the editorial's disalignment with the Governor's statement. The editorial describes the statement as a form of clamping down on the donors in order to impede the progress of the protest. Eliciting the polarized interrogative domain, the editorial enquires if any report had been filed denoting discrepancy and justifies the supports of the donors to the protest. The negotiation of meaning is activated to engage presumed readers in assessing the credibility of the Governor's stance on CBN's action.

Invasion of the National Assembly invasion

The next two excerpts are from the *Nigerian Tribune* on the Metele attack and the DSS invasion of the National Assembly. Their presentation of other sources' opinions is revealed below:

Extract 34: However, in a swift reaction, *Acting President*, Yemi Osinbajo, announced the sack of the DSS Director General, Lawal Daura. In a statement issued by his spokesman, *Osinbajo claimed* that the Daura-sanctioned siege on the National Assembly had no government imprimatur (*Nigerian Tribune*, August 9, 2018: 16)

Extract 35: ... It is not about Ike Ekweremadu, nor is it about Yakubu Dogara. I am speaking for my colleagues when I say that this is about the soul of Nigeria, what we represent as a country, and our standing in the comity of nations.” *We agree with the Senate President* that the country was indeed put to shame by the sordid display and it must be emphasised that this was all an outgrowth of the Federal Government, the executive which has superintendence over all security agencies, not sufficiently appreciating the independence of the legislature (*Nigerian Tribune*, August 9, 2018: 17. www.punchng.com/harassment-of-endsars-promoters-should-stop).

In Extract 34, the editorial disendorses the proposition and takes no responsibility for the views of the cited source but the acknowledgement of the social actor's status and the name attributed the submissions to the sources and distanced the editorials from the statement provided. The editorial expresses disapproval at the peddled rhetoric of the Acting President, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo on the DSS Director-General, Lawal Daura who was said to have acted without the Presidency's approval during the DSS invasion of NASS. It believes that the abuse of power under the Buhari administration had become a norm with officials elected into office with cases of them acting without observing appropriate protocols; although the accuracy of such claims appeared insubstantial, judging the editorials' linguistic preference of 'claim', 'alleged', 'stated' as used in other parts of the editorial. In essence, the editors attributed the statements to other sources and detached their writings from the sources' submissions, using the exclusion strategies to exculpate their stance. The editorial disclaims the reports and fails to drum up support for the proposition, thus, drawing an aspect of dialogic contraction (disclaim) to enunciate its stance.

Also, in Extract 35, the editorial draws from the appraisal category of dialogic contraction (proclaim) to endorse the submission of the Senate President who condemned

the invasion of the National Assembly by officers of the DSS, describing it as ‘*a show of shame*’ and an act of cowardice by desperate groups who seek to destabilize the democratic process in the nation. Despite the use of collective person deixis, the communicative implication was to support an external source’s view on a similar proposition. The authorial voice texturizes the editor’s identity, indicates validation of the views and pronounces absoluteness on the statement, thus constraining readers to judge using its lens, just as the explicit epistemic modal ‘cannot’, a negative assertion, corresponds with the editor’s commitment. The Speaker’s comment fully aligns with the editorial stance, reflects shared value judgment and strengthens commitment to what readers are expected to believe.

4.2.3 Intertextual positioning

Intertextuality positioning is a sub-form of dialogistic positioning and it is concerned with linking other texts that are considered relevant to a proposition and drawing parallel in order to establish a point. It could take the form of direct quotation, reported speech, irony, allusion or parody (Montgomery, 2019). This is revealed in Extract 36 below:

Extract 36: In 2004, the United Kingdom Immigration Minister, Beverly Hughes, resigned her appointment ... This is *the minimum irreducible standard in other democracies...* In France, it was a case of high drama in June last year when two ministers resigned under 24 hours after they came under investigation (*The Punch*, July 27, 2018: 18).

The Punch editor in Extract 36 was addressing the ensuing silence of Kemi Adeosun following her certificate scandal and cited instances that occurred in two developed countries, where an Immigration Minister in the United Kingdom resigned on account of a visa scam, and in France where two ministers similarly resigned on the indictment of Parliament funds mismanagement. These patterns were expected to be yardsticks for measuring accountability in public service; thus, the editor maintained that resignation was a standard in the event of cases as these. This was intended to trigger readers’ feelings in the negotiation of meaning to establish ideological inclination and generate a specific assessment position. Morality as an inscribed value judgment was also raised to invoke readers’ alignment with the proposition while implicitly making a stance. Prior to the eventual resignation of the Minister, this editorial already offered a moral and legal ground in handling the situation and it was no news when she eventually stepped down from the office. The inference drawn from this intertextual

positioning informs readers about the obtainable global moral standards that influence their judgment of the matter.

Extract 37: The growing recourse to lawlessness and brigandage should worry President Muhammadu Buhari. On 6th December 2019, a group of armed DSS officials invaded the Abuja Division of the Federal High Court presided over by the Justice Ijeoma Ojukwu while she was sitting. Apart from disrupting proceedings, the security personnel manhandled Omoyele Sowore in a desperate bid to arrest him in defiance of the orders of the court which had admitted him to bail (*ThisDay*, November 2, 2021. www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/11/02/the-invasion-of-justice-odilis-residence).

The editorial in the above extract makes reference to the invasion of DSS operatives at Omoyele Sowore's court trial. Although the initial discourse was the invasion of Justice Odili's residence by the officials from the same institution, the editorial refers to previous unlawful activities of DSS officials to establish solidarity and achieve fairness in its evaluation of the social event. It is expected that most putative readers will agree with its stance through the provision of similar circumstances where such acts had gone unsanctioned. The adjectival phrase, *growing recourse*, depict that the action had been recorded on several occasions and it was attaining a high level. The President's attention is drawn to the unlawful operations of the DSS even though the editorial does not clearly state it but the modal adjunct, *should*, depict expectation from the Presidency in addressing the menace that was already impugning on its integrity as a law-abiding leader. Omoyele Sowore's re-arrest in court was cited to elicit emotional engagement with readers. The uproar and heat the event generated in local and foreign media was enormous as it was described as a violation of human rights and globally denounced. The intertextual connection was selected to engage readers and make them engage the editorial in the light of its stance.

The *Punch* editorial in extract 38 discusses the circumstances around the freezing of donors' accounts during #EndSARS.

Extract 38: Let us get it straight: there is nothing illegal or criminal in donating for peaceful protests as it is the practice in all free and democratic societies unless we want to go the way of China, Russia or even worse, North Korea. There was an outpouring of financial support against police brutality when on May 25, 2020, a white Minneapolis police officer named Derek Chauvin knelt on George Floyd's neck until his body went limp. There was a

GoFundMe by Floyd's family to cover funeral and burial costs; counselling services; legal fees; and continued care for his children (Punch. November 12, 2020 www.punchng.com/harassment-of-endsars-promoters-should-stop)

The editorial denounced the freezing of the donors' account during the #EndSARS protest. Donors' accounts to fund the protesters' activities were frozen by the Buhari government to frustrate the protest. The editorial referred to other nations who stifle citizens' freedom of speech. The establishment of the appropriateness of peaceful protests as a democratic right preceded the comparison with those nations. This is to make readers follow the construction of opinion and editorial stance on the discourse. The editorial defined the protest as peaceful in order to allay worries and stir concerns. The reference to George Floyd's case in the United State depicted the norm in advanced nations. Such intertextuality is intended to engage readers in the idea that peaceful protest is an obligatory right of every citizen in a democratic society. Even though the social actor in the referenced case, George Floyd, is late, the protest was sparked by outrage from the black communities in the United States and embraced across the globe. The donors whose accounts were frozen were not actively involved on the street to protest unlawful assaults from the Nigerian Police but served as supporters to aid the process.

4.2.4 Linguistic properties in the negotiation of meaning

Engagement features are actualised through various tools, such as deixis, modal adjunct, comment adjunct, interrogatives, hedges and boosters, conditionals, and cohesive devices such as: conjunctions, pronominal expressions, collocations among others. Editors use these tools to amplify, buttress, expound and establish their views in order to engage prospective readers who become the abstract dialogic partners in the writing process. Opinions and views are constructed through these devices and prospective readers are expected to denote the underlying messages conveyed in the lexical devices. Each of them will be discussed hereunder:

4.2.4.1 Deixis as an engagement marker

The sampled data manifest the use of deictic devices to represent authorial positions, collectiveness, indicate the time and location of social events, as well as identify with corroborative opinions. They are discussed below:

4.2.4.2 Deixis as an authorial assertion

The editorials in engaging readers utilize deixis to establish editorial stance, perspectives and opinions. Such forms of authorial presence in discourse reveal the influence they wield in shaping public opinions. Direct speech is a peculiar feature of this linguistic choice and it is used to address political or economic institutions and relevant authorities to respond to pressing demands of the masses. In cases where authorial assertions are used, the plural pronominal deixis is prevalently employed to reveal that such propositions are reflective of organisational ideologies and not specific to individual editors. Also, the actions are conveyed, using active voice, to present a clear stance that could take the form of recommendations, warnings, commendations, acknowledgments, among others. Readers can judge such opinions as representations of the publishers' perspectives, which vary with editorials.

The contextual use of the plural pronominal subject (*we*) depicts authorial positions; in a context, it is used to affirm solidarity, in another context, it condemns the government's actions towards handling issues and consistent attitude of disdain for the rule of law and in another clime, it expresses grief, displaying emotional feelings towards the loss of soldiers in the fight against insurgency (Metele attack). The multifarious outlook of the editorial board suggests dynamism and the ability to assume various roles as determined by the nature of the editorial. The below extract contains elements of deixis where authorial presence is activated:

Extract 39: *We call on President Buhari* to consider the recommendations contained in the Asaba Declaration. Some of the recommendations have indeed been accepted by the Northern Nigeria Governors' Forum and the Arewa Consultative Forum. *We commend* the governors on this bold move. (*Nigerian Tribune*, May 19, 2021. www.tribuneonlineng.com/nigeria-this-edifice-will-fall-if)

The provided extracts illustrate instances of authorial activities through the pronominal plural subject (*we*). Editorials utilized this linguistic element to foster editorial opinions and in some cases, establish authorial influence. In the first extract, an assertive verb is used in the declarative sentence to address the office of the President in requesting he acknowledges some recommendations. Presupposition is also used to signify that a meeting was held by some unspecified people in Asaba

and members of the Northern Nigeria Governors' Forum, together with representatives of the Arewa Consultative Forum have openly declared support for the developments raised during the meeting. Earlier, the Southern governors held a meeting in Delta State to decry the state of insecurity and condemn open grazing policy proposed by the Federal Government. The resolutions reached at the meeting were published in the media but the editorial takes it for granted that the President is aware of such recommendations. Authorial influence is further enacted with the editorial commending and giving a positive evaluation of the governors' action in supporting their counterparts from the south. This evaluative position enunciates the media as a powerful arm of governance that provides the watchdog role of evaluating the activities of the government.

In the below extract, the editorial similarly adopts deixis to reflect authorial voice.

Extract 40: *So, while we welcome the concern of the Senate* on the attack on our soldiers, *we call for definite and decisive actions* to prevent further attacks (*The Guardian*, December 5, 2018:16)

In extract 40, the *Guardian* editorial adopts dual deictic expressions involving alignment with similar views and assertion of authorial influence. First, it acknowledges the Senate's concern regarding the invasion of the National Assembly (NASS) by members of DSS as a threat to democracy. The concession reveals a form of heteroglossic contraction, where support is given to a shared opinion and solidarity is established with opinions that are aligned with authorial views. The use of the pronominal plural subject 'we' is used to denote that the editorial expresses the views of its publisher and the possessive adjective 'our' extends the discourse to other units of the society who are representing the masses. The dual identity it reveals shows solidarity with its publishing firm and also identifies with military officials whose lives are at risk for the sake of the nation's security.

Extract 41: *We want to affirm*, without any fear of contradiction, that the lawlessness demonstrated by Daura, assuming that he actually acted alone, was fostered and nurtured by the government itself (*Nigerian Tribune*, August 9, 2018: 17)

In Extract 41, the authorial influence of the editorial is revealed as it demands a swift response to stall future occurrences. The editorial adopts an affirmative stance to

criticise and condemn Daura's action. The choice of the prepositional phrase, *without any form of contradiction*, entrenches the authorial influence and suggests to readers its confidence in communicating the veracity of the claim. Daura, a nephew to the President who doubles as the Director-General of DSS, had been accused of giving orders to the DSS operatives to invade the National Assembly but the editorial maintains that the presidency fostered such action since Daura does not possess the constitutional right to solely interrupt any government agency. The deictic expression presents a stern representation of the editorial stance regarding the ignoble action.

The *Punch* editorial also utilizes deixis in communicating its stance in the extracts below:

Extract 42: *While we will be the first* to assert the bedrock principle that no one is above the law, the recent events have crossed the line from law enforcement into a brazen intolerance for dissent (*Punch*, August 8, 2018: 18)

The *Punch* editorial employed a strong condemnatory stance to condemn the notion that the law was subjective. Its position on the sovereignty of the rule of law as a binding force reveals a defense in upholding the standards of the law. Its authorial assertiveness is expressed in dual forms; first, as being ahead of other editorials in pointing out the weakness of the Buhari government in adhering to the law, and next, as possessing an omniscient duty of informing the public of conformity to the legal procedures. The editorial projects a luminary status that presupposes its access to firsthand information. In the last extract under this category, the authorial influence is used to demand for the implementation of a plan on the transformation of livestock in the wake of the mayhem inflicted by herdsmen on farmers across the country. This differs from the use of the verbal process, *call on President Buhari*, as evident in Extract 42 above, where it is used to plead with the government. The activation of its role heightens the proposition by attaching a form of urgency to the demand and presenting it as a propitious approach if implemented. The implicit condemnation of forceful possession of lands by herdsmen presupposes that lands of many individuals have been seized in the past. Thus, the presentation of this as a sustainable solution reveals an assurance from the editorial.

4.2.4.3 Deixis as collectivism

There were cases of deixis used to reveal collectivism in the editorials and some of them are captured in the extracts below:

Extract 43: The sacrifices of *our heroes of democracy and those of the ordinary citizens* could not have been to bring these acts of repeated embarrassments upon the country.... Thus, corruption is dangerous to the health and growth of *our economy*. Former Finance Minister and Co-coordinating Minister for the Economy, Mrs. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, has blamed *our lack of strong institutions* which should act as a check on the excesses of officials (*The Sun*, May 12, 2018. www.sunnewsonline.com/government-should-rejig-the-corruption-war).

In the extract above, the possessive adjective *our* is used as deictic expressions to identify with readers and blur whatever gaps that could exist between them. It is used to create the us-them dichotomy, where the editorials and the people are one and the government is another agency suppressing or subjugating them. For example, in extract 43, *The Sun* editorial presents a patriotic model that allows for the defense of heroes who have sacrificed for the freedom the nation has enjoyed. The selection of the nominal phrase, *the sacrifices of our heroes*, suggests that the current crop of leaders are unfit to be described as heroes. This is enunciated in the predicate of the same sentence, where the lexical construction of *acts of repeated embarrassments* describes the contribution of the contemporary government to nation building, contrary to the applauded efforts of patriotic nationalists who laid the foundation. The editorial also deploys a similar construct in referring to the economy. It pitches itself as the voice of the masses, representing their views to aver that there is a common ground existing between them and corruption is a threat to its growth and development. Political actors are implicitly captured as corrupt while the masses are victims of their unlawful engagements. A third person was introduced in the discourse to foreground its opinion on the limitations that corruption has yielded. The alignment drawn in this extract identifies that public officials possess excesses that allow for unaccountability to the electorate.

The *Vanguard* editorial uses deixis to present its disapproval of Pantami's appointment in the extract below:

Extract 44: Pantami, as a preacher, had declared “fatwa” on people. As Minister, he deployed security operatives to chase Abike Dabiri’s staff from a Federal Government facility in Abuja. He is unfit to be our minister. The Presidency’s defence of Pantami is unacceptable. He must go (*Vanguard*, May 16, 2021. www.vanguardngr.com/2020/08/before-corruption-kills-nigeria)

The appointment of Ali Pantami was sternly condemned by the *Vanguard* editorial who declared the appraised entity as unfit for a ministerial appointment. It presents justifications for its conclusion, some of which were that the concerned person had in the past identified with terrorist organisations across the world and his current connections cannot be determined. It also highlighted some statements declaring jihad on groups of people his sect describes as an infidel. The Minister’s antecedents as a staunch supporter of terrorism were highlighted to establish he was unfit to lead the nation. The editorial also suggests that the public have a role to play in determining those who rule them and their concerted efforts could yield a positive outcome. The editorial makes reference to the subject’s former religious role as an Islamic cleric who had declared fatwa on people. Fatwa is defined as a verdict or pronouncement on a debatable matter, which is issued by a mufti, otherwise known as a learned Islamic cleric (Mozaffar, 2002). Fatwa can only be declared by someone with a form of authority, recognized under the Islamic law (Mehmood, 2015), such as the fatwa declaration of war Osama bin Laden issued against the United States of America in 1996. The editorial alludes to fatwa in the extract as a form of jihad on groups of people Boko Haram classifies as infidels. Another justification was provided to justify the editorial’s position on the appointment of Pantami. The editorial presents both religious and moral justifications as reasons for the disqualification of the Minister. The collective deixis, *our*, is used to create alignment and solidarity with readers while the government is captured as a separate entity. The deictic expression evokes an abstract connection between readers and the editorial to signify that they are in the same category of the governed.

The Federal Government reacted to a report on its silence on Fulani herdsmen and its failure to arrest and prosecute any of them. The extract below provides information on the use of deixis by the government's spokesperson to represent the administration's opinion on the matter.

Extract 45: We believe and strongly insist that criminality perpetrated by some miscreants should not be used to demonize other responsible and decent members of the same ethnic group. The collective demonization of any ethnic group because of the misguided behaviour or conduct of criminals is improper and no responsible government will ever do so (*The Sun*. September 6, 2018. www.sunnewsonline.com/buhari-not-indifferent-to-farmers-herders-clashes-presidency).

The editorial cites the President's response to criticisms emerging in the media regarding its silence on matters concerning Fulani herdsmen who were accused of disrupting the peace of the nation. The collective subject, we, captures the representation of the government's stance on the matter which it does not believe has enjoyed fairness and transparency. The evocation of the grammatical element denotes that the spokesperson's statement is a reflection of the government's view on the matter. We believe and strongly agree are two essential items that amplifies this. The description of the editorials that published the report on the administration's biased treatment of the Fulani as miscreants presents the same conclusion on the matter. The collective element is derived to signify that the view is a shared one among the social actors.

4.2.4.4 Deixis indicating time and location

Spatial and temporal deixis were observed in the editorials to reflect context of discourse, as well as describe specific moments certain social events were carried out. These are explicated in the below extracts (46-47)

Extract 46: This is the minimum that is required at *this* time, a joint, multi-pronged, well-coordinated onslaught backed by air and naval power. ...as we noted *here* the other day (*The Guardian*, 2018: 16)

In Extract 46, *Guardian* editorial used the demonstrative discourse deixis, '*this*', to specify the basic requirement for combating insurgency in the Northeast at the time of writing. The temporal deixis signifies that the nation was at a threshold of breaking down due to terrorism and there was a required manner insurgency was meant to be tackled.

The editor stresses the dire circumstances surrounding previous terrorist attacks and since it was no longer a crisis peculiar to the nation but had extended its influence to other neighbouring countries, a concerted effort would be most appropriate in tackling the challenge rather than a single-handed strike which had consistently proven futile. The context substantiates the deixis as it situates it within an event known to the readers.

Similarly, the choice of the cataphoric reference, to expatiate the initial information with respect to the meeting held in Chad to mobilize neighbouring countries in strategic plans, foregrounds the deixis. The deictic ‘this’ was repeated in the Extract and they do not perform similar roles; the former was a cataphoric indicator pointing to a standard measure for combating insecurity – *a joint multi-prolonged, well-coordinated onslaught backed by air and naval power* – while the latter functions as a temporal deixis pointing at a period such actions are deemed most appropriate in the nation. As posited by the editor, there was no better time to stage a counterattack than when other neighbouring nation States were suffering similar crises and a merger of armed forces for collective result would prove effective and productive in the mission to degrade the Boko Haram sect.

In Excerpt 47 below, the use of deixis to signify time and location is further explicated:

Extract 47: The PDP can weep from *now* until there is no tear in their body; she is going to be *there*. We cannot afford to lose *that* woman (*The Guardian*, September 15, 2018:16)

The editorial in the above extract makes reference to an external source in its editorial on Kemi Adeosun’s certificate forgery who also selects from the temporal and spatial deixis to denote time and location. The temporal deixis captures a transient period the opposition can complain about the President’s handling of the charges against the former Minister of Finance, Kemi Adeosun. It identifies significant roles the Minister had played in office and justifies the silence of the administration on the scandal. The heteroglossia representation reveals the speaker’s commitment to the defense of the Minister who had been accused of certificate forgery. Its stance is for the opposition to ignore the scandal and focus on the value the Minister had contributed to the economic resuscitation in the nation. The reference of *there*, in this extract is used to indicate the office the Minister held at the time of the scandal. She was the Minister of Finance who had gained the

supports of some loyalists in the Buhari administration and the support she attracted was sufficient to prevent her from being prosecuted. The person deixis, we, suggests confidence in the Minister's qualification and expertise which are believed to be very resourceful to the Buhari administration and the final proximal deixis in the extract, that, denote the specific social actor involved. It is used to establish mutual communicative setting with readers who are aware of the person being referred to. The deixis also plays the role of an adjective to signify the level of competence and experience the Minister possesses.

4.2.4.5 Deixis corroborating alternative sources

The editorials cited external sources to support their claims and views, so that readers can draw opinion and judgement on the proposition. In the extract below, the editorial provided an intertextual link between the invasion of DSS operatives and the assault on the Governor of Benue State, Samuel Ortom. The statement of Wole Soyinka was cited to corroborate *Punch* editorial's view on the invasion.

Extract 48: Specifically, on Ortom's travails, Nobel laureate, *Wole Soyinka, says*, "Coincidences are, by their very nature, suspect, and I certainly perceive the beginnings of a heavy-handed campaign of reprisals from ruling circles over your political decision...This bodes ill for the nation. It goes beyond any immediately-affected state and alerts us all to fascistic threats against a common democratic destination, and the basic right of free choice of political paths towards its attainment." *We agree* (*Punch*. August 8, 2018:18).

A direct quotation was used to import the Statement of the external source. Editorials, sometimes, paraphrase the views of cited sources but the use of quotation marks denotes the editorial's intention to retain the exact statement made by Soyinka in order to allow readers evaluate the value position of the proposition. The editorial endorses and validates the statement as representational of its views on what it describes as a reckless violation of the rule of law. The authorial presence aligns with the external voice and fails to alter the structural or grammatical arrangement of the statement. The basic simple sentence, consisting of a pronominal subject and a lexical verb (*we agree*), explicates the editorial's support for the proposition. The subject is a person deixis 'we' used as an attitude marker to corroborate the opinion of Professor Wole Soyinka. This strategy is employed to reference similar views supportive of the editorial's stance.

4.2.5 Interrogatives as an engagement tool

Within the context of the editorials, questions were used for different reasons divergent from their use in broadcast talks or interviews. They are engagement tools devised to establish solidarity and establish a relationship with them. There are cases of interrogatives deployed in the respective editorials to negotiate meaning.

Extract 49: The questions continue: on account of what is in the public domain now, can Adeosun vouch for the authenticity of her exemption certificate? Why is the NYSC itself finding it difficult to come out and state the exact position on this matter? Could it by any chance be true that the Senate, which in the past had been accused of extorting money to clear nominees for ministerial positions, did not notice any infraction during Adeosun's screening? What about the State Security Service? Did it also escape their supposed eagle eye scrutiny? (*The Punch*, July 27, 2018:18).

The interrogatives, in the above extract, were used to elicit engagement, aligning readers with the propositions. The editorial triggered the rhetorical functionality to negotiate meaning, as conclusions drawn from the questions would constitute readers' judgment of the appraisal. The editorial engaged readers on Kemi Adeosun's certificate scandal, appraising social actors involved in the entire saga; from the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) staff who purportedly issued exemption letter, to the Senate who confirmed her appointment as a Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the State Security Service who were supposed to ensure compliance with the requirements of the law regarding serving in public offices. The initial sets of questions initiated by the editorial were polar-oriented even though no direct response was required but they were to involve readers in the evaluative process in order to query the administration's defense of the Minister. Similarly, of the five forms of *wh*-question, only the *explicit domain wh-question* was used in the two cases identified in the Extract to heighten the engagement mode and limit responses. The editorial selected from *why* and *what* categories to rhetorically request the role of the government agencies involved in the case. The questions were directed specifically to the NYSC and the State Security Service respectively; this explicitness of the targets helps readers easily understand those involved in the scandal and target attention to them. Also, the editorial's position suggests that all the actors failed in their responsibilities to ensure a proper scrutiny of credentials was undertaken before swearing in the Minister into office. The editorial

blames these agencies for their negligence. Readers are engaged to realize that an adequately effective and functioning system would have identified this gap earlier and inhibited the administration from suffering such decisive blow from the public on account of their misgiving. The wh- questions were mostly employed in depicting the failure in administrative procedures meant to ascertain strict compliance with the constitutional demands.

In the next extract, the house invasion of a legal luminary was discussed and the editorial utilized questions to evaluate the act.

Extract 50: There are several wrinkles on the face of this matter. Was this a case of mistaken identity since Justice Odili's residence is not No. 9 Imo Street but No. 7 Imo River Street? Since there have been robust denials from the Attorney General and Minister of Justice Mr Abubakar Malami, DSS and EFCC, who did it? Was it the police or any of the other security forces? Were they gunning for Mrs Odili's husband Dr Peter Odili, former Governor of Rivers State who recently sued the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) over the seizure of his international passport? (*The Guardian*. November 2, 2021. www.guardian.ng/opinion/raid-on-justice-odilis-residence-why).

The editorial above provides series of questions to evaluate the circumstances that led to the raid of the Justice Odili's apartment by unknown security officials. This is a form of high engagement that engages readers in assessing the value position of the proposition. The rhetorical questions aid the negotiation of meaning between readers and the editorial. The questions in this extract are all rhetorical and require polar responses except for one wh- question demanding the instigator of the raid. The editorial extends the proposition to include the spouse of the appraised, the former Governor of River State in order to reinforce the political hierarchy of the personalities involved. Speculations are raised in the questions elicited to provoke engagement.

Extract 51: Simply stated, RUGA is a better approach to modern agriculture and animal husbandry. Should government proceed with Ruga or discard it? (*Leadership*. July 30, 2019. www.leadership.ng/ruga-and-national-integration)

The editorial above directs its question to presumed readers and demands active engagement from readers through the use of the polar question. This high engagement results in the negotiation of meaning on the need for the establishment of grazing routes

for herdsmen across the country. The topic had generated heat in the media and the editorial's decision to adopt an open-ended discussion frame, invokes feelings of indifference, acceptance or disapproval of the policy.

Interrogatives in journalism mostly accommodate for prefatory statements designed to provide an existing context for enquiry and in the process clarify the relevance of a question that could have appeared confusing to listeners (Clayman, 2010). These prefatory statements in some instances provide a background to subsequent chains of enquiry designed to pose inquisitiveness in readers' minds.

In the next extract, the editorial uses interrogation to also negotiate meaning:

Extract 52: If the DSS was not involved in the tragedy at the High Court, what did its operatives apologise for? To all intents and purposes, the current administration is certainly the most blatantly anti-law and the most uncivil since the return to civil rule in 1999. If the cases of Sowore; former National Security Adviser, Col. Sambo Dasuki (retd) and leader of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), Mr. Ibrahim El-zakzaky, and those of the thousands of other Nigerians currently languishing in jail without trial illustrate anything, it is the fact that the Buhari administration has become a potent threat to the rule of law and democracy. Pray, if court orders are not to be obeyed, why should courts exist at all? Does the administration intend to silence the judiciary and turn the courts into theatres of fascism? (*Nigerian Tribune*. December 16, 2019. www.tribuneonlineng.com/onset-of-dictatorship).

The conditional-headed subordinate clause, *if*, presents a preface to the first question. The background information it provides sets the stage for subsequent series of enquiry to inform readers of events preceding the questions. The editorial selects from the non-polar question to demand the reason for the apology supplied by DSS operatives if it was not culpable of the charges against it. The proposition presupposes a denial of DSS operative's intrusion into court during the trial of Omoyele Sowore. The ensuing sentence buttresses the editorial's perception of the Buhari administration's attempt to desecrate the rule of law and undermine judiciary influence. The next question provides a normative value of conformity to court rulings which it insinuates has been flouted on several occasions by the administration.

Another example of preface is observed in extract 53 below:

Extract 53: *At the core of it all is how a 'technically-degraded' insurgent group could muster enough strength to wipe out 44 men of the army in one fell swoop. Was there failure in intelligence gathering? Were there no surveillance aircraft deployed in the combat zone? Did somebody sleep on duty? Did the hierarchy of the Nigerian Army fail the fallen men? (The Guardian, December 5, 2018: 16)*

In the above Extract, *The Guardian* editor provides preface to buttress his judgment on the insurgency in the Northeast and this prefatory statements trigger a high level of engagement which draws readers to share his views on the proposition. His questions bothered around the activities of the military in the Northeast, querying the preparedness of the army against insurgency. Furthermore, the existential presupposition (Yule, 2000) in the prefatory sentence suggests that the military, expected to be fully armed, suffered a vicious attack from an insurgent group which claimed several lives and the polar questions were aimed at probing the circumstances that could have instigated that.

These interrogatives largely suggest a condemnatory stance than a process of eliciting information which appears to criticize the actions of the military in the region and subjects their activities to public scrutiny; thereby permitting readers to critically appraise the situation as well as maintain solidarity with the editor. Preface, as used in this extract, enables readers to assess the enquiries from the editorial's standpoint as well as query the claims of the administration. The background information of how the insurgent group that had been conquered could be so coordinated to conduct a strike that dealt vicious blows to the Nigerian Army triggers a high level of engagement that activates chains of imagination in readers' minds. Subsequent questions of likely things that could have made the operation in the Northeast unsuccessful are pivotal to eliciting enquiries leading to the assessment of the reports provided by the military base. In detail, the veracity of the government's claim regarding the defeat of terrorism in Northeast stands queried in the light of such a reprisal attack that left almost 44 soldiers dead.

Extract 54: *Pray, if court orders are not to be obeyed, why should courts exist at all? Does the administration intend to silence the judiciary and turn the courts into theatres of fascism? (Nigerian Tribune, 2019. www.tribuneonlineng.com/onset-of-dictatorship)*

The *Nigerian Tribune* editorial elicits questions to establish the editorial on Sowore's re-arrest by members of the DSS whose invasion into the Federal Court was described as unconstitutional. The sovereignty of the law in a democratic society as Nigeria was

scrutinized and evaluated. Readers are likely to perceive the administration as contravening law orders to grant bail to the prosecuted and the autonomous tendencies of the administration have brought the legal framework of the nation irrelevant as only the executive arm wields power without caution; the consequences of which are grave.

Extract 55: The crux of the matter is: should terrorists who have shed blood and massacred thousands of people re-enter the society under the guise of deradicalisation? What of their victims, and the innumerable widows and orphans they have created? (*Punch*, August 2, 2017. www.punchng.com/boko-haram-deradicalisation-a-misplaced-strategy)

The interrogations in the above Extract are deployed to elicit engagement and query the rationale behind such programme: This creates empathy towards the victims and resentment for such violent group and the consequences of their integration were expressed through intertextuality, drawing from similar cases that occurred in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, France, and other countries where the action resulted in more death cases after the deradicalisation of extremists. According to the editorial, normative principles obtainable in developed countries such as allowing the law fulfil its course and the prosecution of arrested members to serve as a deterrent to others would be best implemented in this case rather than their absorption into the Nigerian polity. The assertive stance of this editorial corroborates Eilder (1997)'s study, whose submission states that editorials adopt an active position in communicative processes by influencing putative readers' attitudes through their choice of expressions. The targeted audience would perceive the government as insensitive to their plight and sympathetic to the insurgents whose penitence cannot be verified, and so, evaluate the PMB as supportive of the perpetrators of evil.

4.2.6 Hedges and boosters as engagement devices

The editorials engaged putative readers through hedging and boosters to minimize and expand the force of propositions. Some examples of hedges observed in the data are **comment adjuncts:** put bluntly (*presumptive*), not (*polarity*), unwittingly, surely, obviously (*obviousness*), surprisingly (*predictive*), in truth (*admissive*), curiously (*evaluative*), we are of the view (*opinion*); **modal adjuncts:** perhaps, certainly, possibly (*probability*) always (*usuality*), even, actually, simply, just, really, quite (*intensity*), definitely (*obligation*). These are fully discussed below:

4.2.6.1 Negotiation of meaning using hedges

The editorial in extract 56 avers, in its assessment of Justice Odili's residence invasion, that some powerful individuals authorised the invasion.

Extract 56: Perhaps some high officials of the current administration who are abusing their powers do not understand that anyone can become a victim of impunity (*The Guardian*. November 2, 2021).

The editorial hedges from presenting the proposition as a fact and contextualizes the probability to reveal uncertainty in the representation of the high official's actions. It presupposes the likelihood of oblivion in the consequences of the unlawful steps taken to invade the residence of a senior Justice of the Nigerian Supreme Court. The probability denotes an abuse of office by those concerned and the backgrounding of the culprits' identity strengthens the value of the proposition. Readers can take the proposition as up-for-discussion, where editorial's stance is unestablished and equivocal on the discourse.

In the next extract, *Leadership* editorial comments on the rural grazing settlements proposed by the government to end the farmer-herdsmen clashes. The hedging tool employed is discussed below:

Extract 57: That has not been an easy task, molding Nigeria into a country where tribes and tongues differ but are integrated into one indivisible tribe and tongue, *possibly* by deferring to one of the native tongues (*Leadership*. July 9, 2019. www.leadership.ng/ruga-and-national-integration)

The editorial provides a likely option for national integration and presents it as an opinion that could be considered. Hedging is used to express editorial's view on a unified lingua franca for the nation. This could be due to the sensitivity of the discourse and the conflict it might likely produce while evaluating the value position of the assertion. The editorial makes allowance for a likely forward-going language policy that would integrate the entire ethnic societies in the nation as one. It further hedges from identifying which of the existing three national languages should be adopted as the official language. The attitudinal stance of the editorial towards the communicative content is expressed for readers' engagement.

4.2.6.2 Establishing solidarity using boosters

The editorials employed boosters to foreground their claims and engage readers in the evaluative processes. Boosters as active engagement devices are examined under this category. For instance, The *Punch* editorial used boosters to engage readers in the extract below:

Extract 58: It is *certainly* a starker irony that he was, upon reinstatement, posted to the Ministry of Interior which supervises the prisons, where he ought to have been had he been found guilty of the allegations against him. (*ThisDay*, October 30, 2017. www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2017/10/25/the-maina-recall-scandal).

The mood adjunct in the Extract above, *certainly*, is a high value probability, expressing the editorial's affirmative force to the proposition. It enhances the impact of the editorial's objective view while reinforcing its stance on the subject. The booster is also used to indicate mutuality between the editorial and readers in order to direct readers' attention to a similar conclusion. The editorial shares its conviction with readers on the posting of Maina to the Ministry of Interior where he should have been remanded on corruption charges. The ironical embellishment projects a contrary turn of event. The epistemic marker reveals assurance in the judgement value of the editorial on the scandal and high illocutionary force is used to express confidence on the appropriate state of event.

In the below extract, the *Vanguard* editorial uses booster to establish its stance on the unlawful suspension of Justice Walter Onnoghen:

Extract 59: We *strongly* believe that if the due processes are followed, there is no way that Onnoghen can escape justice if culpable (*Vanguard*. January 29, 2019. www.vanguardngr.com/2019/01/onnoghen-our-democracy-in-danger)

A high epistemic modality marker is deployed in the representation of the editorial's stance on the Buhari administration's illegal suspension of Justice Walter Onnoghen. The booster, *strongly*, reveals conviction and assurance that the evaluative value of the proposition is true.

In extract 60, the editorial presents a high booster to assert its view on Kemi Adeosun's response to public outcry for her resignation.

Extract 60: Surely, the minister is not unaware of the outcry by concerned Nigerians over the issue? Or is she keeping quiet in the hope that the scandal in which she is currently embroiled will go away with time, as the nation confronts very serious existential crises? (*Nigerian Tribune*. July 25, 2018:18)

The editorial engages readers with an affirmative booster to clear doubt on the Minister's ignorance of the masses' demand for her resignation following the leak of the news on her NYSC certificate forgery. The evocation of the certainty modal element, *surely*, denotes confidence in the propositional value. Emphasis is made on editorial's conviction on the state of event, as the ensuing interrogative statement suggests a likely attempt of the administration to evade justice and allow the public clamour wane on the matter.

4.2.7 Use of conditionals as an engagement tool

These are used to express general truth, possibilities, scientific facts, unaccomplished goals with regrets or sheer unrealistic wishes. The editorials direct readers' attention to the President and the Presidency to activate the authority of this office and emphasize the control they wield over events and actions of members of their cabinet. Through the editorials, conditionals are used primarily to present consequences of a social event. Examples of conditionals are represented in the below extracts.

Extract 61: *If* the Presidency through NYSC attempts anything that shields her from the sack and prosecution, all their touted anti-corruption stance will fly out through the window. (*Daily Trust* July 17, 2018:17)

In Extract 61, *Daily Trust* directs its focus on the presidency rather than the President himself the conditional frame is suggestive of an intrusion from the President's cabinet in the proposed prosecution of Kemi Adeosun. The editorial flags an indictment in the President's reputation on the war against corruption as a consequence of such action. Presupposition is also engaged to denote a likely collaboration between the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the presidency to shield the accused from suspension and prosecution. Readers can evaluate the proposition in anticipation of a fair trial for the Minister without the influence of members of the executive council who are projected to possess equal power with the President in determining the outcome of the scandal.

In the next extract, the editorial comments on the invasion of the National Assembly by DSS operatives and uses the conditional *if*:-

Extract 62: We are on the threshold of anarchy. This is frightening and the Presidency must rise to the occasion. All acts of insubordination by political appointees should be dealt with by the appropriate authorities. Unconstitutional acts should not be condoned in any manner. *If* the President overlooks breaches committed by men who are believed to be loyal to him, such acts have a way of undermining democracy (*The Guardian*, August 14, 2018:16)

The various possibilities presented to the readers are meant to stir chains of thoughts that could assist readers in drawing conclusions without the authorial influence overtly defining the conclusion but permitting readers to judge for themselves. The editorial in the extract situates the consequences of non-adherence to alternatives using the conditional, *if*-. This demonstrates the negotiation of solidarity with readers; thus, increasing engagement level. The appraisal is the President and the editorial directs readers' attention to the outcome of justice evasion by close allies to the President. The editorial explicates the normal legal procedures to be effected when public officials are found culpable of a crime. The undermining of democratic practices is flagged as a consequence of the President's influence in shielding his political supporters.

Similarly, The *Punch* editorial evaluates the #EndSARS protest and the implication of government's intrusion. This is captured in the below extract:

Extract 63: *If* this protest continually gets mismanaged, either with more politically sponsored thugs inciting violence or use of security agencies to ward off peaceful protesters, a dangerous revolution may be imminent (*Punch*, October 19, 2020:18)

The editorial employs presupposition to suggest that the #EndSARS protest had been previously compromised by the government through the frequency adverbial, *continually*. The conditional element is also used to reveal the agents sponsored by the government to disrupt the peaceful protest and the result of such perpetual interruption in the organised agitation of the protesters will yield what the editorial describes as a *dangerous revolution*. The adjective, *dangerous*, in the nominal phrase denotes a critical eruption of violence that could upset the stability of the nation.

In the next extract, comments on government's handling of corruption cases of defected members are examined, using a different conditional element.

Extract 64: With all these uncertainties, the curious spate of decamping from the opposition parties to the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) has become quite suspicious. Could it be linked to the allegation that the fight against corruption is used to haunt the opposition? Nigerians may be inclined to believe so *except* the process is made transparent and the AGF rising to the occasion and ensuring that efforts towards the recovery of looted funds are not frustrated. (*The Guardian*. 30 June 2021. www.guardian.ng/opinion/the-attorney-general-and-60b-loot)

The editorial critiques the defection of members from the opposition party to the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC). The editorial pitches a question to engage readers on a precursor to the defection and demands transparency from the government. The modal auxiliary verb, *may*, is used to contextualise the possibility of the masses' misconception about the government's effort in fighting corruption. This presents a likely explanation for the increased rate of defection. The editorial evokes dual commitments that could clear the misconceptions in public space. First is the transparency in the trial of indicted individuals, regardless of their political affiliation and the second is the active engagement of the Attorney General in the uninterrupted procedures involved in recovering looted funds. The editorial posits that once the two conditions are met, the masses can judge the fight against corruption as non-selective.

Also, the *Leadership* editorial comments on the fight against corruption in the extract below:

Extract 65: *Unless* the government moves to quickly allay the serious doubts thus cast on the seeming compromise of efforts to recover huge stolen public funds, then the authenticity of the campaign cannot be guaranteed to Nigerians. That will be a big blow to probity in the public space (*The Guardian*, June 30, 2021. www.guardian.ng/opinion/the-attorney-general-and-60b-loot)

The conditional, *unless*, is used to presuppose an existence of distrust towards the Buhari government's efforts in recovering looted funds. It is also used to demand a swift action in defence of the management of the money recovered. The editorial employs the conditional to infer that the public still believes in the Buhari government and uncertainty could erupt if transparency is not ensured.

4.3 Ideologies and strategies used in the representation of PMB's administration in the editorials

In this section, the ideologies and the strategies used in backgrounding them are examined in this section. Three ideologies were identified – propagandism, absolutism and passivism. The strategies employed by the editorials are also discussed under the subsections below.

4.3.1 Propagandist ideology

Five of the eight editorials (*Punch*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *Daily Trust*, *Vanguard* and *The Guardian*) identify propaganda as a form of ideological orientation to describe the administration's communication with the masses as misleading and false. These editorials share this system of belief to capture the administration as evasive and equivocal in relaying the progress of its efforts to the public. The administration is framed as being diplomatic in the dissemination of information to the masses, especially with regards to security and economic issues in the country, and these are discussed in this section.

4.3.1.1 Propaganda on security issues

The release of information on the state of security in the nation is captured in this subsection and attention is on the Metele attack in Northeast Nigeria and farmer-herdsmen crisis. These will be discussed one after the other:

The Metele attack

The Buhari administration had declared the military's operation in Northeast Nigeria as completed and formerly displaced persons had been encouraged to return to their communities, despite constant records of attacks in the region. The Metele attack was a major event that resulted in the death of several soldiers but before the attack, the nation had been made to believe that Boko Haram had been degraded and normalcy had been restored to the Northeast, with a restoration of both social and economic activities. However, the outcome of the reprisal attack proved the government's reports as untrue. The handling of this issue is captured in the extracts below:

Extract 66: We are of the view that the fundamental lesson of the attack in Metele is that the counter-terrorism operation in the North-East is basically flawed if not a hoax... The government must stop mouthing the regular platitudes about Boko Haram coming into the country from Chad or Niger Republic... The government is in place to protect Nigerians, not to deceive them and put their lives in peril... Endless promises of more materials and manpower won't cut it. If it fails to act decisively now, the country will suffer dire consequences. (*Nigerian Tribune*, December 6, 2018:18).

Extract 67: The tragedy in Metele was a disaster foretold, which undermines the misleading claim by the Buhari administration that Nigeria has "technically defeated" the Islamists. As the Metele offensive shows, it is an empty claim (*The Punch*, November 27, 2018:18).

The editors in the two Extracts above suggest that the administration employed propaganda in communicating their activities in the Northeast to the public. The inaccurate or 'half-truth' information divulged to the public is considered misleading. After the degrading attack suffered by the Nigerian military force, the public came to realise the true state of affairs in that region. The *Nigerian Tribune* editor categorically affirms that the counter-terrorism operation is essentially deceptive through the activation of words like *basically flawed* and *hoax*, suggesting the distortion of information in order to be perceived as being effective. In this respect, power is subtly taken from the people and vested in a few administering the dissemination of reports. This position corroborates Bernay's (1928) view on propaganda, which he describes as the executive arm of the invisible government, stands contrary to the tenets of democracy that give power to the common man to control his environment, including the information he accesses. The editorials present the reports from the government as manipulated and not reflective of the true state of security in the nation.

The editorial cautions against further dissemination of distorted reports emphasising the location of insurgents' influx rather than devising strategic methods to tackle the menace. The source is not as important as developing plans to finally resolve the insurgency in that region. Attempts to condition the masses to believe that Boko Haram insurgents are not from Nigeria is a form of propaganda disseminated to placate the public while undermining their security. The editorials agree that providing half-truth reports will further endanger masses' lives as they will act based on the available information to them, believing that stability has been restored to the region through the efforts of the Nigerian

military to awake to the news of another violent attack or siege that could render them displaced, if not dead.

Both editorials affirm that the lies and half-truths peddled by the government in order to allay masses' fear will further complicate the matter rather than resolving it. Rather than continuous dispersal of inconsistent news, the editor suggests that efforts should be made to totally deal with cases of insurgency through a partnership with other foreign nations who have handled similar challenges and have prevailed. It is important to note that propaganda thrives when the masses' emotions and feelings have been conquered and manipulated to suit the desires and intents of the powerful within the state; and the state represents any institution, religious affiliation, action groups, political parties or nation (Bernay, 1928). The Minister of Information, Lai Mohammed, once granted an interview to an internationally acclaimed media house in London, DW, where he firmly stated that insecurity is no longer a major challenge in the Nigerian clime; thus, allaying concerns of security threats in the nation. This extension of propaganda to an international space, designed to present the Buhari administration as effective and active, falls short of the expected requirement of conformity with the truth value underlying democracy. The editorials reveal that the government spreads false information about equipping the army while soldiers debunk the information, stating that their weapons were obsolete and could not match the sophisticated armoury of the insurgent group. The editorials attribute the Nigerian Army's defeat to the lack of equipment and questions government's investment in arms and ammunition.

The editorial adds that the constant promises of more materials and manpower will not resolve the crisis, as previously failed attacks have proven that those materials are not eventually delivered, nor is the additional manpower supplied. These promises are also forms of lies to pacify the soldiers and encourage them to continually stake their lives for the interest of the nation who cares less about their own safety. The editorial believes that decisive action from the government will result in the reversal of fortune for the insurgent group who would be degraded in a matter of weeks or months, depending on the preferred path the administration chooses to tow.

The Punch editorial presents a rather audacious frame, averring that the attack was long-anticipated since it was in public space that counter-insurgency operations in the Northeast

was a failure. The source of his information is unknown but he appears to have known that a crisis as that would surface, only in a matter of time. His response indicates his cynicism for the government's platitude on matters as this, buttressing his confidence that a disaster was inevitable, and the selection of *empty claim* to describe the administration's report points to the use of propaganda in the spread of information. The administration is presented as a propagandist providing inaccurate information to mobilise support from the masses and cover up the inadequacies of the army to combat insurgency in the Northeast.

Farmer-herdsmen crisis

The government's description of the identity of the herdsmen is discussed under this category.

Extract 68: Apart from the vague promise of the Minister of the Interior, General Abdulrahman Danbazzau, that his ministry would do more to tackle the menace, the Federal Government appears unperturbed over these brazen acts of aggression by these bandits, who the Police Inspector general, Solomon Arase, describes as *aliens* (*Vanguard*. March 15, 2016)

In this extract, the *Vanguard* editorial expresses doubt in the Buhari administration's efforts to resolve the crises between herdsmen and farmers. The description of the Minister of Interior's promise as *vague* denotes lack of confidence in the statement of assurance to address the crisis. Propaganda is backgrounded in the promise provided to placate the public, as the next sentence reveals the cynicism of the editorial at the public announcement. Two propositional values denoting propaganda are provided in the extract; the first was the abstract promise made to keep the public calm, and the next was the description of the herdsmen as aliens by the Inspector General of Police. The misleading information on the true identity of the herdsmen who migrate from one community to another in search of grazing routes for their herds depicts the administration's attempt to mitigate public unrest through the economy of words. The editorial's activation of the social actors suggests the inconsistency of the provided information which it believes are representational of the administration's position on the conflict.

The farmers/herdsmen conflict in Nigeria grew in leaps during the beginning of the second tenure of the Buhari administration and as *Punch* in another editorial puts it, the crises became far deadlier than the mayhem caused by the insurgent group, Boko haram whose activities and violence were restricted to the Northeast. The herdsmen became emboldened with the influence of Miyetti Allah, the leader of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) who had declared that Nigeria belongs to the Fulani tribe and all parts of country can be used for grazing. Several inflammatory comments and remarks were made to incite the violence. The response of the Buhari administration was to develop a policy that permitted the Federal government to implement a national livestock transformational plan that permits open grazing across the federation. The extract below discusses the government's position on the crises:

Extract 69: Unveiled at the National Economic Council's National Livestock Transformation Plan, the government said that it was agreed with states as part of efforts to end the frequent attacks on farmers and other Nigerians by the negatively rambunctious herdsmen... Audu Ogbeh, Agriculture and Rural Development Minister, said, "This conflict is not peculiar to Nigeria... He's wrong. The 10-year National Livestock Plan is gratuitous, discriminatory and offensive. Linked with the controversial bill to establish a Regulatory Framework for the Water Resources Sector in Nigeria, the sinister motive of the initiators of the programme becomes obvious. As is often said, cattle farming is a private business, the responsibility for which should be that of the owners (*Punch*. June 22, 2018. www.punchng.com/fgs-wrong-headed-solution-to-herdsmens-terrorism)

A statement by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Audu Ogbeh, is refuted by the editorial in the above extract. His claim of a ubiquitous trend in cattle conflict across nations is described as untrue. The editorial points out the administration's strategy to play down on the severity of the crises which was at its peak in 2018/2019 by clearly stating that the information provided is wrong. The authorial influence reveals first that the agreement the Federal Government claimed it reached with state governments were unfounded as some states did not consent to the open-grazing policy while only a few others embraced the development. Its description of the plan as unwarranted, offensive and discriminatory suggests displeasure in the lack of transparency in government's representation of its steps to the public. This is revealed in the choice of the adjective, sinister, to describe the intention of those who developed the plan for the

Federal Government to invest in cattle business. Complex sentences are used in this extract to denote the complexities involved in the development of the Livestock transformational plan and the mendacious approach the Buhari administration adopted in justifying the efforts.

4.3.1.2 Propaganda on doubtful integrity

The integrity of the Presidency came under scrutiny when matters of corruption emerged in its tenure. The President's anti-corruption mantra was central to his campaign before the elections. However, the handling of issues that impugned his integrity were revealed in Extract 70 below:

Extract 70: For more than a week now, neither Minister of Finance Mrs. Kemi Adeosun nor the Presidency have said anything definite about the National Youth Service Corps [NYSC] exemption certificate scandal swirling around the minister... It is doubly strange that the Buhari Presidency, which at the drop of the coin touts integrity and anti-corruption as its defining ethic, has kept mute over this matter for so long (*Daily Trust*, July 17, 2018:17).

Silence as a form of propaganda is observed in the Extract above. Leone (2017: p. 158) defines silence propaganda as a “powerful strategy for generating consensus, often to the detriment of the free circulation of ideas and expressions”. The editorial avers that the administration chose silence as a strategic model to ease the pressure connected with the masses' clamour for Kemi Adeosun, the Finance Minister to resign on allegations of the forgery of her National Youth Service Corps' certificate. Considering the value of the personality to the administration, taciturnity became an option in defining discourse within the public space, in order to generate consensus, if not compassion from the masses, most of whose views became divided along partisan lines. Silence, as a calculative measure, was intended to sway the discourse in a favourable manner towards the administration. The aim was to allow the masses to assess the case rather than take a decisive stance towards handling the scandal., As anticipated, that would pitch their views against one another because, at the eventual break of that code after much pressure, the administration defended the case as being an oversight on the Minister's path.

The length of the delay extended beyond one week as the editorial pointed out because, at the time of writing, there was no official statement from the presidency to back up its

stance regarding the matter, and this accounts for the choice of the lexis, *doubly strange*. The editorial struggles in matching the current frame of the event with the touted integrity and ethics of the Presidency, inferring that a swift measure should have been taken by the administration in handling the scandal rather than keeping mute which had made it degenerate into a complex web requiring a defence of integrity. This strategic method had become a custom with the administration who after a period of silence on a matter would see the masses also become quiet regarding it but the media took up the case and after a period of mounting pressure, they caved in and advised the Minister to resign.

Extract 71: By allowing Adeosun to keep a *disdainful* silence in the face of the weighty allegation against her, by dilly-dallying and buck-passing on government's position in the matter, the APC-led government under Buhari is *violating* its own documented pledge. Besides, this government has again demonstrated its *contempt* for Nigerians and its *tolerance* of a terribly low standard of probity. Where is character? (*The Guardian*, September 15, 2018:17)

The Guardian editor in the above extract suggests to readers that the presidency is an accomplice to the Minister's crime, reflective through aiding and abetting, shielding her from the legislated constitutional processes that could result in the termination of her appointment as the Minister of Finance of the Federal. The selection of the prepositional phrase, *by allowing Adeosun*, implies there is more to what is peddled in the media regarding the certificate forgery and the presidency is trying to protect her from the wrath of the law. This stance appears critical and unequivocal as readers are made to perceive the administration as an abettor rather than a transparent arm of government that intends for an absolute flow of the rule of law. Furthermore, the evocation of the adjective, *disdainful*, to qualify her silence also indicates that the appraised actor in the proposition is not spared of the criticism. This attitudinal inscription conveys to readers a deliberate attempt to roll the case under the carpet as the delay has extended beyond expected normalcy and it is apparent that the administration is striving to shield the Minister from the wrath of the law.

The social sanction targeted at criticising the documented pledge of the government also communicates a high degree of disapproval to readers who are reminded that a major campaign promise of the government was to fight corruption at all levels but the involvement of one of its foremost members caught in the eye of the storm has

complicated the execution of such campaign promise. Other items as *dilly-dallying* and *buck-passing* suggests deliberate delay and blame tactics, both employed to stall the investigative process. These attitudinal tokens concisely present the administration as insensitive to the masses' demand of subjecting the Minister to the legal procedures such crime as hers attracts and similarly convey discreet plans to absolve her of the crime.

Normality (social esteem) and propriety (social sanction) were the two central attitudinal judgment forms inscribed and evoked in this extract. To the end that readers should see the deliberate attempt of the administration to distract members of the public from pursuing justice and transparency regarding the entire case. The preponderant evaluative value suggests that editorials skillfully select linguistic items, adjectives, verbal processes, or adverbs to communicate their opinion and stance regarding a proposition which readers are required to align with. Another striking aspect in the extract is the provocation of ethical response that pitches the government against the public through the adverbial choice, *again*, which suggests that the government has consistently towed paths as this and on several occasions has defied public outcries. Overtly asserting that the government has a record of disdain public reactions to matters of governance as well as tolerate *low standard of probity*, the readers are made to perceive the administration in a deleterious light and develop unconsciously a reactive stance that could ultimately influence their ethical assessment of the administration.

Furthermore, the inclusion of an interrogative in the Extract is designed to heighten readers' engagement level. Since raising issues is central to interrogatives (Ciardelli, Groenendijk and Roelofsen, 2019) and these issues elicit engagements prompting readers to peruse the contextual framework of the proposition, analyse and eventually draw conclusions, the evocation of the interrogative expression (*where is character?*) explicitly sums up the editor's preceding stance which evidently condemns the administration's silence regarding the entire case. He raises integrity as a major subject and questions the government's rationale for keeping mute on such matters of national significance, considering the anti-corruption mantra constantly mouthed by the administration and the reposed confidence of the masses. An action such as that, as posited, is considered contrary to the basic responsibility of the government to the public. The invocation of this question also implies that there exists a standard social ethical system the government is

expected to comply with in cases as this; however, this has not been effected and its consequence, a grave one, is reflected in the doubts and skepticisms already exercised by the masses which the editor clearly points out.

4.3.2 Absolutist ideology

This is a socially shared representation existing within a political framework. Averse to economic, ecological or gender-oriented ideology (van Dijk, 2000), it is situated within governance and its relevance in this study, becomes conspicuous in the light of varying expectations from the Buhari administration by the masses in a democratic government. In the Extract below, members of the Department of State Security Service, representing the judicial arm of government, had invaded the National Assembly (NASS), the legislative arm, to disrupt the proceedings of the day and carted the mace away, thus, hindering the lawmakers from carrying out their proposed activity for the day. This is explicated below:

Extract 72: The essence of constitutional government is to ensure that the powers of the state are kept in check so that personal liberty would not be infringed. The scene that played out at the Three Arms Zone on Tuesday is *a throwback to full military dictatorship*, which ceased to be in 1999 when the Fourth Republic came into being (*The Punch*, August 8th, 2018:18)

The editorial posits that the Buhari administration does not adhere to democratic practices. It drew reference to the assault on the legislative arm of government by armed operatives of the DSS. Through the phrase, *throwback to full military dictatorship*, readers recall arduous times the nation had undergone during the Second and the Third Republic where the nation was under military heads who disparaged public opinions and also staged a total clampdown on both the legislative and the judiciary arms of government. That reminder in itself portrays the administration as restoring those gloomy days, thus, drawing reference for the governance from that system of government which most people believe had gone for good. The Fourth Republic, which kicked off in 1999, was a transition to civilian rule modelled after democracy, and even though there had been previously recorded frictions between the executive and the legislative arms of government, matters had never deteriorated to a state where an arm of the judiciary would usurp authority and conduct an assault such as recorded on that fateful day. The modifier, *full military*, triggers in readers a chain of emotional shudders, likely to result in the conception of fear and trepidation,

insecurity, violence, breakdown of law and order, among other negative feelings, considering the impacts of those times on the nation's fledgling democracy.

The editorial in the extract below describes the administration as fostering lawlessness, emboldening the DSS operatives to coordinate an unwarranted strike, thus, jeopardising the process the rule of law. It also presents absolutism, a form of government thriving on despotism and autocracy, as a conspicuous ideological value in the Extract below:

Extract 73: We want to affirm, without any fear of contradiction, that the lawlessness demonstrated by Daura, assuming that he actually acted alone, was fostered and nurtured by the government itself. On too many occasions, the current government did nothing while security agencies descended into the political arena, making a mockery of the democratic process (*Nigerian Tribune*. August 9, 2018:18)

The editorial in the above excerpt infers that the Presidency was aware of the planned invasion by the DSS and the disdain for democratic practices was becoming a norm. The authorial assertion, through the pronominal 'we', alongside the infinitive predicator, *to affirm*, clearly reveals the editorial board's stance regarding the matter. It describes the action of the operatives as lawless, asserting that the government fully backed them up in order to make a mockery of the democratic process. Such mockery is permissive under the military form of government but impermissible in democracy. It further asserts that this was a norm through the activation of the adverbial phrase of frequency, *on too many occasions*, to denote consistency in the violation of the democratic principles. The editorial maintains a more critical approach in its assessment of the invasion and explicitly reports the editorial board's stance. The security agencies have been known to be a veritable tool in despotic operations, however, in democratic systems, their influence is subsumed under the legislative arm who interfaces directly with the executive arm of government. In cases where authority is conferred to them above the legislative arm, absolutism or autocracy has become the form of governance.

The editorial explicitly highlights the dangers of restoring the nation to absolutism or drawing models from that system to administer a nation considered to be operating democracy. This is because whether the full-blown or partial military rule, that system of government does not permit the people to express public opinion, as such, the tenets of

democracy should be adhered to and the supremacy of the rule of law should be maintained in order to ensure peace that fosters the efficiency of every arm of government.

Extract 74: Under President Muhammadu Buhari, the country is *rapidly descending into a full-blown dictatorship*. Rightly, Osinbajo described the unauthorised takeover of the National Assembly complex “*as a gross violation of constitutional order, rule of law and all acceptable notions of law and order...*”. The abuse of power is only reaching epidemic proportions... (*The Punch*, August 8, 2018:18)

The editorial in the above extract passes a comment that depicts a depletion in the rule of law under the administration of the President in the wake of the invasion of the National Assembly (NASS) by members of the Department of State Service (DSS). This gruesome act was described as reckless and unconscionable since the judiciary arm of government is expected to function within the ambit of liberty the law specifies. This action, alongside other incidents across the nation perpetuated by the administration, the editor warns, has initiated the process of descent into a despotic form of government which has remained an integral aspect of the nation’s history. The attitudinal token conveying a negative value is evident in the preferred selection of the expression, “...*rapidly descending into a full-blown dictatorship...*” which activates an implied evaluative position that enables readers to appraise the impending consequence of the administration’s actions.

The adverbial choice of *rapidly* collocates with swiftness and speed, suggesting that if nothing is done in time to check the abnormality, the country would suffer a reversal of fortune from democracy to autocracy. The culmination of several actions perpetuated by the administration, according to the editor, largely suggests that absolutism will become inevitable as democratic tenets are fast depleting with each action the administration embarks on. The editor asserts that the Department of State lacked the constitutional right to shut out members of the House from accessing their chamber and in fact dismisses any rationale behind the repugnant act, as their legal jurisdiction was not in any extended way to prevent them from carrying out their duties as specified in the constitution. Alternative measures should have been sought to handle the incidence were the executive arm of government bent on inhibiting them from sitting over the issue that supposedly warranted the blockade but such despicable display of gross insolence by the DSS depicts little or no

regard for the rule of law in the country which portends descent into a despotic form of governance.

The response of the Vice President who doubled at the time as the Acting President to the incident was considered swift by some editors, following the immediate dismissal of the Director-General (DG) of the institution who was supposedly acting on his own volition without receiving approval from the appropriate quarters. The description of the DG's action as *unauthorised* clearly disclaims any public opinion suggesting the presidency masterminded the entire operation and dissociates them from the obstruction. The attitudinally inscribed adjective, *gross*, captures the crudity and uncivilised nature of the institution's act, while the nominalised item, *violation of constitutional order...*, presents an explicit declaration targeted at distancing the administration's reputation from the institution's action. In spite the unequivocal detachment presented by the Acting President, the editor in Extract appears unconvinced that the DG acted without the prior notice of the presidency and posits that the abuse of power is characteristic of the administration, only reaching an epidemic proportion. The lexis, *abuse of power*, was repeated five times in the editorial to describe the trend and preferred pattern the administration has recently adopted in the governing process. The editor maintains a negative stance through the editorial and demands a different approach in handling matters of national concern.

The administration is also portrayed as practising absolutism in disguise as the excerpt shows:

Extract 75: ...that act signalled the end of the *current administration's pretence to being a democratic outfit*. And so the conclusion is inescapable that full-blown dictatorship, and not the rising *authoritarianism* that we deplored only recently, is now effectively in place in the country. To all intents and purposes, the current administration is certainly the most blatantly anti-law and the most uncivil since the return to civil rule in 1999.... (*Nigerian Tribune*, December 16, 2020. www.tribuneonlineng.com/onset-of-dictatorship)

The editorial explicitly describes the administration as projecting a false identity of a democratic government whereas all its activities suggest otherwise. Metaphoric attribution is made to the government as a regime rather than an administration arising from consistent violations of the tenets of the rule of law, and explicit appraisal is pronounced in the editorial's highly critical stance. This draws parallel with the President's antecedent

as a military ruler who ruled the country in the third republic. Describing the administration as the most flagrant since democratic rule was restored to the nation in 1999, the justifications for this claim are provided so that readers can identify with their evaluation. Activating the actor, the Buhari administration, readers can assess the activities and draw personal conclusions from the proposition.

Absolutism in PMB's management of protesters

The administration of President Buhari engaged in clamping down on dissenting voices. The cases of Omoyele Sowore's #RevolutionNow and the #EndSARS protests are examined in this section. These were two major protests that attracted swift military and paramilitary actions. The extracts below explicate this:

Extract 76: The entire country and a global audience are rightly scandalised by the unfolding saga over Omoyele Sowore and the unruliness of the SSS and the government; but it is only a pattern, a reflection of the *serial disregard of the Buhari regime* for human rights and its battering of other arms of government and our democratic institutions. ... PUNCH will not be a party to falsely adorning it with a democratic robe, hence our decision to label it for what it is – *an autocratic military-style regime* run by Major General Muhammadu Buhari (retd). (The *Punch*, December 11, 2019. punchng.com/buharis-lawlessness-our-stand)

Extract 77: On the one hand, Buhari is saying the youth have a right to protest peacefully. On the other, *the regime* is clamping down on the promoters of the #EndSARS protests in *Gestapo-style* (*Punch*. November 12, 2020. www.punchng.com/harassment-of-endsars-promoters-should-stop)

The editorial describes the administration as a regime with total disregard for both human rights and the rule of law. It cites the Buhari government's management of Omoyele Sowore's unlawful treatment to reveal the ill-treatment dissident voices suffer. The vicious activities of the administration were similarly revealed in its ill-treatment of peaceful protesters who sought an end to police brutality during the #EndSARS protest. The editorial clearly presents its stance on its description of the administration, not as a democratic government but as an autocratic government, adopting gestapo-style. The inference drawn to the President's previous status as a military head amplifies the connection with his current leadership model. It is inferred that the approach to

governance by the President derives from his previous role as the military Head of State during the Third Republic.

The Twitter ban as an act of autocracy

The ban placed in Twitter is discussed in the next extract

Extract 78: Nigeria's media and activists *fear their country is slipping into repression* after the government suspended Twitter in Africa's most populous nation, where hyper-connected youth embraced the platform as a means of protest (*The Guardian*. July 4, 2021. www.guardian.ng/opinion/government-twitter-and-public-interest).

The editorial reveals the concerns of both media and activists regarding the banning of Twitter in the country. The telecommunication firm had censored the President's comment on IPOB supporters and had been banned from operating in Nigeria. The proscription was queried by several individuals, yet the Presidency failed to reverse its ban. The editorial establishes that the nation was towing the path of repression. The evident acts of the President in clamping on any agency, local or foreign, who queries its operations denote the autocratic engagement of the Buhari government.

4.3.3 Passivist ideology

Passivism as a state of inertness suggests deliberate effort to disable certain measures of influence, authority or power, in order to achieve a goal that could have otherwise proven abstruse. This is a strategic tactic often employed in decisive moments to resolve a crisis or launch a reprisal attack against an assailant. The construction of passivism as an ideology in the editorials stems from the administration's manner of handling issues that would have otherwise required a forceful operational approach but tactically managed so as to quell emergent crises or upheaval among the masses.

Extract 79: In his own reaction which came only after relentless criticism of his silence on the matter (*Nigerian Tribune*, December 6, 2018: 18).

Extract 80: Many things quickly followed the Metele incident... Buhari was in N'djamena, capital of Chad, and attended a hastily convened meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, of which he is the chairman (*Daily Trust* November 29, 2018: 17)

Extract 79 denotes a state of passivism where the administration fails to act regarding matters of national concern and dawdles till pressure is mounted before anything is done in that regard. The Nigerian Army had just suffered another vicious blow from the insurgent group, Boko Haram, and not less than 44 soldiers lost their lives. In fact, the number remains disputable as some other media outlets recorded over a hundred casualties, with scores severely injured; however, going by the official reports of the Army that number was given after pressure was mounted on them to release a figure. *Nigerian Tribune* editorial compares other nations' responses to conflict and insurgency with the President's reactions. It identifies swiftness in response to cases of insurgency, militancy or terrorism. Perpetrators are prosecuted to serve as deterrent to prospective perpetrators of crime. In contrast, the reaction of the President is described as slow, and coming after pressure is mounted from the public. The passivist ideology is captured in the protracted period it takes for the prosecution of close allies to the President.

His passivist approach is largely assumed to be connected with his Northern origin as well as his religion, both of which cast a cloud over his decision thus influencing the degree of swiftness he appropriates as a leader. As stressed in the Extract 80, it was persistent criticisms from the masses that informed the President's response which implies that if there was no pressure, this attack could have as well been swept under the carpet and nothing done to remedy the situation.

In Extract 80, *Daily Trust* editor conversely suggests that the delay was necessary to strategically plan a coordinated strike with other affected neighbouring nation States. The adverb, *hastily*, indicating mannerism, modifies the swiftness of the convened meeting of these Heads of States and this contradicts the sustained views of *the Nigerian Tribune* editor. The conveyed meeting at N'djamena in Chad was strategic and necessary for other plans to follow in devising plans to totally degrade the insurgent group. *Daily Trust's* representation presents the President as a strategist whose decisions are not irrational but well-planned to achieve an effective result impacting positively on the nation, whereas, *The Nigerian Tribune* advances a state of passivism where the presidency is inactive and insensitive to the plight of the masses. This further presents the President as lethargic, fragile, enervated and incapable of leading the country, alluding to his reported health condition that requires he makes constant medical trips to London.

4.3.4 Discursive strategies employed in explicating the representations

This section identifies and discusses various discursive strategies deployed by the editorials in explicating the representations of PMB's administration. Four discursive strategies are identified. They are labelling, blame shifting, nominalisation, and activation. They are expatiated below:

Labelling as a discursive strategy

The editorials used labelling as a discourse strategy to convey the representations of the ideologies. The excerpts below (81-85) discuss this strategy:

Extract 81: Nnamdi Kanu is the symbol of a struggle and an ideology. He represents millions of South-Easterners all over the world, even though many of them disagree vehemently *with his separatist agenda*. Many Igbo people still believe in Nigeria despite its current woes and this regime's extreme *nepotism* which has virtually sidelined them. This was what created the *Nnamdi Kanu "monster"* (*Vanguard*. July 5, 2021. www.vanguardngr.com/2021/07/beyond-nnamdi-kanus-re-arrest).

The *Vanguard* editorial's description of the struggle for Biafra's independence, led by Kanu, as a separatist idea depicts a negative appraisal of the proposition. The adjectival phrase describes confidence in the sovereignty of Nigeria as a nation, while tagging the aggrieved group, IPOB, as averse to the collectivism of all ethnic groups that make up the nation. Putative readers are conditioned to perceive Nnamdi Kanu as championing an unworthy course that threatens the coexistence of the tribes in Nigeria. A similar inscribed condemnatory stance is evident in the description of the group (Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB) as proscribed. Such lexical evocations pitch the editorial as a stalwart of democracy against those described as separatists. He was further labelled as an alleged fugitive offender, hiding in foreign nations, away from the claws of justice. The editorial similarly tagged Kanu's emancipatory campaign as a pet project to describe his efforts as futile and ineffective. The editorial distanced itself from the appraised and provided attributive assessment of his claims to liberate the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), describing it as a separatist idea that fostered similar agitations among other tribes for separation, while blaming the administration for its slow response to address the nuisance that produced what he labelled, the '*Nnamdi Kanu monster*'. The Buhari administration

was tagged as having a bias towards other tribes, drawing from the tribalism characterising the tenure,

The *Punch* editorial also used labelling and this is revealed in the extract below:

Extract 82: It cannot persuade *suicide bombers* and *mass murderers* that have been brainwashed by a false heavenly utopia of martyrdom to retrace their steps (*Punch*, 2017. www.punchng.com/boko-haram-deradicalisation-a-misplaced-strategy).

Similarly, the *Punch* editorial extensively deployed labelling as a discourse tool to depict the insurgent group, Boko Haram. Expressing concerns regarding PMB's decision to grant state pardon to repentant terrorists and the deradicalisation program that seeks to integrate them into the society, elements of fear and uncertainty regarding the program are revealed. Implicating the proposed deradicalised group as so-called repentant Islamic insurgents, suicide bombers, mass murderers, battle-hardened insurgents, terrorists, readers similarly perceive the group as vicious, brutal and dangerous for coexistence in the society and doubt the success of their integration. The strategy is predestined to be foiled by their shaped 'jihadist ideology' which prevents a reversal of formation since they have been brainwashed by a heavenly reward for their actions. Polarizing between the PMB administration's uncoordinated approach to fighting terrorism and the insurgents' strategic plans of taking over the country, the evocation of the lexis, formidable and dexterous, single-minded goal contrasts lack of coordination, premature programme scheme from the latter and the former's doggedness to achieve its goals.

ThisDay editorial adopts a derogatory term to describe a category of people present during election campaigns in the extract below:

Extract 83: Even President Muhammadu Buhari was not spared this malaise when some *urchins* prevented him from alighting from his vehicle to address a political rally in Jos, Plateau State until reprieve came from soldiers (*ThisDay*, February 3, 2019. www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2019/02/03/security-and-the-2019-election)

The editorial described some supporters who attended the political campaign of the President in 2015 as *urchins*. This description depicts them as hooligans and rascals who lack civility due to the coarse manner the President was handled during his campaign to Jos, Plateau State. During election campaigns, political aspirants are thronged and they

attract attention from the masses who desires to see them. Depending on locations, some communities have large population that determines the outcome of the election and these zones are considered during campaigns. The presence of the crowd is often required to signify huge followership. However, the description of the electorate in that zone as urchins signifies the editorial's displeasure at their interruption of the President's campaign. The editorial presents the proposition as characteristic of campaigns through reference to Titi Atiku, wife to a former Vice President of Nigeria who suffered a similar attack. The editorial reveals that the force of the mob was broken by soldiers and readers can assess the value of the proposition in a negative light, judging from the negative affect expressed to condemn the obstruction.

The editorial in Extract 84 below also labels the DSS operatives who invaded the National Assembly:

Extract 84: *Hoodlums* masquerading as protectors of democracy, emboldened by their unholy connections to and support by a group of people in the seat of power, had the temerity to close down an entire arm of government with a view to overthrowing its leadership (*Nigerian Tribune*, 2018:18)

The editorial in the above labelled members of the Department of State Service (DSS) as *hoodlums* which contravene their identity as law enforcement agents. The evocation of that item activates a negative image that pitches them against the homonyms of upholders of the law, enforcer of order, preserver of sanity, among many other choices, and situates them as lawbreakers, hooligans and irresponsible. The lexis, *hoodlum*, is a metaphorical naming strategy used directly to compare them with these negative connotations rather than implicitly averring the connection. This is intended to make readers engage in condemning first the personality of the involved social actors and then the act perpetrated. The gerundive phrase, *masquerading as protectors of democracy*, signifies that the social actors betray their role as defenders of the law through the violation of the fundamental rights of legislative members and the invasion falls short of the requirements of their office. The headword, *masquerading*, suggests that they impersonated the role of which they lacked authority but attributed it to themselves in the light of their zeal.

The editorial attributes such effrontery to the connection the Director-General (DG) has with some people in authority and described that alliance as *unholy*. This choice signifies a

breach in order and political formation, implying that the DG was required by law to be subject to other hierarchical formations constituted by law. Its authority was supposed to be drawn from the Acting President in the wake of the President's absence due to illness but he usurped authority, taking directives from the cabals who emboldened him to step into action. The evocation of the lexis, *temerity* indicates that the DSS lacked the right to interrupt an entire arm of government. Their jurisdiction does not confer the authority on them to interfere in any way with the legislative arm.

Kemi Adeosun's story is labelled in *The Punch* editorial discussed below:

Extract 85: Details of the *grimy* story indicate that the person *purported* to have signed the exemption certificate in September 2009 had already retired from service by January of the same year (*The Punch*, July 27, 2018:18).

The *Punch* editor in the above tags the information surrounding Kemi Adeosun's certificate scandal as *grimy*, a selection that activates negative connotations of filthiness, dirtiness, smudginess, among others. This labelling conditions readers from the onset to perceive the story as a messy one lacking all forms of credibility. Readers are poised to draw judgment from the beginning as regards subsequent information that would follow to make them assume a critical stance that would reveal that the entire event is devoid of truth. This strategy is activated through a lexical choice that makes readers perceive the news through the editor's lens. As much as the editor would claim objectivity, labelling and activating the lexis through that adjectival phrase has constrained readers to evaluate the proposition in a negative light which impairs the judgment and positioning. There appears to be a tone of disdain and dissatisfaction in the representation of the editor's view and this was not hidden but blatantly expressed to make readers share in the same displeasure as they draw conclusions that form an opinion regarding the proposition.

Another activated lexis that suggests negative connotation is *purported*, a verbal selection that connotes that the information is unsupported, without evidence hence invalid or untrue. This fully buttressed to readers that the Minister was insincere in her report as there existed a discrepancy between the month she claimed to obtain the certificate and the period the signee retired from office. This could account for the choice of *grimy* to qualify the story, as the editor elevates integrity as a standard for public office holders and expresses amazement at such inconsistency and misleading information peddled by the

office of the Minister. Readers are made to assess the supplied information from a negative stance that projects the Minister as a liar. The combination of the adjective *grimy* and verb *purported* are predications designed to activate an unpleasant image in readers' minds as they engage the evaluative process that could make them dissociate from supporting the Minister's position. The distancing technique, discreetly employed, further foregrounds the editor's evaluation of the process, disendorsing the action to readers.

Blame-shifting as a discursive tool

There were elements of blame-shifting observed in the editorials and these are discussed in Extract 86 below:

Extract 86: While a combination of weak and compromised institutions cutting across the executive, the legislature and the judiciary may have allowed the culture of corruption to thrive in our country, this administration has added a more cynical dimension: If you are on their side, no matter how much you have undermined the system and abused public trust, you can walk the streets with arrogance and nothing will happen to you. (*ThisDay*. October 25. 2017. www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2017/10/25/the-maina-recall-scandal)

ThisDay editorial first blames the legislative and the judiciary for the gap in institutional conformity which has fostered acts of indiscipline in the nation.

4.4 Attitudinal appraisal of media representations

The attitudinal dimensions of the editorials were examined in this section to determine the emotive, ethical and aesthetic values of the propositions.

4.4.1 Affective evaluation

The inscribed feelings towards the propositional value of the editorials were explicated to reveal the affective domain of the assessments. Attention is paid to individual lexis that depict emotional value in each extract. In the fight against insurgency, some soldiers lost their lives and the *Daily Trust* editorial sympathises with the families in the extract below:

Extract 87: We *commiserate* with the Army High Command and with the families of soldiers who paid the supreme price in the service of the Fatherland (*Daily Trust*, November 29, 2018:17)

The editorial evokes feelings of sympathy to identify with families of the deceased soldiers who lost their lives on the battle against terrorism in Northeast Nigeria. The authorial affect is used to align with readers to reveal the editorial's emotive value. The affective mental process was also employed in the Extract to depict the emoter's (the participant experiencing the feeling) negative feeling capturing a tragic experience. The event leading up to this was the Metele attack that left many soldiers dead, and this process was directed to the families of the deceased soldiers as well as the Army High Command who lost valiant men in their combat against terrorism. These soldiers were admittedly described as committed to their fatherland while carrying out their duties as defenders of the nation but the price they had to pay was their lives. This was acknowledged as well as commended by the editor who reached out to their families and described the sacrifice they paid as *the supreme price* to indicate that there is no higher price than laying one's life down for his nation. The activation of the verbal process, *commiserate*, triggers emotional feelings of sympathy, concern and compassion towards the appraised value and signifying that a loss had occurred. That selection provokes empathy and triggers emotional outburst of sadness that could cast gloominess on proposed readers who peradventure are related to the fallen soldiers. Readers are engaged to similarly share in this emotional representation that reinforces the importance of human lives and the price these soldiers has had to pay for their nation. Although the editor had noted earlier that the negligence of the government in fully admitting the debacle in the Northeast had splintered into grievous consequences as death and loss of properties, his position remains condemnatory through other sections of the editorial as he referenced the immediate past administration whose actions had a lasting impact in the proliferation of the insurgents. The editorial's focus in the Extract is the Army High Command and the families of the soldiers whose lives were lost in the attack.

Similarly, the editorial in the below excerpt reveals the complaints of soldiers fighting insurgency in the Northeast:

Extract 88: The point has been made that the administration intends to release \$1 billion from the Excess Crude Account (ECA) for the procurement of arms to prosecute the war against terror, while attention has also been drawn to the *lamentations* by *grieving soldiers* who survived the Metele ambush. Among other things, the soldiers exposed the rotting underbelly of military operations in the North-East, including the

deployment of obsolete equipment and the insincerity of the military high command. (*Nigerian Tribune*, December 6, 2018:18)

The administration's effort in combating insurgency in the Northeast was acknowledged in this extract. The editorial reveals a positive evaluation of the intention for readers to evaluate the progress and investments of the administration into combating insurgency. It further evokes empathy to describe the administration's interest in addressing the distressed soldiers fighting in the Boko Haram war. However, the next sentence describes the plight of the soldiers who believes the administration's report is inconsistent with reality. Drawing from the quality process depicting an emotional assessment, the editorial comments on the revelation emerging from the attack by capturing the victims as *grieving soldiers*, due to the agony they endure while combating insurgency in that region. The anguish and frustration of these soldiers lie in the outdated equipment and weapons in their possession while combating terrorists otherwise armed with sophisticated armoury. This, according to them, results in massive onslaught during warfare, they end up losing more resourceful soldiers at the warfront and their efforts in the region appears futile to the world. The nominalisation of *lament* connotes a state of reality that is existent and will not change until remedied. This evaluative quality foregrounds the circumstances surrounding the Metele attack and other similar attacks lack of commitment from the administration to ensure the welfare of soldiers at the warfront. The nominal and adjectival items, *lamentation* and *grieving*, collocate to signal a state of grief and gloominess expressed by the soldiers who desire a change in operational deficiency. The selections, drawn from the negative affect to represent mental processes, construct an evaluative process that engages readers in the negotiation of meaning regardless of their ideological peculiarities, triggering feelings of disappointment and anger that require swift response from the government in resolving their complaints and developing measures to address issues of safety and welfare. Readers' emotions are easily drawn through the activation of such lexis, to consent to the editors' expressed views regarding the degree of commitment required from the government to tackle insurgency in the Northeast as well as developing ultimate measures to end terrorism in the nation. Editorial's emotional responses are explicit in editorials which contradict the patterns in news reporting where other sources are cited as expressing affectual reactions. The editorial's feelings were critical of the insurgent's action and the three classifications of affect variables: un/happiness, in/security and dis/satisfaction (Martin and White, 2005) denoting negative feelings were observed.

In Extract 89, the behavioural process affect was depicted through the response of Prof. Sagay to questions on Kemi Adeosun's certificate forgery.

Extract 89: The PDP can *weep* from now until there is no tear in their body; she is going to be there. We cannot afford to lose that woman. Who cares about youth service? I don't bloody care whether she did youth service or not. It's irrelevant as far as I am concerned. (*The Guardian*, September 15, 2018: 16).

The editorial notes the response of Professor Sagay to the indictment of Kemi Adeosun. The direct speech was used to capture the disapproval of the appraised to the discourse on the Minister due to her track record in stabilising the economy and boosting the financial sector through her strategic managerial initiatives. The evocation of *weep* triggers a behavioural emotional assessment among readers that present a negative affectual value of the proposition. His process choice includes the modal auxiliary, *can*, used to depict possibility as well as explicitly assert his nonchalance towards opposition's response to the matter he was addressing. His argument was clear – the minister should not be removed from office – despite the enormity of her crime, since this argument was not based on moral standards such as corruption charges related to embezzlement of funds but on ethics guiding the description of her office, the charges against her within the framework of her responsibility as the Minister of the Federation fall short of any gross criminal act.

The personal pronominal element, *we*, is a collective term used to engage stakeholders in the Buhari's government and point their attention to the significant role the Minister plays in the administration since her resignation would be a colossal loss to them. This choice was more of a clarion call to concerned quarters to rally around the Minister and shield her from public outcry. The appraiser holds that the demand for her resignation is championed by members of the opposition due to her failure to observe the one-year mandatory National Youth Service which the Professor does not consider germane to the present office she occupies. Emotional outbursts are revealed in the expression of the appraiser's feelings through the evocation of the clause, *I don't bloody care* denoting desperation for the Minister to be retained in the Buhari government.

4.4.2 Judgment evaluation in media representation of PMB's administration

The editorials evaluate the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari using social esteem and social sanction to describe actions meant to be carried out in an appropriate manner, the capability and the level of commitment revealed in the fulfilment of its obligation to the masses. These aspects of social esteem shall first be discussed before proceeding to social sanction.

4.4.2.1 Social esteem in media representation of PMB's administration

There are elements of high judgement in the editorials to describe agents in the Buhari administration and these are discussed under this classification.

Security

The social esteem representation of the President on matters of domestic security is examined under this section. The extracts below provide an editorial description of Boko Haram.

Extract 90: FROM Day One, the Boko Haram Islamist insurgency has been a big mystery to most Nigerians. How an otherwise “rag-tag” band of religious outlaws ballooned into *one of the most notorious terror machines in the world*, claiming the lives of tens of thousands of Nigerians and rendering more than two million people homeless in spite of the gallant efforts of the Nigerian Army and Air Force, is something difficult to fathom (*Vanguard*. November 28, 2018. www.vanguardngr.com/2018/11/probe-the-metele-boko-haram-massacre)

The *Vanguard* editorial describes the insurgent group, Boko Haram, as notorious; partly for the global recognition the band has attained and also for the havoc attributed to their operations across the country. The capacity of the terror group is inscribed, although within a negative context, to reveal their ability to disrupt peaceful co-existence and act as threat to the security of the nation. The editorial evokes the group's popularity by proscribing it as a terror group with global connections. The capability of the insurgent band registers dread, trepidation and terror in readers' minds.

Also, the next excerpt provides an evaluation on the challenges of soldiers in the Northeast:

Extract 91: Among other things, the soldiers exposed the *rotting underbelly of military operations in the North-East*, including the deployment of obsolete equipment and the insincerity of the military high command (*Nigerian Tribune*. December 6, 2018:18)

The editorial addressed the Metele attack from a critical standpoint with a high propositional value denoting frustration at the plight of the Nigerian Army in the Northeast. In describing the capacity of the administration to tackle insurgency, the editorial presents an adverse state of event requiring urgent attention. This is due to the obsolete weapons provided by the government and the constant misinformation leaders of the troop present on the actual state of affairs. The editorial points out the misleading claims as precursors to the consistent defeat of the Nigerian Army.

Extract 92: On Tuesday, June 28, 2021, the Nigerian security setup achieved a major coup which served the notice that in spite of everything, it still knows its onions (*Vanguard*. July 5, 2021. www.vanguardngr.com/2021/07/beyond-nnamdi-kanus-re-arrest)

In the extract above, the same editorial provides an implicit capacity value in commending the Nigerian intelligence agency on the successful arrest of Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of the proscribed Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB). The nominal phrase, a major coup, presents an ironic application of the term to the achievement of the security setup. The editorial adopts a positive judgement value to commend the efforts and strategic planning procedures it observed in the arrest of Nnamdi Kanu. The efficiency of the Nigerian intelligence agency is heightened and foregrounded for readers to evaluate.

Corruption

The social esteem representation of the President on corruption matters is discussed here. In the next extract, a metaphorical attribute is drawn to the Buhari administration's handling of corruption.

Extract 93: The government would have realised by now that the fight against corruption is not *a game for the chicken-hearted*. It requires commitment, courage and a sustained adherence to principles of equity, fairness and justice (*The Sun*. May 12, 2018.

www.sunnewsonline.com/government-should-rejig-the-corruption-war)

The Sun editorial assesses the Buhari administration's approach to tackling corruption in the nation and suggest a weak approach. The editorial presents the value of normality to denote that brave-hearted persons are required in dealing with corruption. The description of corruption as a game also describes the diplomatic tactics needed to be implemented in order to fight the war. It portrays the President as a weakling, unfit for the task. Readers can negotiate meaning through the editorial's evaluation of the proposition. This extract can be classified under the tenacity and the normality subcategories of the social esteem to denote the President's inability to fulfil his promise on fighting and winning the war against corruption.

Extract 94: We had expected the administration to co-opt the legislature into these worthy national objectives. But in the fight against corruption, we think the National Assembly seems to be *indifferent* when it is not actually opposed to the fight (*The Sun*. May 12, 2018. www.sunnewsonline.com/government-should-rejig-the-corruption-war)

In Extract 94, *The Sun* editorial presents the legislative's attitude to the fight against corruption as one depicting indifference. It acknowledges the efforts of the executive arm and emphasises the limiting results the efforts will yield without the cooperation of the legislative arm. The negative judgment value is evoked to disapprove the acts of members of the National Assembly. The verbal phrase, had expected, suggests a gap in the government's coalition with the legislative arm in the fight against corruption. Readers can engage the discourse from an analytical standpoint which could result in the representation of the Buhari administration as acting independently of the second tier of government. The evaluative conclusion of the editorial on the attitude of the legislators can be derived from the administration's unwillingness to collaborate with it in the quest of achieving its goal.

4.4.2.2 Social sanction in media representation of PMB's administration

This section handles the subcategories of social sanction – veracity and propriety. The first deals with the verifiability of a proposition and the second is concerned with its ethical value. The extract below evaluates the truthfulness of the reports on the President's paralanguage on tackling corruption.

Extract 95: As things stand, *the federal government is also looking increasingly less than sincere* in its anti-corruption fight. In addition to the Buratai case and several others, there is now a brewing controversy over the expanded investigation into allegations of fraud connected with arms purchase over a period of eight years (2007 to 2015) by the military (*ThisDay*. July 28, 2016. www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/07/28/the-allegation-against-buratai).

The editorial in the extract above reveals a negative judgement on the sincerity of the administration's commitment to the fight against corruption. *ThisDay* editorial provides an evaluation of the contrasting details evident in the handling of corruption allegations against members of the administration and the administration's efforts to silence the spread of information. It presents the case of Buratai, the former Chief of Army Staff who was accused of mismanaging funds earmarked for the purchase of arms. The inconsistency of the campaign against corruption and the seeming abetting of government officials identified as culprits lowers the veracity of the administration's decision to end corruption in the country. The editorial invokes the possessive adjective, *its*, to dissociate from the administration's claims. This functions as a cynical reflection of the editorial stance on the war against corruption.

In Extract 96, the propriety of the administration is evaluated with reference to the defence of its officials.

Extract 96: We also affirm that, notwithstanding the fact that those who make damaging allegations against serving public officers have a duty to prove same, institutions of state must investigate every weighty allegation and help clear the good name of any affected public officer. *The duty of a responsible government* in such circumstances is to protect all parties and maintain the rule of law (*ThisDay*. July 28, 2016. www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/07/28/the-allegation-against-buratai).

ThisDay editorial adopts a positive evaluative value to assess the impacts of the former Chief of Army Staff, Lt. General Tukur Buratai, who was alleged of mismanaging the money for arms purchase. The plural pronominal subject, *we*, is used to denote the editorial's stance on the matter. It establishes its authorial influence in the social sanction by drawing from the dialogic contract to align with readers on the value of the appraised. The editorial evokes social sanction of morality to establish the duty of the government. The adjective, *responsible*, constructs an ethical conformity of the Buhari administration in

response to attacks from the public against its officials. The propriety reveals civic commitment of the administration to support and defend its members while ensuring justice and fairness.

4.4.3 Appreciative evaluation in media representation of PMB's administration

Appreciation, the third subsystem of the attitudinal dimension of the appraisal framework, deals with the evaluation of non-human properties and assigning values to texts, objects or a process. It captures the reaction of the appraiser, addressing impact or quality, the composition of the appraised object to examine balance and complexity, and the valuation of the object, whether it is worthwhile or not. In the extracts below, elements of this are discussed.

Extract 97: The deafening silence that has enshrouded the allegation of National Youth Service Corps exemption certificate forgery involving the Minister of Finance, Kemi Adeosun, is *quite troubling*, to say the least. In a matter that impinges on the integrity and character of a government official of such high standing, it is *disgusting – and also very disrespectful ...* (*The Punch*, July 27, 2018:18)

The agent of appraisal in the Extract above is Kemi Adeosun but the targeted object is the case of certificate forgery. The editorial's reaction disapproves of the authority's silence and condemns the act, describing it as *troubling*, *disgusting* and *disrespectful*. The evocation of the oxymoron, *deafening silence*, intensifies the degree of the proposition and negotiates meaning with readers. In describing the impact of the value position, the editorial stresses the implication of silence on the masses who expects so much from members of the administration's cabinet. The impact and the quality of the evaluative position are measured by the social actor's status, described as *a government official of such high standing*, whose office demands a high conformity with basic tenets of integrity and flouting any aspect of that standard attracts grave consequences such as losing her job and facing legal charges.

The composition of the object is deemed imbalanced, contrasting with the masses' expectation from the appropriate quarters. One of the mantra of the administration during election campaign was to fight and expose corruption and the masses rallied around the political party, hoping to experience a departure from the previous norms of leaders elected into public offices. The manner the scandal was handled revealed the imbalance in

the masses' expectations and the administration's disposition to the scandal. The lexical selections of *integrity* and *disgusting* do not collocate, they contrast and further express the imbalance depicting negative judgment. The editorial explains the complexity such a decision could result in, considering the reputation of the administration who at the time was seeking re-election and whose success at the polls was dependent on the manner the case was handled. The balance and complexity of the proposition were negatively appraised.

The valuation of the appraised, dealing with socially or ideologically established conventions, describes the evaluation of the Minister's action in light of the fundamental requirements her office is expected to conform to. The significance of this scandal presented the Buhari administration as incompetent in staying true to the campaign promises made to the nation and this impacted a dent to their image as perceived by the masses. The editor believes that the confidence reposed in them is not worthwhile since they have consistently failed in staying true to their promises. The valuation and assessment of the administration is thus presented in a negative light. The aesthetic evaluation of media representation on the whistle-blower policy is discussed in the final extract below:

Extract 98: The *success story* of President Muhammadu Buhari's anti-corruption crusade cannot be complete without the inclusion of the role of the whistleblower policy. It will be a misrepresentation of facts to say that the federal government's well-conceived and articulated whistleblower policy has not positively impacted on the anti-graft crusade. (*Leadership*. August 24, 2019. www.leadership.ng/fg-and-the-whistleblower-policy)

In Extract 98, the evaluation of the administration's achievement is construed by the editorial and its expectation from the masses is revealed. The Buhari administration had signed to law the whistleblower policy that empowers citizens to expose corrupt officials stashing public funds in private properties or accounts (Oludayo, 2021). The appreciative reaction value is engaged by the editorial to elicit cheerfulness and excitement in the remarkable effort of the administration, which is described as a *success story*. The editorial expresses delight in the impact of the policy which has exposed many corrupt officials and has resulted in the recovery of looted funds. The representation of the editorial reveals a positive appreciative value of the administration to describe a milestone in the

government's fight against corruption. The editorial appraises the proposition as a fact, selecting from a high value, to establish that any contrary opinion would be described as a *misrepresentation* of the obvious achievement. The reaction of readers is expected to be positive and the whistle-blower policy is required to be commended. Authorial presence in this extract is high and confrontational. The formulation of readers' opinions is expected to conform to its stance and rather the negotiation of meaning, the editorial advances a preconceived appreciative value that readers must share.

4.5 Summary

This chapter has been able to identify and discuss the various representations of the President Muhammadu Buhari's administration (tactfully retardation, mendacity, reticence and disdain for the rule of law), and the ideologies reflected in the representations of the administration in the selected editorials, which are propagandism, absolutism and passivism. The engagement techniques employed in the selected editorials to represent the administration (monoglossic and heteroglossic), as well as the linguistic tools used to negotiate meaning and establish solidarity with readers were also examined. The study has also been able to evaluate the various subsystems of attitudinal processes – affective, judgement and appreciation – in order to assess the engagement degree of the editorials with the presented propositions.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter contains the summary of the study, the conclusion of the study, the recommendations and the contributions to knowledge. It also presents suggestions for further studies.

5.1 Summary

This study was designed to investigate the representations of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration in selected Nigerian newspapers' editorials. Chapter one, the introductory chapter, contained the background to the study, statement of the problem, aim and objectives of the study, scope of the study and significance of the study. The chapter also discussed the history of Muhammadu Buhari as a military ruler in the Third Republic, the 2015 general election and President Muhammadu Buhari's administration as a democratically-elected president. Chapter two comprised the conceptual reviews of newspaper as a genre, history of newspapers and editorials, criteria for categorising newspapers, newspaper editorials, contents of the editorials, classification of editorials, and the linguistic features of newspaper editorials. Other conceptual reviews are stance-taking in editorials, newspaper and the pursuit of objectivity, ideology, politics of the media, evolution of newspaper in Nigeria, media ownership, and press freedom in Nigeria. Empirical reviews were also carried out on newspaper editorials, ideology and media representations, roles of the media in democracy, the challenges of the media in contemporary Nigeria, and PMB's administration in print media. It also examined the theoretical framework for the study. Chapter three explicated the methodology adopted in

the conduct of the research, as well as its analytical procedures. Chapter four contained the data analysis. The chapter examined various representations of PMB's administration in the editorials, their preferred means of engaging readers in the negotiation of meaning, editorial ideologies, discursive strategies employed in explicating the representations and the attitudinal appraisal of media representations.

5.1.1 Summary of the findings of the study

The following are the findings of this study:

1. Representations of PMB's administration in the selected editorials

Four representations of the administration were identified in the selected editorials. They are mendacity, tactful retardation, reticence and disdain for the rule of law.

Tactful retardation and mendacity were used to capture matters related to insecurity and the economy. Reticence addressed matters of handling corruption allegations against close aides of the President. Disdain for the rule of law describes the administration's disregard for legal procedures.

2. Engagement tools used in negotiating meaning with readers in the selected editorials

Two forms of engagement strategies were evident in the editorials. These strategies are monoglossic and heteroglossic positionings.

Monoglossic engagement strategies revealed editorial stance on the communicative event and provided opinions in forms of bare assertions to readers. In heteroglossic engagement strategies, editorials cited other external sources that supported their views and distanced themselves from contrasting opinions. Linguistic tools, such as deixis, interrogatives, hedges and boosters and conditionals were also used in the negotiation of meaning with readers.

3. Ideologies and the strategies used in backgrounding them

Three ideologies were discovered in the selected editorials. They are propagandism, passivism and absolutism.

The discursive strategies used in backgrounding them were labelling, backgrounding and activation, which were used to reveal the administration's handling of matters related to insecurity, economy and corruption.

4. Attitudinal evaluation of the representations

The affective, ethical and aesthetic evaluations of the administration were identified in the selected editorials.

Editorials expressed their feelings towards propositions capturing the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, used elements of social sanction and social esteem to demand the administration's conformity to legal standards and the rule of law, and also presented appreciative values of the propositions to readers.

5.2 Conclusion

The assessment of social actors in the media is commonplace, considering their role as a reflection of life in the society. Essentially, the need to comply with the structure of editorial writing and engage readers informs the decisions of most editorials. They make their choice of discussion on trending issues bothering on government policies, local or foreign, and weigh in to evaluate the social processes and events. This enforces a need to provide a background, develop a stance, critique necessary social actors obstructing the enforcement of such policies, and or provide their peculiar views on the subject matter. Editorials also appraise the efficiency and limitations of individuals or groups, occupying political offices, working in professional institutions or corporate organisations and playing significant roles in the society as they appear in news reports. The essence of this is to evaluate the degree of compliance of social actors' policies or activities with democratic standards and societal norms, as defined by various societies. These evaluations are either overtly or implicitly represented in the editorials. The administration of President Muhammadu Buhari was the focus of this study and editorials from the selected newspaper editorials evaluated the responses of the administration to major issues that occurred during his tenure as a democratic leader.

The Nigerian newspaper editorials reveal President Muhammadu Buhari's administration's efforts to deliver on democratic dividends and the attendant challenges with governance. They inscribe a few positive evaluative values and mostly negative emotive values through the entire editorials as they disendorse and disclaim the administration's handling of national matters, distance themselves from contradictory views, while they endorse sources that corroborate their stance. This elicits the questions: how objective can an editorial, whose ideological inclination is critical to a social actor or social event, be? Can its representations be void of personal feelings? The answer to this will not be a straightforward polar response but a detailed and often complex one, as the issue under evaluation will largely determine what form editorials will adopt in writing. The conveyance of an editorial board's stance largely reflects on their framing of the subject matter under discussion.

While government's inadequacies are appraised in order to identify gaps and proffer solutions, the commendation accorded to a social actor, process or event are still embedded with the identification of a limitation that requires improvement. This implies that no editorial is void of negative emotive value but the degree of occurrence differs. The quest for objectivity, therefore, becomes another challenge as they strive to appear neutral in the meaning-negotiation process but their ideological leaning still betrays them and the stance they adopt eventually determines their level of transparency. To this end, the study reveals that objectivity is relative, determined mainly by the ideological disposition of the editorial boards of the respective newspaper publishing firms.

5.3 Recommendations

The process of negotiating meaning with readers is central to editorial writing as readers derive opinions that shape their perspectives about life, governance and society from that medium. Understanding the important role they play, editors consciously draw from real-life experiences to communicate and actively engage readers in a way that stimulate thoughts that culminate in the formulation of opinion. To this end, editors can be said to play a crucial role in the representation of social actors, events and processes which can construct, shape, redefine, or alter readers' prior perception of the proposition. This is why objectivity, though relative, should be pivotal while they write and they must avoid a lopsided representation that fosters bias which impedes on their credibility.

The engagement of readers in the meaning-negotiation process is pivotal to ensuring that effective communication is attained; therefore, editorials should sufficiently engage readers by adopting various linguistic tools that will enhance their position in the communicative event. Similarly, government should strive to deliver on their campaign promises and be sincere with the information they provide on the progress they have attained in executing plans and policies to accomplish them. This will improve public confidence in the government and boost credibility.

5.4 Contributions to knowledge

The study has revealed that the representation of social actors in the media is largely influenced by editors' ideological leanings which in turn determines the form of engagement tools they adopt in negotiating meaning with readers. It has provided insight into the entire process of opinion formulation with presumed readers and how they are actively or passively engaged, through several discourse strategies targeted at foregrounding or backgrounding social processes and events. The study has also investigated the ideologies used by editorials in conveying opinions. It, therefore, provides basis for editorials' stance embedded in ideological inclinations and how it impacts on their engagement with readers in the framing of social actors. The study has also revealed that in engaging readers, editorials utilise various linguistic tools deliberately to foreground their opinions and views. These tools have been explicated in the study.

Therefore, studies in media discourse will find resources used in the study relevant for further researches. The various engagement strategies editorials select from to communicate with putative readers in order to establish solidarity and alignment have been explored in the study. Researchers can, therefore, find useful discursive tools in the evaluation of social events and processes from the study. The study has also revealed the need for government officials to pursue transparency in the communication of its achievements and efforts to the masses who voted them to office. The information provided are vital to determine the course of events and the reactions to be generated among the public. Therefore, the need for openness and acknowledgement of limitations in achieving all the promises made will result in masses' confidence in the policies and activities they pursue. In addition, the study posits that the sovereignty of the rule of law is central to democratic practices and government's adherence with legal standards will

entrench the values of democracy in the country and strengthen the efforts of every institution. Also, the study has further entrenched the nexus between sub-units of applied linguistics and science through the introduction of Voyant, a digital tool, to explicate the representations of the editorials. The application of digital humanities tools to media discourse has been revealed in the study and readers can find useful digital tools that can aid data analysis from the study or be inspired to investigate other related analytical tools.

5.5 Suggestions for further studies

This study focused on the representation of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration in selected newspaper editorials, the ideologies underlying such representations and the engagement strategies used in negotiating meaning with proposed readers. Further studies could consider the masses' opinion of the President's administration on Twitter, a social media platform void of editorial comments but representative of the public's perception of his administration. This would ascertain the level of transparency adopted by the editors in their respective representations of the administration.

Furthermore, the study assessed three major issues that occurred during the president's administration from 2016 to 2021. A further enquiry could be made to evaluate other issues in the President's tenure or a contrastive study could be carried out, comparing media representation of previous presidents or other foreign presidents, to check for trends and patterns. This is to establish the consistency of the media in fulfilling their role as gatekeepers in democratic societies.

Another area of interest could be an enquiry into the relationship existing between the media and the President's administration during the first and the second tenure. This would reveal the degree of freedom the press experienced in the two terms. Finally, researchers can compare foreign representations of the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari with local news reports and the linguistic tools utilised in achieving this.

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APPENDIX

S/No.	Newspaper editorials	Editorial Title	Date
1	<i>Punch</i>	Getting the economy out of recession.	June 8, 2016
2		Budget padding: A scandal meriting EFCC's probe.	September 21, 2016
3		Getting to the root of NIA's \$43 million saga.	April 25, 2017
4		Deafening silence on Adeosun's certificate scandal.	July 27, 2018:18
5		Boko Haram: Deradicalisation, a misplaced strategy	August 2, 2017: 18
6		NASS invasion: Buhari's ominous descent into dictatorship.	August 8, 2018:18
7		Soldiers' massacre: major setback for war on terror louder	November 27, 2018
8		Insecurity: Buhari should go straight for state police	May 14, 2019
9		Economic council offers new hope	September 20, 2019
10		Budget padding perpetrators' place is in prison	November 2, 2019
11		Buhari's lawlessness: our stand	December 11, 2019
12		Harassment of #EndSARS promoters should stop	November 12, 2020
13		Public wages and current economic realities	November 27, 2020
14		Bandits' kidnap of 136 pupils for ransom in Niger	June 10, 2021
15		EFCC's Gestapo raids on hotels, residences	September 1, 2021
16		Buhari, stop the reckless borrowing	September 24, 2021
17	<i>The Guardian</i>	As FG's debts cripple the economy	December 13, 2016
18		Economy: Actualise double digit growth rate.	May 23, 2017
19		DSS, democracy and the rule of law	August 14, 2018:16
20		Chronicles of Adeosun's Certificate Saga	September 15, 2018
21		Adeosun: Integrity matters	September 26, 2018
22		The Brutal attack on Nigerian Army	December 5, 2018:16
23		#EndSARS protests: Before it is too late!	October 19, 2020
24		That 'gory' Tuesday (#20-10-2020)	October 27, 2020
25		The attorney general and \$60b loot	June 30, 2021
26		Government, Twitter and public interest.	July 4, 2021
27		El-Zakzaky: a travesty of justice.	August 15, 2021
28		The lobby against anti-open grazing	October 12, 2021
29		Raid on Justice Odili's residence: why?	November 02, 2021
30	<i>ThisDay</i>	Boko Haram: the unfinished business.	November 20, 2016
31		Curbing herdsman's violence	December 2016
32		The resurgence of Boko Haram	November 30, 2016
33		The allegations against Buratai.	July 28, 2016
34		The privatization option	September 2017
35		Whistleblower policy on illicit arms	March 2017

36		Maina recalls scandal	October 27, 2017
37		Security needs change, not more money	August 2018
38		Plans to end farmers-herders' conflict	September 2018
39		Security and the 2019 election	February 3, 2019
40		The growing cost of insecurity	May 25, 2021
41		The invasion of Justice Odili's residence	November 2, 2021
42		Finally, Maina goes to jail	November 12, 2021
43	Leadership	CBN, Markets and Lower Naira Denominations	<i>Leadership</i> . 2017
44		\$322m Abacha Loot and the Poor	<i>Leadership</i> . 2018
45		FG and the Whistleblower Policy.	<i>Leadership</i> . 2019
46		Ruga and National Integration	March, 2019
47		Curbing Rice Smuggling.	<i>Leadership</i> . 2019
48		Time to Crush these Territories	June 2019
49		RUGA by another name	December 2019
50		Time to crush these terrorists.	July 22, 2021
51	Vanguard	Awaiting Buhari's economic recovery blueprint.	November 30, 2016
52		FG's N5,000 stipends to the poorest.	January 9, 2017
53		Rising unemployment and its consequences.	March 18, 2017
54		Probe the Metele Boko Haram massacre	November 28, 2018
55		Onnoghen: our democracy in danger.	January 29, 2019
56		Before corruption kills Nigeria	August 4, 2020
57		Buhari's shoot-on-sight order	March 22, 2021
58		Beyond Nnamdi Kanu's re-arrest.	July 5, 2021
59		Presidency's defence of Isa Pantami.	May 16, 2021
60		Sinister siege to Justice Odili's home	November 2, 2021
61	The Sun	Recession and the manufacturing sector.	July 24, 2017
62		Economic cost of Nigeria's many public holidays	December 24, 2017
63		The invasion of the senate.	May 2, 2018
64		Government should rejig the corruption war.	May 12, 2018
65		Buhari not indifferent to farmers, herders clashes – Presidency	September 6, 2018
66		The review of border closure	October, 14, 2019
67		Shi'ites/police deadly clashes	July 18, 2019
68		Alleged collusions of soldiers with terrorists	August 20, 2019
69		Prosecuting the sponsors of terrorism in Nigeria	September 23, 2021
70		Digital Economy: China seeks partnership with Nigeria.	November 4, 2021
83	Daily Trust	The Metele Setback	December 2, 2018:17
84		NASS invasion: DSS and enemies of the State	August 14, 2018:17
85		On Adeosun: silence is not golden	July 17, 2018:17
86		Ten Years of Boko Haram	August 4, 2019
87		Amnesty for Bandits	August 6, 2019
88		Soldiers in Cold-Blooded Murder	August 13, 2019
89		Forex Ban for Food Imports. Daily Trust.	August 18, 2019
80		Turkish Arms Supply to Boko Haram?	December 2, 2019
81		Sell the Refineries	December 9, 2019

82		FG's Conditions for Reopening Borders.	November 10, 2019
83		Caution on FG's \$29.960bn Foreign Loan.	December 11. 2019
84		Gains, Pitfalls of 2020 Budget	December 22, 2019
85	<i>Nigerian Tribune</i>	Foreign reserves: going, going....	September 28, 2016
86		The resurgence of kidnapping.	October 14, 2016
87		The Maina Scandal	October 2017
88		The Metele attack	December 5, 2018:13
89		DSS invasion of the National Assembly	August 9, 2018:13
90		Kemi Adeosun's certificate saga.	July 25,5 2018:13
91		Nigeria's rising debt profile	September 20, 2018
92		Onset of dictatorship	December 16, 2019
93		Buhari's state of denial	October 15, 2019
94		Buhari, closed borders and influx of arms	August 18, 2020
95		#EndSARS: Buhari must act now	October 22, 2020
96		Buhari, It's Almost Getting Too Late To Act.	May 5, 2021
97		Nigeria: this edifice will fall if....	May 19, 2021
98		The attorney general and \$60b loot.	June 30, 2021