
A Critical Discourse Analysis of Ideologies in *Twitter* Posts on #EndSARS and Nigeria's 2023 General ElectionsMAJELS Madonna
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Abstract

Nigerian youths have at various times embarked and participated in protests to register their displeasure at some government policies through engaging in physical and media movements. For example, '*Occupy Nigeria*' one of the notable protests, was staged by these youth to protest the proposed increment in the prices of petroleum products by physically occupying streets and government facilities in 2012 following the design of *Occupy Wall Street* movement in the US. Another prominent protest, #endSARS in 2020 was staged by the youths in virtually all the states of Nigeria over police manhandling of citizens. It is adjudged to be a coordinated protest which involved most Nigerian youths. Police brutality on Nigerians has increased exponentially leading to extra-judicial killings in some instances. Public outcries against the excesses of the police have gone unheeded. In order to pacify the public, the police authorities had at various times in the past announced the dissolution of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) in principle. This study critically examines the discourse of posts by Nigerian youths resident in the country on *Twitter* in the #endSARS protests of 2020 and its implications for the 2023 general

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elections. Data analysis is based on van Dijk's ideological discourse analysis. Findings reveal the use of a variety of discursive structures and strategies to express ideological beliefs based on negative lexicalization, hyperbole, compassion, apparent altruism, apparent honesty, negative comparison, warning, and norm and value violation among others.

Key words: Discourse, Discursive structures, Protests, Ideologies, #EndSARS.

Introduction

Human speech is laden with ideologies which discourse analysts interrogate. *Discourse analysis* explores these ideologies. This research is specific in looking at speakers' ideologies in a protest situation as protesters voice out their frustrations following a series of clashes between the police and citizens. The tension between the police and the protesters is renewed and heightened as Nigeria faces a general election in 2023. As a methodological and analytical tool, Discourse Analysis has remained at the center of exploring human speech.

On 8th October 2020, what began as a grass-roots movement to end police brutality in Africa's populous nation became a global phenomenon. Nigeria experienced an unprecedented civilian protests like never before in its history which started with a one-point demand for the government to dismantle a unit of the Nigeria Police responsible for dealing with cybercrime and other related crimes over police brutality on Nigerians. Tied to this, is for those policemen responsible for the human rights abuses to face justice. Unlike other protests in the

past, this protest was organized, directed and mobilized by the youths over the brutality suffered in the hands of men of Nigeria Police. Nigeria and indeed Nigerians have witnessed various forms of protests in the past that would seem uncoordinated when compared with the astute coordination of the protests of the 2020 protests across cities and towns in a digital age. In the two weeks since the protests began, Nigerians trooped out in their numbers to rally against the police abusive tendencies. The protests dominated social media feeds across the globe. Of all the social media platforms, *twitter* was used for the mobilization of Nigerian youths. Twitter was used to facilitate communication between the protesters and other citizens to sustain the tempo of communication and mobilization amongst the youths. What is *#endSARS*? The hashtag was first mentioned by activists in Nigeria in 2017 as they sought to abolish a federal police unit called the Special Anti-Robbery Squad. SARS, as it is commonly known and called in Nigeria, had existed for over three decades. However, critics say that over time, the unit had developed a reputation for abusing its powers. A disturbing video that was released on October 4, 2020, beamed a special spotlight on the police unit reinvigorating outrage across the nation. Protests erupted and demonstrators posted their grievances on Twitter and Instagram and within days, *#EndSARS* went viral

Before now, a protest by Nigerians, '*Occupy Nigeria*' in 2012 was sparked by the demand for government to keep the pump price of petroleum as low N97 because the government had signified the intention to remove the subsidy on petroleum products which would see prices soar as high as N197 (Chiluwa, 2012). *Occupy Nigeria* involved

both the young and old who were mobilized through *Facebook*.

Protests such as those that had taken place in other parts of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) readily come to mind. Egypt and Tunisia became the world focal point as a result of protests, which came to be known as 'Arab Spring' around 2011 (Hamdy and Gomaa, 2012). The wave of revolutionary protests that swept across the MENA was responsible for the ousting of the dictators in the region. Generally, it is believed that the social media played a significant role in the social movements and demonstrations that gained international attention within the region. Around the same period, there was also a protest in the US, '*Occupy Wall Street*' as well as in Greece, where the people protested against the harsh economic situation prevailing in the country. In all these protests, the social media, particularly *Facebook*, played a significant role in the successes recorded. Social commentators have dubbed 2011 as the "year of the revolutions" (Fuchs, 2012:775) and since then protests of various types have continued unabated across the globe with citizens making demands from their governments. Similarly, governments have realized the role of the media as powerful tools for mobilization and execution by citizens against it. Whenever tensions arose, there is a blackout on the internet by governments to cripple citizens from assembling against them. For example, recently, the governments of Uganda and Myanmar cut internet services as a measure to immobilize citizens from using the social media to mobilize against them. This practice is also common in North Korea

The October movement by Nigerians of various age groups, but

particularly masterminded by the young ones, began in Lekki, Lagos to denounce the brutality by men of the Nigeria police. The protesters converged daily at the tollgate in Lekki, a part of Lagos State. In other states where similar protests held, the protesters blocked specific areas to disrupt traffic and send home their demands. In selecting the posts, this researcher followed threads that reflect discourses on the endSARS agitations and political campaigns and garnering support by presidential candidates towards the 2023 general elections in Nigeria among the protesters between 8th October and 31st December, 2020. On October 20, members of the movement clashed with security agencies which resulted in the death of scores of the protesters. This period was selected because the period was the peak of the agitations which spread across the entire country.

The endSARS protesters, mostly young Nigerians, who took over strategic roads and locations across the thirty-six States and the Federal Capital Territory, mobilized through the social media. It would seem like the endSARS protest is run and directed digitally by the youths and will be difficult to stop. The feeling is like the youths have weaponized the social media to their advantage leaving the government clueless. On October 11, 2020, the Nigeria Police announced that it had dissolved SARS and fired two of its officers in response to the agitations and yearnings of the Nigerian people. Both the Nigerian youths and government officials sent messages on different social media platforms, including Twitter.

According to Tremayne (2014: 110), “Twitter revolutions”, is the

contemporary social mobilizations characterized by the hybridization between new forms of network communication, protest gatherings and protest messages in the social media, coupled with citizen struggles in the public sphere. The Twitter revolution gained prominence after the Moldova 2009 civil unrests. Opportunities for participating in the political affairs of a country have since emerged through the use of the social media by raising public awareness as witnessed in the countries that have experienced forms of protest with mobilization of citizens using the social media. The cyberspace has become inundated with struggles of different types through the use of the social media as a means to advance the cause of the youths in the contemporary world (Castells, 2012).

The dearth of research on the new form of collective protest because of social injustice on the social media, with particular reference to *twitter* as a channel for mobilization has pushed the investigator to further our understanding of the new form of communication used by youths in Nigeria for social protest. The purpose of this study is to analyze the ideologies in the discursive structures on Twitter in youth mobilization for protest against police brutality in Nigeria. Thus, the investigator shall strive to answer the following two important questions: (a) what are the context constraints that inform the ideologies of the speech of the protesters? (b) What are the discursive functions of the posts as used by the protesters?

Youth Activism and Twitter in Social Protests

The role of the social media in networking through the cellphone and other smart devices has remained unprecedented in recent times.

Habermas (2006) states that the mass media based on the technologies of mass communication constitute a source of power. People of different ages are able to converge in the virtual space to share experiences and give out information on different network sites. With cellphones, users are able to send and receive instant messages that will enhance their relationship. (Taiwo, 2012:22).

Issues that address social, political and cultural concerns in recent times which are youth-driven by social activism have become prominent and abundant around the globe (Wilson, 2006). Wilson (2006:320) notes that issues are youth-specific (for example bullying) and also specific (poverty, human rights and violence) which are tackled at the local and global levels and “in most cases, in fact, webpages are a central meeting point and basis for information dissemination and expression for these groups”. There is power in the social media as it provides citizens the platforms to practice democracy in public discourse who are not restricted by time, place and physical conditions (Hacker and van Dijk, 2000).

Protests by human beings are as long as civilization. While some protests have been tagged successful, others have not been. Twitter is not used only for social events. Twitter has been used to break stories and a source of stories. This is why Bruno (2014) reveals that those who have twitter accounts perform the role of early warning system which professional journalists can take the lead from there. It is because of this that Allan (2013) refers to them as 'citizen witnessing'

Demands for good governance, political, social and economic betterment are some of the reasons citizens engage in protests in

different parts of the world. This is why Wang and Caskey (2016) point out that although protests have been going on for centuries, contemporary protests have been shaped by the media. Particularly, they note that “Twitter has changed the way that protests come together, and also impacted the people involved with them” (102). It would seem to mean that while other media are also used, the impact of twitter is far more significant. The importance of twitter in protests is further highlighted by Grossman (2009) who notes that twitter did not begin the protests Iran. However, twitter had the capacity to inspire the protesters by strengthening their belief that they were not alone in the struggle, but had supporters around the world for their cause to succeed. The underlying suggestion is that the social media is such a powerful tool for mobilization that is aimed at social, economic and political reforms as we shall see.

The social movements in the MENA are a product of the social media (Shirazi, 2012). He argued that the social media was largely responsible for the success of the Arab Spring especially in the aspects of citizens' participation in communication discourse and mobilization. According to him, in the countries where the uprisings took place, the demands of the citizens were constitutional changes, democratic reforms, respect for human rights and political openness that were lacking.

There might a link between protests and the age grade of those who participate in it, vis-à-vis the means of mobilization. This is why Livingstone (2003:11) argues that there is a match in the style of deliberation that the internet offers and the youth, who are in most cases

disconnected from traditional forms of political activity. She says as the internet is flexible, hypertextual, it has a networked structure and it is dialogic in its mode of address which best suites the youth. For this reasons, we are tempted to say that it appeals to the owners of the digital generation.

Since 2012 when the famous '*Occupy Wall Street*' happened in the US, (Newman & Moynihan, 2012) report that planning of the protest took about a year to hatch. What this means is that the organizers and those involved kept in contact throughout the gestation period, of course, through a medium. The US protest came after those that had taken place in Egypt and Tunisia. The implication is that whatever lapses that were observed in the in Arab protests were now perfected in the US. The US protest was primarily grumbles by the 99% of Americans against the 1% represented by banks, financial firms and others. The aim was to protest the greed of their “corporate greed, social inequality and the corrosive power of major banks and multinational banks and corporations over the democratic process” (Occupy Movement (Occupy Wall Street). New York Times, 2 May 2012)). Wang & Caskey (2016:102) report that beginning with just about 1000 protesters, the figures increased as their number increased and spread on Twitter. According to Wang & Casey, the social media played a crucial role in the starting of the protest, its maintenance and how it turned into a mainstream media topic. According to them, scholars in media studies ought to pay close attention to how twitter can reveal how information is shared among protesters and what becomes of their actions.

The population of Nigeria is estimated to be about 200 million according to latest estimates of the National Population Commission (NPC, 2019). Statistics of social network users in the country reveal that as at 2019, Nigeria had 39.6 million active Twitter subscribers, representing 20% of the national population. The statistics further indicate that out of the active subscribers, 46% of them actively use Twitter for different reasons: trending news (33%), social interaction (21%), business advertisement (20%), and employment opportunities (18%). Furthermore, Twitter in Nigeria has impact on advocacy (13%), easier connectivity (25%), better social interaction (17%), advertisement (13%), instant information (8%), and employment opportunities (7%). In addition, 94% of Nigerians who have access to the internet, do so through mobile phones (Social media poll report, 2019). Social networking remains the main reason why over 95% of Nigerians access the internet across the length and breadth of the country, mostly by the younger population. Social Media Poll Report (2019:17) notes that Nigerians are of the opinion that Twitter has given voice to many voiceless people who can now express their concerns on issues that they feel are going wrong in the country in real-time. We find this information revealing to this research.

The number of Nigerians who have access and use Twitter for various reasons is expected to swell to 44.63million users in 2025 according to projections from 2017 to 2025 (www.statista.com). However, one source indicates that although Nigeria does not feature prominently on the list of countries with most Twitter users, the figure is encouraging and promising (www.statista.com). It would seem that Nigerian youths

have come to embrace the new technologies in communication in this generation. There is a consensus that younger people, irrespective of their country of domicile are daring and enthusiastic users of communication technologies. According to Livingstone (2011:1), the media therefore provide avenues for the construction of identity and mediating social relationships among young people. Facer & Furlong (2001) refer to the youth as cyber kids who Buckingham (2006) and Livingstone (2003:1) say belong to the digital generation. The internet (Twitter inclusive) has become a treasured domain for social exploration and self-expression (Holloway & Valentine, 2003). Livingstone (2003:11) notes that political scientists around the world are now concerned with the reconstruction of online communities of people of like-minds, developing new skills, building alternative deliberative spaces and who are raising the possibility of a public virtual space.

Ideologies in Discourse

What is (language) ideology? Why does it matter in discourse? These are pertinent questions that will help in unpacking the questions set in this investigation. Generally, research in language ideology is geared towards critique in a bid to improve the scholarly enterprise such as linguistic theory, social analysis, and speech act theory among others. For Thompson (1990), ideology is largely concerned with the ways meaning is constructed and relayed through symbolic forms that are diverse.

By analyzing ideologies in discourse it presupposes the analyst has the responsibility of laying bare what has been written or spoken by means

of scrutiny, understanding and systemic analysis in a manner that what is meant is not expressly revealed (Dijk, 1995). According to Dijk (1995) this task is mostly within the socio-political realm where the attempt is to relate structures of discourse with those of the larger society as they relate to class, gender and ethnicity which are associated with the different strata that are entrenched in the social, political and cultural context. In uncovering and accounting for these relations among groups/persons, language is used from a particular social position. The aim of ideological discourse analysis is to systematically link structures of discourse with structures of ideologies (Dijk, 1995:143). An important question here is: how does an analyst 'uncover' ideological statements in discourse analysis? According to Dijk (1995:147-148) ideological discourses are semantically tilted towards the following topics, meanings and implications: self-identity, activity-descriptions, goal-descriptions, norm and value descriptions and resource description. Discourse structures and strategies involved in written texts/speech are ideologically based descriptions on: negative lexicalization, hyperbole, compassion move, apparent altruism move, apparent honesty move, negative compassion, generalization, concretization, alliteration, warning, norm and value violation and presupposition. For want of time and space, we shall leave out their explanations and do so when we analyze our data because they are the tools for analysis.

Dijk (2006: 729) sees ideology as “the foundation of social representations shared by a social group”. This definition is apt for this investigation because we are interested in understanding the shared

representations of a group of people. According to Dijk, ideologies are not personal and goes further to say that the identity of groups is based on their structural properties and on their ideology. He further argues that people develop specific knowledge such as religious or political within themselves. It is this 'knowledge' that is shared, certified and presupposed to be true. However, some other group of people may view another group's knowledge as a "belief, superstition or religion". As to where ideology can be located, Fairclough (2013:57) states that it can be found in texts. According to him, texts, do not in themselves bear ideological statements, however, it is readers that locate ideological statements in texts. This comes to be because a reader is able to make meaning from texts, which are open to different interpretations and also because ideological processes are found in discourse. He notes that it is people who possess ideological processes rather than texts. On the relation between language and ideology, Fairclough opines that "language is a material form of ideology, and language is invested by ideology" (59). By this he means that there is a symbiotic relationship between language and ideology in the sense language is used to form an ideology and it is the same language that is used to express a formed ideology.

Dijk (2006:731) maintains that political ideologies are characterized by different systems of government (democracy, dictatorship), micro practices (parliamentary debates, demonstrations), special norms and values (freedom, equality). Politics is ideological and it is here that groups are opposed, there is power struggles and interests are at stake. Ideologies have a structure that is polarized; it reflects competing or

conflicting group membership and categorization in ingroups or outgroups. It follows that ideological discourse consists of the *ideological square* these are (a) emphasize *our* good things (b) emphasize *their* bad things (c) deemphasize *our* bad things (d) deemphasize their good things (734). It can therefore be understood that there is emphasis on 'our' in politics while everything negative is associated with the opponents.

Dijk (2006:728-9) notes that ideologies, especially political ideologies, are mainly reproduced by discourse. According to him, ideology is a vague term that is often viewed negatively that is rigid, misguided or partisan ideas of others. He goes further to point out that one early approach to ideology was its dominant nature when it functions as a tool for the legitimization of power abuse by the dominant group.

Ideological doctrines often focus on *dominant* ideologies, *multiplicity*, *contradiction*, and *contention* among ideologies within particular societies (Dijk 1998:147-9). He notes that when analysts use ideology as a theory for analysis, the focus is usually on (a) description of membership (b) description of activity (c) description of goal (d) description of value/norm (e) description of position and relation and (f) description of resource It is imperative to note these categories for the sake of this study in the Nigerian context.

One resource that defines the power base of a group or an institution is access to or control over public discourse and this anchored on communication (Dijk, 1988). While professionals have control over their areas of influence, which we align with, less powerful people also

have control in the *public space* such as the social media in which no group is subjugated to the whims and caprices to a more powerful group. It is important that discourse analysts understand the way ideologies work if they are to understand the way ideological representations of language in everyday linguistic and social practice. Ideologies vary through time and in different cultures. It is very important here to understand the various ideologies in discourse analysis. Cameron (2003) for example, notes that the role of ideologies is to make the *unequal* relationship that exists in any society appear natural, rather than *unjust*. Closely related to this is the work of Holmes (2007:56) who asserts that people can be victims of repressive *ideologies* and *discriminatory behaviour*.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Scholars of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) have so much latitude when it comes to the theory and methodology as there abound scores of them. It is for this reason that van Dijk (2000) affirms that there is no unitary theoretical framework or methodology for CDA because it encompasses a range of possible approaches of analysis. What he means is that there are many types of CDA even though they may be closely related. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is therefore a theory of its own with diverse methodologies. Van Dijk (2001:354) notes that most of the notions scholars of CDA refer to in their works include "power," "dominance," "hegemony," "ideology," "class," "gender," "race," "discrimination," "interests," "reproduction," "institutions," "social structure," and "social order".

We are therefore adopting Van Dijk's approach of ideology as one of the base in this work. In our analysis, other notions such as interests, reproduction, class, discrimination and institutions will intertwine to produce a multifaceted approach. The focus of CDA is informed by the understanding that discourses are part of and influenced by social structure in a social interaction (Van Dijk, 1998). Therefore, the focus in CDA is not on language or the use of language in and for themselves per se, but it is upon the partially linguistic character of social and cultural processes and structures (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 271).

CDA arose from Discourse Analysis as a more detailed method of extensive analysis of a piece. This approach takes its roots from diverse disciplines that include ethnography, pragmatics, philosophy, sociology and applied linguistics that aim to analyze discourse (Fairclough, 2004; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Fairclough (2004) argues that the approaches to CDA are determined by the methodology a scholar adopts for analysis. According to him, an approach can be characterized by a realist and dialectical-relational theory of discourse, a methodology which is oriented to constructing objects of research through theorizing research topics in dialogue with other areas of social theory and research, and selecting methods which are in part inherent to this version of CDA and in part dependent upon the particular object of research. This means that the approach of CDA is problem-oriented, interdisciplinary and eclectic (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Analyses of texts include linguistic analysis as well as semiotic analysis (Fairclough, 2004; van Dijk 1997). The combination of the linguistic and semiotic analyses in recent times amongst applied linguists has

given rise to 'multimodal' analysis, which is gradually gaining prominence. Thus, there is now an interdiscursive perspective (Kress & van Leeuwen 2000).

For Jaworski & Coupland (1999:3) language is much more beyond its use. According to them, language reflects social, political and cultural orders. As power and politics are involved, Van Dijk (2001) argues that CDA is a type of analytical research that mainly focuses on the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in social and political contexts. Engaging in CDA brings to the fore an eminent social problem by shedding light on the structures and practices which constitute and prolong the problem (Dijk, 1986, Fairclough 2013).

Fairclough (1992) maintains that a text analysis which aims to be significant must connect with theoretical concerns about discourse. According to him, such concerns include the socially constructive effects of discourse. He further maintains that there will be no good understanding of the social effects of discourse when the analyst does not closely look at what happens when people engage in a conversation or write. The approach of Fairclough (1992:138) is based on the studying discursive events, such an occasion when people use language. The discursive events in Fairclough's approach has three dimensions: texts, discursive practices (production and interpretation of texts) and social practices (situational, institutional and societal practices). Put in another way, the approach is to lay bare what is hidden in language, concerning itself with issues of dominance/resistance and expose an

undercurrent resentment. This is why Trappes-Lomax (2004:140) says CDA is an enterprise that is political in nature which is motivated by a particular political agenda that aims to understand the social world and also transform it. In furtherance of this argument, Abdullahi-Idiagbon (2010:32) points out that CDA focuses on linguistic communication as an instrument that is used to construct and champion either individual or group interests like personal ideology, politics, sexism and social class. What this means that individuals promote one kind of interest or another when they speak or write. On the part of the person who reads or listens to another person, CDA appeals to his conscience in such a way that it awakens his thoughts on the inequalities and injustices that are inherent in the text (van Dijk, 1993). As a result, Dellinger (1995), therefore, admonishes the reader to be on the conscious watch out of these injustices and inequalities when reading or hearing a linguistic communication. We agree with this position as it concerns our study.

Methodology

Nigeria returned to democratic governance in 1999 after a long spell of military dictatorship. Between 1979 and 1983, Nigeria practiced democracy but it was truncated by several *coup d'états* orchestrated by different military officers. Some of the reasons easily advanced for overthrowing each administration was corruption and the need to correct the anomaly (Maier, 2000). Independence for Nigeria brought with it deeply rooted antagonism for people of the different regions. The primary data for this research were obtained from 15 posts purposively selected out of many made by Nigerians residing in Nigeria. The data were collected from *twitter*. They represent the feelings of the agitators

at the period the protests were at their height. The corpus for the present study are representative sample of 1,460 posts on the subject matter. All the data are labeled serially such as 'P1', 'P2' 'P3' for ease of identification and analysis.

Data presentation, Analysis and Discussion

Van Dijk (2001), reinforced by Fairclough (1992, 2013) see ideologies as exemplifications of aspects that help with the constitution, reproduction and transformation of social relations, power and domination. For one to understand these in the Nigerian context by Dijk and Fairclough's views, will make us see the comments as avenues of the recreation of power dynamics and transformation because to demand for a change is to question the current situation. Therefore, ideological representation is located in the discourse of change for a better Nigeria.

P1. We'll never forget. See how they executed harmless protesters. My question is why do want to trust these people again? Is it because it wasn't your family that was killed? Is that why you're so stupid and heartless? #endSARS

P2. They said no one died during #endSARS. That we were all delusional. But suddenly, they're asking people to forgive and forget? *If to say stray bullet touch you or yours that period, you for no yearn?*

P3. Remember that #endSARS is a scar that won't go away. My question to all Nigerian youths are we forgiving Tinubu on what ground? #endSARS.

P4. We will never forget the labour of our heroes past! 20-10-20 is eternal in our calendars... You cannot show me blood and expect us to be on the same page... *Kop por. Na now una know say youth dey important? Day jus break.*

P5. They said #endSARS killings never happened at the tollgate but we all know the truth. I still have the recorded call of *Agbado master*.

P6. How will the grassroots Nigerians know about all these warnings? We have known more than enough reasons why we should avoid #Tinubu and #Atiku so that 2023 will mimic Osun elections.

P7. They said you should forgive and forget AHN, AHN! This small blood? They will shed more for you when they get there *na*. Haba. #endSARS never to be forgotten.

P8. *D* people that are holding Tinubu so he would not fall are earning more than university lecturers. The taxation process in Lagos is enough to disqualify this man from any electoral process. A sick President is about to leave and a sick president wants to come. God forbid.

P9. Quality life and respect for human lives is all I seek. Atiku doesn't seem to respect human lives. He deleted that Deborah post, & for me, that's a deal breaker. Tinubu inherently has a bias against human rights. His stance on #endSARS says a lot.

P10. Tinubu contesting for president is a great insult on the youths of

Nigeria after his role during #endSARS movement.

P11. And some of the candidates cannot get supporters until they pay for support. God forbid BAT-thing.

P12. #endSARS movement 20102020. We shall never forget that day. We used to be the ones pleading and crying for help, but now it's them. Truly, he who laughs last laughs best.

P13. The best support anyone can give Atiku and Tinubu is to encourage them to enter the nursing home, not to stress them with *9ja's* pressure.

P14. On the day Peter Obi will be sworn-in as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, please let's have an #endSARS kind of celebration where no tribe or religious affiliation mattered (sic). This will be a celebration of the emancipation of Nigeria! Please, this is important.

P15. If your brother or sister was murdered during #endSARS, would you forgive and forget the perpetrators? That is why *dem wipe your cord for neck during primaries*.

Negative Lexicalization

The use of strongly negative words/phrases to describe the actions of others is rampant in almost all the selected posts as there is hardly the use of positive words .For example, P15 (...*would you forgive and forget the perpetrators?*), P13 (*The best support anyone can give Atiku and Tinubu is to encourage them to enter the nursing home, not to stress*

them with 9ja's pressure). This comment contradicts the aspirations of these presidential aspirants. Here are people who contesting and hoping to be Nigeria's next President, but someone feels the best support they can get is to '.... support them to the nursing home'. This is also suggestive that they have come of age and rightly belong to the nursing home. P11 is interesting because it shows how politicians in Nigeria get their support (by paying money). This post also denounces the practice by introducing a new lexicon in the political arena through the use of the word *BAT-thing*. BAT are the initials/acronym for the one of the presidential candidates which this person has craftily used. Instead of using the word *bad* as it is known and used in English, it is changed to refer to anything that relates to the candidate. Phonologically, *BAT* can also be heard and understood as *bad*, given the negativity attached to it.

Compassion Move

This means showing empathy or sympathy for (weak) victims as a result of the actions of other people (rich, powerful etc.) so as to enhance the brutality of the other. P1, P2, P4, P7, and P9 are some examples that reflect compassion move. Section 1 (Introduction) highlights a little on the #endSARS protest that took place in October 2020. Scores of Nigerian youths were alleged killed by law enforcement agents but the action was denied by government. Accusations and denials have been going on since the incident. However, our data strike the chord of compassion. The statements indicate they have been brutalized and want the world to know, understand and sympathize with them. The Nigerian government bowed to pressure and instituted panels of inquiry to investigate the Lekki Tollgate as well as other incidents across the

nation. By constituting these panels, it shows that government was moved by the deluge of complaints and the need to address them. P1 is a typical example of a statement that will elicit compassion from a compassionate person. It will be heartless for someone to hear the tale of how people were massacred and not be moved, especially ... *harmless protesters*.

Apparent Altruism move

The apparent altruism move is closely related to the compassion move. This move is used to emphasize understanding for the position or interests of the opponents. It is referred to 'apparent altruism' because the argument is usually not developed, and merely has a disclaiming and positive self-presentation function. P15 and P8 are typical examples. P8 for example is not developed. It is a claim that has not been developed. There are no facts to back the claim and it is difficult to substantiate it by the reader. It is begging for sympathy from the reader while emphasizing the understanding for the position of the others.

Apparent Honesty Move

The honesty move is a strategy for disclaiming possibly negative statements. One method of employing this strategy is through the use of phrases like “Frankly...” or “We should not hide the truth”. P3, P5, & P9 are statements urging the reader to take are truths and not deny them. The second sentence in P9, “Atiku doesn't seem to respect human lives...” must be understood from the perspective that a Nigerian Christian girl was killed because those who killed her claimed she was blasphemous against Islam. It was alleged that Atiku Abubakar, who

eventually won the presidential ticket for one of the political parties to contest for Nigeria's 2023 election, supported what the assailants did by tweeting but later deleted the tweet. So, the writer of P9 is claiming that Atiku Abubakar “doesn't seem to respect human lives”.

Generalization

The aim of the generalization strategy is to generalize from one person or small group to a larger group or category. P1 demonstrates the generalization of politicians as bad people because of the alleged involvement of one of them. The use of the phrase “...trust these people again?” has lumped all politicians as one, which is, bad or insincere set of people. There is an issue of trust and sincerity of purpose among Nigerians about the political class. There is so much cynicism of politicians as they are labeled as insincere and people of questionable character. More importantly, the names of those politicians that feature in our data are alleged to be men of doubtful character, hence the generalization.

Warning

This move is more generally, even without evidence about facts or probable developments, the statements are emphasizing possible threats and terror. Nine out of the fifteen selected posts, P2, P4, P5, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12 & P15 can be adjudged to be statements without facts. P5, for example, “They said #endSARS killings never happened at the tollgate but we all know the truth. I still have the recorded call of *Agbado master*”. This statement makes it categorical that some people lost their lives. The speaker is probably not in position to say who these unfortunate people were. Furthermore, the claim to having the recorded

call of *Agbado master* cannot be substantiated. It might just be a social media razzmatazz to impress his readers. We might add that if he had it, he would have made it accessible the way he made his post available to all. The other posts also lack evidence.

Norm and value violation

Here, the most fundamental way to establishing a distinction between THEM and US is not only to describe proponents in benevolent terms and opponents in negative terms, but to emphasize that the opponents violate the very norms and values that the society holds dear. Our data present these violations in P4, P6 & P9 show the difference between the masses and the politicians on one hand and perpetrators of evil and the victims on another. P9 for example clearly shows that those people mentioned are ruthless (in violation of societal norms) while the victims are presented as victims of the wrongdoings of others.

Presupposition

This is a semantic device that indirectly emphasizes the good properties of the proponents and their bad ones is presupposition. That is, these properties are simply assumed to be known, as if they were commonsense, and hence need not be specifically asserted. For example, P15 emphasizes the casualties some people suffered during the protest. In fact, as alleged by the speaker, some people lost their lives and the people who allegedly masterminded their killing have come back seeking for forgiveness for their actions.

Conclusion

It is now evident that a variety of discursive structures and strategies can be brought into use to express ideological beliefs and the social and personal opinions derived from them. Our data have proved these. Largely, the investigation so far has analyzed how ideology is constructed. The analysis reveals that participants in the discourse ground their contributions in ideologies to convince and persuade their readers. It shows that the ideological discursive formations in the discourse are those of negative lexicalization, compassion, apparent altruism, apparent honesty, generalization, warning, norm and value violation, and presupposition. Our analysis indicates that the discourse is interdiscursive as the data show a mix of diverse themes and ideas for the enhancement of identified ideologies.

We can see that a variety of discursive structures and strategies may be used to express ideological beliefs and the social and personal opinions derived from them. The overall strategy of all ideology appears to be positive self-presentation and negative 'other' presentation. This also implies various moves to present the speakers in our data as good, highlighting that and portraying opponents as bad.

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