

# Problematizing Migration: News Discourses in Nigerian Newspapers

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## Abstract

This paper examines how migration is problematised in Nigerian newspapers by identifying and discussing discursive issues and linguistic devices deployed in news discourses, drawing its data from five Nigerian newspapers. Employing theoretical insights from critical discourse analysis, Nigerian news discourses problematise migration through four discursive issues of poverty, unemployment, security and immigration. The discursive issues provide the basis for Western-driven migration and uncover migrants' experiences in their countries of destination. The paper reveals that Nigerian newspapers give prominence to negative news reportage of migration to discourage potential migrants from irregular migration while resisting the anti-immigration policies of powerful countries.

**Keywords:** (im)migration; poverty; unemployment; Nigerian newspapers

## 1. Introduction

From the earliest time, migration has been an integral nature of humans as a validation of their survival instinct. Migration, as conceived by the International Organisation for Migration (henceforth IOM) (2018), incorporates all varieties and forms of movements, which capture different circumstances and conditions of people from diverse and divergent parts of the world and walks of life. This means that migration concerns all countries and people in the world, and it is interconnected with trade, security, politics, and education, amongst others. Human migration is an ancient trend that dates back to the beginning of human history. However, human migration is not just for the sheer pleasure of migrating because humans migrate for specific reasons. Since human wants are limitless as the resources to cater for these wants are limited and the wealth of the world is naturally unevenly distributed, this, therefore, pushes humans out of their 'original' abode in seeking greener pastures for the betterment of their lives. Migration, thus, becomes one of the major and significant ways of meeting one's needs and achieving one's aspirations in the world. Raineri and Rossi (2017) observe that while Europeans often relate the flow of migration with a threat, warning and menace to their security, Africans conceive migration as an avenue and prospect for humanitarian and altruistic protection, and economic and financial security.

The surge in migration and the urge to migrate from their countries of origin to developed countries have been one of the social and economic realities of life in many African countries as many young African nationals desire better conditions of living in developed climes. This set of people are, thus, ready to risk everything in their quest for and pursuit of a better life in foreign lands which have been perceived from afar as a direct opposite of what is obtainable in their home countries. While there are laid down principles, procedures and regulations guiding international or transnational migration (regular migration); when these people are unable to meet the prerequisites for migrating, due to one reason or the other, they, most times, resort to irregular migration which entails the movement of people from their places

or countries of origin without following the rules, principles and regulations guiding such movements into another country or state (IOM, 2019; Adeniyi, 2019).

While many scholars have examined how (im)migrants and (im)migration are discursively constructed in different media of countries of destination, especially in Europe, America and Asia, little has been done to understand how sending countries, especially Nigeria, discursively perceive migration, by critically identifying and discussing issues in migration news reportage from their own standpoint. Studies on migration within the African continent and Nigeria in particular are resident in sociology, media studies, literary studies and political science (Nwiyi, 2016; Wilson and Abubakar, 2017; Oboli, 2018; Adeniyi, 2019; Ikuteyijo, 2020), while few linguistic ones in Nigeria (Ayeomoni, 2011; Sibiri, Ayinmoro & Odubo, 2015) only conceived migration as a sociolinguistic variable, which affects language use. Therefore, this paper examines how migration is problematised in Nigerian news discourses by identifying and discussing (i) major discursive issues and (ii) linguistic and discourse devices deployed, through the theoretical insights of critical discourse analysis and systemic functional grammar.

## **2. Migration and media**

The interplay between migration and media has been established in the literature (King and Wood, 2001). Migration, being a critical issue around the world, cannot but find its way into the media to present events and happenings on or about migration, revealing the pros and cons of the social phenomenon itself, discursive engagements of migration practices, most especially the politics, economic, security and human angle of migration in the contemporary world. While Fowler (1991) observes that media constructions of events are hardly objective, this is due to different ideological standpoints in which news reports are presented. Studies on media reportage of important social issues in Nigeria have been on terrorism, resource control, militancy, violent protest, divorce cases, (Chiluwa, 2011; Igwebuiké & Taiwo, 2015; Odebunmi & Oloyede, 2016; Osisanwo & Oluwayemi, 2018; Oluwayemi, 2020; Osisanwo & Iyoha, 2020).

Exploring discourses in the Irish political and social institutions, specifically on illegal immigration, Burroughs (2012) employed Foucault's theorisation of identity and power. She argued that people in authority utilised discourses to enforce power and control, and maintain and sustain the status quo. While pinpointing some positives in her data, the study contended that in Ireland, illegal immigrants were portrayed largely in negative ways. Also, Don and Lee (2014) investigated how voices of political elites were incorporated in media reportage of migration. Reisigl and Wodak's approach to Critical Discourse Analysis with van Leeuwen's Socio-semantic Network were deployed to analyse the discursive strategies and different features realisable in a text in the representation of specific meaning in the social world. They found out that nomination, predication and legitimation strategies were used to perform the following functions: construction of in-group and out-group; bestowal of positive or negative evaluative values on social actors; and appealing to authority to present claims as truths.

Comparing media coverage on migration in countries with high human development index (Canada, Australia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Norway, and the Netherlands) with low human development index (Thailand, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Bangladesh,

Pakistan, and Malaysia), Allen and McNeil (2018) argued that there is a preference for negative reports on migration, most especially irregular migration, despite the differences in the levels of human developments in the compared countries. With Australia and the United Kingdom leading in negative reportage and Canada and Switzerland with less in the former category, Thai and Malaysian media had more negative reports in the latter. Also, the deployment of dehumanising language through metaphorical representations of migrants was one of the ways the media portrayed migration and migrants in their reportage. Migrants were likened to a form of natural disaster like ‘flood’ and insects as ‘swarms’ that have come to threaten the national cohesiveness and identity of their host nations.

### **3. Theoretical framework and methodology**

Critical discourse analysis and Systemic functional grammar provide the theoretical foundation for this study. The socio-cognitive approach to CDA recognises the cognitive interface mediating between social structures and discourse structures in its analysis of texts and talks, towards uncovering how ideological biases and polarities are enacted, perpetuated and resisted. As a concept in the approach, ‘discourse topics’, also called discourse issues, are mostly conveyed in news headlines, titles or abstracts of a scholarly paper, the beginning of stories or conversations. They are ‘described as semantic macro-structures, consisting of macro propositions that semantically subsume and control the lower level meanings (propositions)’ (van Dijk, 1980; 2018:234). Discourse topics are said to be the most important information in texts because they are easily recoverable by their recipients from their mental model. In analysing discourse topics in news reports, a close consideration is given to ‘Time, Place, Participants in various identities and roles, as well as the global action or event’ (van Dijk, *ibid.*) On the other hand, Halliday’s transitivity system is embedded in the ideational function of language, and presents clause as ‘representation’, which operates on the clause to realise experiential meanings (Halliday, 1994; 2004). The clause has three parts: the process (realised by verbs), functioning as its nucleus, the participants (nominals) and the circumstance (adverbials). The process types are material, mental, verbal, behavioural, relational and existential. Material features processes of doing and happening; mental denotes actions relating to the human mind; verbal describes verbal actions; behavioural deals with psychological actions; relational characterises processes of ‘being and having’ while existential describes something as existing.

The data were drawn from five Nigerian newspapers, *Daily Trust*, *The Nation*, *The Sun*, *Punch* and *Leadership*, which enjoy wide readership across the country. The news reports were published between 2015 and 2021, which was the period the issue of migration became a major talking point in Nigeria and on the African continent (IOM, 2018). The keyword, migration, was searched on the official websites of the newspapers. One hundred and twenty news reports gathered were classified into four on the basis of their topics, namely poverty, unemployment, security and immigration; while 50 of them were randomly sampled and a few excerpted for analysis. The summary of data is presented in the table below.

Newspaper	No. of Reports	Percentage (%)
The Sun	10	20%
Leadership	10	20%
Daily Trust	10	20%
The Nation	10	20%
Punch	10	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Table 1: Summary of data selection across newspapers*

#### 4. Analysis and discussion

In the data, Nigerian news discourses problematise migration through four discursive issues of poverty, unemployment, security and immigration. Each of these is taken in turn subsequently.

##### 4.1 Poverty

Poverty, which is the state of being poor, is among the main problems that push Nigerians, especially the youth, out of their country of origin to another country, legally or illegally. This also makes migrants susceptible to human trafficking. According to the World Bank (2020: n.p.) ‘40 per cent of Nigerians (83 million people) live below the poverty line, while another 25 per cent (53 million) are vulnerable’.

##### Excerpt 1

Many of **the Nigerian girls are from poor families** in Edo, who are psychologically manipulated during a **voodoo ritual before leaving**, Di Giacomo said. According to him, they are accompanied by a **madam-linked to the traffickers** on the long journey through Niger and Libya. The **increasing number of minors** arriving really do not have any idea even **what prostitution is, what sex is**. (*Punch*, July 21, 2017)

Excerpt 1 presents poverty as the root cause of irregular migration, which leads to human trafficking of the identified **Nigerian girls**. The excerpt as whole is an instance of verbal process as shown by the reporting verb **said**, whose sayer is **Di Giacomo**, the spokesman of International Organisation for Migration as presented in the news report. Aside being the verbiage of the verbal process, the first sentence also has two instances of relational clause. In the first relational clause, the prepositional phrase **from poor families in Edo** clearly uncovers the economic state of the Nigerian girls. Coming from **poor families** indicates that the girls are at a higher risk of vulnerability or susceptibility to human trafficking. **Edo** state is very notorious for sex trafficking from Nigeria. In addition, the second relational clause, which serves as the modifier of **the Nigerian girls**, uncovers the diabolical means which human traffickers employ to get the girls to do their bidding—a **voodoo ritual**. Because the girls socio-culturally understand the consequences of not abiding by the terms of the voodoo ritual, they become manipulated and forced to abide by the dictates of their traffickers, even if their human rights and dignity are violated, thereby making them to be trapped in their situation.

More so, the second sentence in Excerpt 1 depicts human trafficking as a highly networked cartel as **the Nigerian girls** are not left unaccompanied by their traffickers. The noun phrase **a madam-linked to the traffickers** shows the nature of international human trafficking with Nigeria as the source of the human goods. **Niger** and **Libya** are the channel or route through which irregular migration and international human trafficking from Nigeria are directed to Europe. Despite being a woman herself as presupposed by the meaning of the noun **madam**, it is rather disheartening that she is the link between the Nigerian girls, who are deemed ignorant and innocent, and the human traffickers, who will dehumanise and abuse them. This shows that human trafficking is not gender specific as both men and women are involved in the infamous trade. The third sentence represents how ignorant and innocent **the Nigerian girls** are because they are **minors** who do not understand what prostitution or sex is. Also, it is rather unfortunate that the **number** of arriving **minors** for sex trafficking is reinforced by the adjective **increasing**. Hence, unless the root cause of **poverty** at home is wholly addressed by the government and political leadership, Nigerians, especially Nigerian girls, will always be exploited by human traffickers; for eradication of or reduction in poverty will definitely break the supply chain of human trafficking in Nigeria.

### **Excerpt 2**

Italy has become the **main arrival point** in Europe for people **fleeing** persecution and **poverty** in Africa, most of them crossing the Mediterranean from **lawless** Libya in search of a better life. Nearly **600 migrants** have died so far this year trying to reach Italy from North Africa.... Some **4,600** people are thought to have died last year. (*The Sun*, April 3, 2017)

In Excerpt 2, persecution and **poverty** are noted as parts of the causes of irregular migration, which is captured in the lexical word – **fleeing**. The word, **fleeing**, which is a continuous form of the material verb ‘flee’ means ‘running away from a place or situation of danger’. In the first sentence of the excerpt, two continents are compared: **Europe** and **Africa**. While the former is presented as welcoming and accommodating, the latter is represented as persecuting and poverty-stricken. Thus, citizens of African countries are portrayed as abandoned and deprived of the necessities of life by their homeland. This is further seen in the negative adjective, **lawless**, which is used to qualify the only African country in the excerpt, **Libya**, which can be said to be a representation of Africa. Since lawlessness is commonplace in Africa, the persecuted and impoverished people are constructed as having no option but to flee, in order to access a **better life** elsewhere. Thus, the continuous nature of the verb—**fleeing**—shows the intensity and perpetuity of persecution, poverty and lawlessness in Africa, which fuels irregular migration.

However, in the second and third sentences of the excerpt, it is revealed that many fleeing Africans do not get to their destination, Europe, safe and sound. The IOM estimation shows the number of death as at the time of the news reportage in April 2017 to be **nearly 600**, and **4,600 people** are said to have died **last year**, that is, in 2016. Thus, uncertainty is a dominant index in irregular migration because many people are lost to all sorts of dangers and disasters in their pursuit of a better life. This uncertainty is revealed in the two constructs in the

excerpt. These are the adverbial element, **nearly** and the verbal phrase, **are thought to have died**. Therefore, it can be deduced that irregular migration is extremely risky and potentially life threatening as nothing is guaranteed, yet many young people still prefer it to staying in their home country due to extreme poverty.

### Excerpt 3

The EU has discovered that all the **measures** put in place to **stem** the **tide of illegal migration** across the Mediterranean Sea have not deterred the would-be migrants from embarking on the **tortuous** and **hazardous** trip to Europe. **Just like a balloon that is tied in one place only to expand in another**, they can't cope with the ever increasing influx of illegal immigrants from Sub-Sahara Africa. ...human beings have always wanted to escape **poverty** and **misery** and today many Africans see Europe as their El Dorado. (*The Nation*, September 6, 2019)

Excerpt 3 depicts that in spite of all the implemented measures by the European Union, irregular migration from sub-Saharan Africa is unending. The journey is qualified by two negative adjectives **tortuous** and **hazardous**. These descriptive adjectives aptly capture the nature of irregular migration. Also, the trip is compared to **a balloon that is tied in one place only to expand in another**. This means that all efforts to rein in on the ever increasing influx of illegal immigrants from **sub-Sahara[n] Africa** by the member-states of the EU, especially Spain, Italy and France, are not bringing their desired results. The clause **they can't cope** is very important. The pronoun **they** refers to the mentioned countries, while the verb phrase **can't cope** means the countries' resources have been overstretched due to **the influx of illegal immigrants**. More so, that **they can't cope** may make the citizens or even the governments of these countries to employ inhuman methods against the tide of illegal immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa as Don and Lee (2015) and Lirola (2016) observed.

**Poverty** and **misery**, which are contextually synonymous, are the notable causes of the influx of illegal immigrants, and as a matter of fact, humans will surely seek to escape them through any available means. A huge contrast is evident between **Africa**, which is full of **poverty** and **misery**, that the people are always trying to escape from, and **Europe**, which is considered as **their** (immigrants') **El Dorado**, denoting any place which is rich in gold, opportunity, etc. This can be said to be what the African migrants are searching for through ((ir)regular) migration. Therefore, these Africans in their desperation to live their desired life will defy any restrictive measures implemented as inhibitions on their way to reaching their goal. The only measure that can stem the tide of illegal immigration from Africa to Europe is reduction of **poverty** and **misery** with enabling environment for Africans to thrive in their countries of birth/origin.

## 4.2 Unemployment

Closely related to poverty as a way of problematising migration in Nigerian news discourses is unemployment, which is a major cause of poverty. Unemployment is the state of not having a job, even when one is competent and ready to work. This is discussed textually below.

#### Excerpt 4

I am a **graduate** but there is **no work** for me after completing my NYSC over seven years ago. I was teaching in a **private school** but what I get in a month is so little that I can't even take care of myself. I **feel** pained looking at **my aged parents** who needed my support which is not forthcoming. I was left with no option than to **travel out**. Now that I am back in Nigeria, I would continue to struggle while looking for a **green card**, he said. (*Daily Trust*, March 21, 2021)

Excerpt 4 captures the experience of a young Nigerian, who is identified in the news report as **Kenneth Joseph**. Dominantly, the personal pronouns **I, me** and its adjectival counterpart **my** show that the experience is a personal one. This is why the actual words of the human subject are presented in the report, giving it authenticity. Despite the fact that Joseph is educated, which is captured in the relational clause **I am a graduate**, he avers that he has no employment opportunities. This is, further, reinforced by the subordinate clause **after completing my NYSC over seven years ago**. The acronym, NYSC, National Youth Service Corps, is a national programme that mandates all under 30-year-old Nigerian graduates to serve their country for a period of one year after graduation. His inability to get a job after the programme typifies a deep-seated and high unemployment rate in Nigeria.

While some young persons might have escaped unemployment in the country, they are mainly under-employed. Socio-cognitively, a **private school**, especially at primary and secondary levels, is usually the place where many of the young people seek succour to their unemployed situation. In many of such private schools, underemployment is the order of the day as captured in Excerpt 4. Hence, it is pathetic that the human subject cannot even provide for himself neither could he support his **aged parents**. This becomes a multi-dimensional problem as the man, his parents and the society at large are negatively impacted due to the fact that invaluable human resources are continually wasted through unemployment. The unpalatable state of the human subject is what forces him out of Nigeria. Joseph is co-textually one of the **over 13,000 Nigerians** who are deported to the country. In the last sentence of the excerpt, despite being deported, Joseph still maintains that he will not be deterred by his deportation as he promised to **struggle while looking for a green card**. This statement implicates that unemployment rate is high in the country, and the general condition of living in Nigeria has remained unimproved and even worse, hence the sayer's passionate drive and quest to access a better life abroad, which is presupposed in the noun phrase **a green card**.

#### Excerpt 5

He **said** **nurses** were among those who hold **the strong belief that life is rosy abroad** and have travelled without having the necessary information about the reality on ground. **Duru** maintained that most of the nurses, who travelled out, **ended up roaming the streets of Europe frustrated** or engaging in **social vices** including prostitution. (*The Nation*, August 2, 2019)

As typical of news reports, Excerpt 5 is an instance of verbal process as evident through the use of the reporting verb **said**. The sayer of the verbal process is both represented by the third

person personal pronoun, **he**, and the speaker's surname **Duru**. Within the context of the report, Duru is a founder of a non-governmental organisation interested in giving correct information to potential Nigerian migrants on the issue of irregular migration to Europe. In Excerpt 5, Duru counters **the strong belief** of a group of people denoted by the noun phrase **nurses** who are the subject of the relational process **were**. **The strong belief** of the identified social actors is that **life is rosy abroad**, and it is on this basis that the nurses perform the material action **have travelled**. However, their profession, according to the sayer, seems to give them some false perception **about the reality** of life in Europe, since the nurses perform the material action **without having the necessary information**. This prepositional phrase serving as the clausal circumstance depicts the ignorance of the nurses and the false reality of Europe that they had before their emigration.

The sayer asserts that **most of the nurses** could not realise their dreams of a better life in Europe, which ultimately makes them to end up **roaming up the streets of Europe**. The adjective **most** is very significant in this excerpt. It is interesting to note that the sayer deploys number game, which a potent tool in migration news reports by using the word **most**. However, no source is provided for this statistics, which may be subject to doubt, but since the sayer is a founder of an NGO that is saddled with the responsibility of educating the populace on the issue of irregular migration, it can be argued that he has some data which are not available to the news consumer as an authority whose words should be correct. Having realised the falsity of their perception of Europe after emigrating, **the nurses** then are presented as **frustrated** and have no other option but to engage in **social vices**, such as **prostitution**. More so, the implication of this counter narrative by the sayer is to warn potential Nigerian migrants, irrespective of their professions to do their due diligence before emigrating from Nigeria, so that they too will not be frustrated and take to social vices as a survival strategy in foreign lands, reinforcing that **reality on ground** in Europe is distinctively different from perception afar. It can, therefore, be inferred that unemployment is also in Europe as it is in Nigeria, even though its level in both places may differ.

#### **Excerpt 6**

There is the **urgent need** for all of us to ponder on the state of our nation and **tame the monster** that drives people away. The rate of **unemployment** is daily skyrocketing... while basic social amenities and infrastructure continue to be out of the reach of the common man. (*Punch*, April 30, 2016)

Excerpt 6 identifies immediate necessity to address the issues driving citizens of Nigeria from their country of origin to other places in the world. Being an instance of verbal clause, though its sayer and verbal process are not seen in the excerpt, the news report reveals that the sayer is a sociologist whose name is identified in the news story as **Ayotunde Dalton**. He employs an animal imagery, especially metaphor, in his verbiage to present the unpalatable and pathetic living conditions of Nigerians in their country, which make them to seek a better life elsewhere. The animal imagery is captured by the transitive verb **tame** and its object **the monster**. The verb **tame** means to domesticate an animal, particularly a wild animal, so that it can be used as

desired by the tamer, while the noun **monster** denotes a large imaginary creature that is ugly and frightening.

In the second sentence of the excerpt, **unemployment**, insecurity, high cost of living, corruption and **infrastructural decay** are the metaphorised ‘monsters’ that need to be tamed by all concerned persons, especially Nigerian leaders. Using parallelism, the monstrous state of the nation, Nigeria, is further reinforced in the excerpt as unemployment rates are rising rapidly on a daily basis, security concerns have reached their highest level, the cost of living has become unbearably expensive and corruption is prevalent. The absence of fundamental infrastructure indicates a state of severe poverty. This situation makes life difficult and encourages people to migrate in search of a better life. The sociologist, **Ayotunde Dalton**, therefore, recommends that the nation reflect on its current state and take action to address issues such as unemployment, insecurity and poverty. These steps are necessary to improve the quality of life in the country.

### 4.3 Security

Security, a state of being free from danger or threat, is a major discourse issue in Nigerian news discourses on migration. Insecurity, which is the opposite of security, can be conflated under this. In addition, lack or absence of security has been identified as one of the dominant factors making people to migrate (Danda, 2017). This is illustrated in the excerpts below.

#### Excerpt 7

Magashi, who said he knew **Nigeria** would be **most hit** by the demise of Deby, voiced the commitment of the Federal Government to control the **influx of refugees and weapons**. He said the absence of Deby’s influence on the borders which might worsen security situation in Nigeria and other neighbouring countries underscored the need to beef up **security** around borders, particularly with the Republic of Chad in view of the ongoing **unrest** in the country. (*Daily Trust*, April 22, 2021)

In Excerpt 7, the Minister of Defence of Nigeria, named Major-General Bashir Magashi (rtd), is captured commenting on what would be the lot of the country, Nigeria, as a result of the death of Deby. For context, Idriss Deby was the former President of Chad—a country that borders Nigeria in the north eastern part. It is interesting to note that Deby died on April 20, 2021, and the minister has already envisaged the consequences of Deby’s demise in Nigeria when the news was reported on April 22, 2021. His assertion that **Nigeria would be most hit** as a result of the death of the Chadian president is revealing. In addition, due to the fact that the countries, Chad and Nigeria, share boundaries, for more than a decade now, Boko Haram terrorists have been wreaking havoc in the two countries, with Deby leading the war against insurgency in his country. However, with his death, **the influx of refugees and weapons** from Chad, which is conceived as security threats to Nigeria, is presented.

In migration reports, the phrase **the influx of refugees** (or migrants) **and weapons** is always deployed by social actors to raise consciousness of and rally their fellow citizens together in their campaign against refugees and migrants, thereby presenting migrants as threats to national security. Also, the minister reveals the Federal Government’s commitment **to**

**control** any influx of refugees and weapons. The inclusion of the lexical noun, **weapons** in the phrase **the influx of refugees and weapons** within the context of migration shows that the safety and security of the Nigerian people will be threatened if **the influx** is left uncontrolled, hence foregrounding the representation of migrants as security threats. Therefore, the need to **beef up security around borders** due to the absence, occasioned by death, of the Chadian president becomes very important so as to contain the envisaged worsening security situation in Nigeria for the national safety and security of the Nigerian people.

#### **Excerpt 8**

One of the **farmers**, who identified himself as **Sunday Owoseni**, said there was a need for **security agencies to take attacks by the herdsmen seriously** before it degenerated into a serious security threat. **He** said after the abduction of a former Minister for Finance, **Chief Olu Falae**, by the herdsmen, everyone thought the government and other stakeholders would be more proactive about reducing such **attacks on farmers...** (*Punch*, February 15, 2016)

The voice of a Nigerian citizen, who is identified as a farmer and whose name is **Sunday Owoseni**, is presented in Excerpt 8. Security as a discourse issue in migration is evident in the noun phrases **security agencies, attacks by the herdsmen, serious security threat, abduction**, etc. Contextually, after quoting the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Solomon Arase, who states that many herdsmen causing trouble in Nigeria are foreigners, the newspaper proceeds to provide the viewpoint of farmers who have been impacted by the herdsmen's insurgency. Farmers and herdsmen have opposing businesses, which mostly fuel conflict between them. In his words, he, **Sunday Owoseni**, challenges the security agencies, and by extension the Nigerian government, to **beef up security measures to combat the atrocities of the identified foreign herdsmen before their degeneration into a serious security threat.**

Even though a former Minister of Finance, Chief Olu Falae, was kidnapped by herdsmen, the sayer finds it incredulous that the authorities and other parties involved, especially their security formations, fail to secure the people, particularly the farmers, who can be said to be the first direct victims of the rampaging herdsmen. This is however contrary to the expectation of the people, as represented in the inclusive indefinite pronoun, **everyone**. The implication of this is that the government does not either care about the citizens or has lost control of the security management of the country, giving free reign of terror to foreign herdsmen. Therefore, the claim that the government has failed to address the threat posed by the Fulani herdsmen indicates that the government is powerless, complicit and clueless about the security situation of the country.

Moreover, an ethnic dimension can be gleaned in the report. Going by the proper nouns in the excerpt, it can be said that the direct victims of this security threat are the Yoruba people – **Sunday Owoseni** and **Olu Falae**, while the aggressors are Fulani as revealed in the phrase **the Fulani's threat**. The former are farmers and the latter are herdsmen. The ethnic colouration of the insurgency further polarises the country and complicates the security situation, bringing about the issues of indigeneship and natives versus settlers and immigrants. The sayer is,

therefore, warning the government to act fast before a state of war becomes the reality in the country.

#### 4.4 Immigration

Being a major type of migration, immigration is the act of entering and settling in another country to live permanently. Immigration is one of the dominant means Nigerian news discourses problematise migration. In many of these reports, the Nigerian newspapers mostly concentrate on the immigration policies of powerful nations of the world, which affect Nigeria and Nigerians.

##### Excerpt 9

**Within two weeks in January**, the United States of America issued two bans on Nigeria and Nigerians. First it was a visa ban on pregnant **Nigerian women** who want to go to that country to have their babies. ... **Then a week later**, the **Trump administration, all in a bid** to expand its **controversial** travel ban policy, announced that immigrants from six countries, including Nigeria, will no longer be eligible for visas allowing them to live as permanent residents in the United States. (*Leadership*, February 13, 2020)

Excerpt 9 interrogates the immigration policy of the **Trump administration** of the United States of America. The administration was known for its anti-immigration stance and rhetoric. Notably, from the beginning to the end of Excerpt 9, the voice of the reporter runs through. The first sentence, which summarises the whole excerpt, introduces the news consumer to the anti-Nigeria-and-Nigerians' immigration policy of the administration of Donald Trump, former president of the United States. The US is represented as a powerful country whose immigration policy is targeted at Nigeria and Nigerians, negatively. The prepositional phrase, which performs an adverbial function, **within two weeks in January**, shows the acceleration in which the two bans on Nigeria and Nigerians are issued. Other sentences in the excerpt illuminate the two areas that the US-imposed-immigration bans cover. Contextually, **Nigerian women**, especially the elite and wealthy, have made going to the US or the UK to get their babies delivered a way of life. The purpose of this is to acquire citizenship by birth for their children so that they (the children) will be able to enjoy the benefits of being citizens of powerful countries. This is tagged **birth tourism**, which the Trump administration decided to ban.

Interestingly, another adverbial phrase of time, **then a week later**, which modifies the verbal action **announced** in the final sentence of the excerpt, is deployed by the news reporter to present the second part of the ban. While the first ban does affect mainly the elite and wealthy Nigerians, the second seems to include both the rich and the poor in **six countries, including Nigeria**. That immigrants from Nigeria and other five countries would not be eligible to get visas **to live as permanent residents in the United States** means that the Trump administration decided to cut off and deny such immigrants the benefits and status that many quest for. Evident in the excerpt is the negative attitude of the news reporter to the anti-immigration policy of the former president of the United States, Donald Trump. This is gleaned mainly from the prepositional phrases and adverbial phrases, which function as time and reason

adverbials. The phrases are **within two weeks in January, then a week later** and **all in a bid to expand its controversial travel ban policy**. Deductively, this news report can be said to be a kind of protest which seeks to co-opt the news consumer to join the protest against the anti-immigration stance and policy of the Trump administration. However, the reporter is silent on why Nigerian women go on **birth tourism** and why immigrants from Nigeria are denied permanent resident visas in the United States.

#### **Excerpt 10**

Home Secretary Priti Patel said the Conservative government wanted to **encourage people with the right talent**.... It would open up the UK to **the brightest and the best** from around the world... We're ending free movement, **taking back control** of our borders, she said, adding that the changes will bring overall migration numbers down. (*The Nation*, February 20, 2020)

Excerpt 10 shows that more stringent immigration proposals have been put forth by the British government in the aftermath of Brexit. The purpose of these plans as revealed in the news report is to reduce the flow of low skilled labour. This implicates that the British immigration plans have always been difficult; making it more stringent further increases the level of the difficulty. Brexit means the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union. It is revealing that these immigration plans are targeted at low skilled labour. This means that the UK welcomes highly skilled labour and professionals, leading to brain drain and underdevelopment of the countries of origin of the professionals. Home Secretary's, Priti Patel, verbiage presents this in Excerpt 10.

That the British government paints baiting highly skilled labour and professionals from other parts of the world as **encouraging people with the right talents** shows that powerful nations always exploit invaluable human and natural resources of weak countries, as evident through colonisation and neo-colonisation. The noun phrase **people with right talents** is antonymous to **low skilled labour**, which is unwanted, in the report. In addition, the nominalised adjectives, **the brightest and the best** refer to people with the **right** talents. Presupposition is gleaned in the infinitival phrase **taking back control of our borders**. This means that hitherto with **the tougher immigration plans** British borders have been left without any control, which makes many **low skilled labour** to have **free movement** into the United Kingdom, precipitating huge migration flow in the country.

This lexicalisation or phrasing is deployed by the Home Secretary to perhaps rouse the British citizens against the immigration of foreign nationals, especially those with low skills, into their country and to cause fear amongst the citizenry to present the immigration situation of the country as being lawless and free-for-all. Further, the phrasing reveals that the British government is discriminatory and self-centred. The appropriation of the voices of all British citizens by their government is also worthy of note. The inclusive pronoun **we** and the noun phrase **Conservative government** that Priti Patel, the Home Secretary, represents in the excerpt, suggest that all Britons and members of the government are in support the more stringent immigration proposals announced by Priti Patel.

### Excerpt 11

I was at a friend's apartment in **New York** one afternoon when I suddenly heard a knock on the door, Ibrahim recalled **with nostalgia** as he shared his touching story with our correspondent who traced him to the small drinking joint in Surulere.... Two police officers had come to **pick and hand** me over to the immigration because according to them, I was not permitted under the law to visit any other state yet aside from California where I lived. I had left Los Angeles two days earlier after some guys who racially **abused and molested me threatened to kill me.** (*Punch*, April 30, 2016)

Excerpt 11 chronicles the deportation experience of a Nigerian, named **Ibrahim**, from the US. Since it was a personal story that was being shared, the pronoun **I** is the most significant pronoun in the excerpt. Relational and material clauses are also evident in the excerpt as states of being that are described and a number of actions that are performed, though the whole excerpt is hinged on verbal processes, **shared** and **said** in the report. The sayers begins his story by mentioning his location, which is **New York**, as revealed in the excerpt. The newspaper presents Ibrahim's feeling as nostalgic through its comment in the phrases, **with nostalgia** and **his touching story**. The import of this comment is to foreshadow the sayers's bittersweet yearning and sense of loss that he feels about his experience in New York. This implies that New York, being a representation of the United States of America, is a better place compared to **the small drinking joint in Surulere**, a representation of Nigeria, from where Ibrahim was recalling his experience.

Full of material processes, the report shows the persons behind the knock on the door that the sayers heard in the first sentence of the excerpt are **two police officers**. The noun phrase, **Two police officers**, is the actor, the pronoun, **me**, the goal, while the noun phrase, **the immigration**, is the beneficiary of the coordinated material processes **had come to pick and hand me over**. The choice of these material actions is possibly used to tone down the nostalgic experience against a more violent material verb—arrest. In presenting the reason for his arrest, the sayers distances himself from and disagrees with the **two police officers** on their reason for coming to arrest him. This is gleaned from the construct **according to them**. The given reason by the police officers is that he is only allowed to visit **California**, and no other state due to legal restrictions. This shows that the sayers, despite his distancing and disagreement, is an immigration lawbreaker according to the law enforcement agents.

However, his own reason for leaving his legally approved place of residence, **California in Los Angeles**, is the threats of murder he gets from some individuals, **some guys**, who subject him to racial abuse and physical harassment. The noun phrase, **some guys**, implies that the actual identity of these actors may be unknown to the sayers. Moreover, that the sayers was racially abused and physically harassed implicates that he is not seen as a human being whose humanity is at par with that of the unknown guys to the extent of issuing him murder threats. Thus, since his life is threatened, it can be argued that leaving his place of residence may be the only available alternative. The sayers seems to suggest that there is no justice for African immigrants in America as presented in news report. Inferentially, it can be said that the police, as represented here, is unreasonable, and perhaps racist, since they fail to investigate the

matter impartially before detaining the sayer, and ultimately deporting him to Nigeria as revealed in the whole news story.

## 5. Conclusion

This study has examined how migration is problematised in Nigerian news discourses by discussing major discursive issues and accounting for linguistic and discourse devices deployed in sampled data, drawing theoretical insights from van Dijk's approach to critical discourse analysis and Halliday's transitivity system of systemic functional grammar. Problematising migration in Nigerian news discourses is done through four discursive issues of poverty, unemployment, security and immigration, while verbal, material and relational processes were the dominant process types deployed in the reports. The findings of the paper are consistent with Burroughs (2012), Allen and McNeil (2018) that the media reportage of migration, especially irregular migration, is largely negative.

In addition, the paper contextually unveils specific push factors that force young Nigerians out of the country of origin, taking to irregular migration as survival strategy (Ikuteyijo, 2020), and is in conversation with Lirola (2016), providing the bases for Western-driven migration from sub-Saharan Africa. For poverty as a discursive issue, Africa is presented as persecuting and poverty-stricken, while Europe is shown as welcoming and accommodating. It is this state of Africa that forces its citizens to seek a better life, through irregular migration, in Europe, even though many of these Africans do not reach their destination in the long run. In addition, first personal pronouns and the actual words of the human subjects are used to present unemployment as a discursive issue to show authenticity of experience and assertions.

In security as a discursive issue, assertions, negative lexical terms and collocates are used to present immigrants as threats to national security and to rally citizens, Nigerians, together against the potential threat of immigrants. For immigration as a discursive issue, Nigerian newspapers mostly concentrate on the immigration policies of developed countries, especially United States and United Kingdom, which affect (potential) migrants of Nigerian origin, showing their negative attitude, as a form of resistance, against such policies. Overall, the newspapers prefer negative reports on migration, especially irregular migration, through the use of negative noun phrases, adjectives, number game, authority, metaphor, polarisation, and comparison.

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