

Ideological Representations in Selected Newspaper Reports of Omoyele Sowore's Trial

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Abstract. This study examined the dominant ideologies in the newspaper reportage of Omoyele Sowore's trial, the rhetorical devices presented in them and how these rhetorical devices have been used as linguistic tools to portray the ideologies. Teun van Dijk's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is predicated on the two dimensions of 'positive self-presentation' and 'negative other-presentation' served as framework. Newspaper reports on the trial of Sowore from *The Punch*, *Vanguard*, *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian*, which are newspapers with wide readership were randomly sampled and those concerning the trial were purposively selected. A total of 12 excerpts were used. Six dominant ideologies that underlie the texts - liberalist, revolutionist, totalitarian, religious, terrorist and nationalist - are identified and analysed from the data gathered. Out of the 27 discourse structures identified by Teun van Dijk, nine - actor description, polarisation, burden, authority, consensus, lexicalisation, national self-glorification, negative other-presentation and comparison - were duly identified in the news reports. The news reports of Omoyele Sowore's trial are embellished with ideological presentations of both the viewpoint of the journalists and individuals presented in the text. The study concludes that lexical choices influence the interpretation of ideologies.

Keywords: Ideology, Newspapers, Omoyele Sowore, Political Trial, #RevolutionNow

Languages: English

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1.0 Introduction

In this age of fast communication, the media (broadcast, print and online) plays its role of providing information. Newspapers are one major medium of communication meant to inform the public about the situation of the nation or report incidents and events (Fagunleka and Olorunsogo, 2022). Whether in online or print newspapers, the information communicated is usually embedded with ideologies. Newspapers are particularly known to lead in the initiation of discourse on key national issues. The initiation, advancement, and sustenance of discourse by newspapers are not often devoid of some embellishments, determined by their own angle of the story (Danaan, 2017). Ideology can be described as “a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group, class or society and ideas which help to legitimise a dominant political power” (Eagleton, 1991: 1). Ideology could be socio-political, socio-economic, or socio-cultural. From the point of view of Critical Discourse Analysis, no text is ideologically neutral. Ideologies are an important characteristic of Critical Discourse Analysis, and they could be subtle or hidden (Chukwu and Olorunsogo, 2024). In newspaper discourse, there may be subtle language choices that reflect ideologies to persuade the readers. One of such issues in recent newspaper reports is the trial of Omoyele Sowore.

Sowore is a Nigerian human rights activist. He was a presidential candidate in the 2019 Nigerian presidential election under the umbrella of the African Action Congress (AAC), but he lost. In August 2019, Sowore called for a revolution because he said Nigeria’s elections were not credible. He was arrested on August 3, 2019, by the Department of State Security (DSS) based on one of his tweets on Twitter of 2nd August, 2019, where he wrote: “all that is needed for a #RevolutionNow is for the oppressed to choose a date they desire for liberty, not subjected to the approval of the oppressor”. He was consequently charged with treason, money laundering and “cyber-stalking”. National and international newspapers reported these events from different perspectives and linguistic choices that may connote underlying messages. This study, therefore, aims to interrogate the rhetoric and ideologies that underlie newspaper reports on Omoyele Sowore’s trial to identify and analyse the dominant ideologies present in the newspaper reports.

The primary objective of the study "Ideological Representations in Selected Newspaper Reports of Omoyele Sowore’s Trial" is to identify and analyze the dominant ideologies present in the newspaper coverage of Sowore's trial. This involves examining how various newspapers frame the narrative surrounding the trial and the implications of these frames on public perception. Additionally, the study aims to investigate the rhetorical devices utilized in the reports, exploring how these linguistic tools serve to convey specific ideological positions and influence readers' interpretations. By focusing on the interplay between language and ideology, the research

seeks to uncover the subtle ways in which media discourse shapes societal understanding of political events.

To achieve these objectives, the study is guided by several research questions. Key questions include: What are the dominant ideologies reflected in the newspaper reports of Omoyele Sowore's trial? This question aims to uncover the ideological underpinnings of the media narratives. Another important question is: What rhetorical devices are employed in these reports, and how do they contribute to the portrayal of ideologies? This inquiry focuses on the specific language choices and strategies that shape the representation of Sowore and the context of his trial. Lastly, the study seeks to understand how the discourse strategies used in the reports influence the representation of key actors involved in the trial, thereby examining the broader implications of media representation in political discourse.

2.0 Literature Review

Ideologies and newspaper reports have been studied from different perspectives in extant literature. Oyeleye and Osisanwo (2013), drawing from Critical Discourse Analysis, identified the use of pronouns, possessives, and demonstratives as elements of lexicalisation that reflect ideologies such as in-group and out-group membership embedded in media discourse of 2003 and 2007 general elections. The study sampled two Nigerian news magazines, using Fairclough's model of "wording". Another study, Osisanwo (2013), dwelled on how the media expresses ideology on electoral issues. The study investigated the ways in which selected Nigerian news magazines expressed the ideological pursuits of social actors, suggesting that ideologies are changed, acquired and expressed through discourse. It claimed further that the media makes use of the ideological polarisation, that is, in-group and out-group membership, in that, in-group members speak only well of themselves and negative of the other, and the same goes for out-group members. They emphasise the good of self and de-emphasise the good of other, while they de-emphasise the negative aspect of self, and emphasise the bad of the other. These papers are relevant to the current one as they pave the way to distinguish participants in the Sowore trial reports.

Moeketsi (1999) revealed that the question-and-answer method was the main means of gathering information and thereby reconstructing the story that the court would like to know. However, the data used in the study does not appear to be a sufficient representation of the discourse structure in the courtroom. The current paper, though being about trial, is on newspaper reports rather than courtroom discourse. It however built insight on courtroom registers used in Moeketsi (1999).

Taiwo (2007) examined language, ideology and power relations in the headlines of some Nigerian Newspapers and the social context from

which they emerged. He identified the various uses editors made of the linguistic resources to portray the various existing societal ideological postures and power relations, drawing from Critical Discourse Analysis as its theoretical framework. The study discovered that headlines were an emotion-inducing strategy in the hands of editors for various purposes. The current study differs as it focuses on reports, rather than headlines.

Ayoola and Olaosun (2014) and Osisanwo (2017) both conducted their studies on Boko Haram in news reportage. Whereas Osisanwo (2017) studied newspaper reportage with focus on Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Systemic Functional Grammar, Ayoola and Olaosun (2014) used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as framework and studied how the media represented the socio-political discourse that revolves around the activities of Boko Haram. Ayoola and Olaosun (2014) concluded that contrary to the public perception of daily newspapers as purveyors of misery and libel, the reports in the study were accurate and reliable. However, the so-called accuracy and reliability do not totally rule out the reality of daily newspapers as purveyors of misery. Even though both studies looked at crisis discourse in newspapers, they are totally different from this study which is a trial discourse.

Ayoola (2008) also studied the discourse strategies employed by news participants to foster specific ideologies using pragmatic tools. It examined features such as setting, topics and participants projected in the context and content of the reports on Niger-Delta by selected Nigerian newspapers. The study was aimed at proposing an analytical framework for describing and interpreting the print media-political discourse. However, as the data used for the study centred on Niger-Delta, this study appears too streamlined to a particular kind of discourse or region for a study that aims to propose an analytical framework.

From this review, it is observed that the studies of ideology in newspaper reports are spread across different theoretical backgrounds and on subjects such as Boko Haram, lexicalisation and power relations while the aspect of ideology and its relationship in political trial discourse suffers some neglect. Therefore, this study focuses on the ideology and discourse strategies of Omoyele Sowore's trial. This focus is essential as it attempts to break new grounds and push forward scholarship in this area, particularly on the subject which has enjoyed little or no scholarly patronage.

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis is an innovative multidisciplinary approach which tackles a number of important social issues, which relate to the use of language in social institutions with emphasis on the relations between language and power on one level and language and ideology on the other. It draws from many of the methodological tools of traditional linguistics, critical linguistics, text linguistics and sociolinguistics.

Scholars such as Norman Fairclough, van Dijk, van Leeuwen and Ruth Wodak, among others, have postulated different approaches to CDA due to their different backgrounds. Van Leeuwen's (1996) approach, for example, unveils ideological tendencies and representations. This is done using socio-semantic categorization method for the representation of social actors. For Fairclough (1989), CDA studies often analyse the relationship of causality and determinism between discursive practices, events and text, and also the wider social and cultural structures. This research adopts Teun van Dijk's (2006) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model which is predicated on two dimensions: 'positive self-presentation' (semantic macro-strategy of in-group favouritism) and 'negative other-presentation'.

Van Dijk (2006) claims that ideologies are expressed, acquired, and reproduced by text or talk. He identifies ideology as a background belief that underpins shared representations of a specific group within the society and postulates that ideology forms the basis of discourse and social practices through certain discourse structures. He therefore proposed a schema that explains many properties of a self-identity group. The properties are identity criteria, typical activities, aims, norms and values, and basic resources. He says further that, for ideologies to happen, it must be through a number of discursive structures and strategies. For example, the pronoun 'we' is one of these structures typically used to deictically to refer to the in-group membership of the current speaker.

Teun van Dijk's (2006) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model is predicated on two dimensions: 'positive self-presentation' (semantic macro-strategy of in-group favouritism) and 'negative other-presentation' (semantic macro-strategy of derogation of out-group). These are expressed in what he termed categories of ideological discourse structure in the likes of 'actor description', 'authority', 'burden', 'categorisation', 'comparison', 'consensus', 'counterfactuals', 'disclaimer', 'euphemism', 'evidentiality', 'example'/'illustration', 'generalisation', 'hyperbole', 'implication', 'irony', 'lexicalisation', 'metaphor', 'self-glorification', 'norm expression', 'number game', 'polarisation', 'us-them', 'populism', 'presupposition', 'vagueness', and 'victimisation'.

Since this study looks at how language shapes and informs the mind of people, it embraces van Dijk's approach because it offers both social and cognitive insights to the data studied. And it is useful in examining how ideologies are cognitively formed and used as tools for influencing social behaviour and practices.

3.0 Methodology

Based on the intention of this study to analyse how ideology and rhetoric were enacted in the trial reports of Omoyele Sowore, the electronic versions of four newspapers (*Vanguard*, *The Punch*, *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian*) published between September 2019 and March 2021 were selected through

the purposive-random sampling method. The choice of these newspapers was informed by their perceived popularity for covering political news. The period covered by the newspapers is the duration of Omoyele Sowore's trial. A total of twelve excerpts were used for this study, with three excerpts from each of the newspaper for proper balancing. Stories with details relevant to this study were analysed.

The study adopted a descriptive approach as it seeks to investigate the ideologies and rhetorical strategies adopted in the newspaper reports. Data were gathered through sourcing for online news reports from the newspaper applications. Eighteen reports relating to Sowore's trials were gathered across the four newspapers by using the keyword search "Sowore" on the newspapers' online databases. This targeted approach ensures that the analysis remains relevant to the research objectives. The underlying ideologies in the news reports were then identified and analysed, and the manner in which the key actors in the data were represented was discussed. Finally, how the language logically portrays 'self' positively and the 'other' negatively in the data was examined. After systematic reading of all 18 reports, six ideologies were identified and a total of 12 excerpts were selected, with three excerpts from each newspaper, to maintain a balanced representation of the ideologies across the different media outlets. This approach facilitates an analysis of how each newspaper framed the trial and allows for the identification of common ideological undercurrents across the reports. The use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the analytical framework further justifies the data selection, as CDA is particularly effective in examining the relationship between language, power, and ideology within media texts. By focusing on the linguistic choices and rhetorical strategies employed in the reports, the study uncovers the underlying ideologies that inform the portrayal of Sowore and the broader socio-political context.

4.0 Analysis

Six ideological frames are identified in this study. They are liberalist ideology, terrorist ideology, nationalist ideology, totalitarian ideology, revolutionist ideology and religious ideology. These ideologies do not only cover the beliefs of the news writers but also individuals in the society as reported in the newspaper reports.

4.1 Liberalist Ideology

This ideology, otherwise known as liberalism, centres on the general belief in equality before the law and support of the rights of individuals. The consent of the governed is a necessary requirement here too. It believes that the fundamental human rights of citizens, such as rights to life, freedom of speech, freedom of movement and so on, should not be trampled upon or denied them. In the data gathered, elements of liberalist ideology are found in the words of some individuals as reported in the newspapers as well as the ideology of the journalists. These individuals believe in the fundamental human rights and see any action by the government to deny Sowore and other individuals alike of their rights as inappropriate and unacceptable. Excerpt 1 conveys the ideological viewpoint of Sowore's lawyer, Femi Falana. In excerpt 2, the journalist sees Sowore as a liberalist, and in excerpt 3, the United Nations group does not see any wrong in Sowore's actions. To it, it is an exercise of his fundamental rights. Expressions of liberalist ideology are considered in the excerpts below:

- (1) Sowore's Lawyer, Falana, said "Sowore's trial is unnecessary and uncalled for, it would only further stain the human rights record of this administration and diminish and dent the moral standing of the country. Sowore's charges amount to electrocution of freedom, as the democratic credentials of any elected government are not simply about the legitimacy of its mandate, but about its tolerance of dissent and its compliance with the fundamental principles of freedom".

(The Guardian, Sept. 24, 2019)

- (2) Sowore was arrested in Lagos on August 3, 2019 for calling on Nigerians to take to the streets in peaceful demonstrations to demand a better country from the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari.

(The Guardian, Jan 11, 2021)

- (3) The UN group, after analysing the circumstances of the arrest and detention of Sowore as well as the charges instituted against him, called on the Nigerian government to stop its unlawful prosecution of the activist. The Working Group described the charges against Sowore as "quite vaguely defined," adding that "such vagueness seems to have been used to make an ordinary exercise of freedoms [sic] sound like a threat to national security and/or a terrorist act."

(The Punch, Oct 22, 2020)

Apart from the fact that the report in Excerpt 1 does not see the importance of Sowore's trial, it highlights its demerits. By saying that the trial "would only further stain the human rights record of this administration," it means that the Buhari-led administration already does not have a good record as regards the rights of citizens, and that Sowore's trial is a further infringement on his human right by the administration. This is further confirmed in the report with the description of the charges against him as an "electrocution of freedom". In other words, his freedom has been killed and taken away from him. The report explains further what is expected of a "democratic" government. By emphasizing how the government's actions have infringed on Sowore's right, and how an ideal government ought to treat its citizen, the report foregrounds the liberalist ideology, where citizens of the society have their rights and such rights should be respected by the government.

The explanation or reason given in Excerpt 2 for the arrest, gives the impression that the action did not warrant an arrest. Firstly, the report explains his action as a "calling", not necessarily performing the action itself. Secondly, the "call" was for a "peaceful demonstration...". With the adjective, "peaceful", it connotes an action that is not harmful. Also, it goes ahead to give the reason for the action, as one done "to demand a better country...". Citizens, have a right to demand a better society in a democratic system. Hence, the purpose and means for its actualization, according to the report, are lawful. Stating this as the reason for Sowore's arrest in the report, unveils the belief that one does not have the right to peacefully demand a better government under Buhari's administration. Else, such a right will be taken away by the government through any means, including arrest.

Excerpt 3 does not overtly portray this ideology, but lexical choices in the excerpt such as "unlawful prosecution", "activist", "vagueness", "ordinary exercise of freedoms" are what reflect this ideology. Calling the government's action an "unlawful prosecution" simply reflects oppression and also an attempt to silence an individual who is advocating his rights (activist). Describing the government's charge against Sowore in the report as "quite vaguely defined" further buttresses the fact that the actions of the government are just a sheer trampling on Sowore's rights. Sowore's action is trivialised to be "an ordinary exercise of freedom", to show that he was expressing his fundamental right which should not warrant an arrest or prosecution.

4.2 Terrorist Ideology

The word 'terror' emerged in the English language as a descriptor for the actions of French revolutionaries against their domestic enemies in 1793 and 1794, most notably referring to repression in the form of executions (Stuurman, 2019). The latter half of this early definition of terror has persisted through global history and politics, with many scholars agreeing that the point of terrorism is to terrorise, with the act of doing so historically assumed by an organized force (Chailand and Blin, 2007:2)

Terrorism can be broadly understood as a method of coercion that utilizes or threatens to utilize violence to spread fear and thereby attain political or ideological goals. Terrorism has no internationally accepted definition but can be often, though not always, defined in terms of four characteristics (United Nations, 2018: 23). They are the threat or use of violence; a political objective; the desire to change the status quo; the intention to spread fear by committing spectacular public acts; the intentional targeting of civilians. The reports express the ideology of the DSS. Elements of the above mentioned characteristic of terrorism are evident in the reports below.

- (4) DSS claimed Sowore had reassured some group of persons he will create anarchy in the country after his release on 5th of December. The service said the rearrest is in line to [sic] the caution of the alarm it raised on 3rd of December warning of a plot to destabilise the country.

(Vanguard, Jan 11, 2021)

In Excerpt 4, some lexical choices by the journalist in the report, as claimed by the DSS towards Sowore reveals the ideological standpoint of terrorism. First, the use of the word "reassured" could mean that Sowore was certain to spare no effort in achieving his aim. Also, "anarchy" is a state of lawlessness or political order due to absence of government. To say in the report that Sowore wanted to "create anarchy" means that he would therefore go to any length to make sure that Nigeria became a lawless state, void of a working political system. Again, to say that there was a "warning", could be inferred as a call to get ready for what was to be experienced, and in this case, it was "a plot to destabilize the country". And this is one of the ways terrorists operate, that is, by causing instability in the society. The report therefore gives a validation to the actions of the DSS, as one done to forestall terrorism in this nation, by Sowore.

4.3 Nationalist Ideology

Nationalist ideology, also known as Nationalism, is based on the premise that the individual's loyalty to the nation-state surpasses other individual or group interests. It seeks to support the actions of the government and promotes everything government-oriented. It praises and glorifies the nation-state, rather than self-glorification. It is the recognition and an awareness by people in a common geographical area that they belong to a nation and share common interest, history, goals, and the desire to free themselves from any political and socioeconomic domination by other states (Oyeneye et al. 2006). Individuals or organisations reflected this ideology as reported in the newspapers. This could have been a deliberate or unconscious act, however, since every language reflects one ideological standpoint or the other. The reports below have elements of nationalism or nationalist ideology. Since the arrest and trial of Sowore have drawn the attention of the international community, some individuals and organisations involved in one way or the other in the case are reported to carry out actions or make speeches, in the interest of Nigeria. Excerpt 5 is a portrayal of the ideological standpoint of the All Progressives Congress (APC); Excerpt 6 reveals the ideology of both Prince Danesi Momoh and a coalition of Civil Society Organisations. The ideology of the convener of the Civil Society Groups for Peace, Justice and Development (CSGPJD), Comrade Yusuf Yahuza, is presented in excerpt 7 and Excerpt 8 expresses the ideology of Festus Keyamo. Here are excerpts:

- (5) All Progressive Congress (APC) calls on Nigerians to reject the toxic messages and criminal antics of some individuals and partisans who have embarked on a campaign of calumny against the government and are calling for a forceful takeover of government. They are cowards and enemies of Nigeria...anyone that perpetrates actions that threaten our democracy, the collective peace and safety of the country and its citizens must face the law. The recent arrest of Mr Omoyele Sowore by the Department of State Services (DSS) must be seen for what it is – a legal and timely action by our security services to protect our democracy and protect the country.

(Daily Trust, Dec. 29, 2019)

- (6) A coalition of Civil Society Organisations has alleged that the co-convener of the #RevolutionNow Movement, Omoyele Sowore, staged the drama at the Federal High Court in Abuja on Friday to embarrass Nigeria before the global community... Prince Danesi Momoh urged the Directorate of State Security ... and the police to arrest and prosecute those involved in the

drama...He asked them not to compromise the national security in the face of “cheap blackmail”.

(Daily Trust, Dec. 13, 2019)

- (7) Addressing a press conference in Abuja yesterday, the convener of the Civil Society Groups for Peace, Justice, and Development (CSGPJD), Comrade Yusuf Yahuza, said the activities of the #RevolutionNow group were causing anarchy in the country, complicating issues for the government and derailing governance; creating chaos and destabilising the nation.

(Daily Trust, Dec. 29, 2019)

- (8) Minister of State for Labour and Employment, Festus Keyamo, says any attempt to change the present government other than through the ballot box or through constitutional means is treasonable and no reasonable government will tolerate such an attempt.

(Vanguard, Jan 11, 2021)

- (9) He said “it is further appalling to note that in a bid to garner media hype in condemnation of a valid government action taken in good faith and in the interest of the general public, Mr Falana, SAN, resorted to quoting non-existing sections of the constitution by stating that Mr Malami (SAN) should have apologized to Col. Dasuki (retired) and Mr Sowore in accordance with section 32(6) of the 1999 constitution...it is unfortunate that a senior member of the bar could resort to concoctions and fabrications of non-existing provisions just to score ‘cheap media publicity’”.

(The Punch, Dec. 31, 2019)

Excerpt 5 supports Nigeria, and lexical choices that seek to protect the interest of Nigeria and its citizens can be found in it. The All Progressives Congress (APC) which is the ruling party deemed it fit to address Nigerian citizens, over whom it rules. The address first enjoins Nigerians to “reject” messages that are “against the government” and everything that seeks to counter or stand against it. It paints those opposing the nation through their “toxic messages” and “criminal antics” as “cowards and enemies of Nigeria” and as “threats” to the democratic system, as well as the peace and safety of the country. It then goes ahead to praise the action of the DSS, which the report insists must be viewed by the citizens of Nigeria as “legal and timely”, and one done in the interest of the people and democracy.

There are also two ideological discourse structures identified in the excerpt. They are: National self-glorification- which is a device to create

Positive-Self presentation by glorifying one's nation -and Negative-Other presentation, which is used to classify out-groups as bad. The report presented the APC and its members as good citizens who would do everything they could to support the interest of Nigeria which is a nation that allows the rights of citizens (democracy). With the repeated use of "our democracy", the party identifies with the citizens as belonging to it. Thus, whatever the country and other citizens faced, the party also faces such. And then, the party refers to the "other" which in this case are the "individuals and partisans" who they claim to be spreading messages that are against the democracy of the nation as "they". This reflects a mark of exclusion, to mean that the party members do not belong to these "individuals and partisans" who are negatively portrayed by the party, by referring to them as "cowards and enemies of Nigeria".

In Excerpt 6, a prompt is given to the DSS by Prince Danesi Momoh to "arrest and prosecute" individuals involved in the "drama" that was aimed at defaming the nation's global image. This nationalist concern is also expressed by "a coalition of Civil Service Organisations", as they categorise the event that took place at the Federal High Court as one that was done "to embarrass Nigeria before the global community". And the action that does not seek to bring to justice those involved in the nation's defamation is tagged by Prince Danesi Momoh as a "compromise" of "the national security" of the nation. From the excerpt, the concern of the Organisations and the individual stated in the report is for the nation and its reputation and public image.

Classifying the activities of the #RevolutionNow in Excerpt 7 as "causing anarchy in the country, complicating issues for the government and derailing governance; creating chaos and destabilizing the nation" by Comrade Yusuf Yahuza portrays him as patriotic. His condemnation of the activities of the #RevolutionNow as one that stalls the peace, unity and progress of the nation, magnifies his utmost concern for the welfare and state of the nation.

Festus Keyamo in Excerpt 8 also classifies Sowore's activism as one that is aimed at overthrowing the government in a means "other than the ballot box". His tagging of Sowore's activism as "treasonable" reflects his stance on the issue, thereby projecting him as one who would not support an action that is detrimental to the government of a state. This is why he validates the action of the government by saying "no reasonable government will tolerate such an attempt". He uses the statement to infer that the government has sufficient and justifiable reasons to prosecute Sowore. Such technique in the ideological discourse structure is referred to as "burden".

The speaker in Excerpt 9 refers to the actions of the government as "valid" and one done in the interest of the public and in "good faith". This implies that the government has the interest of the nation and the image of

the country at heart. The actions of Mr Falana are regarded as “unfortunate” by the speaker, as he holds the bar in high esteem and feels disappointed at the negative impact this publicity may have cost his dear nation.

4.4 Totalitarian Ideology

Totalitarianism is a system of government that is centralized and dictatorial and requires complete subservience to the State. It is the principles and practices of a state in which every citizen is subject to the power of the State that exercises complete control over all areas of life. In this kind of system, the State controls everything because it is neither accountable nor responsive to the people. This type of government does not also recognize the principle of fundamental human right of citizens. The leader exercises all the executive, legislative and judicial powers of the government and the judicial system is subject to State control. In the excerpt below, the totalitarian ideology of Abubakar Sani is portrayed.

- (10) Abubakar Sani lamented “Suffice it to say that the three arms of government are equal only on paper: in practice, the executive calls all the shots. Not only does it pay the piper, but it is also firmly in control of the instruments of coercion.” ...A Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Mr. Sylvester Elema, stressed that in a “normal democracy”, court orders should have been “superior” to any government directive.

(The Guardian, Jan 26, 2021)

In Excerpt 10, Abubakar Sani is of the opinion that there is inequality in the way the Nigerian system is run. His ideological standpoint is what the excerpt portrays. Although the different arms of government are equal with specific duties and roles allocated to each, Sani claims that this equality exists “only on paper”, that is, the Constitution. He says that in reality or practice, only the executive arm “calls all the shots” which invariably means that the presidency is solely in charge of the affairs of the nation. The executive arm of government is headed by the President. Hence, it implies an autocratic system where power is only limited to a single hand rather than what originally ought to be in the nation. Nigeria is a democratic State, and as such, there should be decentralization of power as obtainable in a democratic system. However, when only the executive decides or has the final say in all the actions and decisions of the State, it is autocratic. This ideology is also backed up by a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Mr Sylvester Elema, who emphasizes what obtains in what he calls a “normal democracy”. This implies that the situation of the country is not what obtains in a democratic system. He stresses that in a democratic system, orders of the court are “superior” to government orders. Unfortunately,

since what is being experienced is not a “normal democracy”, the reverse is then the case.

The excerpt also subtly standardises the opinions overtly or covertly supported in the reports, and this is known as authority. Authority, which is one of the ideological discourse structures, is the mentioning of authority to back up or support one’s case. The opinions of two well-known individuals in Nigeria, Abubakar Sani (a Senior Advocate of Nigeria, SAN) and Mr Sylvester Elema, were presented, and this gives the impression that since they are respected citizens in Nigeria, their opinions are standard.

4.5 Revolutionist Ideology

According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, a revolution is an attempt, by a large number of people, to change the government of a country, especially by violent action. Hence, by this definition, a revolutionist can be described as someone involved in the attempt to change the government of a country. This especially happens when there are social injustices or actions performed by such a government that threaten the peaceful and democratic existence of the individuals in the society. Ezekwesili, an ex-minister of Education, relays this ideology in a report. Consider the excerpt below:

- (11) Ezekwesili, an ex-minister of Education said “there is nowhere we have seen change happen without the resilience of a segment of the population to act regardless of the oppression that may be against it. That is why we must all applaud the resilience of Yele Sowore. Some people are not fair to him in dismissing his advocacy. I don’t dismiss it at all. Every society needs a Yele Sowore...

(The Punch, Feb. 16, 2020)

Excerpt 11 presents Sowore as a revolutionist. Oby Ezekwesili sees Sowore’s action as revolutionary. She first explains Sowore’s action as normal. And by saying “there is nowhere we have seen change happen without the resilience of a segment of the population to act regardless of the oppression that may be against it”, she presents his action as a prerequisite for a revolution to take place. In expressing her support for Sowore’s revolutionary steps, she sees the commendation of Sowore as a necessity for everyone, as she says, “that is why we must all applaud the resilience of Yele Sowore”. This ideology of hers is the reason she sees those “dismissing his advocacy” as “not fair to him”. As a matter of fact, she expects that every society should have individuals who possess revolutionary characteristics. This is why she says, “every society needs a Yele Sowore”.

Ezekwesili in the excerpt, shows solidarity with Sowore and this is known as consensus in the ideological discourse structure. Consensus is a

political strategy used to form agreement and solidarity. Obiageli Ezekwesili agrees totally with the actions of Sowore by “applauding” it, and believing every society needs someone like him in it. She forms solidarity with him by saying that despite other people’s dismissal of his advocacy, she believes in it, agrees to it and does not “dismiss it at all”.

4.6 Religious Ideology

A religious ideology can be defined as a set of ideas that refer to religious and secular tools, accompanying political actions and processes in a sustained systematic way. This ideology in the report attributes a mode of dressing and behavioural pattern of individuals to tend to show their religious beliefs. The journalist uses some lexical choices to portray this ideology. Religious ideology is found in the following excerpt:

- (12) The adjournment came after a drama occurred when a man dressed as a native doctor, in solidarity with the defendants stormed the court. Though the young man who is in his 30s declined to disclose his name... He wore a black and red-stripped robe that terminated by his kneel, with a cap made from the same material. The self-confessed spiritual advisor to Sowore also tied a red wrapper around his waist, even as he held a middle-sized calabash in his right hand. Other items like white cowries, snail shell and an object that looked like a dried skull of an animal, were attached to his red robe. Sowore walked into the court premises with the supposed ‘babalawo’ (native doctor)...

(Vanguard, March 3, 2021)

This excerpt is suggestive of the fact that outfits could determine the religious background of an individual. The report gives an in-depth description of the individual such as “red wrapper”, “middle-sized calabash”, and “snail shell” and so on. Even though the report states that the man claimed to be a spiritual advisor of Sowore, after the description of the outfit, it goes ahead to call him a “babalawo (native doctor)”. This is to mean that there is a pattern of dressing ascribed to “native doctors”, and the things listed in his outfit are only expected of a “babalawo”. Also, the report says that the meeting was adjourned after the man came. His presence brought about “drama” that led to the adjournment. The report is therefore suggestive of the fact that the society does not see or permit some sort of dressings or outfit in some environments and some individuals are not expected to be present in some settings. It was not only his outfit that brought about the chaos, but the fact that a “native doctor” had to appear in court, as this is not a gathering for such people. Lexicalisation, an

ideological discourse structure that uses specific lexical items to express underlying concepts and beliefs, can be seen in the excerpt.

5.0 Conclusion

The study analysed and discussed the ideologies dominant in the newspaper reports on the trial of Omoyele Sowore. It has been able to portray that words do not exist in a vacuum. The data analysis reveals that words and expressions can show certain things about the speaker which the speaker may or may not be aware of. This study further established that the linguistic choices in newspaper reports are embellished with ideologies. The dominant ideologies identified in the study include liberalist, nationalist, totalitarian, religious, terrorist, and revolutionist ideologies. These ideologies were examined using van Dijk's (2006) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, bringing out elements that positively presented in-group members, that is, activists or government (depending on the story) and negatively represented out-group members, that is, government at some time and activists at other times. The study reveals that there are deliberate language choices used in the data to convey the different ideological perspectives of the individuals in the texts studied. And these ideological perspectives shape the beliefs of the readers on the trial which makes them identify with certain groups against others.

The limitation that might have impacted the comprehensiveness of findings in this study is that it focuses on a restricted selection of four prominent newspapers —Vanguard, The Punch, Daily Trust, and The Guardian—which may not adequately capture the diverse ideologies and narratives of the broader media landscape. To address this limitation, future studies should adopt a more comprehensive approach by including a wider variety of media sources, such as online news platforms, social media, and broadcast media, to capture a broader spectrum of public discourse. Expanding the temporal scope could also provide insights into the evolution of narratives over time, particularly in response to significant events related to the trial. Also, incorporating a multimodal analysis that examines visual elements alongside textual content could enhance the understanding of how different media forms contribute to ideological representations. By broadening the methodological framework and diversifying data sources, future research can offer a more interesting perspective on the interplay between media, ideology, and public perception in political contexts.

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