METAPHORICAL OPTICS OF INSECURITY IN SELECTED NIGERIAN PRINT MEDIA

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Abstract

The study delves into the metaphorical optics employed in selected Nigerian print media to depict insecurity, drawing upon Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory. Data were derived from three purposively selected Nigerian newspapers based on popularity, readership, availability and expansive space for insecurity discourse especially in their editorial and opinion columns. These editorials and opinions were those published between the years 2020 and 2023. Through a qualitative analysis, the research unveils prevalent metaphorical constructs, including combative human beings, diseases, wild animals, and businesses, to illustrate and contextualize insecurity in Nigeria. In the metaphorical optic of the "combative human being," the media portrays conflicts and tensions akin to interpersonal disputes, emphasizing the human element in insecurity dynamics. Diseases, as metaphors for insecurity, signify the pervasive and potentially contagious nature of the threats, highlighting the need for urgent containment and intervention. Wild animal metaphors depict insecurity as a predatory force, with corrupt practices, terrorism, and instability. The business metaphorical optic underscores insecurity as an illicit enterprise, portraying criminal networks. The findings contribute to a nuanced comprehension of the metaphorical optics of insecurity, offering insights for media discourse, policy formulation, and public understanding.

Keywords: Economy, Insecurity, Nigeria, Metaphor, Relevance

Introduction

The condition of insecurity is an inevitable feature of all strands of modern human existence. It is a global challenge that prevails across all areas of society. It resonates in economy, civil society and political life. Vail (2005) captures these wide-ranging areas of human affairs and the phenomenon of insecurity, and thus typifies personal, economic, social, political and environmental insecurities. All these insecurity exemplifications are consequently captured in Vail's (2005:6) conceptual clarification of the notion of insecurity. According to him:

> Insecurity…is a form of uncertainty that, by its nature, is not immediately amenable to this sort of calculation, so that it is not meaningful to speak in the language of probabilities. Insecurity refers instead to processes that are presently taking a painful toll on people's lives, as well as to the psychological state of mind that is a consequence of this daily brutalising experience. It has an immediacy that cannot be avoided or displaced into the realm of probability: an individual who is hungry or homeless, or has a bad job, or is seriously ill does not need to calculate the likelihood of disaster striking because they are already living this fate.

As evident in Vail's (2005) micro submission, insecurity is a paradigm for modernity; with concomitant hazards on people, and by extension, a (state) nation or an inter-nation. When it comes into existence, it becomes intractable and unpredictable. In contemporary global north and global south, there are worldwide insecurity dynamics that have become intractable and unpredictable. In this wise, Burke (2017:1) specifies "insecurities represented by phenomena such as transnational terrorism, gender violence, climate change and ecological

degradation, pollution, economic crisis, nuclear weapons, and transnational crimes…" In the words of Burke (2017), these insecurity variants have complex and systematic sources across large swathes of time and space, and can be reasonably understood as global forms of insecurity. Thus, by its complex global nature, insecurity is unprecedented and overlapping given that security crises could morph from banditry to extremist insurgencies and so on.

A number of countries of the world are experiencing insecurity at variance. While some forms of insecurity in certain world-domain are less life-threatening some are so lethal on humanity. This paper concentrates on the latter. Taking a critical survey of the ruinous forms of insecurity, the United States of America (USA), for instance, has suffered activities of insurgency (which mostly include terrorism and political mobilisation) throughout its history and development. Sauer (2011:1) confirms this when he avows that "prior to the attacks on September 11, 2001, domestic terrorism was synonymous with the Oklahoma City bombing: during the 1990s the country witnessed the rapid rise of anti-government movement/militias". In recent times, USA is also facing gun violence. *Insider* (2022:1) has it that "the Gun Violence Archive, a non-profit that tracks shootings in the US, has recorded at least 314 mass shootings in 2022 so far. Gun violence overall has killed at least 22,000 people in the US this year so far according to the Archive's record". Apart from the USA, a number of countries have also been ascertained by the Global Terrorism Index 2019 to have experienced very high impact of toxic insecurity. These countries are Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria and Syria. The Global Terrorism Index of 2018 established that Afghanistan recorded the highest number of terrorism-related deaths for the second consecutive year with the Taliban accounting for 83 per cent of these fatalities. In Iraq, insurgency activity has been dominated by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) since 2013. ISIL was responsible for 801 deaths from terrorism in

2018. As for Syria, while the number of deaths and incidents has steadily declined, the country remains one of the worst ten countries for terror-related deaths in 2018. In Nigeria, deaths from insurgency were approximately 2,040 in 2018, a 33 per cent increase, with Fulani extremists and Boko Haram.

Nigeria, since independence, has battled with amalgam of noxious insecurity. In fact, since its return to democracy in 1999, various forms of insurgent activities and violent acts of banditry have put the country in constant security conundrum. The trajectory of insurgency and banditry in the country could be summed mainly on ethnoreligious terrorism which incorporates militancy in the South-Southern (Niger-Delta) parts of Nigeria, Boko Haram insurgency in the Northcentral region of Nigeria, Fulani extremists in the Northcentral parts of Nigeria and rural/urban killings as well as abduction/kidnapping all over Nigeria. This medley of insecurity is confirmed in the 2021 Global Peace Index (GPI) which ranked Nigeria 146 among 163 independent nations and territories, according to its level of peacefulness (Olaiya, 2021). Most recently, the 2022 GPI ranked Nigeria 143 among 163 independent nations and territories, according to the level of peacefulness (Odeniyi, 2022).

Amongst a number institutions which have tried to fight for peace and security in Nigeria is the Nigerian media – both mass and new media. The media has been conflict-sensitive in Nigeria. This institution has endeavoured to sensitise, especially through symbolic linguistic representations, insecurity in Nigeria, the height of insecurity and its deleterious effects on the Nigerian economy, lives and properties. Their use of language and visual imagery has not only given the insecurity issues the attention needed but also shaped citizen's (including government's and security agents') perception on insecurity and economy in Nigeria. The media, in their reportage, have engaged determinedly the potency of metaphor as a cognitive tool for

understanding abstract social concepts as insecurity and economy. This human cognitive logicality is confirmed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980:146) when they avow that "since much of our social reality is understood in metaphorical terms, and since our conception of the physical world is partly metaphorical, metaphor plays a very significant role in determining what is real for us." Through metaphorical optics, the media have been able to make insecurity and other issues like economy real and relevant to readers and listeners. In this paper, therefore, metaphorical optic typically refers to the way something is perceived or presented, often involving a figurative or symbolic perspective rather than a literal one. It can be used to describe how situations, events or ideas are framed to influence perception, emphasising the importance of the metaphorical lens through which we view things.

Since investigating metaphorical optics allows us to see underlying conceptual systems, this paper examines the use of conceptual metaphors in some carefully chosen editorials and opinions on insecurity discourse in Nigeria of three purposively selected newspapers: *The Guardian*, *Punch* and *Vanguard*. The objectives of the study are, therefore, to (a) consider the conceptual metaphors adopted as optics (b) the effects they have on readers' perception and cognition (c) and their relevance within the insecurity situation in Nigeria. Consequently, the paper claims that metaphor is an essential part of insecurity discourse; as it maximises relevance in the entire discourse.

The Nigerian Media and (In) Security in Nigeria

The media (the collection of print, electronic and digital) is a rallying force in modern society. It entertains, informs and educates. For this reason, people rely on the media for dissemination and consumption of information. The media intersperses into all areas of human civilisation: education, banking, technology and most

especially, politics. Essentially, media earns the name fourth estate as a result of its visibility and key role in influencing political system. According to Abraham (2012:5), "the fourth estate of a democratic country is the media because it holds the pillars of the constitution firmly as a ground to base the rights of every citizen and also provide a medium for the people to reach the higher authority." Specifically, the responsibility of the media is to mediate between the government and the governed. Very comparable to the fourth estate role, is the obligation of the media as a watchdog. The media watches over state institutions and provide a check on government. Whitaker *et al* (2004:53) capture this role in this perspective: "ideally, journalism should be the eyes and ears of readers, listeners and viewers: informing the public, serving as a watchdog over government, business and industry, facilitating democracy, and being a medium of socialization." Largely, media is an integral part of any democratic society which makes available the information which the polity require to make responsible, informed decisions.

The Nigerian media is one of the most active media institutions in Africa. It comprises print (many of which have made efforts with digital transition), radio, television and digital news providers. In this list also are popular international brands such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Cable Network News (CNN). These media channels have contributed professionally in enriching Nigerians with the required information. Although, there have been, at one point or the other, a mounting crisis of confidence in some of these channels and their operators at giving complete and accurately fair information. Nevertheless, Digital News Report (2022) confirms that overall trust in news relayed by these channels has increased to 58% in 2022 with conventional media platforms recording the highest trust rating against the online and social media news platforms. Trust in the Nigerian media has been relatively restored on account of socio-political

predicaments such as the Coronavirus pandemic, insecurity, inflation, economic malaise among others, experienced by the country. The Nigerian media has not only kept its democratic function by keeping Nigerians abreast of these challenges, the institution has continued to build, shape or transform Nigerians' perceptions in this regard.

A dominant challenge in Nigeria today is insecurity. Nigeria has, in recent times, continued to witness myriad of events threatening her security. The predominant security challenges have been acts of terrorism, banditry, herdsmen's engagement in clashes and killings, kidnapping for ransom, among other criminal activities. These major challenges have been at the forefront of media reportages. The media engages in critical reports, diagnoses conflict situations contained in the reports, and makes critical counter-insecurity suggestions. Invariably, in this regard, the Nigeria media informs, shapes public opinion, and provide orientation on government policies that affect security in Nigeria.

A matter of significance to scholarship in Nigeria is the media and its linguistic responsiveness to insecurity in Nigeria. There are limited extant studies that have engaged in this. Olagunju and Ajadi (2014) examined ideology in selected editorials on Federal government-Boko Haram face-off with the goal to make known the roles of the media in the event. The study reveals that the editorials present the ranging insecurity as insuperable because the Boko Haram insurgency is ideologically positioned powerful. It submitted that the media needs to be more sensitive to its language use in order to save the delicate bond of the nation from disintegration. Relatedly, Ebim (2017), from the critical analytic perspective, probed into the nature and patterns of language use in portraying insurgent activities in the Nigerian print media. The study established that language use in the media in relation to crises reportage is judgmental and it is capable of causing disaffection through linguistic labels. It is obvious in these studies that attention has

been accorded the ambivalently negative use of language by the Nigerian media response to harmful insecurity in Nigeria. However, the metaphorical optics deployed to represent insecurity in Nigeria has not been given the scholarly engagement required. Therefore, focussing on discourse on insecurity in selected Nigerian print media, this paper intends to consider the conceptual metaphors adopted as optics, the effects they have on readers' perceptions, cognitions and their relevance in the portrayal of insecurity in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical base of this article is eclectic, amalgamating insights from Lakoff and Johnsons' Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory (RT). The two are briefly discussed in sequence, together with how they stand to adequately interpret the metaphorical optics deployed to represent insecurity in Nigeria.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (1980) put forward by Lakoff and Johnson came forward in order to challenge the myopic conception of language philosophers towards metaphor. Before the introduction of CMT, philosophers had maintained that metaphor is irrational and dangerous. They have ignored it and as well projected it as a phenomenon whose status is not major in the philosophy of language. Instead, metaphor is always seen as the result of some operation performed upon the literal meaning of… utterance. The implication of this is that "conventional metaphor where much of our ordinary conceptual system and bulk of our everyday conventional language are structured and understood primarily in metaphorical terms, has gone either unnoticed or discussed" (Lakoff and Johnson: 1980:453). With the advocacy of CMT, metaphor is affirmed to be "pervasive in everyday life, not just in language, but in thought and action (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 454). The justification for this is that human conceptual system,

in terms of which thinking and acting come forth, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.

With the status of metaphor as human property, CMT holds that "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing or experience in terms of another" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 455). Given this description, metaphor is considered an expression with two conceptual domains (knowledge fields) where one is understood in terms of the other. The conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain is called source domain, while the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the target domain (Kovecses, 2010). This coherent organisation means conceptual domain A symbolises the "target", and which is the same as conceptual domain B, the "source". This unidirectional process takes the form of mapping features of source domain onto the target. This mapping (which means neural connections across domain), according to Lakoff (1980, 2003, 2008), is systematic (because there is a set of correspondences between the two domains) and selective (because only a part of the source domain is mapped unto the target domain and only a part of the target is highlighted in the mappings from the source).

Consequently, metaphor, in the theoretical underpinning of CMT, is an integral part of human existence that defines human reality and experience. Metaphor is not "simply an ornamental aspect of language, but a fundamental scheme by which people conceptualise the world and their own activities" (Gibbs, 2008:3). Accordingly, CMT brings to light how conceptual metaphors prompt human understanding of abstract concepts through source domains. These source domains are concrete experiences which are natural because they manifest from human bodies, physical and cultural interactions. Thus, going by this theoretical background, realisable metaphors deployed as optics on insecurity in Nigeria are not just a matter of language, but

concepts realisable through mappings in the conceptual system. Beyond this, this paper considers these metaphors as ostensive stimuli which maximise relevance and create expectation of optimal relevance. It is by virtue of this inferential pragmatic feature of metaphor that this paper has incorporated Relevance theory.

Relevance theory, an inferential approach to pragmatics, was developed by Sperber and Wilson (2002) on account of the deficiencies traceable to Grice's (1989) cooperative principle and the superfluous maxims later categorised into a single maxim (principle) or relevance. Thus, relevance theory is a rather a "wide-ranging framework for the study of cognition, devised primarily in order to provide an account of communication that is psychologically realistic and empirically plausible" (Allot, 2010:1). Relevance theory is predicated on what is relevant and two principles: Cognitive and Communicative. In the words of Sperber and Wilson (2004:608), "intuitively, relevance is a potential property not only of utterances and other observable phenomena, but of thoughts, memories and conclusions of inferences." By virtue of this conception, the cognitive principle of relevance affirms human utterances and other cognitive properties as relevant given that human cognition tend to be geared to the maximisation of relevance. In this wise, maximisation of relevance of cognitive properties is predicated on cognitive effect and processing effort. In relevance-theoretical terms, an input (an utterance, a sight, a sound or a memory) "is relevant to an individual when its processing in a context of available assumptions yields a positive cognitive effect...a worthwhile difference to the individual's representation of the world: a true conclusion (Sperber & Wilson, 2004:607). Examples of cognitive effects are contextual implication, (defined in terms of a conclusion deducible from input and context together); others include strengthening, revision or abandonment of available assumptions. According to relevance theory, the more cognitive effect a stimulus/input gives rise

to, the more relevant it is, and the greater the processing effort required to process a stimulus/input, the less relevant it is.

The communicative principle takes off from the cognitive principle. This aspect of relevance theory was introduced by Sperber and Wilson (1995) to advance Grice's (1989) claims that 'the essential feature of most human communication, both verbal and non-verbal, is the expression and recognition of intentions'. In enriching this submission, Sperber and Wilson are of the opinion that certain communicative acts, either verbal or non-verbal which give rise to expectations of optimal relevance are ostensive-inferential communicative acts which are defined in terms of two intentions: the informative and communicative intentions which the communicator exclusively relies on. The ostensive-inferential communication which revolves around the communicator (speaker) and his audience (reader) is so described because it is considered to be an ostensive stimulus "designed to attract audience's attention and focus it on the communicator's meaning" (Sperber & Wilson 2004:611). The communicator produces an ostensive act (which indicates both the informative and communicative intentions), while the audience recognises such an act as being ostensive; he is further guided by the presumption of optimal relevance in making inferences about such intention of the communicator. The communicative principle and the idea of optimal relevance put forward a comprehension procedure for interpreting and making out hypothesis about speaker's meaning.

Following these theoretical submissions, metaphor is a cognitive conceptual tool that drives understanding; it thrusts cognitive effects: maximising relevance, and significantly, it is an apt pragmatic ostensive-inferential stimulus that establishes optimal relevance. Print media writers of vital global pandemics such as insecurity consciously or unconsciously deploy metaphors in the discourse of insecurity. In effect, the channelled metaphorical optics afford readers a broad

perception of insecurity. When such affordance yields positive cognitive effect – a firm contextual implication, among others, then such metaphorical optics are relevant. Additionally, when its presentation of insecurity is ostensively inferential; giving readers that expectation of relevance, then it has succeeded in creating readership optimal relevance for itself. It is, therefore, reasonable to affirm here that a writer's metaphorical optics of insecurity in an endangered socio-political ambience will achieve relevance by uniquely representing known sceneries from the context, thus satisfying the reader's expectations of relevance.

Methodology

Material: Data for this paper were taken from three purposively selected Nigerian newspapers. They are: *Punch* (online), *The Guardian* (online) and *Vanguard* (online). These set of newspapers were selected based on popularity, readership, availability and the fact that they have expansive space for insecurity discourse especially in their editorial and opinion columns. These editorials and opinions were those published between the years 2020 and 2023. These years had a great number of human mortality cases engendered by insecurity. The selected years had no connection with any democratic dispensation of any individual elected as the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Procedure: This paper did not engage in any contrastive analysis of data extracted from the selected newspapers. Excerpts that metaphorically conceptualise insecurity in the editorial and opinion pages of the selected newspapers were gathered using the MIP (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) metaphor identification process. MIP submits that a linguistic element can be taken as metaphorical in a given discourse, if the meaning it represents contextually is incongruous yet comparable to its basic meaning in other context. For example, making reference to insecurity as 'football match' showcases semantic

incongruity that can be ascertained by a cross-domain mapping between the source domain of football match, and the target domain of insecurity. Further to this is that, having identified the linguistic metaphor, they are further grouped under a label depending on the domain that figured prominently. From the data, three source domains were drawn upon to conceptualise insecurity in Nigeria: COMBATIVE HUMAN BEING, DISEASE, WILD ANIMAL and BUSINESS. This is presented in table 1 below. In analysing the conceptual metaphors, through a coalesced insight from Lakoff and Johnsons' Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory (RT), I indicated how the selected newspapers draw on the metaphors to provide an optic of coherent explanations and narratives about insecurity in Nigeria. Consequently, the paper claims that metaphor is an essential part of insecurity discourse; as it maximises relevance in the entire discourse.

Table 1: Linguistic realisations of metaphors and their conceptualisations

Metaphorical optics	Linguistic realisations	Frequencies
Combative human being/ human being to be combated with	fight, fighting, threat, arrest, strive	15
Disease	plague, plaguing, rabid, worsen, severity, ravaging, epidemic	7
Wild animal	Tame, taming, wild	5
Business	Business	3

Results and Discussion

Insecurity, in the context of this paper, is a sensitive and an abstract phenomenon. It is sensitive in the sense that it describes the state of human beings at risk or in danger; especially of a situation that can

engender morbid mortality. And, it is abstractive, because it is non-concrete for human comprehension. Nigeria has been experiencing insecurity since her independence in 1960. Insecurity has been something of great concern to the well-meaning of Nigerians and institutions, amongst which are media outlets. The media, especially the print-online media, have helped to describe, document and above all made Nigerians to understand insecurity in Nigeria by virtue of the different metaphorical optics/conceptualisations deployed to represent the dastardly situation where no one is safe. Let us consider the various metaphorical optics utilised by the selected newspapers.

Excerpt 1

> Nigeria's former Ambassador to Argentina, Ambassador Empire Kanu, said that the Buhari-led Government had failed woefully especially on the security sector. He said that all the funds budgeted for security had not been properly utilised, accusing the Federal Government and Heads of Security agencies of playing on the intelligence of Nigerians under the guise of *fighting* insecurity...Umar then questioned the role of para-military agencies such as the Nigerian Customs Service and the Nigeria Immigration Service, saying "they have no blueprint *in the fight against insecurity*. The military has decided to *fight* this alone but they are overwhelmed." *Vanguard*, August 6, 2022

Excerpt 2

> When President Buhari came to power in 2015, our expectations, as civil society organisations working to help and support the government in *fighting* corruption and insecurity, was that the insurgency could, perhaps, reduce drastically, even if not completely eradicated. *The Guardian*, 19 January 2023

Excerpt 3

Barely five weeks to the end of President Muhammadu Buhari-led administration, experts and analysts in the national security sector have described it as a failure owing to its inability to decisively deal with the security worries of Nigerians as promised. The administration rode to power in the first instance in 2015, and again in 2019, basically on a three-pronged campaign plan, with the *fight* against insecurity as key. *Punch*, 23 April 2023

Excerpt 4

Under Buhari, bandits went after soft targets in schools, where they kidnap students for ransom. They operated in Government Science Secondary School, Kankara, Katsina State; Government Girls Secondary School, Jangebe, Zamfara State, and Government Science College, Kagara, Niger State, among others at different times between 2020 and 2021... The August 24, 2021 invasion of the Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna; the March 28, 2022 Abuja train attack in Katari, Kaduna; the domination of Kuje prison by insurgents on July 5, 2020, where hundreds of Boko Haram detainees were freed are testimonies to Buhari's zero rating in *fighting* insecurity. *The Guardian*, 23 May 2023

The metaphorical optic evident towards insecurity in the excerpts above is that of COMBATIVE HUMAN BEING (*n-15*) as shown in Table 1. Insecurity has been conceptualised as COMBATIVE HUMAN BEING through the linguistic realisations of *fight*, *fighting*, *threat*, *arrest*, *strive.* The selected newspapers have, in a way, co-constructively construed insecurity in Nigeria, as a phenomenon that stubbornly combats and is being combated. As it is portrayed in *excerpt 1,* insecurity is affirmed as a HUMAN BEING TO BE COMBATED. (e.g. under the guise of *fighting* insecurity, no blueprint in the *fight* against insecurity, the military has decided to *fight*...). This metaphoric

optic attributed to insecurity as HUMAN BEING TO BE COMBATED WITH is also apparent in *excerpt 2* (e.g. support the government in *fighting* ... insecurity). Similarly, in *excerpt 3*, insecurity as a HUMAN BEING TO BE COMBATED WITH is marked (e.g. basically on a three-pronged campaign plan, with the *fight* against insecurity). *Excerpt 4*, in the same way, projected insecurity as a HUMAN BEING TO BE COMBATED WITH (e.g. Buhari's zero rating in *fighting* insecurity).

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) are of the view that metaphor is a natural part of our daily life and our everyday speech. It is not just a conceptual system of communication but rather the means for innate thoughts, actions and understanding. The metaphorical optic of insecurity as a HUMAN BEING TO BE COMBATED WITH as presented by the linguistic realisation of *fight* and *fighting* gives an understanding of the type of insecurity in Nigeria as an interpersonal dispute, emotionally distressing entity that has negative intent in being combative, and has a cruel impact on the other person's well-being. This metaphor signifies that this nature of insecurity in Nigeria is intractable, and it requires violent attack and a defensive scenario in order for it to be defeated. For instance, the intractability of insecurity especially when there are no strategic plans to combat it is presented thus:

Excerpt 5

My take is that we have clueless and inept people in government who, like Nero, fiddle while Nigeria burns. With Buhari in the saddle, insecurity will continue to *strive*," he said.

Vanguard, August 6, 2022

From excerpt 5, while the linguistic realisation of *strive* further construes the existing insecurity in Nigeria as a HUMAN BEING TO BE COMBATED WITH, it also establishes its tendency to remain incontrollable especially in a situation where there is no tactical plan to nip it in the bud. In Nigeria, there have been countless acts of insecurity

that have claimed lives. According to Okoli (2022, para 1), in *The Conversation*:

> 2022 has been an eventful year. ...There have been some especially horrifying events in 2022. On 28 March, terrorists ambushed and attacked a passenger train en route from Abuja to Kaduna. They killed some passengers and abducted scores more. After almost six months of negotiations, and unconfirmed claims of payment of ransom, the last batch of 23 captives from the train was released in October. On 5 June, more than 30 people were murdered in another terrorist attack, this one on a church in Owo in Ondo State.

The insecurity scenario above confirms, gives validity and relevance to the linguistic realisations (e.g. **fight, fighting, threat, arrest, strive**) of the metaphoric optic of insecurity as HUMAN BEING TO BE COMBATED. Thus, the metaphoric optic of insecurity as a HUMAN BEING TO BE COMBATED yields ostensive stimuli in the readers and negotiates full cognitive effects, which are relevant with regards to insecurity in Nigeria. The report above substantiates that there was an attack that brought about killings and abduction. It also bears out that 30 people were murdered. Consequent upon this, the metaphorical optic of insecurity as HUMAN BEING TO BE COMBATED maximises relevance and is optimally relevant bearing in mind that such optic evince striking positive cognitive effect in comprehending the state of insecurity in Nigeria. This effect is possible for the reason that the media make use of such linguistic realisations based on the context of insecurity in Nigeria. Insecurity as HUMAN BEING TO BE COMBATED is therefore an apt pragmatic ostensive-inferential stimulus given that it conveys, amidst a societal issue as that of insecurity, a sense of struggle, effort and determination to end insecurity in Nigeria. The optimal relevance therefore lies in its ability

to vividly express the idea of working towards a goal (combating insecurity) to overcoming such adversity.

The next metaphorical optic prominent in the selected newspapers illustrates the co-construction of insecurity in Nigeria as a DISEASE (*n-7*) as shown in Table 1. The below confirm this.

Excerpt 6

Shortly after Enoch Adeboye, a leading cleric, expressed serious concern about the rampage of criminals nationwide, Olusegun Obasanjo, a former president (1999-2007), raised similar fears. To save Nigeria from implosion, every stakeholder should weigh in, proffer, and act on practical solutions to curb the unprecedented insecurity *ravaging* the country. *Punch*, April 11, 2022

Excerpt 7

...is rather unfortunate that insecurity in Nigeria today has gone beyond crisis stage and now an *epidemic* considering its negative impact on the country and the untold hardship it has caused hapless Nigerians. It is a shame that the Federal Government's ineffective handling of the insecurity challenge allows terrorists in whatever form to operate a parallel government in some parts of the country. *The Guardian*, June 27, 2023

Excerpt 8

Too often, President Muhammadu Buhari has appeared – to citizens, commentators, and even his supporters – as too silent on burning national issues. The perception is not misplaced, going by his relative lack of reaction to multifarious incidents, including *rabid* insecurity *plaguing* the country, charges of

ethnic cleansing and domination, as well as the recent #EndSARS protest. *The Guardian*, March 15, 2021

Excerpt 9
There is growing pressure from Nigerians across all walks of life on the need to address the insecurity *plaguing* the country," he said. "The problem currently is nowhere is safe in the country — and nobody, irrespective of class or position in life, is safe. The Guardian, August 11, 2022

Excerpt 10
Whereas experts have acknowledged the need to scale up security to protect life and property, there are concerns that the unbalanced spread of the country's resources across critical sectors would create another social insecurity that could *worsen the outlook. Vanguard*, January 19, 2023

From the excerpts above, the selected media have co-constructively conceptualised insecurity in Nigeria as a DISEASE. This metaphorical optic portrays an abnormal condition or disorder that affects the body or mind's normal functioning. It tends to involve specific symptoms and can affect different organs or systems in the body. Insecurity becomes a DISEASE through the linguistic realisations of *ravaging, epidemic, rabid, plaguing, worsen*. For instance, in excerpt 6 it was categorically stated that Nigeria needs to be saved from implosion by curbing the insecurity ravaging the country. Ravaging, here, carries a negative denotation such as devastating, ruining among others. It is in the nature of disease if not well attended to destroy the entire body. Egbejule (2022, para 1) confirms the ravaging nature of disease when he states that "a university Don, Prof. Kolawole Olatunji Matthew on Friday expressed concerns over the ravaging effects of communicable

diseases in the country saying that Government must take investment in health security". The metaphorical optic used to construe insecurity in Nigeria is that of a chronic DISEASE that destroys. Similarly, insecurity as a DISEASE is described to be *epidemic* in nature in excerpt 7. Insecurity is metaphorically depicted as a disease rapidly spreading to a large number of people and places within Nigeria. In the same vein, in excerpts 8 and 9, the linguistic realisations through *rabid* and *plaguing* also give credence to insecurity in Nigeria as a DISEASE. Plague denotes contagious bacterial disease caused by Yersinia pestis, often associated with historical pandemics such as the Black Death. It is suggestive of a widespread deadly affliction or calamity. The metaphorical optic of insecurity as a DISEASE through *plague* highlights the pervasive and destructive nature of insecurity, emphasizing its widespread and harmful impact on the country. This encompasses various security challenges such as insurgency, terrorism, and criminal activities that contribute to a sense of instability and threaten the well-being of the entire population. Lastly, excerpt 7 construes insecurity in Nigeria as a phenomenon that is capable of *worsening the outlook* if resources are not well spread across the country. The implication of this metaphorical optic is that as a DISEASE, it is capable of making the sickly situation in the country more negative or unfavourable. It is expected that there would be deterioration in the areas of life and properties if the spread of resources (economic, social etc.) are unbalanced.

The metaphorical optic of insecurity as a DISEASE realised through *ravaging*, *epidemic*, *rabid*, *plaguing*, *worsen* deployed to comprehend insecurity in Nigeria yields positive cognitive effect. In the words of Kristner (1998:10) "...disease metaphors are principally a way of being vehement. ...Disease imagery is used to express concern for social order, and health is something everyone is presumed to know about". Thus, if everyone is acknowledged to understand the notion of

health, understanding insecurity in terms of DISEASE, based on the contextual situation of insecurity in Nigeria requires less processing effort that produces positive cognitive effect. This, therefore, makes the metaphorical optic of insecurity as a DISEASE relevant. Agbelusi (2022: para 1-2) confirms the epidemic nature of insecurity in Nigeria, for instance, when he states that:

> The South-west of Nigeria is plagued by a surge in cyber-crime, armed robbery, kidnapping, domestic crime, extrajudicial killings, herder-farmer conflicts, ritual killings, and banditry. The South-east is a haven of ritual killings, commercial crime, secessionist agitation, kidnapping, herder-farmer clashes, attacks by unknown gunmen, and banditry. The south-south remains threatened by militancy, kidnapping and environmental agitation. The North-east has been subject to humanitarian crisis lasting over a decade and caused by the Boko Haram insurgency and the Islamic State in West Africa Province. Meanwhile, the north-west is enmeshed in illegal mining, ethnoreligious killings, and banditry. It is therefore, that insecurity in Nigeria has assumed a soft spot in political stance and that it has claimed thousands of lives and extensive damage and loss of property.

The part description given immediately above is evident that insecurity is a DISEASE given its spread all over the country. This metaphorical optic maximises relevance and is optimally relevant in view of the fact that it produces positive cognitive effect. This effect is confirmed taking into account the linguistic realisations used by the media to concretise insecurity in Nigeria as a DISEASE. Insecurity as a DISEASE is therefore an apt pragmatic ostensive-inferential stimulus which signifies that insecurity is pervasive and harmful to Nigerians' well-beings. It has spread causing emotional distress and impacting

various aspects of life. The optimal relevance therefore projects the need to address and heal the underlying issues contributing to insecurity in Nigeria, treating it as something that can infect and undermine a country's confidence and mental health.

The next metaphorical optic dominant in the selected newspapers illustrates the co-construction of insecurity in Nigeria as an Animal (*n-5*) as shown in Table 1. The excerpts below confirm this optic.

Excerpt 11

Again, it is regrettable that the political leadership has grown so rotten that it struggles to *tame* insecurity just as it is in romance with corruption at every level. Nigeria has long tolerated an anomalously high rate of corruption in the society. This has led to derailment of infrastructural developments across the country and nothing seems to work out for the good of the people. *The Guardian*, April 13, 2022

Excerpt 12

These disparate and counter-reactive views on the insecurity situation in Nigeria have subsisted. However, all opposing camps accept that *wild* insecurity engulfed Nigeria and predated the administration of President Buhari. The anti-establishment analysts on security cite resurgent acts such as in Boko Haram/IWSAP terrorists; armed banditry, ethno-religious conflicts, organized and commercialized kidnapping and communal strifes to impulsively buttress their standpoint. *Vanguard*, January 28, 2020

Excerpt 13

AMID claims by the President, Major General Muhammadu Buhari (retd.), of *taming* insecurity, violence remains stubbornly ubiquitous. While traumatised Nigerians are politely reminding Buhari of his unfulfilled pledge to secure their lives and

property, bandits, terrorists, and sundry criminals are underscoring the reminder with blood, broken bodies, and pillage. The reality on the ground compels the conclusion that despite its exertions, its repeated rhetoric and record expenditure, the Buhari regime failed to *tame* insecurity in its eight years in office. *Punch*, May 21, 2023

From the excerpts above, the selected media have co-constructively conceptualised insecurity in Nigeria as not just an animal but as a WILD ANIMAL. This metaphorical optic represents a non-domesticated species that typically lives and thrives in its natural habitat, posing a level of danger. Essentially, for wild animals, understanding specific species and practising caution in their presence is essential to minimize risks. Insecurity turns out to be a WILD ANIMAL through the linguistic realisations of *wild, tame* and *taming*. *Tame* is evident in excerpt 11. The writer categorically and conceptually states that political leadership in Nigeria struggles to *tame* insecurity just as it harbours corruption. The implication of the *tame* metaphorical optic in this discourse is that insecurity is potentially dangerous and predatory considering the carnage that insecurity has engendered in Nigeria. Tame, in this context means that political leadership in Nigeria finds it difficult to subdue and control the level of insecurity in Nigeria. Similarly, insecurity as a WILD ANIMAL is apparent in the *wild* insecurity deployed in excerpt 12. It is emphasised that *wild* insecurity has submerged Nigeria as it is accentuated in resurgent acts such as Boko Haram/IWSAP terrorists, armed banditry, ethno-religious conflicts, organized and commercialized kidnapping and communal strife among others. In excerpt 13, insecurity as a WILD ANIMAL is foregrounded in *taming* insecurity and *tame* insecurity. Insecurity is metaphorically seen as a wild creature that is still triggering violence to the level of spilling innocent human blood even with certain eight years of governance.

The metaphoric optic of insecurity realised through the linguistic realisations of *wild*, *tame* and *taming* to foreground insecurity as a WILD ANIMAL construe insecurity that is roaming freely in the landscape of the nation. It represents untamed challenges and uncertainties that require careful attention, strategies, and collaborative efforts to bring under control. Just as with a wild animal, addressing insecurity involves understanding its root causes, implementing effective measures, and fostering a sense of security and stability within the country. Considering the intractable nature of insecurity in the country, the metaphorical optic of insecurity as a WILD ANIMAL is optimally relevant given that such optic produces positive cognitive effect in understanding the circumstance that insecurity has plunged Nigeria into. Insecurity as a WILD ANIMAL is in essence an apt pragmatic ostensive-inferential stimulus in view of the fact that it emphasises the urgency and complexity of the situation Nigeria is. It is akin to facing untamed challenges that require a multifaceted approach. Lions of corruption, hyenas of terrorism, and vultures of instability paint a vivid picture, thereby urging concerted efforts for a coordinated and strategic response.

The next metaphorical optic also represented in two of the selected newspapers illustrates the co-construction of insecurity in Nigeria as BUSINESS (*n-3*) as shown in Table 1. The excerpts below confirm this optic.

Excerpt 14

The government can neither carry the fight to the known forests where these terrorists are located in order to liberate hundreds of abducted students and other Nigerians nor can they secure the Correctional Centres where arrested terrorists are remanded. Only few days ago, a self-confessed bandit kingpin, Abu Sani, in a BBC documentary declared that

insecurity has become a *business* which everyone including government officials benefit from. ...

For that bandit kingpin, Abu Sani to tell us that government is *profiting* from this madness, we have to believe him. We need to ask ourselves? How are these bandits getting their arms and ammunition? If they buy in the black market, how do they cross the borders without some collaborations? It is a huge *business*.
Vanguard, August 6, 2022

Excerpt 15

Citizens' lives meant very little under this regime. But we must admit that political divisions and the winners-take-all approach to politics meant that politics remains a fiasco and war. "Politicians are probably fueling insecurity crisis in Nigeria. Insecurity has become a major *business*. Kidnappers and bandits are having a free reign. Negotiations with bandits receive more attention than normal *business* and ethical transactions." *The Guardian*, May 29, 2022

Two selected newspapers have conceptualised insecurity in Nigeria as a BUSINESS. This metaphorical optic represents an organized efforts and activities of individuals or entities aimed at producing, selling, or buying goods and service to meet specific economic needs. It underscores partnerships in financial operations. Insecurity turns out to be a BUSINESS through linguistic realisations of *business* and *profiting*. In excerpt 14, there seems to be an established partnership between the government and terrorists (the propellers of insecurity in Nigeria). In other words, government is not keen at fighting insecurity as it should. No concrete attempt is being made to arrest and ensure that those arrested are well imprisoned. This triviality towards insecurity on the part of the government is suggestive of cooperation and partnership in crime because of some pecuniary gains. In the same way, in excerpt 15, a partnership dealing with the

perpetrators of insecurity is underscored to the detriment of the lives of Nigerian citizens. An instance of kidnappers and bandits having a free reign accentuates this.

Understanding insecurity in Nigeria through a BUSINESS lens represents a situation where people benefit. This involves illicit activities such as arms trade, kidnapping and corruption. As depicted in the excerpts, in this unfortunate scenario, individuals and government profit from the instability which is similar to stakeholders gaining from a business venture. Addressing this would require dismantling the incentive structures that drive such activities, implementing stronger law enforcement, and promoting ethical business practices to disrupt the profitability of insecurity. In the words of Aro (2023:1):

> Bello Matawalle, minister of state for defence, says conflict entrepreneurs are responsible for the unending banditry in the north-west. ...Banditry has its economy, which is fueling the crime in the country. Conflict entrepreneurs don't want insecurity to finish in this country. Many people in the north are part of the business.

In view of the situation depicted above, it is evident that insecurity is a BUSINESS given that some set of people benefit from it. This metaphorical optic maximises relevance and is optimally relevant considering the fact that it produces positive cognitive effect. This effect is established taking into account the linguistic realisations deployed by the media to concretise insecurity in Nigeria as a BUSINESS. Insecurity as a BUSINESS is therefore an apt pragmatic ostensive-inferential stimulus that highlights the clandestine operations that undermine stability in Nigeria. The optimal relevance therefore projects identifying security challenges as illicit transactions, where arms dealings represent areas of vulnerability, and criminal enterprises symbolize the various threats. Combating insecurity then involves disrupting these business

networks, strengthening defences, and implementing strategies to dismantle the illicit operations that perpetuate instability.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has delved into the metaphorical optics of insecurity in selected Nigerian print media, employing Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory. The metaphorical frameworks of the quarrelsome human being, disease, wild animal, and business have been examined to elucidate how these metaphors shape perceptions, cognitions, and responses to security challenges. The metaphorical lens of the combative human being humanizes security issues, emphasizing the interpersonal nature of conflicts and fostering a sense of collective responsibility for resolution. Disease metaphors heighten the urgency of intervention by framing insecurity as a pervasive and contagious threat, thus influencing public perceptions and the prioritization of security concerns. Wild animal metaphors evoke vivid imagery, portraying security challenges as predatory forces that require comprehensive and strategic responses. The business metaphorical optic underscores the illicit and interconnected nature of insecurity, urging targeted efforts to dismantle criminal enterprises, fortify defences, and disrupt economic incentives. By applying Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual analysis and Sperber and Wilson's relevance insights, this research enhances our understanding of how metaphorical optics contribute to the framing of insecurity in media discourse. These insights hold implications for effective communication, policymaking, and public engagement, emphasizing the importance of selecting metaphors that resonate with the public's cognitive frameworks to foster a more nuanced understanding of and response to insecurity in the Nigerian context.

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