



Socio-Cognitive Analysis of Selected Editorial Reviews on Muhammadu Buhari's Administration in *The Nigerian Tribune*

Olusegun Oladele Jegede, Esther O. Senayon

Department of Languages and Literature, Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Abstract

This study examined the socio-cognitive dimensions of selected editorial reviews on Muhammadu Buhari's administration in The Nigerian Tribune, with particular attention to how language constructs ideology and mediates public interpretation of socio-political issues. The study addressed the limited scholarly attention given to the interplay between discourse, cognition, and ideology in Nigerian newspaper editorial reviews. The specific objectives were to examine the dominant ideological positions embedded in the editorial reviews, analyse the cognitive models that mediate discourse interpretation, and explore how these ideological positions and mental models shape and reflect socio-political practices in Nigeria. Anchored in Teun A. van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Model of Critical Discourse Analysis, the study adopted a qualitative research design and analysed selected editorial reviews on security, economy, and health during Buhari's administration. The findings revealed that the editorial reviews predominantly constructed ideological positions centred on governance, accountability, national security, and public welfare. They also activated shared cognitive models through lexical choices, presuppositions, evaluative expressions, and references to collective socio-political experiences, thereby guiding readers' interpretation of events and policies. The study further found that these ideological and cognitive structures reflected broader socio-political practices such as public criticism of governance, civic engagement, and negotiation of national identity in Nigeria. The study concluded that The Nigerian Tribune editorial reviews function as socio-cognitive sites where language, ideology, and public knowledge interact to shape political meaning and influence socio-political discourse in Nigeria.

Keywords: Editorial Discourse, Socio-Cognitive Analysis, Ideology, Cognitive Models, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Discourse plays a crucial role in shaping social cognition and mediating the relationship between language and society. Across global media systems, editorial reviews function as institutional sites where ideology, evaluation, and public reasoning converge, enabling newspapers to interpret national events for readers. Editorial discourse therefore operates within broader traditions of media framing and agenda setting, where language structures public understanding of political and social realities (Alhumsi & Alsaedi, 2023). In many societies, the press serves as a channel through which governance, policy, and public accountability are assessed, particularly in contexts marked by economic pressure, health challenges, and security concerns. In Nigeria, the press has historically functioned as a watchdog, agenda setter, and agent of socio-political change, especially during periods of economic instability, infrastructural decline, health crises, and security challenges (Alugbin & Osisanwo, 2025; Ademilokun & Taiwo, 2013).

Editorial reviews are therefore not neutral reports but ideologically shaped texts that guide interpretation through evaluative language and cognitive framing (Jegede & Okere, 2025). The *Nigerian Tribune*, as one of Nigeria's longest-established newspapers, has maintained a strong tradition of critical engagement with government performance, particularly during Muhammadu Buhari's administration (2015–2023), marked by economic recession, insecurity, and public health concerns (Ojebode, 2020). Within this context, ideological positions, lexical choices, evaluative expressions, and presuppositions interact with shared cognitive models to influence how readers interpret governance and national conditions, thereby presenting a need to examine how editorial discourse constructs meaning and shapes socio-political understanding in Nigeria.

Studies have shown that critical discourse analysis (CDA) provides valuable insights into how media texts shape and reflect power relations, ideologies, and social structures (Osisanwo & Oluwayemi, 2025; Jegede, 2022; Alhumsi

Citation: Olusegun Oladele Jegede, Esther O. Senayon, "Socio-Cognitive Analysis of Selected Editorial Reviews on Muhammadu Buhari's Administration in *The Nigerian Tribune*", Universal Library of Languages and Literatures, 2026; 3(1): 23-33. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70315/uloap.ullli.2026.0301004>.

& Alsaedi, 2023; Jegede & Okere, 2025). Within this tradition, van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach (SCA) has been particularly influential in explaining how discourse mediates the relationship between language and society through shared mental models, ideologies, and social cognition (van Dijk, 2008). Existing research on Nigerian media has focused mainly on content analysis and linguistic patterns, often neglecting the cognitive dimension that underpins ideological reproduction and social interpretation (Ademilokun & Taiwo, 2013; Jegede & Lawal, 2023). Although several studies have examined how Nigerian newspapers frame socio-political issues, there remains a paucity of research that systematically applies the socio-cognitive framework to editorial reviews in major Nigerian dailies, particularly *The Nigerian Tribune*. This gap is more pronounced in relation to key sectors—economy, health, and security—during the administration of Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023), a period marked by significant policy shifts and national debates. The lack of socio-cognitive analysis of editorial reviews on these sectors limits our understanding of how media discourse shapes public cognition, reinforces ideological positions, and influences socio-political attitudes. This study seeks to address this gap through a socio-cognitive analysis of selected editorial reviews in *The Nigerian Tribune* on the economy, infrastructure, health, and security during Buhari's administration. The specific objectives are to examine the dominant ideological positions embedded in the editorial reviews, analyse the cognitive models that mediate discourse interpretation, and explore how these ideological positions and mental models shape and reflect socio-political practices in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of Editorial Reviews in Shaping Public Opinion and National Discourse

Editorial reviews have long been recognised as one of the most powerful genres in journalistic discourse because they articulate institutional positions, interpret events, and influence how readers understand and evaluate national and global issues. According to Alhumsi and Alsaedi (2023), editorial reviews are persuasive and evaluative texts that contribute to the construction and dissemination of ideological meanings within society. Scholars observe that unlike news reports, which aim at objectivity, editorial reviews are inherently subjective, using linguistic and rhetorical strategies to promote particular viewpoints and shape public discourse (van Dijk, 1998). They perform crucial communicative functions such as agenda setting, opinion formation, and socio-political commentary, thereby serving as a bridge between media institutions and the public sphere (Jegede, 2022; Osisanwo, 2024). Jegede and Okere (2025) argue that editorial reviews often draw on shared cultural knowledge, historical context, and collective memory to frame issues in ways that align cognitively and emotionally with audiences. This framing power allows

editorial writers to legitimise institutional perspectives while subtly delegitimising opposing views. Jegede and Lawal (2023) note that Nigerian editorial reviews frequently employ implicatures and pragmatic strategies to explore sensitive political topics, demonstrating their dual role as both persuasive instruments and sites of ideological negotiation. The significance of editorial reviews in shaping discourse therefore lies not only in their content but also in their discursive strategies and their ability to mediate between language, cognition, and power structures.

Furthermore, editorial discourse has been critically examined in relation to agenda-setting theory, which emphasises the media's capacity to determine the salience of issues in public consciousness. Jegede (2024b) claims that the media do not tell people what to think, but what to think about, and editorial reviews perform this function through evaluative commentary and issue prioritisation. In both global and Nigerian contexts, scholars note that editorial reviews influence public opinion through a combination of rhetorical strategies, selective topic emphasis, and intertextual references that anchor issues within broader socio-political narratives (van Dijk, 1998; Ojebode, 2020). According to Zhang et al. (2024), the ideological weight of editorial language lies in lexical choices, syntactic structures, and discursive framing, all of which subtly position readers toward particular interpretations. Jegede (2022) observes that nominalisation and other grammatical features in Nigerian editorial reviews serve to obscure agency and promote institutional perspectives, thereby reinforcing dominant ideologies. However, some scholars challenge the unidirectional view of media influence, arguing that audiences also actively negotiate and contest editorial positions, thereby complicating simplistic models of media effects (Liu & Zheng, 2024). This debate reveals a tension between editorial authority and reader agency, suggesting that the persuasive power of editorial reviews operates within a dynamic, interpretive space shaped by cognitive and socio-cultural factors.

In the Nigerian media context, editorial reviews have played a particularly significant role in shaping national discourse due to the press's historical position as a watchdog and critic of political authority. Ojebode (2020) argues that Nigerian newspapers often function as ideological battlegrounds where national issues are framed, contested, and redefined. Editorial reviews frequently address topics such as governance, economy, security, and health, reflecting institutional stances while influencing how the public interprets government policies and socio-political developments (Jegede, 2024a). Scholars note that editorial writers often deploy pragmatic strategies, metaphorical framing, and implicatures to express critique while maintaining institutional credibility and avoiding direct confrontation (Jegede & Lawal, 2023; Taiwo, 2007). Such discursive strategies not only influence individual interpretation but also shape shared mental

models that guide collective understanding and action. While existing literature emphasises the ideological significance of editorial reviews, gaps remain regarding the cognitive mechanisms through which editorial discourse affects public perception, particularly in the Nigerian context where socio-political dynamics intensify discursive negotiation. These gaps emphasise the need for socio-cognitive approaches that integrate linguistic, ideological, and cognitive dimensions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of editorial influence on national discourse.

Media Discourse and Ideology in Nigeria

Media discourse in Nigeria has developed in close relation to political history and social change. Nwankwo et al. (2023) explain that the press began in the nineteenth century as a tool against colonial rule. Early newspapers such as *Iwe Irohin* and *The West African Pilot* shaped opinion and promoted nationalist ideas. Language served as a means of resistance. After independence, newspapers continued to act as watchdogs and political actors. Military periods placed limits on open criticism. Journalists used euphemism, implicature, and metaphor to question power without direct attack. Ojo (2026), Ojebode (2020) and Jegede (2024b) note that editorial positions often reflected institutional stance. Media discourse therefore functioned as a space where ideology was produced and contested. The press did not only report events. It shaped social awareness and influenced public judgement about state power and governance.

Ideological stance in Nigerian media appears clearly in coverage of politics and crisis. Adesope and Ezeah (2019) argue that framing often reflects institutional interest and elite power. Alternative voices may receive less attention. Ekwenchi (2018) states that lexical choice and syntax guide reader judgement. Evaluative words shape perception of policy and leadership. Jegede (2024a) observes that digital media has changed editorial practice. Newspapers now mix traditional commentary with online interaction. Ownership and political ties influence content (Akinfeleye, 2011; Odunlami & Akinkoya, 2025). Some scholars stress journalist agency. Adebani (2016) argues that professional norms can limit owner control. Tension exists between structural pressure and newsroom practice. Ideological position in Nigerian media results from this ongoing negotiation between power, profession, and public expectation.

Recent studies examine the link between ideology, discourse, and public cognition in Nigeria. Jegede (2024b) notes that digital platforms increase contest over meaning. Audiences comment, share, and reinterpret news. Ekeanyanwu (2021) argues that agenda-setting remains important, yet influence now passes through online interaction. Coverage of reform, insecurity, and health crisis shows strong framing of governance issues (Asemah and Edegoh, 2012; Obot and Okon, 2022). The media still shapes public understanding through selection and emphasis. The research gap remains

on cognitive processes that guide interpretation. Linguistic diversity and literacy differences affect message uptake. Analytical models that link discourse, context, and cognition are needed. Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model provides such a framework. Study of these patterns clarifies how media discourse shapes political culture and national consciousness in Nigeria.

Cognitive Framing, Mental Models, and Public Interpretation of Media Texts

Scholars examine how cognitive framing and mental models shape audience interpretation of media texts. Research shows that ideological content can become normal and accepted through repeated framing. Van Dijk (2014) explains that mental models are socially shared cognitive structures. These structures guide how people interpret and judge events. Frames operate at individual and group levels. Audiences rely on prior knowledge when reading political and economic news. Jegede and Omotayo (2024) state that political discourse uses transitivity and agency patterns to direct attention. Such patterns assign blame or praise. Yuniawan et al. (2023) argue that framing selects aspects of reality and makes them more salient. This process promotes specific problem definitions and moral judgements. Alhums and Alsaedi (2023) note that media discourse produces and contests social meaning. Media texts are not received in a passive manner. Readers process messages through cognitive frameworks shaped by culture and experience.

Scholars extend framing studies to socio-cognitive models that stress shared mental schemas. Jegede and Okere (2025) argue that political interpretation in Nigeria reflects entrenched social representations shaped by history and language use. Van Dijk (2008) states that mental models arise from interaction between discourse, cognition, and society. Babalola (2024) claims that frames exist in everyday language and guide opinion without direct persuasion. Jegede (2024a) observes that media language aligns with cultural schemata and reinforces ideological narratives. Critics question strong cognitive claims. Couldry and Hepp (2017) warn that such theories may reduce audience agency. Audiences can resist or reinterpret dominant frames. Social position shapes response to media messages. Debate continues on whether audiences mainly absorb frames or actively reshape meaning within local and cultural contexts.

Recent scholarship links socio-cognitive analysis with critical discourse study. Jegede and Omotayo (2024) show that political communication uses language and cultural reference to secure ideological uptake. Chilton (2025) explains that audiences connect text with wider social knowledge through inference. Mental processes structure ideological meaning. Jegede and Okere (2025) note that Nigerian media engage cultural frames linked to governance and identity. Triyono et al. (2023) argue that cognitive linguistics helps identify implicit metaphors and framing devices. These tools reveal

how interpretation is guided without direct statement. Some scholars question universal claims. Osisanwo (2024) stresses the diversity of interpretive communities. Shared frames may not function in the same way across groups. Socio-cognitive study remains useful but must attend to context and variation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Teun van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Model of Critical Discourse Analysis

Teun A. van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Model of Critical Discourse Analysis links language study with social theory. It explains how discourse enacts and reproduces power and ideology in society. Discourse is seen as social practice shaped by social structures. His socio-cognitive approach states that discourse and society connect through social cognition. Social cognition includes shared knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and ideologies. Discursive events influence society through mental models and shared representations. These mental models guide interpretation and action. Discourse can therefore sustain dominance and inequality. The model treats discourse as a site where power operates. Elites often control public knowledge and opinion through media, politics, and other texts. Van Dijk distinguishes between macrostructures and microstructures. Macrostructures concern themes, topics, and overall organisation of texts. Microstructures concern word choice, syntax, and rhetoric. Both levels reveal explicit messages and hidden ideological positions. Ideology is defined as shared mental representations that organise group attitudes. Power involves control of discourse and access to communication. Dominant groups shape public understanding and maintain inequality in this way. The model has a critical aim. Analysts examine who controls discourse and whose interests it serves. Context models explain how participants understand situations. These models consider roles, identities, and goals. This framework supports systematic study of language, cognition, and society.

Van Dijk's model of Critical Discourse Analysis is particularly suited to this study because it provides a comprehensive framework for examining how discourse in editorial reviews shapes and reflects ideological positions within specific socio-political contexts. His socio-cognitive approach is especially relevant as it bridges the gap between textual structures and social realities through the mediating role of cognition (van Dijk, 2008). Editorial reviews in *The Nigerian Tribune* on critical sectors such as the economy, health, and security during Muhammadu Buhari's administration are not neutral commentaries; they are discursive acts that influence how readers interpret and respond to national issues. Van Dijk's emphasis on mental models and shared social representations allows for an exploration of how these editorial reviews contribute to the formation, reinforcement, or contestation of ideological perspectives in the public sphere. The approach's interdisciplinary nature enables a comprehensive analysis of linguistic patterns alongside social

contexts, revealing how power relations and ideological assumptions are embedded in discourse. Its explanatory power makes it well suited to reveal the subtle ways in which media discourse mediates between institutional ideologies and public cognition, which is central to understanding the socio-political impact of editorial texts.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative design was adopted for this study as it enabled a detailed exploration of language use, ideological structures, and cognitive dimensions within editorial discourse, which quantitative methods could not adequately capture. The socio-cognitive approach to Critical Discourse Analysis provided the analytical framework, providing depth and explanatory power for understanding the relationship between discourse, cognition, and society. The population comprised all editorials on Muhammadu Buhari's administration. The data consisted of a series of editorial reviews published in *The Nigerian Tribune*, dated 18-05-2023, covering three thematic areas—economy, health, and security—on Muhammadu Buhari's administration. These texts were selected because they represent influential media discourse on key national issues and provide rich linguistic and ideological content for analysis. Data was collected through systematic retrieval of the editorial reviews from the newspaper's digital archives. Rigour and validity were ensured through careful cross-checking and iterative reading. Ethical considerations included adherence to proper citation practices, respect for intellectual property, and avoidance of misrepresentation. No human participants were involved, so formal consent was not required; however, academic integrity standards were strictly upheld.

RESULTS

This section presents findings from the analysis of selected editorial reviews on Muhammadu Buhari's administration in *The Nigerian Tribune*. It examines how ideological positions and cognitive structures shape discourse across governance, accountability, national security, and public welfare. Attention is given to linguistic strategies that activate shared mental models through lexical choices, presuppositions, evaluative expressions, and references to collective socio-political experience, thereby shaping interpretation of policies and contributing to public criticism, civic engagement, and identity negotiation in Nigeria.

DOMINANT IDEOLOGICAL POSITION EMBEDDED IN THE EDITORIAL REVIEWS

This section examines ideological positions constructed in editorial discourse on governance, accountability, national security, and public welfare within Nigerian socio-political contexts.

Ideological Positions on Governance

Excerpt 1

"He would be leaving behind an economy with all manners of

encumbrances, bereft of shared prosperity for the majority of Nigerians."

(Editorial Review on Economy, pg14-15, *Nigerian Tribune*, Thursday, 18 May, 2023)

Excerpt 1 constructs governance as ineffective economic stewardship, positioning leadership performance within expectations of inclusive prosperity. The phrase "all manners of encumbrances" signals structural dysfunction attributed to governmental action, shaping interpretation of governance as burden-producing rather than development-oriented. "Bereft of shared prosperity" activates an ideological frame in which legitimate governance is associated with equitable distribution of national wealth. Readers interpret state performance through shared socio-political expectations that leadership should reduce inequality and expand access to economic resources. The linguistic framing positions governance failure as visible through outcomes experienced by citizens, particularly within contexts of unemployment and economic strain. Ideological orientation becomes structured around the belief that political authority must deliver collective welfare, and deviation from this expectation signals governance deficiency.

Excerpt 2

"His two-term tenure has been characterised by an unprecedented increase in human misery occasioned by an upsurge in the inflation rate, rising national debt stock, an uptick in unemployment ratio and a reduction in foreign direct investment, among other shortcomings.... The frightening figures might have gone up now, judging from the present level of misery in the country."

(Editorial Review on Economy, pg14-15, *Nigerian Tribune*, Thursday, 18 May, 2023)

Excerpt 2 positions governance through economic performance indicators, constructing leadership evaluation through measurable socio-economic conditions. The expression "unprecedented increase in human misery" frames governance as responsible for widespread suffering. Enumeration of inflation, debt, unemployment, and investment decline guides readers towards interpreting governance through empirical economic decline. Ideological positioning emerges through alignment of leadership responsibility with lived hardship, shaping interpretation of governance as causally linked to national welfare outcomes. The phrase "frightening figures" strengthens perception of crisis, directing readers towards critical judgement of administrative effectiveness.

Ideological Positions on Accountability

Excerpt 3

"The nation's 81-year-old leader began his tenure with a London medical trip to treat an ear infection and had spent almost a year of his eight years in office attending to his

flailing health. He is ending the tenure with a London trip to treat a tooth problem."

(Editorial Review on Health, pg17-18, *Nigerian Tribune*, Thursday, 18 May, 2023)

Excerpt 3 constructs ideological meaning through symbolic association between leadership condition and institutional capacity. Repeated reference to "London medical trip" functions as representation of reliance on external systems, indirectly connected to national institutional inadequacy. Readers interpret foreign medical travel as a sign of domestic system weakness, particularly within public healthcare delivery. The description of "flailing health" introduces perception of vulnerability in leadership capacity, shaping interpretation of governance stability. Ideological positioning emerges through association between personal health narrative and broader national system performance, directing readers towards reading leadership as a symbol of systemic dependency and institutional limitation.

Excerpt 4

"His admission is symbolic of the neglect which the country's health systems have suffered over the years and the hopelessness of many citizens in seeking care in health facilities.... Health financing has not improved under the Buhari administration"

(Editorial Review on Health, pg17-18, *Nigerian Tribune*, Thursday, 18 May, 2023)

Excerpt 4 constructs accountability through symbolic association between leadership action and institutional decline. The statement "symbolic of the neglect" positions individual experience as representation of systemic governance failure. Ideological framing directs readers to interpret leadership responsibility as central to institutional performance. "Hopelessness of many citizens" activates cognitive association between state action and citizen welfare, reinforcing expectations that governance should ensure functional healthcare systems. The assertion that "health financing has not improved" constructs accountability through policy evaluation, guiding interpretation towards perceived administrative inaction. Readers are positioned to assess leadership performance based on service delivery outcomes, particularly within health systems that directly affect survival and wellbeing.

Excerpt 5

"In asking to be nominated and elected president, Buhari in 2014 promised on national security and defence: 'I will urgently secure the territorial integrity of the nation. I will never leave the defence of the nation in the hands of hunters, children, and Civilian JTF... But eight years down the road from his first inauguration as president, tens of thousands of lives have been lost to the upsurge in Nigeria's security challenges such as insurgency, banditry, armed herders

attacks, kidnappings, religious-motivated attacks, separatist agitations and other violent conflicts.”

(Editorial Review on Security, pg19, *Nigerian Tribune*, Thursday, 18 May, 2023)

Excerpt 5 constructs accountability through contrast between political promise and governance outcome. The quoted pledge establishes expectations of strong state protection and institutional security control. The subsequent enumeration of violent outcomes positions leadership performance as deviation from declared commitments. Ideological framing directs readers to interpret accountability through fulfilment or failure of electoral promises. The scale of insecurity presented through multiple conflict categories shapes perception of governance as unable to meet foundational obligations. Interpretation becomes structured around comparison between anticipated security delivery and lived national insecurity.

Ideological Positions on National Security

Excerpt 6

“If a state’s first obligation to those it governs is to provide for their security and maintain a monopoly on the use of violence, then Nigeria has failed, even if some other aspects of the state still function The unabating insecurity situation convinces cynics that Buhari has not lived up to expectations.”

(Editorial Review on Security, pg19, *Nigerian Tribune*, Thursday, 18 May, 2023)

Excerpt 6 constructs national security as central to state legitimacy, positioning insecurity as indicator of governance failure. The statement “then Nigeria has failed” frames security performance as defining the condition of state existence. Ideological positioning aligns readers with conceptual models in which protection of life forms core governmental responsibility. Reference to “monopoly on the use of violence” activates political schema associated with state authority and sovereignty. The phrase “has not lived up to expectations” directs interpretation towards evaluation of leadership effectiveness in security management. Readers are guided to interpret insecurity as evidence of weakened institutional authority and reduced trust in governance structures.

COGNITIVE MODELS AND THE MEDIATION OF DISCOURSE INTERPRETATION IN THE EDITORIAL REVIEWS

This section examines how editorial reviews activate shared cognitive models through linguistic choices that structure interpretation of governance, economy, security, and health issues in Nigeria.

Lexical Choices

Excerpt 7

“Economists say to check inflation, the government must

promote work, encourage savings, and investment as increased labour supply, capital supply, productivity, and personal savings can help to reduce inflationary pressures.”

(Editorial Review on Economy, pg14-15, *Nigerian Tribune* Thursday, 18 May, 2023)

Lexical selection in Excerpt 7 activates economic cognition rooted in institutional knowledge and everyday survival experience. The term “economists” functions as an entry point into a professional schema that associates inflation control with structured economic behaviour. Words such as “work”, “savings”, “investment”, “labour supply”, and “productivity” form a network of economic vocabulary that guides readers towards interpretation of inflation as manageable through disciplined fiscal behaviour. Readers familiar with rising food costs and declining purchasing power in Nigeria draw on lived experience to connect these lexical items with material hardship. The ordered listing of economic terms constructs mental alignment between policy action and expected outcomes. Interpretation shifts towards assessment of governmental capacity to align policy with established economic reasoning.

Excerpt 8

“According to the World Bank, in its 2022 Poverty and Prosperity Report, Nigeria contributed three million people to global extreme poverty, while the country was tagged: “home to a large share of the global extreme poor.””

(Editorial Review on Economy, pg14-15, *Nigerian Tribune* Thursday, 18 May, 2023)

Lexical choices in Excerpt 8 draw on institutional authority and statistical vocabulary that structure interpretation through global economic classification. Terms such as “contributed”, “global extreme poverty”, and “large share” activate cognitive schemas associated with international ranking systems. Readers interpret Nigeria’s economic condition through comparison with global standards of development and deprivation. The phrase “home to a large share of the global extreme poor” strengthens mental association between Nigeria and structural poverty narratives. Interpretation becomes shaped through external validation rather than local perspective alone, reinforcing cognitive reliance on global institutions for economic meaning-making.

Presuppositions

Excerpt 9

“Perhaps one of the most valuable long-term investments of this administration is the passage of the Act establishing the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). This agency, which was established in 2011 to lead the response to the challenges of public health emergencies and to enhance Nigeria’s preparedness and response to epidemics, had existed for over 10 years without a legislative mandate.”

(Editorial Review on Health, pg17-18, *Nigerian Tribune* Thursday, 18 May, 2023)

Presuppositional structure in Excerpt 9 activates assumptions about institutional legitimacy and governance effectiveness. The expression “most valuable long-term investments” presupposes that governmental action can be evaluated within investment logic that values future benefit. Readers are guided to accept that institutional formalisation represents progress. The clause “had existed for over 10 years without a legislative mandate” presupposes prior institutional weakness and delayed governance action. Cognitive processing aligns administrative reform with improvement of public health readiness. Interpretation becomes shaped through assumption that legality equates institutional strength within public administration systems.

Excerpt 10

“On April 14, 2014, Boko Haram insurgents accessed the Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok, Borno State by subterfuge, picked up 276 students, loaded them in trucks and made for the inner recesses of the dreaded Sambisa Forest ... With a programme of amnesty for surrendering insurgents, the Buhari administration also proclaimed that Boko Haram had been technically defeated.”

(Editorial Review on Security, pg19, *Nigerian Tribune* Thursday, 18 May, 2023)

Presuppositions in Excerpt 10 activate shared assumptions about state responsibility and national security performance. The detailed description of abduction presupposes prior awareness of insecurity conditions within public memory. Reference to “technically defeated” presupposes official claims of military success requiring public acceptance or scrutiny. Readers draw on existing knowledge of persistent insurgency to evaluate contrast between state declaration and lived insecurity. Cognitive processing becomes structured around the expectation that security claims require experiential validation rather than official pronouncement alone.

Evaluative Expressions

Excerpt 11

“Mustapha saw hospitals without beds, emergency wards without ambulances, intensive care units without power supply and health facilities in shortage of human resources and infrastructures needed for services ... According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 20 percent of all global maternal deaths occur in Nigeria.”

(Editorial Review on Health, pg17-18, *Nigerian Tribune* Thursday, 18 May, 2023)

Evaluative expression in Excerpt 9 emerges through contrast between institutional expectation and observed failure. Phrases such as “without beds”, “without ambulances”, and

“without power supply” generate interpretive judgement regarding systemic inadequacy. Readers associate these descriptions with breakdown of healthcare responsibility. The statistical claim regarding maternal deaths introduces evaluative comparison between Nigeria and global health standards. Cognitive interpretation shifts towards assessment of national health governance within global benchmarks of performance and responsibility.

Excerpt 12

“In its 2022 Annual Review of Nigeria's Violent Conflict Profile, published April 21, 2023, the research group Nextier holds that terrorist attacks in Nigeria exponentially increased between 2020 and 2021, leading to the displacement of two million persons while an estimated 800,000 people required humanitarian help in the most hit Borno State ... The Middle Belt region has been the worst hit. Between 2015 and 2020, the frequency of farmer/herder violence resulted in over 7,000 deaths in Benue alone, while the overall middle belt region recorded 1,800 fatalities. Millions of people have been displaced, and others suffer psychological trauma.”

(Editorial Review on Security, pg19, *Nigerian Tribune* Thursday, 18 May, 2023)

Evaluative framing in Excerpt 12 arises through statistical representation of violence and humanitarian crisis. Terms such as “exponentially increased”, “displacement”, “fatalities”, and “psychological trauma” guide readers towards assessment of severity and state capacity. Cognitive processing interprets numerical data as an indicator of governance effectiveness in security management. Evaluation becomes structured through comparison between expected protection and reported outcomes of insecurity across regions.

References to Collective Socio-Political Experiences

Collective socio-economic experience informs interpretation in Excerpt 7 through shared understanding of inflationary pressure in daily life. Readers draw on cognitive models shaped by rising prices of food, transport, and basic goods. Economic advice becomes meaningful through lived experience, allowing interpretation of policy prescriptions as responses to familiar hardship. Shared socio-economic knowledge structures understanding of governance responsibility in managing economic stability.

Collective socio-economic cognition shapes interpretation in Excerpt 8 through shared awareness of poverty and development challenges within Nigeria. Readers connect statistical representation with everyday experiences of economic hardship such as inflation, unemployment, and declining purchasing power. The World Bank reference situates local experience within global classification systems, reinforcing cognitive alignment between personal hardship and national economic identity.

Collective memory of insecurity shapes interpretation

in Excerpt 10 through reference to the Chibok abduction event. This event remains part of national socio-political consciousness and functions as a cognitive reference point for evaluating security claims. Readers interpret official statements of victory through remembered trauma and ongoing insecurity reports. Cognitive schema formed through media coverage and public discourse influences sceptical reading of state declarations.

Shared experiential memory structures interpretation in Excerpt 11 through references to everyday healthcare conditions familiar to many citizens. Imagery of inadequate hospitals activates cognitive schemas formed through personal encounters and reported experiences within public health facilities. Readers interpret these representations through knowledge of systemic shortages in medical infrastructure. The World Health Organisation statistic situated these experiences within global awareness, reinforcing interpretation of national health challenges as socially shared concern rather than isolated incidents.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONS, MENTAL MODELS, AND SOCIO-POLITICAL PRACTICES IN NIGERIA

The editorial reviews on Muhammadu Buhari's administration reveal how ideology and cognition shape meaning, response, and political judgement in Nigerian society through linguistic patterns and memory. These are revealed in the discussion below.

Public Criticism of Governance

Editorial reviews present criticism of governance through evaluative lexis, symbolic reference, and moral positioning, framing the Buhari administration as accountable for insecurity, economic decline, and institutional weakness. Lexical choices such as "human misery", "encumbrances", and "shared prosperity" carry judgement that directs readers towards critical interpretation of state performance. Such expressions do more than describe events; they position governance within public expectations of welfare, justice, and responsible leadership. References to Buhari's medical visits abroad further function as symbols of distance between political leadership and ordinary citizens who depend on underfunded hospitals within Nigeria. Mental models formed through these repeated representations encourage readers to connect policy failure with lived hardship, particularly unemployment, inflation, poor healthcare access, and insecurity. Editorial discourse therefore becomes a site for public dissatisfaction with governance. Criticism gains force because it mirrors everyday realities familiar to many Nigerians. Political authority is measured against social experience, and failure is framed not simply as administrative weakness but as breach of civic responsibility. Public judgement becomes linked with memory, language, and political expectation.

Civic Engagement

Editorial reviews also shape civic engagement through strategic language that invites readers into national conversation about governance, responsibility, and reform. References to reports, mortality figures, and security data establish credibility while prompting citizens to interpret policy through recognised evidence. Statistics drawn from organisations create cognitive anchors that stabilise meaning and make social conditions measurable within discourse. Readers encounter poverty rates, displacement figures, and healthcare indicators as evidence connected with everyday life. Emotive descriptions of suffering, trauma, and deprivation then transform data into human experience, strengthening moral response. Such discourse encourages readers to evaluate leadership critically, discuss policy decisions, and participate in democratic judgement. Editorial reviews function as civic texts that legitimise questioning, debate, and collective scrutiny of state action. Newspaper commentary becomes the medium through which citizens negotiate responsibility between government and society. Engagement emerges through reading, interpretation, conversation, and reflection. Language therefore supports participation in public affairs while reinforcing the idea that governance remains subject to scrutiny from citizens whose lives are shaped by policy decisions and outcomes in Nigeria.

Negotiation of National Identity in Nigeria

Editorial reviews contribute to negotiation of national identity through shared memory, cultural reference, and representations of collective struggle during Buhari's administration. Discussions of insecurity, especially references to the Chibok schoolgirl kidnapping and Boko Haram violence, activate memories that remain emotionally powerful within Nigerian public consciousness. These memories shape interpretation of official claims, especially declarations of military success or policy achievement. Readers compare state narratives with remembered experience and present realities. National identity is therefore constructed through tension between official political messaging and public memory. Descriptions of hospitals lacking beds, electricity, or ambulances similarly evoke questions about citizenship, belonging, and access to state care. Editorial discourse frames these issues as matters affecting all Nigerians despite regional, ethnic, or class differences. Common hardship becomes discursive ground for reflection on what nationhood should mean in practice. Mental models built through repeated reference to suffering, resilience, and expectation position Nigeria as a shared political community facing unresolved structural challenges. Identity emerges through criticism, endurance, and continuing demand for accountable leadership committed to public welfare and renewal.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study set out to address the limited scholarly attention given to how Nigerian newspaper editorial reviews construct ideology while simultaneously activating cognitive models that shape interpretation of governance discourse. Prior studies on Nigerian media discourse have largely focused on framing strategies and political communication patterns without sufficient emphasis on the socio-cognitive processes that mediate interpretation (Adesope & Ezeah, 2019; Ekwonchi, 2018). The present study examined editorial reviews on Muhammadu Buhari's administration in *The Nigerian Tribune*, focusing on governance, accountability, national security, and public welfare. The results indicate that editorial discourse is systematically structured through ideological positioning and cognitive activation, guiding readers towards particular interpretations of socio-political realities. The data suggest that lexical choices, presuppositions, evaluative expressions, and references to collective socio-political experience function as key mechanisms through which interpretation is shaped. These findings extend earlier framing studies which emphasise media selection and emphasis (Yuniawan et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2024), yet give stronger attention to cognition as a mediating factor in discourse interpretation.

The findings on ideological positioning indicate that editorial reviews consistently construct governance through evaluative economic and institutional terms that associate leadership with performance outcomes. Governance is largely represented as deficient when measured against expectations of inclusive welfare, institutional efficiency, and economic stability. This pattern aligns with earlier observations that Nigerian press discourse frequently evaluates political leadership through moral and performance-based frames (Akinfeleye, 2011; Ojebode, 2020). The present study extends this position by showing that ideological constructions are not limited to overt criticism but are embedded within lexical selections that guide cognitive processing. Expressions such as "encumbrances" and "human misery" frame governance failure as systemic rather than incidental, shaping interpretation through shared cultural expectations of leadership responsibility. The results also suggest that accountability discourse is reinforced through symbolic references and contrasts between political promises and outcomes. This supports van Dijk's socio-cognitive theory that ideology operates through mental models activated in discourse interpretation (van Dijk, 2008; van Dijk, 2014). However, the strength of these findings is moderated by the focus on selected editorial texts, which may not fully represent the broader editorial practices across Nigerian newspapers.

The cognitive dimension of the findings demonstrates that editorial discourse activates shared mental models through structured lexical fields, presuppositions, evaluative constructions, and references to collective experience. The

results indicate that lexical choices drawn from economic, health, and security domains function as cognitive triggers that align readers' interpretation with established knowledge frameworks. This observation supports Triyono et al.'s (2023) position that discourse interpretation is shaped through cognitive activation structures that link language and social knowledge (Triyono et al., 2023). Presuppositional structures also guide interpretation by embedding assumptions about institutional legitimacy and governance performance, particularly in health and security narratives. Evaluative expressions further shape judgment by linking empirical data with emotional and moral interpretations, thereby strengthening interpretive direction. Similar findings have been reported in Nigerian media studies that emphasise the role of linguistic resources in political communication (Taiwo, 2007; Jegede, 2022). However, the present study adds analytical depth by demonstrating how cognitive models mediate between textual features and socio-political interpretation, rather than treating language as a direct framing device. One limitation relates to the interpretive nature of cognitive analysis, which may introduce subjectivity in identifying mental schema activation.

The study also shows that ideological and cognitive structures in editorial discourse reflect broader socio-political practices such as public criticism of governance, civic engagement, and negotiation of national identity. The findings indicate that editorial reviews function as platforms for legitimised criticism of state performance, particularly in relation to economic hardship, insecurity, and public service delivery. This aligns with Nwankwo et al. (2023), who argue that Nigerian media frequently function as watchdog institutions that mediate between the state and citizens. The results further suggest that civic engagement is shaped through exposure to statistical information and institutional references, which encourage readers to evaluate governance through evidence-based reasoning. This supports Couldry and Hepp (2017), who emphasise the media's role in constructing shared social reality through repeated discursive patterns. The negotiation of national identity emerges through references to collective memory, particularly in security-related discourse that recalls events such as insurgency and mass violence. These representations shape cognitive models of national belonging and state responsibility. While the findings are strong in demonstrating these relationships, the study remains limited by its focus on one newspaper source, which may restrict generalisability across Nigeria's diverse media environment.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in its integration of ideological analysis with cognitive processing within editorial discourse. The results indicate that ideology does not function independently of cognition but is mediated through mental models activated by linguistic choices. This supports van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach, which positions discourse, cognition, and society as interconnected

domains (van Dijk, 1998; van Dijk, 2014). The findings also extend framing theory by demonstrating that frames operate not only at the level of media selection but also through cognitive activation patterns embedded in lexical, evaluative, and presuppositional structures (Yuniawan et al., 2023). Methodologically, the study demonstrates the usefulness of combining qualitative discourse analysis with cognitive interpretation for examining editorial discourse in Nigerian contexts. Practically, the findings suggest that editorial reviews play a significant role in shaping public perception of governance and may influence civic attitudes towards accountability and participation. Future research may extend this study by incorporating comparative analyses across multiple newspapers and integrating audience reception studies to validate how readers interpret activated cognitive models in real communicative settings.

CONCLUSION

This study examined ideological positions and cognitive models in selected editorial reviews on Muhammadu Buhari's administration in *The Nigerian Tribune* and found that discourse construction consistently revolves around governance, accountability, national security, and public welfare. The results indicate that editorial language systematically deploys evaluative lexis, presuppositions, evaluative expressions, and references to collective socio-political experience to shape interpretation of political events and policy outcomes. These linguistic resources activate shared cognitive models that guide readers towards particular understandings of leadership performance and national conditions. The study addressed the identified gap in scholarship by moving beyond framing analysis to demonstrate how ideological meaning is cognitively mediated in editorial discourse. The results support the conclusion that editorial reviews function as socio-cognitive sites where ideology and mental models interact to structure public interpretation of governance realities in Nigeria. This contribution strengthens theoretical discussions within socio-cognitive discourse analysis and expands understanding of how media texts influence political cognition and civic perception. The findings also carry practical relevance for media literacy and public communication, as editorial discourse clearly participates in shaping civic judgement and national discourse. Future research should extend the scope of analysis to multiple newspapers and incorporate audience reception studies in order to examine how readers internalise or resist the cognitive models activated in editorial discourse across diverse socio-political settings in Nigeria.

REFERENCES

1. Adebani, W. (2016). *The nation as grand narrative: The Nigerian press and the politics of meaning*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press.
2. Ademilokun, M., & Taiwo, R. (2013). Discursive strategies in newspaper campaign advertisements for Nigeria's 2011 elections. *Discourse & Communication*, 7(4), 435–455.
3. Adesope, F. A., & Ezeah, P. (2019). Framing of political issues in Nigerian newspapers: An analysis of the 2015 general elections. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies*, 11(3), 21–30.
4. Akinfeleye, R. A. (2011). Nigerian media and democracy: A critical appraisal. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 3(3), 223–240.
5. Alhumsi, M., & Alsaedi, N. (2023). A transitivity analysis of two political articles: An investigation of gender variations in political media discourse. *World Journal of English Language*, 13(6), 76–99.
6. Alugbin, M., & Osisanwo, A. (2025). "We Are All Migrants": Ideological Construction of Xenophobia in Nigerian and South African Newspaper Reports. *African Journalism Studies*, 1–17.
7. Asemah, E. S., & Edegoh, L. O. (2012). Mass media agenda and political issues in Nigeria: Implications for democracy. *European Scientific Journal*, 8(3), 104–114.
8. Babalola, D. (2024). Party politics, dearth of political ideology, and the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. *The Round Table*, 113(5), 434–450.
9. Chilton, P. (2025). *Analysing political discourse: Theory and practice*. London: Routledge.
10. Couldry, N., & Hepp, A. (2017). *The mediated construction of reality*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
11. Ekeanyanwu, N. T. (2021). Media convergence and ideological contestations in Nigeria's digital public sphere. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 13(1), 35–53.
12. Ekwenchi, O. (2018). Language, ideology and political communication in Nigerian newspapers. *Studies in Media and Communication*, 6(2), 45–55.
13. Jegede, O. O. (2022). Nominal choices in Nigerian newspaper editorial reviews: A functional grammar approach. *Ife Journal of Languages and Literatures*, 8(1), 235–252.
14. Jegede, O. O. (2024a). Evaluating the potential of a unified Hausa-Igbo-Yoruba language to ease language related social and political conflicts in Nigeria. *Journal of Universal Language*, 25(2), 51–92.
15. Jegede, O. O. (2024b). Speech acts in the digital sphere: A corpus-based exploration of interactional dynamics on social media platforms. *Corpus-based Studies across Humanities*, 2(2), 359–383.
16. Jegede, O. O., & Lawal, S. O. (2023). Violation of maxims and implicatures in 'The Fuel Subsidy Controversy' editorial in *The Independence* newspaper. *Issues in Language and Literary Studies*, 9(1), 118–139.

17. Jegede, O. O., & Okere, A. C. (2025). Language as a tool for political transformation: Pragmatic analysis of Atiku Abubakar's 2023 speech on Tinubu's academic records. *International Journal of Sub-Saharan African Research*, 3(1), 483–495.
18. Jegede, O. O., & Omotayo, A. O. (2024). Framing loss through language: Analyzing transitivity in Hillary Clinton's concession speech. *GUU Journal of Humanities*, 3(2), 24–40.
19. Liu, X., & Zheng, X. (2024). The persuasive power of social media influencers in brand credibility and purchase intention. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1), 1–12.
20. Nwankwo, U., Nwanchor, E., Chike, O., & Orji-Egwu, O. (2023). Media, security challenges and the future of Nigeria: A theoretical overview. *African Journal of Politics and Administrative Studies*, 16(2), 313–341.
21. Obot, C. U., & Okon, P. E. (2022). Media framing of security challenges in Nigeria: A content analysis of newspaper coverage. *Journal of Communication and Media Research*, 14(1), 45–60.
22. Odunlami, O. A., & Akinkoya, O. F. (2025). Media Ownership Interests and Challenges of Ethical Journalism Practice in Nigeria. *Tanzanian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 1(1), 47–63.
23. Ojebode, A. (2020). Media and governance in Nigeria: Patterns, issues and prospects. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 12(3), 345–362.
24. Ojo, O. I. (2026). Assessment of Discursive Maxims and Ideological Constructions on Police Assaults of Journalists among Editorials in Nigerian Newspapers. *Federal University Gusau Faculty of Education Journal*, 6(3), 325–334.
25. Osisanwo, A. (2024). Self-legitimation in selected speeches of Abubakar Shekau, the Boko Haram terrorist leader. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 1–20.
26. Osisanwo, A., & Oluwayemi, V. (2025). Problematising migration: News discourses in Nigerian newspapers. *Journal of English Scholars' Association of Nigeria*, 27(2), 121–136.
27. Taiwo, R. (2007). Language, ideology and power relations in Nigerian newspaper headlines. *Nebula*, 4(1), 218–245.
28. Triyono, S., Sahayu, W., & Fath, S. N. (2023). Ecological discourse and environmental education in English textbooks: A multimodal eco-critical discourse analysis. *3L, Language, Linguistics, Literature*, 29(3), 213–227.
29. van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach*. London: SAGE.
30. van Dijk, T. A. (2008). *Discourse and context: A socio-cognitive approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
31. van Dijk, T. A. (2014). Discourse–cognition–society: Current state and prospects of the socio-cognitive approach to discourse. In C. Hart & P. Cap (Eds.), *Contemporary critical discourse studies* (pp. 121–146). London: Bloomsbury.
32. Yuniawan, T., Urip, S. R., Seinsiani, I. G., Din, W. A., Swanto, S., & Ardi, H. (2023). Media Framing and COVID-19 Infodemic in News Headlines of Indonesian Online Newspapers. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 9(2), 19–32.
33. Zhang, T., Ladhak, F., Durmus, E., Liang, P., McKeown, K., & Hashimoto, T. B. (2024). Benchmarking large language models for news summarization. *Transactions of the Association for Computational Linguistics*, 12(1), 39–57.