

"GOD, OUR SECURITY!": AN INTERTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF INSECURITY DISCOURSE ON SELECTED WHATSAPP GROUP-MESSAGES

Samuel Olabode AJIBIYE, PhD.

*Department of Languages,
Yaba College of Technology,
Yaba, Lagos State.
samuel.ajibiye@yabatech.edu.ng*

Abstract

This study investigates intertextual configurations of insecurity discourse by selected WhatsApp group members on WhatsApp platforms in order to explore and explicate the sources group members rely on for the construal of insecurity texts. The study adopted a participant-observation and media-monitoring method of data collection. Data were retrieved from selected WhatsApp group platforms from January to June 2022. Thirty-six (36) research respondents, drawn across the three federal senatorial districts in Lagos, was duly informed, and consent granted. From the data collected, only twelve (12) security-related discourses were purposively selected for analysis. The study is undergirded by Fairclough's theoretical postulation on Critical Discourse Analysis, with a focus on intertextuality. Findings reveal that, through manifest intertextuality, group members inter-mixed insecurity discourse with political, historical and religious discourses. The study also reveals that group members' intertextual invocations are marked with scare tactics and self-distancing strategies. The scare tactics foregrounds doom saying while the self-distancing strategy enacts self as whistle-blowers. Self-protectionism is discursively exemplified through the concealment of self-identity and denial of self-involvement. The call for personal and collective prayers instantiates the religionization of insecurity events in Nigeria. Since there are fears for personal safety and public security in Nigeria, the study concludes that God is 'our' security.

Keywords: CDA, intertextuality, security discourse, social media discourse, WhatsApp,

Introduction

The primary statutory obligation of every democratic government is the provision of security to lives and properties. Such obligation is one of the anchors of a democratic nation's constitution. The provision of national security and personal safety is thus a social contract

between citizenry and state authorities. Interestingly, the provision of comprehensive security to state entities: individuals, communities, environments, economy and international systems impacts on the survival of a state (Buzan, *et al.* 1998; Hansen, 2006). Thus, protecting and securing the survival of state entities and identities is an ontological necessity for every democratic government. However, the dilemma of present times is that a self-assured security of lives and properties in Nigeria is still a mirage.

Frightening security events have consistently occurred in Nigeria in the last four years (i.e., 2019 - 2022) arising from economic inequalities, political differences, religious intolerance, violent extremism, social unrests, ethnic marginalization, tribal bigotry and sectional agitations. With failing security architecture in Nigeria, Nigerians and foreigners residing in the country have witnessed mind-blowing attacks and incendiaries. Since it is the constitutional right of citizens to demand more security from state authorities, the enactment of security discourse becomes a fertile ground for intellectual engagements (Huysmans 2008: 170).

The attention of scholars has been increasingly drawn to modern insecurity discourse, in recent times, due to globally terrifying security events such as the 9/11 terror attacks in the United States (2001), the 3/11 terror attacks in Madrid (2004), the 7/7 terror attacks in London (2005), the 26/11 terror attacks in Mumbai (2008), the 9/21 terror attacks in Kenya (2013), and the 14/4 terror attacks in Abuja, Nigeria (2014) (see Buzan *et al.* 1998; Slone, 2000; Laclau and Mouffe, 2001; Beck, 2002; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Hansen, 2006; Bigo and Tsoukala, 2008; Lippert and Wilkinson, 2010; Herschinger, 2011; Collins and McCombie 2012; Kroener, 2013; Abba, & Musa, 2015; Chiluwa, 2016). Investigating public texts and materials produced by agents of terrorism and media personnel, these scholars' research efforts focus on the strategic formations and chains of discourses that trigger and promote global terrorism and its frequency of occurrence. While Western scholars' attention is drawn to global terrorism, studies on insecurity in Nigeria have, similarly, piqued the interests of discourse scholars.

Security Discourse in Nigeria

Security is defined as the freedom from life-threatening risks and the partly absence of unwanted [harmful] events (Hansson, 2012; Aven, 2014). The definition suggests that (national) security is the assured absence of increased anxiety, persistent crimes, traumatic experiences of worsening violence and threats to life among a group of people living closely as a family, community, state or country. Since security is one of the basic needs of humans, the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Section fourteen, Sub-section two (b) says: "The *security* and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government." In

other words, governments and state authorities are the *primary-providers* of personal safety and national security. When the people are protected from internal (domestic) conflicts (i.e., civil disorder) and external aggressions, the country's identity and territorial integrity is maintained. However, what the Nigeria's Constitution says is a contradiction to what security discourses portray as reality in Nigeria in recent times.

Today, insecurity discourse in Africa has gained in significance due to a combination of amorphous security threats and increasing vulnerabilities. Besides, the 'War on Terror' narrative has given credence to insecurity discourse. Note that the preponderance of conflicts and crises across Africa is fueled by terrorism and violent ideologies. Sadly, terrorism has been accelerated by terrorist network groups such as *Boko Haram* and Islamic States of West Africa Province (ISWAP) in Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger Republic and Lake Chad (West Africa); *Al Shabab* in Kenya, Somalia and Sudan (East Africa); *Al-Qaeda* in Mali and Burkina Faso, and the Islamic Maghreb (i.e., parts of North Africa). These terrorist groups strategically organize and perpetuate the most vicious and horrendous acts which include intractable killings, coordinated suicide bombings, mindless violence, unimaginable destructions of properties, the proliferation of light and heavy weapons across Africa among other heinous activities.

The effects of terrorism in Nigeria have produced dire consequences, especially humanitarian crises such as domestic violence (i.e. spousal homicide), violent extremism (i.e. sporadic bombings of religious houses and massacre of worshippers), cattle herders-farmers clashes (i.e. invasion of farmlands and wanton destructions of farm produce), political violence (i.e. pre- and post-election crises), ritual killings (i.e. mass kidnappings and mutilating of human-body parts), social crimes (i.e. [highway] armed robbery and assassinations), Niger-Delta militancy (i.e. destruction of oil-producing facilities and kidnapping of expatriates), invasion of schools and abduction of schoolchildren, and separatist movements (i.e. pro-Biafran and Yoruba-republic agitations). These perennial conflicts and crises are so prevalent in Nigeria that Federal and State Governments are still struggling to contain them and negotiate peaceful resolutions within their geo-political spaces. These national insecurity issues therefore deserve some intellectual explorations, especially the role(s) of language use in the (de)escalation of such local conflicts and crises. For example, following the arrest of some members of the dreaded *Boko Haram* sect in Kano in 2011, the leader, late Ibrahim Yusuf, released a public statement 'threatening' the Nigerian government and security authorities that "[it is] a situation which we will not take lightly by the grace of Allah." Additionally, in an attempt to sustain the *oneness* of Nigeria, the Buhari-led government clamped down on promoters of secessionism and labeled

them “terrorists” as a tactical way of crippling their growing influences and delegitimizing their primary objectives, a situation that heightened security tensions in parts of Nigeria.

Interestingly, some discourse scholars have investigated how language resources had been deployed in the reportage of terrorism and conflicts in Nigeria. Such scholars have investigated the systemic functionality of language, discourse configurations and underlying ideological embellishments in local Nigerian newspaper reports on conflicts and terrorism. Using a critical discourse approach, Ayoola (2010) investigated ideological perspectives that laced the reportage of Niger-Delta activities by selected Nigerian newspapers. Using Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics, Igwebuike and Taiwo (2015) explored the transitivity system utilised in the representations of Bakassi-Peninsula conflict in selected Nigerian and Cameroon newspapers. Osisanwo (2016) examined the discourse strategies adopted in the representation of *Boko Haram* terrorism. Alfred and Taiwo (2019) investigated the matiation in editorial representations of selected Nigerian print-media organisations on terrorism in Nigeria. Chiluwa, Chiluwa and Igbinoba, (2022) analysed ideological posturing in news headlines on herder-farmer conflict in the Nigerian press. To the best of our knowledge, none of these studies focus attention on insecurity discourse on WhatsApp platforms in Nigeria, the critical exploration of discursive tactics of insecurity messages shared and forwarded by group members on selected WhatsApp group platforms is the lacuna filled by the present study.

Beyond the discursive space of news organizations, particularly news-print media, the discourse of insecurity issues is gaining increasing attention in social media interactions. Given the weak state security in Nigeria, users of WhatsApp group platforms, for instance, identify threats and discursively share personal safety strategies and public security measures in order to protect the lives of group members (including their ‘loved ones’), legitimizing group membership commitments. Thus, the present study is focused on how language resources are deployed by Nigerian-users of selected WhatsApp group platforms, to contain personal insecurity by suggesting personal safety measures, self-defense strategies and retaliatory techniques to group members.

Social Media Discourse in Nigeria: A Focus on WhatsApp

Globally, WhatsApp is one of the most widely-used mobile instant messaging (MIM) applications (Kartal, 2019). WhatsApp is a technology-based social media application that allows users to send and receive synchronised messages for personal, educational, institutional or religious purposes. The mobile communication application is an invention of Brian Acton and Jan Koum (Yeboah & Ewur, 2014). According to McKiernan (2016:32) “WhatsApp

affords its users the ability to send synchronously, in near real time, text messages, photos, videos, mapped geographic locations, voice messages and the contact details of others.” Unlike using traditional telephone calls, WhatsApp messaging thus provides a unique opportunity for its users to remotely use text messages, pictures, emojis, emoticons, voice notes, videos, stickers, and video (or conference) calls for the purpose of sharing knowledge, experiences and information. Besides, WhatsApp messaging is cheaper, reliable and efficient than phoning, especially when someone does not want to engage in a prolonged conversation. It also provides its users the privilege of creating an online group formation, known as WhatsApp groups.

WhatsApp groups are social media platforms, consisting of close-knit WhatsApp users who share common interests, ideologies, aspirations and concerns. The creation of a WhatsApp group platform is basically intended to facilitate information-sharing and knowledge-transmission among group members. For instance, a WhatsApp group can serve as a platform for academic purpose (i.e., delivery and receipt of online lectures), marketisation (i.e., online advertisement of products and services), online relationship maintenance (i.e., extended family or spousal relationships), social events (i.e., online political, economic, religious, cultural or educational groups), and online corporate relations (i.e., co-workers and business associates) among others. Thus, WhatsApp messaging has penetrated every facet of human lives.

In addition, WhatsApp groups constitute a social identity. The formation of group identities on WhatsApp is an act of social power in which the Group Admins discursively coordinate members’ online posts and daily interactions. Group Admins invariably construct group identities, and have the prerogative to determine what is discursively ‘good’ (i.e., socially acceptable) or ‘evil’ (i.e., socially unacceptable) for group members’ online interactions. Such group censorship, within the discursive space, is necessary to establish and foster smooth interpersonal relationships, and as a face-saving mechanism of group identities. Besides, the power mechanisms of membership inclusion and exclusion solely reside with Group Admins.

Interestingly, discursive engagements on WhatsApp groups bother on social themes such as political matters, economic vagaries, religious concerns, social events (i.e., festivities, ceremonies, funerals and celebrations), and security issues. Proffering solutions to continuing social problems facing group members, especially issues related to personal insecurity, is one of the recurrent discursive themes on WhatsApp groups in Nigeria. According to Huysmans (1998: 238), “People group together because of a fear of the power of other people to kill [and destroy], and because of the uncertainty about life.” Since there are no, assuredly, guaranteed security apparatus enacted by state security authorities to protect Nigerians from harmful events and untimely death, it must be invented. Consequently, group members share online messages

that discursively encourage adherence to personal safety protocols such as prompt response system, emergency measures, and countermeasures in the hope of dispelling imminent danger and protecting group members, including loved ones. Using critical discourse analysis as a theoretical basis, the present study thus explores the intertextual configurations in selected WhatsApp messages on the enactment of personal security by group members.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Discourse Analysis

The theoretical framework adopted for the present study is Fairclough's postulation on intertextuality as situated in critical discourse analysis (henceforth, CDA) (Fairclough, 1992a & b, 1995). CDA is concerned with how socio-cultural phenomena impinge on discursive practices. Suffice it to mention here that a critical discourse analyst is not interested in the linguistic components *per se*, but the underlying power structures, inequality, domination and ideological dispositions that embellish discursive structures. In so doing, Fairclough posits that CDA is intended "to explain existing conventions as the outcome of power relations and power struggle" (Fairclough 1989, p.2). A number of notable discourse scholars have come up with various models to explain the CDA paradigm such as the "Three-dimensional Model" led by Norman Fairclough (Fairclough, 1989); the "Socio-cognitive Model" by T. A. van Dijk and his group (van Dijk, 1991); the "Discourse-historical Approach" by Ruth Wodak (Wodak, 1996, 2001) to mention just a few. For the purposes of the present study, our focus is limited to Fairclough's critical concept of intertextuality.

Fairclough's Concept of Intertextuality

Bakhtin (1981, 1986) and Kristeva (1986) laid the fortuitous foundation for Fairclough's postulation of intertextuality (Ajibiye, 2019, p. 4). Though intertextuality as conceived by Bakhtin and Kristeva is centred on literary studies, Fairclough's conceptualisation of intertextuality focuses on non-literary texts and semiotic materials. According to Fairclough (1992a:270), the notion of intertextuality "points to how texts can transform prior texts and restructure existing conventions (genres and discourse) to generate new ones." This means that intertextuality focuses on how texts producers rely on the relationship that connects a text with prior texts in the constructs of new texts (Bauman, 2008; Hodsdon-Champeon, 2010; Ajibiye, 2019; Ellah, 2022).

Fairclough (1992a:85) classifies *intertextuality* into two related types, namely "manifest intertextuality" and "constitutive intertextuality." Manifest intertextuality is the explicit manifestation(s) or insertion(s) of prior textual elements in a new text(s) by text producers

(Ajibiye, 2019, p. 5). For instance, manifest intertextual is instantiated when a text producer makes an explicit reference to prior texts such as proverbial sayings, historical events, official document, published materials (i.e., media reports), notable quotes in order to emotionally connect the audience with a new text. Such precedent statements are intended for achieving emotive appeals and persuasions.

Since text producers incorporate other sources into their own texts, it is important to note that intertextuality is used for the purpose of endorsement, reinforcement, enhancement and cohesion of their own statements (Ellah, 2022, p. 12). Intertextuality is thus considered an appropriate analytic tool for the present study due to its intrinsic capacity to unpack the heterogeneity with which WhatsApp *forwarded* messages are dexterously embellished and construed by group members. Note that constitutive intertextuality is not within the purview of this study. Using manifest intertextuality, this paper investigates intertextual configurations of insecurity discourse by selected members on WhatsApp group platforms in order to explore and explicate the various sources group members rely on for constructing and construing insecurity texts and how they position themselves in relation to other sources to convey their views about unabated insecurity in Nigeria.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a participant-observation and media-monitoring method of data collection procedures. Data were retrieved from selected WhatsApp group platforms from January to June 2022, the year preceding 2023 general elections in Nigeria. The period was specifically chosen due to the intense security atmosphere, especially with the widespread reports of kidnapping for ransom, mindless killings and violence that characterized the first-half of year 2022. Sadly, (re)election-seeking government officials often shift their attention away from public insecurity to (re)election campaign sprees, abdicating their constitutional duties of protecting lives and property. Besides, pre-election years often climax political parties' quests for their respective choice flag bearers towards up-coming general elections, a situation that heightened security tensions across the country.

Lagos State is a melting pot of all tribes, ethnic nationalities and races with growing population over twenty million. Lagos State, dubbed as a Mega City, consists of three federal senatorial districts: Lagos West, Lagos East and Lagos Central. Since Lagos State consists of three federal senatorial districts, research respondents were drawn from the three senatorial districts. Twelve (12) respondents were drawn from each of the three federal senatorial districts, making thirty-six (36) respondents (i.e., 18 male and 18 female). Consequently, thirty-six (36) research

respondents, who are members of different WhatsApp group platforms, were duly informed about the purpose of the research, and consent granted. Each of the WhatsApp Groups comprises, approximately, between fifty (50) and two hundred (200) members. Group members relatively discuss, interrogate and share personal concerns and experiences about, interests in and views on national insecurity issues in Nigeria on their respective WhatsApp.

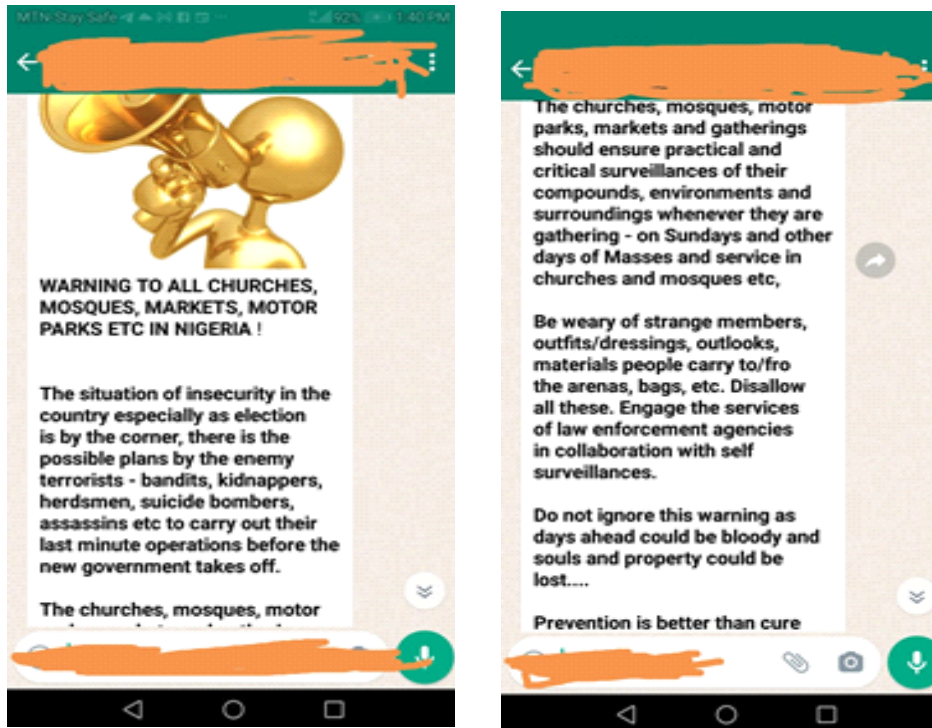
Since informed consent was granted, research respondents thus agreed to forward receive insecurity-related posts and messages by members of their respective WhatsApp platforms to the researchers' smart-phones from January to June, 2022. At the end of June, 2022, three hundred and forty-eight (348) insecurity-related posts and messages on WhatsApp were received. Only twenty-four (24) posts were unequivocally found to be without duplications, similar thematic focuses and unnecessary repetitions. In order to avoid being subjective in our judgment and selections, only *forwarded* messages that discursively emphasized scare mitigation, self-defense strategies and precautionary measures were purposively selected for analysis; hence, twelve (12) messages were chosen as data. Note that selected messages were anonymised. For instance, sensitive data and personal information were obliterated in order to protect the privacy of research respondents and group members, but message contents remain intact.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section focuses on the analysis of data collected, with reference to manifest intertextuality of WhatsApp group-messages. Due to space constraints, only eight excerpts were purposively collected and analysed. For reasons of space, the instantiation of intertextual insertions in the *forwarded* messages are first highlighted before the explication of instances of manifest intertextual configurations.

Scare Tactics: Scare tactics is creatively deployed when the intertextual insertions in WhatsApp *forwarded* messages are intended to draw the attention of target WhatsApp group members to imminent danger in a way that frightens them. Excerpts with scare tactics are presented and explicated below:

Excerpt 1:



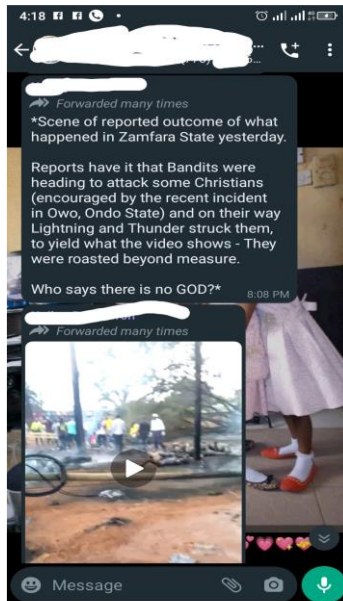
No doubt, the security architecture of Nigeria is failing. Spurred by gnawing insecurity of lives and properties, the netizen of excerpt 1 deploys manifest intertextuality of discourse representation (i.e. indirect speech reportage), which is exemplified in the in-text: "*There is the possible plans [sic] by the enemy terrorists – bandits, kidnappers, herdsmen, suicide bombers, assassins etc to carry out their last minutes operations before the new government takes off.*" The netizen is indirectly reporting the "possible [or secret] plans by the enemy terrorists" as a *warning* to encourage vigilance and caution among target WhatsApp group members. Using graphological emphasis as headline, target WhatsApp group members are encouraged through WhatsApp messaging to be vigilant in crowded places such as CHURCHES, MOSQUES, MARKETS and MOTOR PARKS in NIGERIA as such places are flashpoints. Scare tactics is explicitly foregrounded in the penultimate paragraph: "*Do not ignore this warning as days ahead could be bloody and souls and property could be lost...*" Note that the intertextual insertion of the popular healthcare quotation: "Prevention is better than cure" is intended to warn target WhatsApp group members of the increasingly tensed security situations in Nigeria.

Excerpt 2



Okada is a popular commercial motorcycle found across major cities, towns and villages in Nigeria. Due to the gnawing traffic situations on Lagos roads, Okada riding for commercial purposes is prevalent in Lagos State. In excerpt 2, the netizen uses manifest intertextuality of discourse representation (i.e., indirect speech reportage), which is demonstrated in the in-text: *"Lagos State Government has given 1st June, 2022, as the take-off date of Okada riders ban in most parts of Lagos metropolis. Because of this the Okada riders mostly the Northern Okada riders have declared civil disobedience on that day to protest against the ban."* Since civil protests in Nigeria are often characterized by violence and destruction of public property, the indirect speech report is intended to *warn* Lagos residents about the "danger looming." The centralized skull and crossbones that accompany the text visually accentuate the associated threat. Consequently, the netizen politely recommends self-isolation in the expression: *"Please stay indoors or [only go to] a walking distance to your homes that day to avoid being victims."* The term: "please" is a strategy to appeal to would-be defaulters. Note the use of negative tagging: *"The Northern youths have sworn to go on a rampage that day"* to raise WhatsApp group members' apprehension and encourage compliance. The negative tagging associates 'the Northern youth' with mayhem during civil protests. Using the hashtag: #mayGodhelpus [Nigerians] explicitly inter textualises the netizen's religious ideology, which acknowledges God's (divine) intervention in insecurity events in Nigeria.

Excerpt 3:



Attacks on Christians have been on the rise in Nigeria in recent times. One of such attacks is the Owo massacre on Sunday 5th June, 2022 in which worshippers were attacked and killed by unknown gunmen during congregational service at St. Francis Catholic Diocese, Owaluwa, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria. In excerpt 3, the netizen uses manifest intertextuality of discourse representation (i.e., indirect speech reportage), which is exemplified in the in-text: "*Reports have it that Bandits were heading to attack some Christians (encouraged by the recent incident in Owo, Ondo State) and on their way Lightning and Thunder struck them, to yield what the video shows – they were roasted beyond measure.*" Quoting the 'Reports' is intended to intertextually connect the netizen's claim: "encouraged by the recent incident in Owo, Ondo State" with the reported incineration of human bodies by "lightning and thunder." The video showing incinerated human bodies scattered around the centre of a road is prefaced with the rhetorical question: "*Who says there is no God?*" Connecting the incineration with the "power of God" (i.e. lightning and thunder) legitimises the netizen's religious ideology – lightning and thundering is capable of incinerating evil doers (i.e. bandits) attacking Christians. The rhetorical question is intended to re-enact what the Bible says: "*The Lord thundered in heavens, and the Most High uttered His voice, hailstones and coals of fire. He sent out His arrows and scattered the foe, lightning and vanquished them*" (Psalms 18:13-14, NKJ). Thus, the rhetorical question reinforces the netizen's religious belief in the existence of God, who administers a just retribution for human actions.

Excerpt 4:

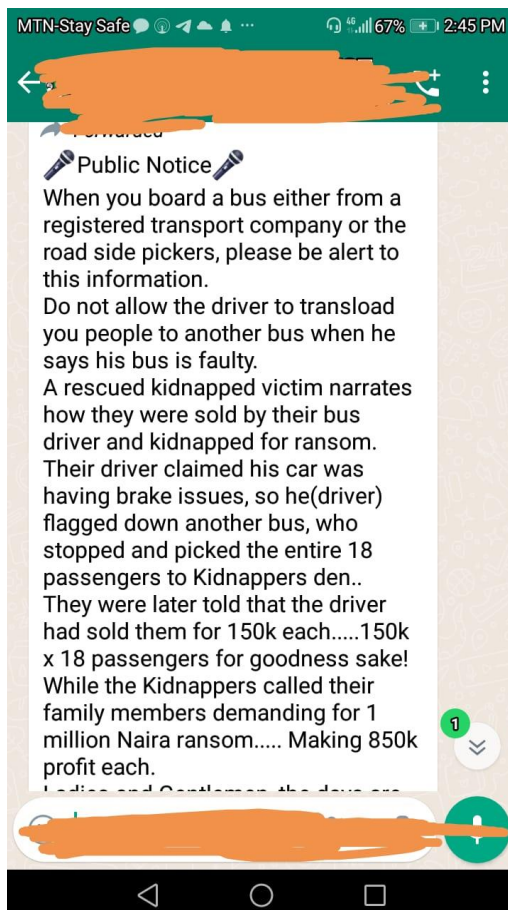


There is a shocking surge in kidnapping for ritual killings in Nigeria. Media reports reveal how some Nigerians, including avaricious young people, engage in money-making rituals, that require the decapitation of human body parts. Similarly, some older generation of Nigerians, especially desperate political elites seeking 'spiritual power', involve in ritual killings (i.e., dripping blood of dead humans) as major requirements for oath-swearing at shrines and self-fortification against political enemies. In excerpt 4, the netizen uses presupposition in the expression: "*The number of undocumented missing persons is unbelievably high. Kidnapping for rituals is at the highest and these evil guys have devised various and very intelligent unsuspecting ways of abducting people... Be careful with friends (even close friends), relatives and strangers wholly.*" This expression presupposes that the increasing number of missing persons is unknown and "even (close) friends and relatives" are agents of kidnappers and ritual killers. The presupposed proposition implicitly cued in the new text is that ritual killers allegedly lure and kidnap their victims through close friends, relatives as well as strangers. This shared knowledge is inserted in the new text to justify the necessity of self-vigilance to danger, especially in the company of close friends and relatives. Target readers, especially WhatsApp group members, are thus advised on self-protective measures in the expression: "*Guard your drinks, cup and food at all times, never continue with your drink or food after it has been out of your sight for even a second. Do this always & everywhere even if you are with your very close friends, colleagues and relatives.*" The call for personal prayers is a strategy that explicitly

enacts the netizen's religious ideology and legitimises the claim that: "WE ARE CURRENTLY IN VERY VERY DANGEROUS TIMES." The netizen's deliberate choice of the first-person plural pronominal: 'We' is instructive: a positive portrayal of *us* (i.e., the netizen and target WhatsApp group members) as good people with noble intentions, but living "*currently in very very dangerous times*" in which the number of missing persons is increasing.

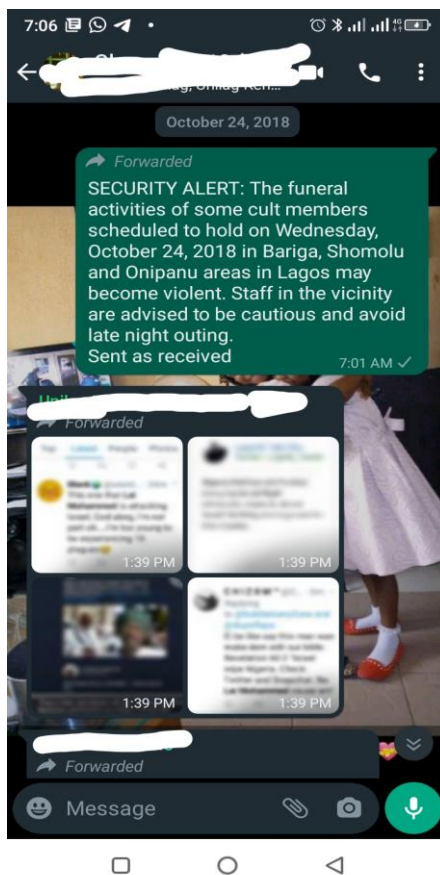
Self-distancing Strategy: Self-distancing strategy occurs when a WhatsApp user imports intertextual insertions in WhatsApp *forwarded* messages in a way that explicitly or implicitly dissociates self-involvement (i.e., identity) in the text. For instance, when a netizen employs an indirect discourse representation, such discursive act signals self-distancing, as a face-saving mechanism or threat mitigation. Excerpts with self-distancing strategy are presented and analysed below:

Excerpt 5:



In the netizen's indirect speech reportage in excerpt 5, he or she uses hashtag: '#copied' in order to intertextually establish self-distancing from the WhatsApp group-message content. Self-distancing is a discourse strategy adopted by text producers to dissociate personal involvement and maintain positive self-image. In addition, it may be a face-saving strategy since the government does not provide adequate public security. Besides, personal safety may be compromised when certain leaked information – that does not sit well with the current administration – is linked to an individual (i.e. the sender).

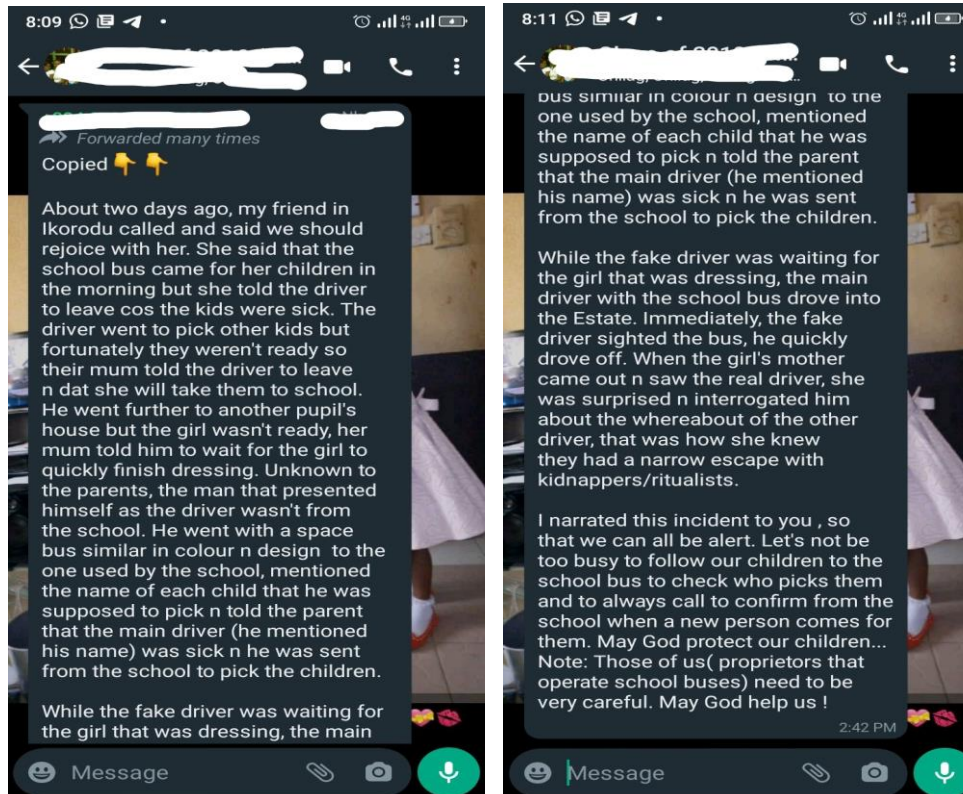
Excerpt 6:



Since social media has instantaneous and widespread visibility, some social media users often use a common expression: “copied” and “sent as received” to disguise their personal involvement in the construction of the discursive event. In excerpt 6, the netizen uses such expression: “*Sent as received*” to intertextually legitimise self-distancing in relation to the WhatsApp group-message. In other words, there is no alteration to the WhatsApp group-message. Such self-distancing strategy is specifically necessary to reinforce the culpable denial

of any inadvertent alteration(s) to the *forwarded* message. In a nation where insecurity remains a major concern, the netizen thus projects himself or herself as a ‘sender’ of a security-related message as received. Note that the netizen fails to reveal the message-source, a strategy of hiding and protecting the identity of the text-producer.

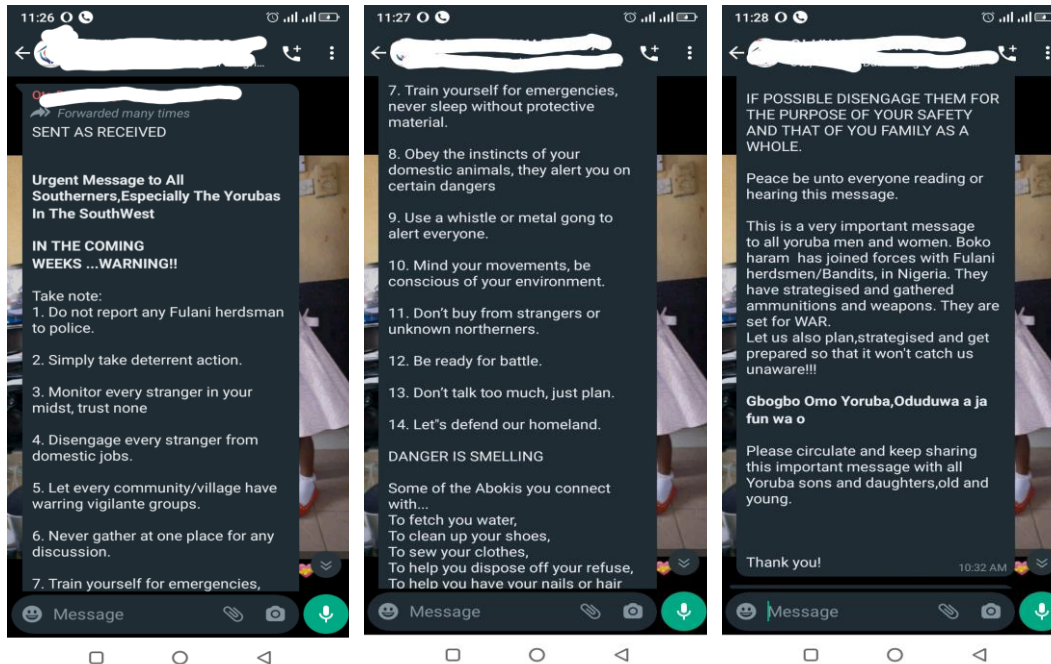
Excerpt 7:



Using the word: “copied” at the beginning of a social media text is a strategy of personal exoneration from self-indictment. In excerpt 7, the netizen quickly exonerates him-self or herself from the incidents that occurred in the story being retold. For instance, from the story, the netizen uses indirect speech reportage in the expression: “*About two days ago, my friend in Ikorodu called and said we should rejoice with her. She said that...*” Since the story is prefaced with ‘Copied’, the narrator is the whistle-blower indirectly reporting the voice of the reported (i.e. my friend in Ikorodu), whose ‘girl’ narrowly escaped a kidnap attempt. In the last paragraph, the unidentified narrator justifies the reason for the indirect speech reportage as thus: “*I narrated this incident to you so that we can all be alert [sic].*” In so doing, the narrator uses

the word 'copied' in order to intertextually distant self from any active involvement in the narrated incident. In other words, it was merely copied and pasted as reported.

Excerpt 8:



From the above excerpt, the netizen uses the caption: "SENT AS RECEIVED" to intertextually re-echo the voice of the (unspecified) author, who composed the WhatsApp message. In other words, the netizen is merely re-presenting what was 'received'. In terms of indirect discourse re-presentation, the expression: 'sent as received' illustrates the voice of the whistle-blower (i.e., 'sender') not the author, who itemises self-defense strategies and safety measures to those living in the Southwest, predominantly the Yoruba. Thus, 'sent as received' is not only employed to dissociate Self from any form of personal involvement in the reported insecurity claim, but also as a discursive form of self-protectionist strategy.

Discussion of Findings

From the analysis of data collected, the WhatsApp group messages feature both direct and indirect discourse representations of scary situations in the country. The messages are explicitly and implicitly built on shared knowledge of religious beliefs (i.e. religion) and past events (i.e. history). For instance, expressions such as "*We can only continue to pray that...*"; "*Who says there is no God?*"; "*...encouraged by the recent incident in Owo, Ondo State*" and "*A rescued*

kidnapped victim narrates how they were sold by their bus driver..." reveal a hybridization of religious and historical discourse that enacts personal safety strategies and public security measures.

There is the preponderant use of scare tactics in WhatsApp group messages on insecurity occurrences in Nigeria. Such intertextual insertions are intended to make target group members adopt and sustain particular safety measures, in a nation with failing security architecture. Scare-laden expressions such as *"Please stay indoors or [only go to] a walking distance to your homes that day to avoid being victims."*; *"About two days ago, my friend in Ikorodu called and said we should rejoice with her. She said that..."* and *"and moreover, no level of justice can bring you back to life"* are intended to cause fear or alarm target readers. Since safety is everybody's business, target group members are encouraged to learn from the 'past' experiences of others in order to make informed decisions about their own safety and the security of loved ones.

In addition, the analysis also reveals the frequent use of intertextual configurations that implicitly enact self-distancing. Such self-distancing is aptly captured in some expressions: "SENT AS RECEIVED"; "copied" and "#copied". Using these expressions foregrounds personal dissociation from the reported incidents. Thus, the expressions portray netizens as whistle-blowers!

The online call for personal and collective prayers tactically projects the religionization of insecurity occurrences in Nigeria as an act of God. In other words, some Nigerians hold the religious belief that security of lives and property can, in helpless situations, be transferred to God when government fails to provide adequate security of lives and property. Drawing further from religious discourse thus reveals that one can only hope to be protected by God in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study is carried out to unpack the underlying ideological leanings in WhatsApp group messages. Using Fairclough's conceptual postulations of manifest intertextuality, there is the frequent genre-mixture of history and religion discourse on insecurity on WhatsApp group messages in Nigeria. The study demonstrates how the constellations of various texts indexed the perspectives of self and other-protection in online group-members' interactions. It is therefore argued that the deployment of language resources on social media technology, especially WhatsApp, has helped to shape users' perceptions about insecurity by mitigating pervasive scare and facilitating the containment of personal insecurity.

References

- Ajibiye, S. O. (2019). An Intertextual Analysis of Inter-party Presidential Debates in Nigeria (2011 and 2015) – A Critical Perspective. In *Journal of Language and Literary Studies*. (LARES), Vol. 19 (1), 1-20.
- Abba, T. S. & Musa, N. (2015). Speech Acts Analysis of *Daily Trust* and *The Nation* Newspapers' Headline Reports on Boko Haram. *Journal of Communication and Culture*, 6(1), 63–72.
- Alfred, B. & Taiwo, R. (2019). Framing and Perspectives: Exploring the Rhetorical Functions of Thematic Choices in Nigerian Editorials on Terrorism in Nigeria. *Ghana Journal of Linguistics (JLAG)*, 8(1), 42-59.
- Aven, T. (2014). What is Safety Science? *Safety science*, 67, 15-20.
- Ayoola, K. (2010). The Presentation of Ideological Perspectives on Niger-Delta Discourse in Nigerian Newspapers. *Journal of the Nigeria English Studies Association (JNES)*, 13(1), 17-32.
- Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination*. Austin: University of Texas Press. Bakhtin, M. (1986). *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Balzacq, T. (2005). The Three Faces of Securitisation: Political Agency, Audience and Context. *European Journal of International Relations* 11 (2), 171-201.
- Bauman, R. (2008). Introduction: Genre, Performance, and the Production of Intertextuality. Retrieved 22nd May, 2022 from <https://www.blackwellpublishing.com>
- Beck, U. (2002). The Terrorist Threat. World Risk Society Revisited. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 19(4), 39–55.
- Bigo, D. & Tsoukala, A. (2008). Understanding (In)security. In D. Bigo and A. Tsoukala (eds), *Terror, Insecurity and Liberty: Illiberal Practices of Liberal Regimes after 9/11*. New York: Routledge.
- Buzan, B, Wæver, O. & Wilde, J. D. (1998). *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. London: Lynne Rienner.
- Chiluwa, I. (2016). The Discourse of Terror Threats: Assessing Online Written Threats by Nigerian Terrorist Groups. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 40, 318–338.
- Chiluwa, I., Chiluwa, I. M. & Igbinoba, A. O. (2022). “Herders Are Terrorists”: Analysing News Headlines on the Herder-farmer Conflict in the Nigerian Press. In Chiluwa I. (ed.) *Discourse, media and conflict*, (pp. 69-92). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Collins, S. & McCombie, S. (2012). Stuxnet: The Emergence of a New Cyber Weapon and its Implications. *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, 7(1), 80–91.
- Ellah, S. M. (2022). Intertextuality in Political Discourse: A Study of President Mohammadu Buhari's 2015 Inaugural Speech. In *Journal of Languages, Linguistics and Literary Studies (JOLLS)* Vol. 11 (1), 9-17.
- Fairclough, N. (1989) *Language and Power*. London: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. L. (1992a). (ed.) *Critical Language Awareness*. London: Longman Group.
- Fairclough, N. L. (1992b). Text and Context: Linguistic and Intertextual Analysis within Discourse Analysis.” In *Discourse and Society*. Vol. 3 (2). pp. 193-217.
- Fairclough, N. L. (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The critical study of language*. Harlow, UK: Longman Group.

- Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Tavistock Publications. Hansen, L. (2006). *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*. New York: Routledge.
- Hansson, S. O. (2012). Safety is an Inherently Inconsistent Concept. *Safety science*, 50(7), 1522-1527.
- Herschinger, E. (2011). *Constructing Global Enemies: Hegemony and Identity in International Discourses on Terrorism and Drug Prohibition*. New York: Routledge.
- Hodsdon-Champeon, C. (2010). Conversations within Conversations: Intertextuality in Racially Antagonistic Online Discourse. *Language @ Internet*, 7.
- Huysmans, J. (1998). Security! What do you Mean?: From Concept to Thick Signifier. *European Journal of International Relations*, 4 (2), 226-255.
- Igwebuike, E., & Taiwo, R. (2015). Representation of Bakassi Peninsula Conflict in Nigeria and Cameroon Print Media: A Critical Discourse Approach. *Linguistikonline* 73, 4(15), 29-45.
- Kartal, G. (2019). What's up with WhatsApp? A Critical Analysis of Mobile Instant Messaging Research in Language Learning. *International Journal of Contemporary Educational Research*, 6(2), 352-365. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33200/ijcer.599138>
- Kristeva, J. (1986). Word, Dialogue and Novel. In Moi, T. (Ed.) *The Kristeva Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Ltd, pp. 34-61
- Kroener, I. (2013). 'Caught on Camera': The Media Representation of Video Surveillance in Relation to the 2005 London Underground Bombings. *Surveillance & Society*, 11(1/2), 121-133.
- Laclau, E. & Mouffe, C. (2001). *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. (2nd ed.). New York: Verso.
- Lippert, R. & Wilkinson, B. (2010). Capturing Crime, Criminals and the Public's Imagination: Assembling Crime Stoppers and CCTV Surveillance. *Crime, Media, Culture*, 6(2), 131-152.
- Norris, P., Kern, M. & Just, M. R. (Eds.) (2003). *Framing Terrorism*. New York: Routledge. Osisanwo, A. (2016). Discursive Representation of Boko Haram Terrorism in Selected Nigerian newspapers. *Discourse and Communication*, 1-22.
- Slone, M. (2000). Responses to Media Coverage of Terrorism. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 44(4), 508-522.
- The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*. van Dijk, T. (1991) *Racism and the Press*. London: Routledge.
- Wodak, R. (1996) *Disorders of Discourse*. London: Longman. Wodak, R. (2001) The Discourse-historical Approach. In R. Wodak and M. Meyer (eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage, pp. 63-95.
- Yeboah, J., & Ewur, G. D. (2014). The Impact of WhatsApp Messenger Usage on Student's Performance in Tertiary Institutions in Ghana. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5, (6), 157-164.