

## Discourse Issues in Nigerian Media Reportage of Pro-Biafra Protests in Selected newspapers

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### Abstract

*This study examines the discourse issues in the reportage of the 2015 and 2016 pro-Biafra protests in selected Nigerian newspapers. Previous studies on the reportage of protest have examined the representational and discursive strategies as well as the ideological inclinations in news reports, leaving the discourse issues in the protest understudied. The study therefore examines the discourse issues represented in the 2015 and 2016 pro-Biafra protest presented in selected Nigerian newspapers. Data for the study were news reports purposively drawn from four widely circulated Nigerian national dailies, The Punch, The Nation, The Sun and Vanguard newspapers which allocate sufficient space to the coverage of the protests. The period covered was between 2015 and 2016, a period when the protests were prominently reported in the country. Ruth Wodak's Discourse Historical approach to Critical Discourse Analysis and M.A.K Halliday's Transitivity model of Systemic Functional Linguistics served as the theoretical framework of the study. The data were subjected to critical discourse analysis. The discourse issues identified include marginalisation of the Igbo, worsening economic situation, human rights abuse, injustice, corruption and unemployment*

*Keywords:* discourse issues, pro-Biafra protests, Nigerian newspapers, Indigenous People of Biafra

### Background to the study

In October 2015, Nigeria began to witness a prolonged widespread wave of protests beginning in the East, a region occupied predominantly by the Igbo. The protest quickly spread to other parts of the country, having its toll on economic activities in the country and attracting a lot of attention both nationally and internationally. The protest took different forms as it spread to other parts of the world, especially in major cities of the world in continents like North America, Asia and Europe. The protest can be said to have arisen out of fresh feelings of nationalism and solidarity amongst the Igbo, especially amongst Igbo youths, who were calling for an independent nation – Biafra, because they were supposedly being marginalised in the affairs of Nigeria. Biafra had first been conceived prior to an attempt by the Easterners to secede from Nigeria in 1967 out of what they perceived then as the oppression and

marginalisation of the Igbo (Falola and Heaton, 2008). When Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of IPOB (Indigenous People of Biafra) and director of Radio Biafra was arrested and detained by security operatives in Nigeria in September, 2015, despite having been tried and granted bail, it sprung up reactions and made for grave nationalistic feelings amongst the Igbo. Pro-Biafra protesters took to the streets in their numbers to protest Kanu's continued detention. The protest however later escalated to more intense agitation against what was perceived as marginalisation against the Igbo in Nigeria and fresh demands for secession from the country.

The protest subsequently made the headlines of newspapers both within and outside Nigeria. Newspapers and the news media in general, have represented and constructed the agitation in different ways. This difference in the construction of events, as Fowler (1991) observes, is what makes news reportage hardly objective; the news media would often subtly constitute viewpoints and opinions about what is being reported. According to Fowler, the language of the news media is not neutral as it often surreptitiously reflects the opinions and the worldviews of reporters. This is invariably why different media houses would often present or construct the same events or issues from different perspectives and standpoints. This, in turn, affects and influences people's opinion, attitude and value judgement about the issues being reported.

Hence, only a systematised and objective enquiry into the language of news reportage can reveal these nuances in the language of news reportage and identify the linguistic means that have been used to conceal certain elements of 'subjectiveness' and ideology in the news. The study therefore examines the discourse issues constructed in the reportage of the protest. Given the enormous influence that the news media wield through the number of people that rely on it for information, it is pertinent that a study such as this interrogates how events are represented and constructed in the news.

### **Construction of protests in the media**

The news media has reported different social issues, including protests, in the media in different ways. Some of such issues have addressed electoral issues; crime-related issues, insurgency, and so forth (see Chiluwa, 2011a, 2011b; Osisanwo, 2013, 2016; Oyeleye and Osisanwo 2013a, 2013b). The news media have reported issues relating to protest. The construction of protest has been subjected to different scholarly examinations by Nigerian and other international scholars. Lee and Craig (1992), for instance, study US newspapers' representa-

tion of civil action in South Korea and Poland as represented in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal*. Similarly, Wang (1993) studies how ideologically opposed newspapers report the same news by comparing and contrasting how American and Chinese press represent the failed 1991 Soviet coup. Also, Fang (1994) examines rhetorical strategies such as lexical and syntactic choices in reporting civil actions employed by mainland China's official newspaper *Renmin Ribao* (The People's daily). Like Lee and Craig (1992), Fang discovers that how conflicts in foreign countries are represented or labelled depends largely on China's policy towards these countries and their governments. Countries that are favourably disposed to China's policy are positively represented while the opposite is the case when the country being reported is at loggerheads with China.

Like previous works, Fang (2001) studies how two ideologically opposed newspapers, namely mainland China's mouthpiece, *The People's Daily* and Taiwan's KMT newspaper, The Central Daily News, represent the civil unrest in South Africa and Argentina. Hall (2011) also studies how UK broadsheet newspapers (*The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian* and *The Times*) represent students' protest in the planned increase in University tuition fees in the UK in November, 2010. Hall observes that the language of reporting the protest in the newspapers contained speech acts. These speech acts are identified as informing, deliberating and witnessing. The speech acts are observed to have influenced the tone of the articles in each of the newspapers and reflect their political leanings.

In Nigeria, Egbunike (2015) studies newspapers and social media reports of the protests that emanated from government's removal of subsidy on premium motor spirits in Nigeria. The study examines the frames used by both media in framing the protest. Egbunike identifies 'motivation', 'diagnosis' and 'prognosis' as the three 'collective action frames building tasks proposition' of the framing theory which were all utilised in the data analysed. Egbunike discovered, as reflected from his data (three national newspapers – *Nigerian Tribune*, *The Guardian* and *The Punch*, as well as social media samples – the #OccupyNigeria Facebook page, blog posts, conversations in Nairaland and Twitter) that newspapers' framing of the motivation, diagnosis and prognosis of the protest was better and their narration of the protest more heterogeneous, hence, making newspapers better contributors to the discourse of the #OccupyNigeria protest than the social media. However, Egbunike posits that the relationship between the social media and the news media is imbalanced, as the media often distort the message of movements. This asymmetrical de-

pendency, as he observes, 'is seen in mass media preference for catchy headlines which promotes the deviant behaviour of protesters'.

Mitu (2015) studies how the online news media framed international protests. Choosing the Romanian news website – *hotnews.ro* – as a case study, he examines how different protests – the Egyptian protests at Tahir square in Cairo, the protests at Taksim square in Istanbul, the Indignant movement in different countries and the Indignant movement that led to the Occupy Wall Street movement - are represented online. Mitu's study is however clearly not representative enough as it becomes difficult to generalize or reach a reasonable conclusion based on only one arbitrarily sampled online news media outlet. Ajayi and Bamgbose (2019), in a similar manner, studying ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria, examine online agitation for the release of Nnamdi Kanu in 2015. Their study reveals how linguistic tools are employed by different groups online to construct identities and perception about others. Ajayi and Bamgbose discovered that Kanu's supporters show optimism about the realisation of the Biafran State. Kanu's supporters also have a negative construction of Nigeria and her people.

The current study differs from previous studies in that it examines the discourse issues in the construction and representation of the 2015 and 2016 Biafra protest in news reports which has hardly been researched. This is perhaps because the protest is a very recent development in Nigeria.

## Methods

Data for the study were news reports purposively drawn from four widely circulated Nigerian national dailies, *The Punch*, *The Nation*, *The Sun* and *Vanguard* newspapers which allocate sufficient space to the coverage of the protests. The period covered was between 2015 and 2016, a period when the protests were prominently reported in the country.

### 4. Ruth Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach to CDA

The Discourse-historical approach of Wodak (1996, 2001) was advocated by the Vienna School and it has its focus on the impact of historical socio-political contextual factors since the 1980s. Here, the importance of context to meaning cannot be overemphasized. Attention is given to the contribution of non-verbal aspects of texts, that is, semiotic devices. Also, texts are not just to inform us of some reality, they, in addition, construct the reality (Dijk 1985). In the discourse-historical approach, discourse is seen as structured forms of knowledge and the memory of social practice, while text refers to concrete oral utterances or written documents (Reisigl & Wodak 2001). CDA, therefore,

aims at revealing the sources of dominance and inequality observed in the society by analyzing texts, whether written or spoken. It is to find the discursive strategies utilized to construct or maintain such inequality or bias in different contexts (Rashidi and Souzandehfar 2010).

Ruth Wodak's discourse historical approach (DHA) (Reisgl and Wodak, 2009; Wodak, 2001; 2009) is anchored on the Vienna school of discourse analysis which has its roots in Bernstein's sociolinguistic approach (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Wodak, 1996) 'as well as within the philosophical and sociological tradition of Critical theory' (Wodak and Reisgl, 2009). According to Wodak, when analyzing historical and political text, the discourse historical approach dwells largely on the historical background of discourse events. The approach 'integrates and triangulates knowledge about historical sources and the background of the social and political fields within which discursive events are embedded' (Wodak, 2009: 38.)

The following layers of context are taken into consideration in the systematic quantitative analysis in discourse historical analysis (DHA).

- i. The intertextual and interdiscursive relationships between utterances, texts, genres and discourses;
- ii. The extra-linguistic social/sociological variables;
- iii. The history and archaeology of texts and organizations; and
- iv. The institutional frames of the specific context of a situation (Wodak, 2009: 38)

This, according to Wodak, would help one to understand how discourses, genres and texts change due to socio-political contexts. Wodak (2009:8) opines that CDA investigates 'authentic everyday communication in institutional, media, political or other locations rather than on sample sentences or sample texts constructed in linguists' minds'.

CDA will be used to account for how the protest is represented in the newspapers. The discourse issues in the reports as represented in the linguistic content of these newspapers will be studied.

##### **5. Discourse issues in the 2015 and 2016 pro-Biafra protest**

According to Wodak (2001), discourse issues are key issues or thematic pre-occupations embedded in discursive events. When analyzing texts, the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) dwells largely on the background of discourse events. In the DHA approach to CDA, it is held that for a proper investigation of discursive events, there has to be an integration and triangulation of

“knowledge about historical sources and the background of the social and political fields within which discursive events are embedded’ (Wodak, 2009: 38).

The identification of discourse issues in text helps to espouse the representation and projected ideologies concealed in them, and this is what makes DHA socially constituted as well as socially constitutive. In the news items examined, six discourse issues stand out as identified. They include: marginalisation of the Igbo, worsening economic situation, human rights abuse, injustice, corruption and unemployment. The discourse issues in the representation of the 2015 and 2016 pro-Biafra protest in selected Nigerian newspapers are discussed subsequently.

### **Marginalisation of the Igbo**

The marginalisation of the Igbo, the alleged exclusion of the Ibos in the running of government and scheme of events in Nigeria, is a major discourse issue in the 2015 and 2016 pro-Biafra protest reported in Nigerian newspapers. The Igbo lament the perceived marginalisation they suffer not only in the distribution of resources but also in political office sharing in the nation. Important and strategic political offices are supposedly being ceded to the north and west while the south east is allotted less political offices. To the Igbo, the north and west are the first class citizens while the south east is in the second class tier in the distribution of political appointments. Let us examine the following excerpts:

#### **Excerpt 1:**

Fourthly, it is the believed marginalisation of “Biafrans” in the scheme of things in Nigeria...

For many of them, Biafra is just their rejection of every injustice they suffer, unemployment, marginalisation in high places, bad roads, lack of infrastructure, etc. Not only are we poorly represented in government, we are treated beggarly...

Other factors that have fuelled our agitation for Biafra are the slavery Nigerian government have subjected Ndigbo to, which includes economical, political, academic, religious, cultural and social slavery. Nigeria is a State, where others are first class citizens, but they treat the Igbo as second class citizens. This is a state, where others are born to rule, but treat the Igbo as perpetual outcasts. This is a state where state policies deliberately deny Igboland critical developmental infrastructure. —*The Vanguard* Nov 15, 2015, p .20

#### **Excerpt 2:**

Biafra: Igbo leaders want end to street protests

Lament politics of exclusion

Demand true federalism

No fewer than 60 prominent Igbo leaders met yesterday in Lagos where they called for an end to the ongoing pro-Biafra street protests in Nigeria.

The leaders noted that the alleged exclusion of the zone in the sharing of key political offices, informed the protests. —*The Sun* Dec 22, 2015. Pg 28

In excerpt 1, the major cause of the protest is the marginalisation of the Igbo. The marginalisation of Igbo is an important discourse issue in the discourse of the 2015 and 2016 pro-Biafra protest. The Igbo, as captured in ‘marginalisation of “Biafrans”’ were allegedly being marginalised in the political administration of the country. It was this perceived marginalisation, amongst other issues that led to a thirty-month civil war in Nigeria in 1967. The war led to the destruction of lives and properties, leading to the death of millions. The Igbo in Nigeria were not only poorly represented but regarded as ‘second class citizens’ as explicated in excerpt 1. The protest was a product of the perceived injustice meted out against the people from the region.

In the excerpt, this marginalisation is believed to be synonymous with slavery, and slavery, as shown in the excerpt is made manifest in social, political, academic, cultural and religious affairs. In the political scene, it is believed that there is lopsided appointment against people of Igbo extraction. This lop-sidedness was an apparent manifestation of marginalisation against the Igbo.

In excerpt 2, the perceived exclusion or marginalisation of the Igbo in the occupation of political offices was believed to have led to the protest. The Igbos were believed to have always been sidelined from occupying important political offices in the country. For instance, there has always been a debate about when a president will emerge from the Igbo speaking part of Nigeria.

#### **Worsening economic situation**

Another discourse issue that is recurrent in the representation of the 2015 and 2016 pro-Biafra protest is worsening economic situation prevalent in the country, a situation caused by bad management of the economy resulting in unfavourable living conditions for the citizenry and for business owners. The Federal Government of Nigeria, it is believed, as captured in the excerpt 2, has failed in its responsibility of delivering essential promises to Nigerians on economic issues as well as on social and infrastructural facilities. Nigerians have

hitherto lost faith in the government of the nation. There is also the proclivity of Nigerian politicians to become absolutely focused on lining their pockets with public fund when they get hold of power. This has resulted in a decline in the country's economy, consequently impoverishing the masses. David Cameron, former English Prime Minister was attributed to have said that if the amount of *money embezzled in Nigeria* in the last thirty years had been *stolen in the UK*, the *UK would have ceased to exist*. Let us consider the following excerpt:

**Excerpt 3:**

Governance failure at all levels has exacerbated the plight of these youths and supposed elders who have also lost their means of livelihood due to the precarious economic situation of the country. Lack of good governance had grossly accounted for the impoverishment of these jobless and unemployable youths and elders who ordinarily would have found succour as factory hands if we had attained significant industrial growth and development, even the unemployment rate among tertiary institution graduates has worsened the already bad situation. —*The Nation*, Thurs. Nov. 19, 2015, p. 16.

**Excerpt 4:**

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) representing Imo North, Senator Athan Achonu has attributed the on-going agitation for the realisation of Biafran state on worsening economic situation in the country. —*The Vanguard* Mon. Nov. 23, 2015, p. 7

The above excerpts show the adverse effects of government inability to perform its constitutional function. Apart from having a quite clueless government as claimed, the government also fails to provide employment for the jobless while those who had jobs were retrenched and government did nothing to salvage the situation. The outbreak of the protests as well as the protests' intensity has been attributed to the teeming population of underemployed and jobless youths in the country which is a direct product of bad economic choices made by the government. The failure on the part of government has made many people to lose their means of livelihood while the younger generations have nothing. This has also led to harsh economic life, attributed to bad economy. The country has also witnessed economic recession that led to massive retrenchment of workers such that these retrenched workers become nuisance to the nation. It has also crippled small scale businesses and multi-national companies. Job loss, amongst other issues has made the protest the last resort of the masses.

**Excerpt 5:**

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) representing Imo North, Senator Athan Achoru has attributed the on-going agitation for the realisation of the Biafran state on worsening economic situation in the country. —*The Vanguard* Mon.

Nov. 23, 2015, p. 7

The excerpts above attributed the failure of government to worsening economic situation in the country. Government failed because it could not judiciously manage the nation's economy. The fall in the price of petroleum which was the source of the nation's income had adverse effects on the people and the economy. With the worsening economy, government still pays lip-service to other sources of income. This neglect led to massive unemployment.

**Human rights abuses**

Human rights abuse, the denial of the fundamental and basic rights of an individual or individuals, is one of the discourse issues in the 2015 and 2016 pro-Biafra protests. Such rights include freedom of association, speech, movement, religion, life, and so on. In news reports on the 2015 and 2016 pro-Biafra protests, human rights abuse was prevalent. The instances of abuse are exemplified below:

**Excerpt 6:**

MASSOB people wanted to do anniversary, a peaceful protest; no gun, no machete, a non-violent one for that matter; they were descended upon and 12 of them were mowed down and many injured. Now one of them went under the Freedom of Information Act, freedom of expression and he is caught, detained, tortured and eventually bailed. Then, people are protesting his detention, and I was told the protest turned bloody. Not that the protesters attacked anybody, but that those who are supposed to protect them turned the weapons against them. That is not the kind of Nigeria we want. —*The Sun*

Wed. Nov. 18, 2015 Pg 27

From excerpt 7, it is apparent that there was perceived gross human rights violation of the protesters who were supposedly peaceful in the protest. In fact, it is evident from the reports that the protesters were non-violent, peaceful and calm. They carry out their activities within the confines of the law. They do not have in their possession dangerous weapons because they are not terrorists or militants. The police who are constitutionally supposed to protect and safeguard their lives have invariably turned against them. The police were allegedly reported to have shot at the protesters. The protesters were also allegedly attacked with teargas canisters, leading to the death of some protesters.

Here, the police were projected as serial killers, killing many protesters. This is apparently the zenith of human rights abuse. Some protesters, as it seems, were then illegally prosecuted for conducting themselves within the ambit of the law. This situation is equally illustrated in excerpt 8, 9 and 10:

**Excerpt 7:**

Two pro-Biafra protesters were on Tuesday feared killed by purported stray bullets from the police after thousands of youths trekked about 40 kilometres from Aba to Port Harcourt in protest against the continued detention of the Director of Radio Biafra, Nnamdi Kanu. —*Punch*, Wed. Nov. 11, 2015 Pg 21

**Excerpt 8:**

The police have arrested 22 members of the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra and those of the Indigenous People of Biafra in some parts of the country. The police (sayer) said four suspects were apprehended in Anambra, six in Imo, 11 in Delta and one in Abia State. —

*Punch* Tue. Nov. 17, 2015

**Excerpt 9:**

Anambra Commissioner of Police, Mr Hosea Karma, confirmed the arrest of the protesters, saying it was because they were parading along the Enugu-Onitsha expressway thereby causing breach of peace. According to the CP, “there is nothing like Indigenous People of Biafra. Those people constituted nuisance on the high way and that was why they were picked. —*Vanguard*, Wed, Oct 21, 2015, p. 14

Excerpt 8 deploys the use of passivisation to foreground the number of people the police allegedly killed. This strategy aims to condemn the activities of the Nigerian Police Force as inimical and inhuman. The circumstantial element “on Tuesday” ascertains and confirms the originality of the news because the news reports could not authoritatively reveal the identity of the police officers that committed the heinous crime. The circumstantial element “from the police” was also deployed because the news could not authoritatively say the police killed two pro-Biafra protesters. This is another tactical approach to avoid another social unrest because the killing of two protesters attributed to the Nigeria police could incite another social unrest.

In excerpt 9, the behavioural process is tactically used to bring to prominence the activities of the Nigerian police who arrested twenty-two suspected members of MASSOB and IPOB. The verbal process in the last excerpt authenticates the information of the protesters’ arrests by the police. The police

deploy the strategy of mitigation to reduce the mental and social effects of the “arrests”. Other strategies used are aggregation and functionalization. The deployment of aggregation and functionalization strategies was to condemn the activities of the Nigerian police.

It is apparent that the rights of the protesters are violated. This is against international practices. The police are supposed to protect lives and properties. In Nigeria, as can be insinuated from the reports, the reverse is the case. They use live ammunitions to disperse angry youths leading to loss of lives. It reflects the deliberate infringement on people's right and this does not augur well for a evolving democracy like Nigeria's.

### **Injustice**

Injustice is another discourse issue in the 2015 and 2016 pro-Biafra protest. It is the major cause of the protest. The rights of the protesters were violated through imprisonment, illegal arrests, inequality, inequity, unfairness, political discrimination and so on. The easterners believed they were discriminated against. They suffer untold hardships. In the political landscape, as mentioned earlier, an easterner has never occupied the position of President of Nigeria, and thus, the Igbo were regarded as third class citizens in Nigeria. Now let us exemplify excerpts explicating injustice in the discourse of the 2015 and 2016 pro-Biafra protests:

#### **Excerpt 10:**

For many of them, Biafra is just their rejection of every injustice they suffer, unemployment, marginalisation in high places, bad roads, lack of infrastructure, etc. Not only are we poorly represented in government, we are treated beggarly. —*The Vanguard* Nov 15, 2015. Pg 20

From excerpt 10, it is clear that apart from hunger and unemployment, injustice is another discourse issue prevalent in the discourse of the 2015 and 2016 pro-Biafra protest. Despite the fact that the easterners are very industrious and contribute enormously to the nation's wealth, they still suffer various degrees of injustice. The easterners are allegedly killed and oppressed despite the fact that the region together with others fought for the independence of the nation. The excerpt below expatiates this further:

#### **Excerpt 11:**

Biafra started, because of the injustices and marginalisation of Ndibgo in Nigeria. These injustices triggered the Civil War of 1967 to 1970. Those of us, who went to that war, were very much convinced that we were fighting to

liberate our people and we were prepared to give it our all. —*The Vanguard*  
Nov 15, 2015. Pg 20

According to excerpt 11, the major cause of the Nigeria civil war was injustice against the Igbo. This perceived injustice led to the Civil War between 1967 and 1970. The period was regarded as the dark days of military junta in Nigeria. It must be noted that Ojukwu, the supposed leader of the defunct Biafra Army, could not condone the injustice in the first republic; he had to declare the eastern region a Republic in 1967. The protesters allegedly believe that the injustice in the first republic was minute compared to its enormity which is apparent in the fourth republic. This is exemplified below:

**Excerpt 12:**

We want to go, we want to remain on our own, because of the injustices that have been so entrenched that the Igbo man no longer has future in Nigeria. What was happening then was child's play compared with what Ndigo are going through now. If Ojukwu were alive, I know he would have declared another war, which perhaps, would have been the departing point in Nigeria. I am not afraid to die, I am passionate about Biafra and I want to die fighting its cause. —*The Vanguard* Nov 15, 2015. Pg 20

What gave birth to Biafra in the first republic was injustice and it is quite unfortunate that the nation has not learnt its lesson from the thirty months civil war. The nation has not corrected the past events that led to the war. All the issues that led to the war were still unresolved after well over forty-five years. The protesters lamented the enormity of injustice against the Igbo. This is the major cause of the siege of protests that crippled commercial activities in the zone and other parts of the country.

It must be noted that many of the protesters who see themselves as disciples of Ojukwu also lament how law and order have become extinct in the country. Federal character in political appointments has become a thing of the past. Nepotism, tribalism, favouritism and many other vices have come to be the order of the day in Nigeria. All these issues and many more triggered the Nigerian civil war. Despite the fact that years have passed, Nigerians have not learnt from their past.

**Corruption**

Corruption is another discourse issue in the 2015 and 2016 pro-Biafra protests. Corruption manifests in bribery, embezzlement, diversion and misappropriation of funds among other vices. The government of Nigeria at all levels have, to a great extent, have seemingly failed to nip corruption in the bud. Nigerians

ans have hitherto lost faith in the administration of the nation because of this. This situation has also made the Nigerian government fail in its social responsibility and consequently impoverished the masses.

**Excerpt 13:**

- Governance failure at all levels has exacerbated the plight of these youths and supposed elders who have also lost their means of livelihood due to the precarious economic situation of the country. Lack of good governance had grossly accounted for the impoverishment of these jobless and unemployable youths and elders who ordinarily would have found succour as factory hands if we had attained significant industrial growth and development, even the unemployment rate among tertiary institution graduates has worsened the already bad situation. — *The Nation*, Thurs. Nov. 19, 2015. Pg 16

Excerpt 13 shows the adverse effects of government inability to perform its constitutional function. Government fails to provide employment for the jobless while those who had jobs were retrenched and government did nothing to salvage the situation. Failure on the part of government has made many older people lose their means of livelihood while the younger generations have nothing. This has also led to harsh economic situation in the country.

Failure of government was attributed to bad economy. Bad economy evident in economic recession has led to massive retrenchment of workers such that these retrenched workers have become nuisance to the nation. It has also crippled small scale businesses and multinational companies. These workers who lost their jobs embarked on massive protest to express their sufferings.

**Unemployment**

Unemployment, a condition in which a person of employable age does not have a means of providing ends meet for himself or his family. It is usually accompanied by under-employment. According to the excerpts here, many youths have resorted into crime because of lack of job. Many who are employed are underpaid. This situation is demeaning and people have no option but to express their annoyance about the economic hardship in the nation. In fact, the siege of protest is attributed to the lack of employment opportunity in the country. This is exemplified in the excerpt 14:

**Excerpt 14:**

The unemployment rate is too high. Government has to tackle unemployment and get the youths fully engaged and pay them salary. —The Vanguard Mon.

Nov. 23, 2015. Pg 7

It is clear that unemployment is very high in the nation. Thousands of graduates are turned out by Nigerian universities every year without the economic resources necessary to cater for them. Many of these youths often become viable weapons in the hands of perpetrators of evil. Sometimes, they end up as political thugs and miscreants. The issue of unemployment is closely linked to worsening economic situation. The excerpt, for instance, attributed the failure of government to worsening economic situation in the country. Government failed because it could not judiciously manage the nation's economy. The fall in the price of petroleum which was the source of the nation's income had adverse effects on the people and the economy. With the worsening economy, government still pays lip-service to other sources of revenue such as agriculture, mining, small scale business and so on which can provide viable sources of employment. This neglect led to massive unemployment. This is exemplified in the excerpts below:

**Excerpt 15:**

These youths in the past were usually engaged in various forms of entrepreneurship apprenticeship after primary education for upwards of 6-8 years before their masters set them up in the same business. Majority of the primary and secondary school leavers in recent times no longer have the patience and endurance to undergo this entrepreneurship apprenticeship that the typical Igbo youth was known for because of avariciousness and the get-rich-quick syndrome that has pervaded their psyche. —*The Nation*,

Thurs. Nov. 19, 2015. Pg 16

Excerpt 15 emphasises the loss of social values, which arises from unemployment. The easterners are known for their business acumen. They practice the apprenticeship tradition where a young person undergoes apprenticeship and after some years graduates to start his own trade. However, this culture is fast dissipating due to the encroaching influence of formal education. Now, young people who go to school instead of the entrepreneurship training acquire certificates without commensurate jobs to fend for themselves. This has turned out to have very grievous implications on the youths in the Southeast region of Nigeria.

## Conclusion

Discourse issues are key issues and thematic preoccupations embedded in discursive events. They usually form the background of discursive events. The identification of discourse issues in texts helps to espouse the representation and projected ideologies concealed in them. Guided by Ruth Wodak's Discourse Historical approach to Critical Discourse Analysis and M.A.K Halliday's Transitivity model of Systemic Functional Linguistics, six discourse issues were discovered to have espoused the representation and projected ideologies. They include marginalisation of the Igbo, worsening economic situation, human rights abuse, injustice, corruption and unemployment. The identification of these discourse issues further lays credence to Wodak's (2001) claim that discourse issues are at the root of discursive events and identifying these discourse issues can help to clearly map out ideologies as well as other discourse areas.

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