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Metaphoric construction of corruption in Nigerian media discourse

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Abstract

Conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) and cultural linguistics (CL), which form the chief theoretical anchor for this study, express the role of language, culture and cognition in the construal and expression of human experiences. The approaches posit that the metaphorical use of language by an individual or group is shaped by their ideological orientation, knowledge of their natural and social world, and their cultural worldview. This study investigates the metaphorical use of language by the Nigerian print media in their attempts to express ideation on corruption in the Nigerian public sector. There has not been any deliberate and rigorous attempt to study the metaphorical representation of corruption in the Nigerian media discourse, hence this study aims at addressing the lacuna. Thus, this study uses insights from CMT and CL to identify, classify and analyse some of these metaphors in six Nigerian newspapers, namely; *The Guardian*, *Punch*, *Daily Trust*, *The Nation, Vanguard* and *The Sun*. The study shows that print media reports of corruption in Nigeria involving powerful social actors such as politicians, government appointees, career civil servants, academics, the military, the media and others have often used metaphorical frames that emanate from the domains of disease, war and conflict, enmity, impediment to movement, violent natural forces, monstrosity, among others, to describe the incidence, scope, effects and consequences of public sector corruption in Nigeria.

Key words

metaphor, corruption, Nigeria, culture, media discourse

1. Introduction

President Muhammadu Buhari (PMB) came to power in Nigeria on 29 May 2015 on the rhetoric of possessing the integrity and spiritual stamina to reduce or eradicate corruption from the Nigerian public space. The retired army general had acquired a reputation for his zero tolerance of indiscipline and corruption as military head of state (1983-85).

Many believed he was the best man for the job in the crusade against chronic corruption in Nigeria. However, public opinion and media reports tend to suggest that the war against corruption under PMB has so far been largely selective and unsuccessful. Some of his critics believe he is not capable of winning the battle against corruption in Nigeria because most of his political associates are people with proven records of corruption. Thus, Nigeria is still widely perceived as one of the world's most corrupt nations. A survey conducted in the six geo-political zones of the country by a non-governmental organization, the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), from November-

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December, 2018 reveals that "there is ample evidence to conclude that corruption remains a major challenge in Nigeria" (*Punch*, Wednesday, 27 March 2019, see also Okonjo-Iweala, 2018). The survey shows that the incidence of corruption is more likely to increase in Nigeria rather than decrease. Corruption has not only dented Nigeria's reputation in the comity of nations, it has also stunted its development (Omenka, 2013; Sunkanmi and Isola, 2014). Page (2018) in his *A New Taxonomy for Corruption in Nigeria* contends that:

> Corruption is still the single greatest obstacle preventing Nigeria from achieving its development potential. It drains billions of dollars a year from Nigeria's economy, stymies development, and weakens the social contract between the government and its people. Nigerians view their country as one of the world's most corrupt and struggle to cope with the effect. (p.1)

Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) for 2021 ranked Nigeria 154 out of 180 countries having scored 24 out of 100. The report shows that Nigeria dropped five places when compared with the 2020 report in which Nigeria was ranked 149 (see *Vanguard*, 25 January 2022: https://vanguardngr.com; and *Punch*, 25 January 2022: https://punchng.com). This implies that corruption is on the increase in Nigeria. The government however challenged the report as a misrepresentation of the facts on the ground. Nonetheless, with the frequent media reports of massive corruption in the Nigerian public sector, it is difficult to say if the war against corruption in Nigeria is being won or lost. While most media reports show that the war against corruption is being lost, the government on its part believes it is making progress in containing or curtailing incidences of public sector corruption in the system.

Reports show that widespread corruption is responsible for the high level of poverty in Nigeria (Ucha, 2010; Moyosore, 2015). ActionAid Nigeria (2015) reports that Nigeria harbours some of the poorest people in the world with as much as 69 percent of the population, which is about 112.47 million Nigerians, living below the poverty line (also see Danaan, 2018). The report further observes that the "vast incidence of poverty in the midst of plenty has severally been linked to the endemic corruption in the country, as it involves the massive stealing of the resources that would have otherwise been invested in providing wealth-creating infrastructure for the citizens" (p.6). Categorizing Nigeria as one of the poorest countries in the world appears ironic and shocking going by the fact that Nigeria has earned 96.212 trillion Naira from crude oil since 1958 when exploitation started in Oloibiri (*Vanguard*, 12 August 2016; also see Akani, 2002; Abraham and Michael, 2018). The *Vanguard* newspaper (5 September 2017) reports that "Nigeria earned, squandered N77 trn oil revenue in 17 years." The editorial of *The Sun* also reported that Nigeria loses 5.2 trillion Naira annually to corruption at the nation's seaports (15 August 2021) and corruption will be costing Nigeria 37 per cent of her GDP, i.e. $200 billion …about 10 times its national budget (*The Sun*, 24 August 2021.) These grim reports graphically represent Nigeria as a deeply corrupt, wasteful and profligate nation.

Nigeria's poverty and socioeconomic stagnation have been attributed to the pervasive culture of corruption in the country, and the misplacement and mismanagement of its priority agenda. The widespread public sector corruption in Nigeria with its consequences on national development explains why the country has been ranked as the sixth most miserable country in the world, based on data compiled by Steve Hanke of the University of Baltimore, USA (see *The Guardian*, Monday 1 April 2019; *Vanguard*, Monday 1 April 2019). A section of the Nigerian media (*The Guardian*, 9 January 2022) reports that systemic corruption in the system is largely responsible for Nigeria's 26-trillion-Naira debt profile in seven years of President Buhari's regime. The media also reports that the political and security elite have frittered away $15 billion through fraudulent arms procurement deals in the last 20 years (*Daily Trust*, 9 January 2022). Okolo and Raymond (2014) in their sociopolitical study of corruption in Nigeria contend that corruption was originally alien to the African society as most precolonial African nations were founded on strong ethical and cultural values that frowned on corruption but promoted social justice, equity and fairness. They argue that public sector corruption in Nigeria and other African nations was an imported cultural habit from colonial contact.

This study is therefore motivated by the dearth of deliberate, rigorous and robust study of the metaphorical representation of corruption in the Nigerian media discourse. Previous linguistic studies on corruption in Nigeria have not drawn chiefly on conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) and cultural linguistics (CL) to justify why corruption has been so diversely framed in Nigerian newspaper

reportage. This research is significant in that besides adding to the existing body of knowledge on metaphor studies, it enables the Nigerian reader and the global audience to have an insight into the nature and scale of public sector corruption in Nigeria.

2. Theoretical orientations

This part of the study focuses on some of the models of metaphor, conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) and cultural linguistics (CL) in particular, which form the major theoretical foundation of this work. Sonderling (2009) considers metaphors as a fundamental component of media discourse because metaphors influence and structure the way we think and behave. Kövecses (2010) argues that metaphor plays a role in human thought, understanding and reasoning, and, beyond that, in the creation of our social, cultural and psychological reality. These perspectives represent metaphor as an essential element in the configuration and expression of social, cultural and psychological experiences. This explains why Gibbs, Jr. (2008) observes there is now a greater emphasis on situating metaphor studies within broad, comprehensive models of human cognition, communication and culture.

Conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) or the cognitive linguistic view of metaphor, was first developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Kövecses (2010) describes the work as the first view of metaphor that challenged all previous/traditional assumptions on metaphor in a coherent and systematic way. Ortony's *Metaphor and Thought* (1993) brought together diverse disciplinary and theoretical orientations in the study of metaphor. Budaev (2009: p. 265) maintains that the contemporary metaphor theory of Lakoff and Johnson has inspired the emergence of a number of theoretical approaches such as the primary theory (Grady et al, 1996); connectivity theory of metaphor interpretation (Ritchie, 2003, 2004); the blending theory (Fauconnier and Turner, 1998, 2002; Turner and Fauconnier, 1995, 2000; Fauconnier, 1997); and the theory of metaphor models (Baranov, 2003; Baranov and Karaulov, 1991; Baranov and Zinken, 2003; Chudinov, 2001, 2003). Lakoff and Johnson (2003, p.254) classify the "primary metaphor theory" of Joseph Grady (1997), Christopher Johnson (1997), and the "neural theory metaphor of Srinivas Narayanan (1997) as "a major advance in metaphor theory." There is also Charteris-Black's critical metaphor analysis (2004, 2005, 2018) which draws insights from the conceptual metaphor theory of Lakoff and Johnson, and developments in critical studies. All the approaches express the fact that human beings draw from their cognitive, linguistic and cultural abilities in attempts to express their understanding of their natural and social worlds, including their figured worlds. Metaphor is therefore not simply an ornamental aspect of language, but a fundamental scheme by which people conceptualize the world and their activities (Gibbs, Jr. 2008).

The crux of Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) argument on conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) proceeds from the assumption that "metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action" (p.3). They posit that metaphor is pervasive in our everyday language, thought and perception of reality. Lakoff and Johnson argue that the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another. This implies using our knowledge and experience of one entity (known as source domain) to understand another entity (known as target domain). The source domain is usually a physical or concrete entity while the target domain is usually an abstract entity. To Ifukor (2005), it is also customary that in metaphor there is the use of a set of correspondences between two conceptual or experiential domains where one of the domains (commonly referred to as source) assists humans to structure, understand and reason about the other domain (called target).

Lakoff and Johnson posit that metaphor can be understood as the **mapping** from a source domain to a target domain. The process of understanding one concept (target domain) in terms of another (source domain) is known as **mapping**. Thus, we have conceptual metaphors such as ARGUMENT IS WAR; LOVE IS A JOURNEY, IDEAS ARE FOOD, etc. This implicates that human beings, consciously and unconsciously, try to use their knowledge of one domain (source) to understand another domain (target). In the first metaphorical expression, ARGUMENT IS WAR, we use our experiential knowledge of war to understand argument; we use our knowledge of journey to understand the concept of love in the second expression; while we use our knowledge of food to comprehend ideas as what we can chew, swallow or digest. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) classify metaphors into three categories: **structural**, **orientational** and **ontological** metaphors. Structural metaphors occur in cases where one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another. Orientational metaphors organize a whole system of concepts with respect to one another such as up-down, in-out, front-back, on-off, deep-shallow, central-peripheral. Orientational metaphors are not arbitrary, rather they have their basis in our physical and cultural

experience (p.14). Ontological metaphors provide a basis for viewing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc. as entities and substances as aspects of our experiences (p.26). Ontological metaphors are therefore used to comprehend events, actions, activities and states. Gibbs, Jr (2008) observes that research on metaphor is now as multidisciplinary, and interdisciplinary, as perhaps any topic being studied in contemporary academia (see also Kövecses, 2010; Gibbs, Jr. 2017).

Exploring the interconnectedness between language, culture and cognition is fundamental in metaphor studies. Lakoff and Johnson (2003, p.247) observe that the metaphors we use and what they mean depend on the nature of our bodies, our interactions in the physical environment, and our social and cultural practices. The intrinsic link between language, culture and conceptualization is what ties CMT with contemporary debates in the field of cultural linguistics (CL). Sharifian and Palmer (2007) and Sharifian (2017) explore the relationship between language, culture and conceptualizations. Sharifian argues that cultural linguistics benefits from insights in cognitive linguistics (and other related disciplines) and its analytical tools are shaped by **cultural schemas**, **cultural categories** and **cultural metaphors**. Similarly, Sharifian and Palmer (2007, p.1) posit that "language is a cultural activity and, at the same time, an instrument for organizing other cultural domains. Speakers take account of discourse situations, which are structured by culture." This implies that the way societies perceive or conceptualize phenomena such as corruption, illness, health, death, political activities, relationships, and so on are culturally and cognitively mediated. At the heart of the theoretical framework of cultural linguistics is the notion of "cultural cognition", which affords an integrated understanding of the notions of "cognition" and "culture" as they relate to language (Sharifian, 2017, p.2).

3. Persuasive communication and the socio-natural world

Human cognition, communication and culture constitute an integral component in the study of metaphor (Gibbs, Jr. 2008). Humans, from classical antiquity to the contemporary world, use language in communication to persuade or dissuade others. Humans have always seen rhetoric or persuasive communication as an important subject for study and contemplation through the ages (de Wet, 2010, p. 69). Rhetoric as the formal study of persuasive communication is described by Aristotle as the art of discovering all available means of persuasion in any given case. Charteris-Black (2018, p. 3) observes that classical rhetoricians were interested in how speakers achieve their desired effects on audiences in particular contexts, and viewed rhetoric as an art capable of influencing civic life and shaping society. Classical rhetoric essentially trained speakers on how to persuade in public forums and institutions such as courtrooms and assemblies. Charteris-Black (2018) argues that developments in communication technology have led to a convergence between the styles of written and spoken language hence disciplines and professions such as public relations, law, marketing, advertising and the mass media place value on communicating persuasively. de Wet (2010) sees the modern democratic world as a mass society that is characterized by mass production and mass consumption. The modern society exists in a space in which a person encounters numerous communicators/persuaders, some of whom are anonymous. de Wet (2010, p. 69) opines that the modern world is a space in which we are often bombarded by persuasive messages from, *inter alia*, television, radio, film, newspapers and magazines – mass media that employ various techniques to persuade even millions of recipients to specific viewpoints.

Language plays an essential role in the way we experience and talk about our natural and social worlds, including the inner world of our own consciousness (the figured worlds). It is the resources of language that enable their users to create mental pictures of the realities around them and inside their heads (Gee, 2014, p. 123). Sonderling (2009, p.112) posits that language is not a simple medium for communication but a powerful and complex social communication system that requires better understanding. He argues that the media usually use language to encode a particular ideology or perspective and that many examples of ideological assumptions are found in the discursive practice of the mass media. Media texts are rarely neutral; they are contextually used to encode values and ideologies that impact on and reflect the larger world (Cotter, 2003). Cotter (2003, p. 417) argues that most linguists consider a news text from one of two vantage points: that of discourse structure or linguistic function, or according to its impact as ideology-bearing discourse. In all, the ideological use of language by the media plays a crucial role in the shaping of public, as well as media, discourse. The ideology that shapes or underlies media reports therefore should be taken into account in the linguistic analysis of media texts or news reports.

4. Studies on metaphors and political discourse in Nigeria

Nigeria's return to democratic governance in 1999 has provided data for discursive and metaphorical studies on how the resources of language have been deployed by powerful social actors and others who control discourse to construct identity, establish and challenge hegemony, generate misleading implicatures, communicate political programmes and policies to the public, expose and resist dominance, etc. Kamalu and Agangan (2011) show that so much has been done on the nature and scope of political discourse in Nigeria. Most of these studies have drawn insights from pragmatics, discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis. Some of the recent linguistic studies of political discourse in Nigeria include Inya (2020), which studies parliamentary language in Nigeria; Igwebuike and Chimuanya (2020) examine political fake news in Nigeria; Adegoju (2021) uses insights from critical epistemic discourse analysis to study coercive persuasion in rebranding Nigeria campaign discourse; and Adegoju (2022), which draws from social semiotic theory to study 2015 election pledges in Nigeria. However, it is only Taiwo (2013); Kamalu and Iniworikabo (2016); Tella (2019); Igwebuike (2020); and Inya, (2022) that involve a metaphoric study of the Nigerian political discourse.

5. Studies on corruption reportage

From the perspective of metaphor in particular, corruption in Nigeria and some other countries have been studied by linguists. Chiluwa (2007) examines metaphors of power and corruption in Nigeria media discourse, Okunrimeta and Alabi (2014) use insights from cultural concepts to study metaphors of corruption in Nigerian literature, while Isyaka, Hasan and Kunalan (2016) use conceptual metaphor approaches to study corruption chiefly as virus, war, orientation and culture in online media in Nigeria, Iraq and Malaysia. Albtoush and Sahuri (2017) look at corruption as shame in Jordan through the lens of metaphor, while Forsberg and Severinsson (2015) draw from a diverse corpus to demonstrate that corruption is chiefly perceived as a virus in social organizations. Jing-Schmidt and Peng (2017) examine the metaphorical framing of corruption as disease, vermin and weed in Chinese flagship newspaper the *People's Daily*, as a form of ideological persuasion. This therefore explains why Charteris-Black (2004) asserts that metaphors can be used as an instrument of persuasion or propaganda. The works reviewed in this study reveal that there has not been any comprehensive, rigorous and robust metaphoric analysis of corruption in Nigeria media discourse, hence this study aims to address this lacuna using excerpts from six national newspapers in Nigeria. Again, previous studies on corruption did not involve the integration of the analytical framework and insights from the conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) and cultural linguistics (CL) unlike this study that draws from both theoretical orientations.

6. Methodology

The primary data for analysis in this study is derived from selected news reports on corruption and anti-corruption discourses from six major Nigerian newspapers. The corpus comprises news headlines, editorials, features and news reports of online editions of *The Guardian*, *Punch*, *Daily Trust*, *Vanguard*, *The Sun*, and *The Nation* newspapers. The newspapers are privately owned, not subject to the dictates and control of the government, published in English (there are other newspapers that are published in indigenous languages) and enjoy the widest spread and patronage across the six geopolitical zones of the multiethnic and multireligious Nigeria. The excerpts selected for analysis cover a period from March 2015, that is, two months before President Muhammadu Buhari assumed office, to February 2022, that is, 12 months to the next general elections in February 2023. A total of one hundred and fifty (150) news reports on corruption were sampled from the newspapers but only fifty-five (55) which explicitly framed corruption in the six (6) frames adopted for the study were selected for analysis.

Table 1. Statistical representation of data sources

	The Guardian	**Punch**	**Daily Trust**	**The Nation**	**Vanguard**	**The Sun**	**Frequency occurrences**	**Percentage %**
News reports	5	3	6	2	4	6	26	47.27
Headlines	-	1	-	2	3	3	9	16.36
Editorials	3	1	-	-	-	-	4	7.27
Features	2	3	3	5	2	1	16	29.09
Total							**55**	**100**

The study adopts content analyses as its research design. Content analyses can be quantitative or qualitative and can be conducted with any written material, from documents to interview transcriptions and can be applied to large numbers of texts (Sándorová, 2014). A qualitative content analysis, which this study adopts, does not primarily involve physical counting of data. Rather, it tends to be more critical in nature and can be used when we need to penetrate the deeper layers of a message, such as in a semiological or narrative analysis (Wigston, 2009). Data sources for this study are however presented in simple statistics for the purpose of clarity and objectivity but its analysis remains qualitative.

Conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003) and insights from cultural linguistics (Sharifian, 2017) constitute the theoretical anchor for this study as they enable us explore the metaphorical frames used to represent corruption and anti-corruption rhetoric in selected Nigerian newspaper reports. The analytical framework of metaphor identification, metaphor interpretation and metaphor explanation will be adopted to identify, classify and explain metaphorical frames in the data. The purposively selected data show that the six newspapers draw copiously from their cultural schemas, cultural categories and cultural metaphors in their framing of corruption.

6.1 Metaphor identification and classification procedure

This study will draw insights from the metaphor identification procedure (MIP) developed by the Pragglejaz Group to enable us determine which words or expressions can be considered metaphorical in context. Gibbs Jr, (2017, pp. 69-70) states the four main steps to be followed in determing whether a word has been metaphorically used in context are as follows:

I. Read the entire text (i.e. written text or spoken transcript) to establish a general understanding of the discourse.
II. Determine the lexical units in the text.
III. For each lexical unit in the text, check metaphorical use: establish the meaning of the lexical unit in context (how it applies to an entity), and the relation in the situation evoked by the text (contextual meaning). You should take into account what words are before and after the lexical unit. Determine if the lexical unit has a more basic current/contemporary meaning than the one in the given context. For our purposes, basic meanings tend to be: more concrete; what they evoke is easier to imagine, see, hear, feel, smell and taste; related to bodily action; more precise (as opposed to vague); and historically older. Basic meanings are not necessarily the most frequent meaning of the lexical unit.
IV. If the lexical unit has a more basic current/contemporary meaning in other contexts than the given context, decide whether the contextual meaning can be understood by comparison or contrast with the basic meaning. If yes, mark the lexical unit as metaphorical.

Table 2. Key metaphor words: Source and target domains of corruption metaphors

Source domain	**Target domain**	**Examples of key metaphor words**
Disease / illness	Corruption	pandemic, scourge, cankerworm
Obstacle / physical impediment	Corruption	challenge, obstacle, burden, weight
Pervasive entity	Corruption	centre, every facet, widespread, pervade
Horrifying creature / physical danger	Corruption	monster, dangers, tame
Killer enemy / opponent	Corruption	destroy, kill, enemy
War / conflict	Corruption	fight, battle, brawn, crusade

7. Data presentation and analysis

In the Nigerian sociocultural context, a phenomenon like corruption is morally abhored and perceived as an existential threat to the moral, social and economic wellbeing of the community. Many Nigerians view corruption, with trepidation, as an entity capable of destroying the system, hence they frame corruption as a dreaded disease, a violent natural force, a vicious enemy, a horrifying creature, etc. The dominant frames used in the selected Nigerian newspaper reports to talk about corruption have been identified and classified into six as follows: CORRUPTION IS A DISEASE/ILLNESS; CORRUPTION IS A HORRIFYING/DANGEROUS CREATURE; CORRUPTION IS A PERVASIVE ENTITY; CORRUPTION IS A DEVELOPMENT IMPEDIMENT; CORRUPTION IS A KILLER ENEMY; and CURTAILING CORRUPTION IS WAR/CONFLICT.

7.1 CORRUPTION IS A DISEASE/ILLNESS

Infectious or contagious diseases that spread fast among communities and are capable of causing fatality or serious health problems to infected persons usually cause panic among people who live in the affected places. Governments and health agencies issue safety guidelines to the public on how to protect themselves and contain the spread of the diseases in the communities. Some of the news reports from Nigerian newspapers draw from the knowledge domain of infectious disease and illness to express their knowledge of corruption and its impact on Nigerian society.

Text 1:

> The Ignored **Pandemic**: How corruption in Health, Education and Water Sectors is plunging Nigerians into poverty
>
> *The Guardian*, 2 November 2021

Text 2:

> The recent report of a national corruption survey published by Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) that a whopping N400 billion is spent on bribes each year since 2015 is an indication that the **scourge** of corruption is indeed capable of killing the country if nothing is done about it
>
> *The Guardian*, 4 November 2017

Text 3:

> Buhari assumed office as president on May 29, 2015, waving the sword and the shield of his declared war against corruption… After all, he did battle with the same **cankerworm** in his 20 months in office as military head of state and would easily reconnect from where he left in 1985
>
> *Daily Trust*, 3 January 2021

Metaphoric words such as **pandemic**, **scourge** and **cankerworm** are from the domain of disease and express a condition in which the health and well-being of a certain entity (person or thing) is under attack by another entity (disease). Most Nigerian societies culturally categorize diseases/illnesses as fatal or mild. Mild diseases/illnesses do not evoke fear and anxiety in the discourses of the people. The word pandemic refers to the outbreak of an infectious or contagious disease in a whole country or countries leading to the death or hospitalization of infected persons. A disease is regarded as a pandemic if it is prevalent and poses a threat to the health and well-being of the general public. In the context of the news headline (text 1), pandemic is used as a structural/cultural metaphor that involves the use of the knowledge frame one has about dreaded infectious or contagious diseases like Covid-19 or influenza to understand the nature of corruption in Nigeria. It implies that corruption is prevalent in Nigeria and poses a dangerous threat to the health and well-being of Nigerian society. It also encodes the assumption that corruption is an infectious or contagious disease and that many persons in the Nigerian public sector are at high risk of being infected with the disease of corruption. This also suggests that widespread corruption in the country (Nigeria) may lead to its hospitalization (weaken the system) or its death (total collapse of the system) if adequate measures are not put in place to arrest it.

The word scourge is metaphorically used in Text 2 to imply a social problem or affliction like the outbreak of a disease like HIV/AIDS or any other dreaded disease that causes or imposes great suffering on people. The news report expresses grave concern that the suffering being imposed on the country's socioeconomic well-being by corruption is indeed "…capable of killing the country if nothing is done about it." The metaphoric expression is also structural/cultural in nature and implies that corruption is a dangerous illness like AIDS or cancer that is capable of killing the country if nothing is done to check its spread. Here, the country is being personified as a human being that can be infected by a dreaded disease and can die as a result of the infection. Kövecses (2010) classifies personification as a form of ontological metaphor because it involves giving human qualities to nonhuman entities. Text 3 refers to corruption as a cankerworm. The word, cankerworm, is a morphological derivation from **canker**, a plant disease that attacks and destroys plants/trees. A cankerworm is a caterpillar (pest) that consumes the buds and leaves of trees/plants. Thus, by referring to corruption as a cankerworm the news article evokes cultural schemas that perceive corruption as a canker- (disease) carrying pest consuming

the socioeconomic well-being of the Nigerian nation. Here, the country is metaphorized as a tree/plant that is being consumed by a cankerworm. Inherent in the CORRUPTION IS A DISEASE/ILLNESS metaphor is also the orientational metaphor of HEALTHY IS UP; SICKNESS/ILLNESS IS DOWN. The reference to warfare metaphors, war and battle, shows that corruption, culturally metaphorized as a cankerworm, is a dangerous phenomenon capable of killing any entity that harbours it. It suggests that to contain or curtail the effects of the disease/illness on an entity is also a form of war.

7.2 CORRUPTION IS A PERVASIVE ENTITY

Most newspaper reports communicate the impression that corruption is a phenomenon that can be found in most parts/sectors of Nigerian society. The metaphoric frames used in the news reports are essentially ontological and express the ideology that no sector of the country is free from corrupt practices. Ontological metaphors provide a basis for viewing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc. as entities and substances as aspects of our experiences. The metaphors imply that corruption is a ubiquitous entity that exists in every sector of the Nigerian social space. While texts 1-3 metaphorize corruption as a disease/illness, the metaphors in texts 4-8 characterize corruption as a pervasive entity that is present in almost every sector of society. Locutions like **endemic**, **widespread**, **pervade**, **across**, **centre**, **deeply rooted**, **deeply entrenched**, and **permeates** evoke cultural schemas that suggest the scale or extent of corruption in Nigerian society.

Text 4:

> President Muhammadu Buhari said Monday the primary reason he won the 2015 presidential poll was that Nigeria revolted against corruption, which he alleged was **endemic** under the administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan
>
> *Punch*, 11 December 2018

The word "endemic", at the surface level of signification, is usually used in the context of a disease or condition that is prevalent in a particular area or among a particular people but in the context of the excerpt (text 4), it is used to construct a scenario in which a social vice (corruption) has become monumental and pervasive in a particular geopolitical space, Nigeria. The metaphoric use of endemic in context evokes an image/cultural schema of a dangerous condition that has become native to a people. This implies that corruption has become native to Nigeria since it has been around with us since Nigeria's independence in 1960. The deliberate use of such metaphors from the domain of disease, illness and fatality is intended to provoke fear, panic and to awaken the consciousness of the citizens to the threats posed by corruption to their existence. The metaphor gives the impression that Nigeria is under the siege of corruption. The metaphoric use of endemic in the discourse context synonymously ties in with words such as widespread, pervaded, every facet and monumental in texts 5-8 below.

Text 5:

> As the world marks International Anti-corruption Day, Nigerians have lamented **widespread** corruption and its devastating effects on the country.
>
> *The Guardian*, 10 December 2020

Text 6:

> The Inter Religious Coalition Against Corruption in Nigeria (ICACN) has called for concerted (sic) effort to pointedly tackle the menace of corruption that has **pervaded** the socio-political, economic and cultural lives of the country
>
> *The Nation*, 24 October 2021

Expressions such as **widespread**, **pervaded**, **in every facet**, **at the centre**, etc. share a sameness of meaning in contexts that show that instances of corruption in Nigeria are widespread, pervasive and can be found in virtually all sectors of Nigerian society. The predominant metaphor used in the words/expressions is ontological and evokes the image schema of Nigeria as a PHYSICAL OBJECT or CONTAINER with boundaries or territorial spaces within which the entity called corruption exists. The metaphor suggests that corruption exists in every space/dimension within the container known as

Nigeria. The words and expressions share the same semantic and communicative function of signifying the existence of a phenomenon that is prevalent in a society.

Text 7:

> There is no gainsaying the fact that Nigeria, as a country has been beleaguered with **monumental** corruption of high propensity – which is **deeply rooted in every facet** of our governance stratum
>
> *Daily Trust*, 18 August 2021

Text 8:

> While many Nigerians focused on corruption **at the centre**, the shady dealings that have been **deeply entrenched** in **states** or **subnational level** where public officials are quietly siphoning billions have continued unabated
>
> *Daily Trust*, 10 April 2021

Texts 4-8 evoke image/cultural schemas that tell us how widespread corruption is in Nigeria. Texts 7 and 8 in particular make use of coherence/orientational metaphors to communicate negative evaluations of corruption in Nigeria. The word "monumental" suggests an entity that is large in size. This image schema implies that corruption occupies a very large space in the CONTAINER, Nigeria. Most cultures appraise something big as UP (positive evaluation/upward orientation) and something small as DOWN (negative evaluation/downward orientation). However, in the contextual use of "monumental", corruption receives a negative evaluation even when it suggests an entity that is big in size. Thus, in the cultural schemas of Nigeria, monumental represents BIG IS DOWN (downward evaluation/negative orientation) instead of BIG IS UP; while its opposite, SMALL IS UP (upward orientation/positive evaluation) instead of SMALL IS DOWN because of its attribution and association with corruption (a negative moral evaluation). BIG IS DOWN because corruption is a moral issue and, in most societies, VIRTUE IS UP; LACK OF VIRTUE IS DOWN. The notion of monumental corruption represents lack of virtue (DOWN). In text 8, the image schema of "centre" is juxtaposed with that of "states"/ "subnational level" which is peripheral. The juxtaposition of dichotomous categories encoded in orientational metaphors informs us that corruption exists at state/subnational levels (PERIPHERY) and at the national level (CENTRE) in Nigeria, and is thus pervasive.

7.3 CORRUPTION IS A HORRIFYING AND DANGEROUS CREATURE

Cultural schemas generally provide the basis or foundation for the common ground, that is, the knowledge shared or assumed to be shared by members of a speech community (Sharifian,2017, p.14). The cultural knowledge of a monster as a horrifying, ugly, huge and dangerous creature seems to have assumed universal acceptability. The image schema that Nigerians have about a monster is that of a wild, huge, frightening and dangerous creature capable of consuming or destroying human beings and other less powerful creatures. Most human societies also believe that some monsters can be tamed or domesticated and made less harmful. Texts 9-11 metaphorize corruption as a monster that can be tamed or defy being tamed at the same time.

Text 9:

> …there is massive unemployment, abject poverty, low standard education, lack of basic amenities and infrastructures, all because of the **great monster** called corruption
>
> *Daily Trust*, 18 August 2021

Text 9 above explicitly construes corruption as a dangerous entity that need to be "confronted" because it is responsible for a series of socioeconomic problems in society such as massive unemployment, abject poverty, sub-standard education, lack of basic amenities and infrastructure. The underlying metaphor thus frames corruption as an enemy of the people. This personifies corruption as a human being. The cultural and cognitive understanding of the metaphor inherent in the text is that corruption in Nigeria can be understood as a horrifying and dangerous creature whose presence in society has been of catastrophic consequence to the people. The attribution "great" frames the massive, huge and monumental size of corruption in the Nigerian public sector. The underlying ideology is that

corruption, as a dangerous monster, is capable of hurting or killing Nigeria if it is not contained or eradicated. Text 10 below explicitly represents corruption (a monster) as a dangerous entity.

Text 10:

> In a statement delivered by the secretary of the Board of Trustees (BoT), Funso Olojo, the group affirmed that the NGO was established to further sensitize Nigerians on the **dangers** inherent in corrupt practices
>
> *The Sun*, 10 November 2021

The above text shows that corruption is a dangerous entity/act that can destroy both the country and those who associate with it. The sensitization programme is therefore to educate society on how to protect Nigeria and its citizens from the dangers associated with corrupt practices. Text 11 below implies that corruption, being a monster, can still be **tamed** if the political will is there.

Text 11:

> Government has found it **very difficult** to **tame** corruption because of institutional failure in the supervision of the various agencies in public and private sectors
>
> *Vanguard*, 16 January 2021

The cognitive and cultural schemas in texts 10-11 implicitly express the understanding that corruption in Nigeria is a dangerous monster that can be tamed or domesticated by the political leadership. The word "tame" as used in the discourse context suggests that a wild and dangerous creature like corruption (a monster) can be tamed if the political will is strong. Some other contextual uses of **tame** suggest that corruption, metaphorized as a monster, has been successfully tamed/domesticated elsewhere and that the same feat can be replicated in Nigeria. To tame means to domesticate and to be made less harmful. Some other corruption metaphors as monster single out institutional failure as the reason for government's inability to tame corruption in Nigeria. The cultural schemas evoked in texts 10-11 are those of fear and hopelessness as a result of the inability ("…has found it very difficult…") of the political leadership in Nigeria to tame the monster, corruption. This creates a mental scenario that Nigeria's socio-political space is not safe for business and social development as a result of unbridled corruption.

7.4 CORRUPTION IS A DEVELOPMENT IMPEDIMENT

Conceptual metaphors enable language users to express their knowledge of some abstract categories and experiences in a more coherent manner. Usually, abstract and underlineated experiences (sic, Kövecses, 2010) receive more delineated status via ontological metaphors. Ontological metaphors generally enable humans to conceive their experiences in terms of objects, substances, and containers, without specifying exactly what kind of object, substance or container is meant (Kövecses, 2010). Some of the news reports conceptualize corruption, an abstract entity, in terms of weight, burden, obstacles, challenge, etc. as can be gleaned from Texts 12-16 below.

Text 12:

> This year, the theme is 'United against Corruption.' It focuses on corruption as one of the **biggest obstacles** to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
>
> *The Guardian*, 10 December 2020

Text 13:

> Tinubu went on to state that ensuring Nigeria becomes a member of a committed international community that frees us from the **burden of corruption**…
>
> *Punch*, 1 April 2021

Text 14:

> The Rector of Maritime Academy of Nigeria, Oron, Akwa Ibom State, Commodore Duje Effedua (retd.) has disclosed that corruption and maladministration **weighed down** the institution for 39 years
>
> *The Nation*, 4 August 2021

In texts 12-14 above, corruption is framed as an object that slows down forward/upward movement. This implies that national development is a motion/journey which can be fast and smooth without obstacles or impediments. It can be slow or stagnated if there are objects that weigh it down or impede its movement. The metaphoric expressions: "obstacles", "burden" and "weigh down" foreground corruption as an impediment to national development or growth. In the natural world, obstacles, burdens and weights can slow down or impede movement or progression. Culturally and cognitively, therefore, we use our ideational experiences of the natural world to make sense of how corruption as an obstacle, heavy weight and burden can stifle national development/growth.

Text 15:

> Corruption has remained a **big challenge** for the administration which a member of the administration, Prof Itse Sagay, SAN, attested to recently
>
> *Vanguard*, 16 January 2021

Text 16:

> Over the last twenty years, politicians themselves have touted corruption as the most **intractable challenge** of the Nigerian state
>
> *The Guardian*, 13 October 2018

The word "challenge" as used in the two contexts of the discourse imply "difficulty" or "obstacle" to movement – the realization of set goals (national development). The attributions "big" and "intractable" underline the magnitude of the difficulties or obstacles that corruption constitutes to national development. Contextually, "challenge" as used in texts 15 & 16 ties in sameness of meaning with "obstacle", "burden" and "weigh down" in texts 12-14 above.

7.5 CORRUPTION IS A KILLER ENEMY/OPPONENT

Framing corruption as an adversary is one of the metaphors used by most Nigerian newspapers to construe corrupt practices and their negative effects on Nigeria. The metaphors personify corruption as a strong enemy that poses existential threats to the life of its opponent (Nigeria). Texts 17-18 below frame corruption as a formidable opponent who can kill and destroy its opponent if not checked.

Text 17:

> It is very disturbing when you consider how far corruption had **destroyed** in all aspect (sic) including the National assembly, civil service and in the academia
>
> *Vanguard*, 21 February 2022

Text 18:

> Buhari, at the outset of his administration, pointed out that 'if we do not **kill** corruption, corruption will **kill** us.'
>
> *The Nation*, 24 February 2018

Texts 17-18 above explicitly frame corruption as a dangerous killer enemy whose existence threatens the very existence of the country. Text 17 implies that corruption as an enemy has already **destroyed** critical infrastructures of the country (national assembly, civil service and academia). This implies that Nigeria has been a victim of corruption. Text 18 metaphorizes corruption as a strong enemy who may likely annihilate Nigeria if the country does not resist it. Cognitively and culturally, any entity capable of destroying or killing its opponent is considered an enemy. Texts 19 clearly depicts corruption as a "most powerful" and principal adversary of the country.

Text 19:

> This incredible survey done by the National Bureau of Statistics assisted by a global body, underscores the widespread belief that corruption is Nigeria's **most powerful enemy** which both government and people must defeat
>
> *The Guardian*, 4 September 2021

The news reports employ the ontological metaphor of personification to frame corruption and Nigeria as two human entities involved in a clash/conflict. The texts also imply that Nigeria has other lesser (less destructive) enemies but frames corruption as its most powerful and principal one.

7.6 CURTAILING CORRUPTION IS WAR/CONFLICT

Ideationally, containing a killer enemy takes the form of war. Based on texts 17-19, which frame corruption as a killer enemy, some of the news reports construe curtailing the threats of corruption as war. In the natural world, we can only go to war against our enemies and we do so to secure our interests and safety. Since most Nigerians see corruption as an enemy of the people, waging a war against it is natural, acceptable and justifiable. Thus, the metaphors used by most Nigerian newspapers to communicate anti-corruption rhetoric emanate from the domain of warfare/conflict as can be gleaned from texts 20- 23 below:

Text 20:

> London-based news magazine, *The Economist*, has described the government of President, Major General Muhammadu Buhari (retd.), as inept and high-handed, adding that he had also failed to **tackle** corruption
>
> *Punch*, 23 October 2021

Text 21:

> President Muhammadu Buhari's recent lamentation over corruption **fighting back** in the wake of his **fight against** graft must be a true reflection of the state of affairs but such open acknowledgement of the '**enemy**' may undermine the spirit and purpose of the **fight**
>
> *The Guardian*, 02 November, 2021

Text 22:

> The federal government and Transparency International, TI, have continued in their disagreement over the state of **war** on corruption in Nigeria as they **trade tackles** during an **anti-corruption** radio programme in Abuja this Wednesday
>
> *Vanguard*, 01 April 2021

Text 23:

> From time immemorial, Nigeria has been locked in **endless battle** with corruption. In this **tussle** of good vs evil, the country has often relied on **brawn** rather than on its number six…
>
> *The Sun*, 14 October 2021

The cognitive perception of corruption as a killer enemy justifies framing efforts at containing or curtailing it as a form of war or armed conflict. Metaphoric keywords such as **war**, **fight**, **battle**, **defeat**, **tackle**, **tussle**, **brawn, anti-**(corruption) used to frame curtailing corruption by the government and other agencies are drawn directly from the domain of warfare and armed conflict. Texts 20 and 22 construe corruption as an enemy that can be tackled in a war and defeated, while text 21 conceptualizes it as a strong **enemy** that **fights back** against its opponents. Text 23 sees the war against corruption as a conflict (tussle) between good and evil. The image schema of good vs evil is orientational: VIRTUE IS UP (GOOD); LACK OF VIRTUE IS DOWN (EVIL). Within the framework of CURTAILING CORRUPTION IS WAR between good vs evil lies a subtext that perceives war against corruption as a religious obligation. Thus, the subtext entails a frame that WAR AGAINST CORRUPTION IS A RELIGIOUS OBLIGATION.

Framing the battle with corruption as one between good vs evil gives the war a religious undertone. Cognitively and culturally, corruption is perceived as lack of virtue or an immoral act, hence some of

the news reports conceptualize efforts at containing it as a religious war/obligation. In text 24 below we see the war against corruption being framed a "crusade", that is, a religious war/obligation.

Text 24:

> President Muhammed Buhari's anti-corruption **crusade** appears to have taken off in earnest barely a week after assuming office with a stern warning to ministers not to dabble into approving payments for contractors
>
> *Vanguard*, 6 June 2015

"Crusade" as used in the excerpt above intertextually connects with the medieval military expeditions of Christian Europe during the 11-13th centuries to recover the Holy Land from the hands of its Muslim occupiers. The underlying metaphor wants the reader/audience to draw from their historical knowledge frame of the Christian expeditions of the 11-13th centuries to understand the zeal, necessity and spiritual stamina behind efforts to rescue Nigeria from corruption. The crusade metaphor implies that Nigeria is being occupied by perceived immoral entities/persons (corrupt practices) and the efforts to recover the Nigerian holy land (its socioeconomic essence) from the immoral occupiers (corrupt practices) should be pursued with apostolic zeal or be taken as a religious obligation.

This study on the metaphorization of corruption in Nigeria media discourse is significantly different from previous studies on metaphor and corruption. At the level of theory, the integration of an analytical framework and insights from conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) and cultural linguistics (CL) show that linguistic, cognitive and cultural perceptions and experiences shape how individuals and groups view their social and natural worlds. The news reports considered in this study show that most Nigerian newspapers draw from their social, cognitive and cultural experiences in construing corruption as a killer enemy, dreaded monster, impediment, disease/illness, etc. This study is important in that the six metaphorical frames from which it considered corruption are novel and more comprehensive, and therefore a positive contribution to the existing body of knowledge on corruption and metaphoricity in Nigeria and beyond. At the level of practice, individuals, groups and agencies involved in the anti-corruption campaign will find this work useful as the use of insights from culture and cognition is a confirmation of the crucial importance of literary imagination and its linguistic analysis in the project of creating a deeper understanding about identity, intergroup relationship and the humanistic pursuit of the common good.

8. Conclusion

This study has tried to establish that the resources and insights from CMT and CL can enable an analyst to examine issues that border on language, thought and culture. Most of the metaphorical expressions examined in the study are structural, ontological and orientational. Analytical insights from CL such as cultural schemas, cultural categories and cultural metaphors were blended with a CMT framework since both orientations are not mutually exclusive. This research chiefly examined the metaphorical frames used by selected Nigerian print media to portray the nature, scale and effects of corruption on Nigeria. The news reports, editorials, features and headlines revealed that the writers borrowed words from the domain of illness/disease, monstrosity, physical objects/containers, war/conflict, religion among others to talk about corruption in Nigeria. The study showed that corruption in Nigeria is pervasive, monumental, and poses an existential threat to the social, economic and political development of the country if nothing serious is done to eradicate or reduce its menace in the system.

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