

A Corpus Assisted Media Representation of Buhari during the 2015 Election Campaigns in Nigeria

Dr Florence Awele Nwaefuna
Centre for Academic Development
Communication and Study Skills Unit
University of Botswana
PVT BAG: 0022, Gaborone, Botswana

ABSTRACT

The article examines how Nigeria's former President, Muhammadu Buhari, was portrayed in the media during the 2015 political campaigns using corpus linguistics and Halliday's transitivity model. Analyzing texts from six national newspapers over seven months, the study employs a corpus-assisted approach with the Wordsmith concordance tool and Systemic Functional Linguistics to examine how agency and processes shaped Buhari's representation. The findings show a predominantly negative portrayal, with Buhari's name frequently collocating with negatively connoted words. The transitivity analysis reveals he was depicted as benefiting from terrorist actions and stereotyped as a religious fundamentalist and pro-corruption figure. The study concludes that media representation was biased, as Buhari, despite being negatively portrayed, won the 2015 elections, challenging the notion of media objectivity in representing reality.

Keywords: Critical discourse analysis, Systemic functional linguistics, Corpus linguistics, Media representation

INTRODUCTION

Language serves as an invaluable resource for the media, playing a pivotal role during political campaigns. Journalists strategically use language to promote competing ideas and policies across various media outlets, including print and electronic platforms. They make editorial decisions regarding which news reports or advertisements to include or exclude, thereby influencing public perception and attitude towards the subjects represented in the media. Language can have detrimental effects on democracy if used negatively, or beneficial effects if used positively, by the media to achieve its desired goals (Brooks & Murov, 2012; Kim, 2020; Singh, 2021).

A cursory observation reveals that Nigerian election campaigns are marked by both physical and symbolic violence. Physical violence includes actions where political thugs steal ballot boxes and commit acts of violence against voters, including fighting, maiming, and even killing. This physical violence is often accompanied by linguistic violence, as the media can perpetuate negative stereotypes about certain social groups through biased reporting. Derogatory or abusive language aimed at a particular political candidate may incite violence. Akubor (2015) notes that negative expressions contributed to the 2011 post-election violence in Nigeria, which resulted in over 1,000 deaths and 847 casualties.

Bourne (2015) argues that past Nigerian regimes have faced criticism for poor governance, being blamed for the country's socio-economic issues such as poverty, corruption, poor infrastructure, and terrorism. Consequently, election periods always generate significant interest from the electorates, who hope to elect a candidate capable of addressing these challenges. Given Nigeria's dense population of approximately 220 million people (Adesola, et al., 2024) and its multicultural and multi-ethnic composition, the choice of any presidential

candidate inevitably attracts criticism from different ethnic groups, as articulated in both print and electronic media.

The media's role in perpetuating negative stereotypes is significant, as they can influence language in several ways: establishing new words with new meanings, extending the meanings of existing terms, displacing older meanings with new ones, or stabilizing meanings by reinforcing existing ones (de Souza, 2007, cited in Phili, 2011). In the Nigerian context, for instance, election campaigns always generate new words with loaded messages derived from both indigenous languages and English (Oyeleye & Osisanwo, 2013).

This study, therefore, aims to examine the representation of former Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari in the print media by combining Halliday's transitivity model and corpus linguistics as complementary approaches. To date, no research has employed these two methodologies to analyze the 2015 election campaigns in the Nigerian print media. This study fills the lacuna by using corpus linguistics to identify words that co-occur with Buhari's name and determine whether these words portray him positively or negatively. Additionally, Halliday's functional transitivity model (encompassing material, verbal, relational, and mental processes) is used to analyze how the media use language to empower or disempower Buhari. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Theoretical Framework, Media and Democracy, Research Methods, Results/Discussion, and Conclusion.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The combination of corpus analysis and critical discourse analysis in single research is not a novel practice even though both methods are relatively new movements in linguistics. Recently almost one in five articles of critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) utilized corpus linguistic techniques (Attia, 2022; Flowerdew, 2023; Zhang & Yu, 2023). McEnery and Wilson (2001) cited in Stefanowitsch (2020, p. 2) defines Corpus Linguistics (henceforth CL) as "the study of language based on examples of real-life language use." It is the computational analysis of naturally occurring data. CDA on the other hand, is based on the assumptions that there is a strong connection between linguistic structure and social structure. This means that discourse cannot exist without social meaning but must incorporate social context in its analysis. Thus, the primary aim of CDA is to show how language is related to issues of power, inequality, dominance, and discrimination and how these notions are established, sustained, reproduced, and challenged in specific contexts of language use (Fairclough, 1995, 2015). Fairclough and Wodak (1997) posit that CDA has multiple principles, and one principle related to study is power and ideology.

Power is the control of one group or institution by another, that is when members of a given social group who have power control the acts and minds of members of other groups (van Dijk, 2001; Al-Zubaidi, 2022). Power can be enacted through action and cognition by those who hold power, and these can be challenged and contested by the controlled or less powerful group (Fairclough, 2015). Ideology on the other hand, "is the representation of the way things are which does not accord with reality, but which works in the interest of the dominant classes, groups, or institutions in society (Althusser, 1971, p. 149). One of the domains in which CDA is applied is the media because it reproduces the attitudes of the powerful or dominant group who aligns themselves with certain political views and represent politicians of the other camp in disparaging terms during the process of writing their news (Alafinan, 2019; Kroone et al., 2023).

Another principle of CDA related to study is that it does not have a single method of analysis due to its interdisciplinary nature (van Dijk, 2013; Roscoe, 2024). Halliday's transitivity informs the present study because CDA uses SFL's analytical framework especially those of transitivity and agency to show how ideological processes are manifested as systems of linguistic characteristics and processes. The theory stipulates that language has several social

functions which are represented in the clause (transitivity) system of a language and one of the functions of a clause is that social actors can be represented in different ways to achieve a particular ideological effect.

In the SFL model, a representation of experience consists of the processes (what kind of event/state is being described), the participants that specify the entities involved in the process, that is the actor or agent, the goal; the sayer or senser and the circumstances specifying the when, where, why and how of the process. According to Halliday's SFG model, the processes or functions of language is further sub-divided into six categories namely: *material, mental, verbal, relational, behavioral, and existential* (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

A material process is a process of doing or happening, and the actor is the key participant. The mental process has to do with affection, cognition, perception, or desire (e.g., hear, know, love). Verbal processes include all modes of expressing and indicating, even if they need not be verbal, such as "showing" (e.g., say, warn, argue etc.). The existential process is the process of existing and happening as in *there is (process: existential) a little house (existent) on the mountain (circumstance: place)*. The relational processes are concerned with the process of being in the world of abstract relations (e.g., being or becoming, possessing). They obligatorily require two participants (i.e., the *Carrier & attribute; the possessor and the possession*). The final category of Halliday's processes is the Behavioral processes which focuses on the processes of physiological and psychological behavior. Behavioral processes are typically intransitive, involving only the behavior as participant. If there are two participants, the second participant is Behavior (Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Azhar, 2023).

CDA practitioners also adopt corpus linguistics as one of its analytical methods to realize their specific objectives. Corpus linguistics uses different techniques for analyzing linguistic patterns, and these include frequency analysis, concordance, key word patterns, and collocation. Tawfleck et al. (2022) postulate that frequency is a phenomenon where an analyst calculates the number of times a target item occurs in a corpus, and it is the first step in the process of analysis. Concordance is a display of a search item in a corpus, and it is usually presented on the computer screen in the KWIC (Key Word in Context) format (Mabuya, 2021). This is usually characterized by a search word in the middle with a few context words to the left and to the right of the searched item. Gillings and Mautner (2024) aver that concordance analysis shows how a particular word or phrase is distributed throughout a corpus, whether it is confined to a particular section or found throughout the corpus. It also shows the company in which such items keep in the corpus, whether they are negative or positive. In line with this view, this study, therefore, attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. Which words collocate with the name Buhari in the concordance lines?
2. Do the words represent him positively or negatively?
3. Which linguistic features are used in the representation?

The methodological approach of Corpus Linguistics and CDA has been criticized in some studies. Widdowson (2007) and Baldry (2000) cited in Nwaefuna (2022) argue that users of corpus linguistics and CDA engage in "cherry-picking" of data analysis by picking texts that suit their political agenda and ignoring others. Baldry (2000, p. 36) argues that corpus linguistics "abstracts text from the context," as concordance lines only present a small fraction of words in context. In defense of these criticisms, Stubbs (2001) assert that "to accuse Corpus Linguistics of ignoring context" is strange since CL is a theory of context and the essential tool for analyzing words in context is the concordance.

Therefore, combining Corpus Linguistics and CDA in this study is justified because both methodologies complement each other. First, concordance lines help constrain interpretation to what is contextually plausible by focusing on patterns of lexis and collocations (O'Keeffe & McCarthy, 2010) and CDA facilitates a more in-depth analysis by considering the context of the text and the nature and forms of the genre used (Baker & McEnery, 2015).

MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY

Media constitute channels of communication through which information is transmitted among individuals, embracing various platforms such as radio, television, newspapers, magazines, advertisements, billboards, films, and recordings. Democracy, conversely, is an idealized form of governance wherein citizens actively engage in political processes (Warren, 2017). Media and democracy are interrelated as media have the potential to shape political agendas, while political actors can similarly influence media content. According to Fairclough, (2010, 2015), communication, mediated through language, functions as a social practice due to its role in the negotiation and construction of meaning. Thus, both media and political institutions are social entities as language plays a pivotal role in the dispensation of ideology during electioneering campaigns in Nigeria print media.

There is paucity of research concerning the linguistic representation of presidential candidates during election campaigns in Nigerian print media through the lens of corpus linguistics and Critical discourse analysis. Shopeju and Ojukwu (2008) analyzed the media portrayal of former President Obasanjo's tenure from 1999 to 2007, revealing that he was depicted as an autocratic and corrupt leader who dominated the ruling party and exploited available resources to benefit his loyalists. Ochu (2012) conducted a corpus linguistic analysis of terrorist terminologies in Nigerian online newspapers, examining the linguistic associations of terms related to terror. His findings indicated that word associations are not always lexically congruent but are often semantically related within the context of selected terms. For instance, the concordance lines for 'terrorism' frequently included words like 'anti', 'squad', and 'unit'. Ochu's research is pertinent to the present study as it employs collocation and concordance lines in its analysis.

Several scholars have investigated the representation of social actors in news media using critical discourse analysis and corpus analysis, uncovering media bias in the portrayal of marginalized identities and discourses. Journalists exert influence over readers by creating or reshaping discourses. Notable studies in this domain include those by Chen (2013), Mahmoud and Malmir (2017), and Baker (2009).

Chen (2013) examined the coverage of the Libyan civil war in *China Daily* and *The New York Times*, employing frequency and concordance analysis to identify ideological differences in reporting. The study found that terms like "Qaddafi" and "war" were prevalent in the lexical frequency lists of both newspapers. However, collocations with "Qaddafi" were predominantly negative in *The New York Times*, while *China Daily* presented more neutral and positive descriptions. This implies that the *New York Times* views Gaddafi: the former Chairman of the Revolutionary command and council of Libya as the other.

Mahmoud and Malmir (2017) analyzed the linguistic and semantic representation of Islam and Muslims in US news articles through corpus linguistics, finding that terms such as 'Islam' and 'Muslim' were frequently associated with words like "violence," "religious radicalism," "extremist," and "militants" (p. 135). Foster et al. (2011) argue that these negative portrayals are entrenched in Western ideology.

Baker (2009) scrutinized the terms 'refugee' and 'refugees' in British newspapers using the Wordsmith concordance program. The study revealed that refugees are depicted as uncontrollable natural disasters, suffering collectives, and passive recipients of aid, thereby dehumanizing them and portraying them as the "other," indicative of racist discourse. Van Dijk (2013) posits that racist discourse discriminates against "the other group," perceived as engaging in negative actions that threaten the socio-economic interests of the host country.

The above studies justify the need for this research as Fairclough (2001, p. 29), posits that "language is both a site of and a stake in class struggle, and those who exercise power through language must constantly be involved in struggle with others to defend or lose their positions." It is apparent that Buhari and his opponent, the then President Ebere-Chukwu

Jonathan were in a constant struggle to defend or lose their positions and the media can perpetuate negative stereotypes about a particular social group by adopting a positive or negative way of writing about them and influencing the attitudes of voters. Therefore, the present study explores if media is biased in the representation of former presidential candidate: Muhammadu Buhari in the print media.

RESEARCH METHODS

The data for this study were collected from six selected Nigerian newspapers: *The Guardian*, *Punch*, *Daily Sun*, *The Nation*, *Desert Herald*, and *The Vanguard* online between November 2014 and May 2015 when the election campaigns started and ended. This period was selected because it covered reports of events leading to the Nigerian elections in April and events surrounding the change in government structure in May. The newspapers were selected purposively because they have national coverage, published daily, and are widely read by Nigerians irrespective of their political, social, religious, and regional affiliations. The study employs corpus linguistics which is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. To analyze the data quantitatively, a frequency analysis was done by loading the corpus on Wordsmith tool 7.0. The data were collected from the selected newspapers and saved as plain text. The corpus for analysis generated from the Wordsmith tool were 540465 tokens and 51,265 types.

To analyze the keywords, the researcher compared the Nigerian Election Corpus (NEC) and the British English (BE06) which were retrieved online. The comparison of the two corpora: NEC and BE06 is done by using the keywords tool (Wordsmith 7 tool) which then created the keywords list of 500 words. The top 100 keyword lists were selected for analysis due to time and space constraints. The keywords were grouped into word classes. The word classes were categorized into nouns, verbs, and adjectives to identify lexical items that collocate with the name Buhari. Concordance analysis was then used to examine the data generated in a more qualitative way by choosing five-word spans to the left and right of the keywords. The researcher then analyzed words that were frequently mentioned in the corpus. Thus, the words in the category of nouns: *Boko Haram*, *Corruption*, *Obasanjo*, and the word *cannot* in the category of verb were analyzed. The words were chosen because they have high frequencies and high loglikelihood in terms of statistical measures when computed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses words which collocate with the word *Buhari*. As highlighted in the previous section, the words were selected based on their high frequency and loglikelihood. Concordance analysis was used to determine collocation patterns.

Table 1: Nouns and verb collocating with the term Buhari

No	Word	Collocate frequency	Log-likelihood	Word class
1	Corruption	857	1743.60	Noun
2	Boko	673	1454.72	Noun
3	Haram	666	1425.42	Noun
4	Obasanjo	619	1338	Noun
5	Cannot	383	295.71	Verb

From Table 1 above, the word corruption is strongly associated with the noun Buhari. It has high frequency of 857 and 1743.60 log-likelihood in the corpus. This is followed by the terms Boko and Haram. Boko Haram is a compound word. Both words are mentioned 673 and 666 times with log-likelihood of 1454.72 and 1425.42 respectively. The word *Obasanjo* is frequently mentioned in the corpus. He is mentioned 619 times with 1338 loglikelihood. In the

category of verb, the word *cannot* which depict negative meaning is also mentioned 383 times with 295.71 log-likelihood. The keyword analysis of these terms did not show whether they represent *Buhari* in a negative or positive light. An analysis of the concordance below explains this.

Buhari collocating with corruption via concordance line

76 from the top down, and both Jonathan and **Buhari** have laid out anti-corruption plans. But Jo
 78 through manipulation. I also thought that **Buhari's** reputation as an anti-corruption fighter woul
 90 ongly-imprisoned Dad would recognise that **Buhari's** ambition was to stem corruption. Unlike many
 127 tructure and jobs on the economic side." **Buhari** who claimed corruption has almost become a cul
 145 fighting corruption, Nigerians know that **Buhari** is weighed down by a load of corruption, the l
 207 rrupt of its citizenry. Nigerians expect **Buhari** to tackle corruption and put a halt to the cult
 237 i is a converted democrat as he claimed. **Buhari**'ll fight corruption like I did -Guinea Presid
 249 e placard of the pro-Buhari group read: "**Buhari** will fight corruption." I'm running for Presid
 362 corrupt The president didn't need to ask **Buhari** for his definition of corruption. As a lucky sh
 797 AUSE YOU TO MAKE THE SAME MISTAKES AGAIN **BUHARI** The Pro-Corruption "Saint" > He doesn't intend

Figure 1: Buhari and corruption

The above table shows that Buhari is represented in complex ways as being anti-corruption and fighting it or planning to fight it or weighed down by a load of corruption. The evidence is that he is actor in material processes of *fighting*, *stemming*, and *tackling* corruption (lines 76, 90, 207, 237, 249) and at the same time, he is a goal of being weighed down by corruption (145) as illustrated below:

Line 90: *Buhari's ambition* (agent) *was to stem* (material process) *corruption* (goal)

Line 207: *Buhari* (agent) *to tackle* (material process) *corruption* (goal) and *put a halt* (material process) *to the cult* (goal)

Line 237: *Buhari* (agent) *will fight* (material process) *corruption* (goal) like I did

Line 249: *Buhari* (agent) *will fight* (material process) *corruption* (goal)

Line 145: *Buhari* (goal) *is weighed down* (material process) *by a load of corruption* (agent)

The above lines suggest that Buhari as an agent has some power to stem, tackle and fight corruption because those constructed as agents in a clause can influence change. The media also represent Buhari as being seriously concerned about corruption through material processes in which he is the goal of the actions of a load of corruption which metaphorically weighs him down (line 145). The newspapers that represent him so positively are clearly on his side. But this could also mean that he is so involved in corruption that it weighs down on his conscience.

He is also represented via noun phrases which are used as labelling strategies to portray him as a "*corruption fighter*" or a "*pro-corruption saint*" (line 797). In other words, you cannot be a saint and be pro-corruption. Another significant finding is that Nigerians are represented as wanting or expecting him to fight corruption through the mental processes when one looks to the left of the node word "Buhari" in (line 78): *I* (senser) *also thought* (mental: cognition) *that Buhari's reputation as anti-corruption* (phenomenon). in (Line 90): *Dad* (senser) *would recognize* (mental: cognition) *that Buhari's ambition was to stem corruption* (phenomenon) and in (line 145): *Nigerians* (senser) *know* (mental: cognition) *that Buhari is weighed down by loads of corruption* (phenomenon).

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), the mental process of cognition has to do with verbs of thinking, knowing, understanding and so on and the mental process of perception has to do with seeing, hearing and so on. Mental processes involve two participants: the senser, that is the conscious being involved in a mental process and phenomenon which is what is felt, thought, or perceived by the conscious senser. Therefore, in the above

concordance, words such as *I, Dad, Nigerians, Nigerians* (lines 78, 90, 145) are the sensors who are involved in the mental process by thinking or perceiving what Buhari should do about corruption while Buhari is that which is perceived and thought of in the lines. The media also represent Nigerians as sayers in (line 237: *he (sayer) claimed (verbal) Buhari will fight corruption (verbiage)*), in (line: 362: *The president (sayer) didn't need to ask (verbal) Buhari for his definition of corruption (verbiage)*). Line 237 above reveal that Nigerians are expecting Buhari to fight corruption. At the same time Buhari is ridiculed in line 362 when the president perceived that Buhari is corrupt because he doesn't need to ask him to define corruption. On the same left to Buhari, words such as: *Pro Buhari group* and *You* (lines: 248, 797) reveal that Nigerians are represented as (actors) in the material process: *reading about Buhari and making the mistake again of electing Buhari* (lines 248 and 797) because he is tagged as a *pro-corruption saint*. Buhari on the other hand, is represented as the goal of their actions.

One can conclude that the media represented Buhari negatively to tarnish his image so that he could lose the election. When a group of social actors are represented as objects in the clause and are being dominated by the powerful that they cannot challenge the status quo, this may suggest that they are powerless. Therefore, representing Buhari as the goal of Nigerians' actions shows that he cannot fight corruption that has dominated the society and representing Nigerians as sensors and sayers shows that Nigerians want and expect Buhari to fight corruption since it is one of the social ills that weakens democracy and hinders economic growth of a state (Bhandari, 2023).

Buhari collocating with Boko Haram

16	MEND (Leadership, January 7, 2015) *	Buhari faults crackdown on Boko Haram (P
102	r Northern elements such as IBB and	Buhari as financiers of Boko Haram terrorism
181	Nigs to interrogate the link between	Buhari and violent groups. He was refe
430	PDP members have questioned why he,	Buhari was picked by Boko Haram as part of the team
930	deploy troops to fight Boko Haram.	Buhari described Boko Haram as our people
974	Buhari is a Muslim fundamentalist	Buhari is behind the Boko Haram," "Buh
1,051	* Middle Belt Forum PA MUHAMMADU	BUHARI * Endorsed by MEND * Boko Haram N
1,074	s ploys to play to gallery General	Buhari: Fundamentalist or Demagogue" Ak
1,085	r the Nigerian presidency, Muhammadu	Buhari, has vowed to defeat Boko Haram
1,182	APC presidential candidate, Muhammadu	Buhari (rtd) is an Islamic fundamentalist
1,470	DANT? *Boko Haram wants talk---picks	Buhari as mentor----- (Punch Nov. 2
2,174	mist insurgency Boko Haram.Muhammadu	Buhari won 54% of 29 million votes cast over

Figure 2: Buhari and Boko Haram

The concordance lines above show that the name Buhari co-occurs with the following noun phrases: *Boko Haram* (lines 16, 430, 930, 974, 1051, 1085, 1470 & 2174), *Boko Haram terrorism* (102), *violent groups* (181), *Fundamentalist or Demagogue* (1074), *Islamic fundamentalist* (1182) and *Muslim fundamentalist* (974). Following Halliday's (1994) transitivity model, Buhari is the agent in the clause in line 16: *Buhari(agent) faults crackdown (material process) on Boko Haram (goal)* while *Boko Haram is the goal* and in line 1085 Buhari is the sayer: *Muhammadu Buhari (sayer), has vowed (verbal process) to defeat Boko Haram (verbiage)*. Being an agent means he has power to influence certain actions. Thus, the media positioned him as someone who finds faults with the series of measures to restrict the Boko Haram insurgency (line 16). Following Halliday (2004) transitivity model, Buhari is also positioned as a sayer in the verbal process (line 1085). He is represented as someone who is determined to defeat Boko Haram (1085). In other words, he is not supportive of Boko Haram if he finds fault with the measures adopted to crackdown the group and vowed to defeat them. This shows that Buhari is represented in a complex way.

Other complex ways of representing Buhari are also exemplified in lines 974: *Buhari* (carrier) *is* (relational) *a Muslim fundamentalist* (attribute) and in line 1182 *Muhammadu Buhari* (*rtd*) (carrier) *is* (relational) *an Islamic fundamentalist* (attribute). In the above lines, Buhari is positioned as a carrier in the attributive clause. As a carrier, he is attributed the quality that makes him one of the religious extremists (lines 974 and 1182). Such representations show that Buhari is stereotyped. The media also construct Buhari as the beneficiary of Boko Haram kind gestures in lines 430: *Buhari* (goal) *was picked* (material process) by *Boko Haram* (agent/object) as part of *the team to have talks with government of Nigeria* (expansion of the line), in line 1051: *BUHARI* (goal) * *Endorsed* (material process) by *MEND* * *Boko Haram* (agent/object) and 1470: *Boko Haram* (agent) *wants talk---picks* (material process) *Buhari* as *mentor-----*(goal)

In line 430 and 1051, Buhari is positioned as the goal in the passive voice with the preposition: *by*. This means that the agent of the sentence behind the preposition “*by*” in the two lines are doing the action. In lines 430 Boko Haram is doing the action while Buhari is the beneficiary of the action. In line 1051 both MEND and Boko Haram are doing the action and Buhari is the beneficiary of such kind gesture. MEND is a militant group in the Niger Delta threatening Nigeria's economic security (Mustapha, 2021), while Boko Haram is a terrorist group causing widespread disruption to Nigerians' lives (Nyiayaana, 2021). Buhari is also described as Boko Haram negotiator in line 430. He was also described as a supporter of Boko Haram by being endorsed by them (line 1051). In line 1470, Boko haram is positioned as the agent performing positive action on Buhari in the material process *picks* and Buhari is the goal that is assigned the quality of being Boko Haram’s mentor.

Other instances where Buhari is constructed as a supporter of Boko Haram are lines 930: *Buhari* (*sayer*) *described* (process: verbal) *Boko Haram* as *our people* (*verbiage*) and 974: *Buhari* (*subject*) *is behind* (*preposition*) *the Boko Haram,*” (*object*). In line 930, Buhari is positioned as a sayer in the verbal process because he described Boko haram as our people. According to Halliday the verbiage in the clause is very significant because it corresponds to what is said or shows the mind of the speaker (Buhari) who is the sayer in the clause structure. The use of the pronoun “our” suggests that Buhari as a Muslim and other Muslims alike accept the group as one of them. Buhari’s support for Boko Haram is also shown in line 974 where he appears as the subject in the clause followed by a preposition: “*behind*” and the object: “*Boko Haram.*” He is constructed as being behind the group. In line 102, Buhari is also represented via noun phrase “*financier of Boko Haram terrorism*” which are used as labelling strategy to portray him as Boko Haram benefactor. Marvanci (2009) argues that the terms Islam and Boko Haram have become negative due to their association with political activism, extremism, and terrorism. However, media portrayal of Buhari as connected to Boko Haram would discourage Nigerians from voting for him, as it could be seen as supporting Boko Haram's anti-Western education ideology.

Associating Buhari with Obasanjo

208 president Olusegun Obasanjo has said that Buhari would be better placed to end the Bo
 224 TF? They accused Obasanjo for covering up Buhari. They claimed without any shred of evide
 254 Obasanjo Ibrahim Babangida, T.Y. Danjuma, Buhari’s win reflects the continued influence of t
 475 Obasanjo,of the military junta, appointed Buhari the Federal Commissioner (Minister) for Pet
 674 Obasanjo, 1999 The documentary criticized Buhari for heading PTF’s Board, whereas PTF is t
 816 my corruption. Obasanjo was digging into Buhari, he set up probe of PTF. They probed Buhari
 1,189 Obasanjo ordered found nothing against Buhari. Since President Goodluck Jonathan’s handl
 1,198 w Obasanjo and APC leaders branding Gen Buhari to be the president of this country. “I am

Figure 3: Buhari and Obasanjo’s friendship

The above concordance lines show that the relationship between Buhari and Obasanjo is that of close associates or friends. This is evident when one looks to the left of Buhari. Obasanjo is represented as the actor performing the role of protecting and supporting Buhari through the material process of *covering up Buhari* (line 224), *appointed* (line 475), *ordered*, *found nothing* (line 1189) and *branding* (line 1198). Obasanjo is also represented as a sayer: *President Obasanjo* (sayer) has said (verbal) *that Buhari would be better placed to end the Boko Haram* (verbiage) line 208) when he claims that Buhari is capable of defeating Boko Haram. As an actor the media empowered him through the material and verbal processes to protect and support Buhari while Buhari as a goal is represented as a beneficiary of this kind gesture.

In addition, Buhari is represented as a close ally of Obasanjo when one looks to the right of Buhari. He is attributed positive roles characterized by adjectival phrase such as: *better placed to end the boko* (line 208), a clause such as: *“Buhari’s win reflects the continued influence of t”* (line 254), nominal phrase: *Head of sates and oil minister* (line 359), *Federal commissioner minister* (line 475), and verb phrase: *to be the President of the country* (line 1198). For instance, line 475 shows Obasanjo’s role as an actor performing the action of appointing Buhari as the Federal Commissioner (Minister) for Petroleum. The positive media representations of Buhari as a friend of Obasanjo in lines 224 is not clarified. In line 224, it was not stated why and what Obasanjo is covering Buhari of and why? However, an expansion of line 224 below:

“They accused Obasanjo for covering up Buhari. They claimed without any shred of evidence that some PTF money (up to N25 billion was lost)”

reveals that Obasanjo was accused of shielding Buhari from the allegations levelled against him when 25 billion Naira from the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) went missing. This implies that Buhari was accused of misappropriation of public funds but was protected by Obasanjo.

In addition, the name Buhari co -occurs with social actors such as Obasanjo, Ibrahim Babangida and T.Y Danjuma to the left of Buhari in line 254 but the action they performed on Buhari is also not specified. This is because there are no material processes that indicate their actions on Buhari. Buhari is only assigned the noun “win” in the clause which depicts victory. The extension of line 254 below:

and 1940s, who have decisively shaped Nigeria’s postcolonial trajectory. They include Yakubu Gowon, Olusegun Obasanjo, Ibrahim Babangida, T.Y. Danjuma, and Buhari. Buhari’s win reflects the continued influence of that generation, but this decade may be the last where they----

also reveals that Buhari’s victory at the poll was possible because of the influence of Obasanjo, Ibrahim Babangida and T.Y. Danjuma who are said to have shaped Nigeria’s postcolonial leadership in 1940s. These representations of Buhari by the media show that both Obasanjo and Buhari are friends.

Buhari collocating with the modal auxiliary verb Cannot

1 igeria to Dubai in four years. (Muhammadu Buhari cannot achieve that within four years. I kn
4 contrary to what the magazine thinks, Buhari cannot do a better job of tacking Boko Har
6 (APC) presidential candidate, Gen. Muhammadu Buhari cannot stop Jonathan’s re-election bid. Exce
7 mmands are not the same, it then means that Buhari cannot do better than Jonathan. But one thing
9 he people supporting Buhari, they know he (Buhari) cannot deliver but they are pushing him for
10 And why would anyone say that General Buhari cannot pull through some two hours of hot debate
33 President Jonathan observed that Buhari cannot remember his own phone-number
16 and truth shall find him out. Truly, Buhari cannot change. He is not the change we need. V
1,583 nt it is going to be very difficult for Buhari. He cannot revamp the economy of this country

Figure 4: Buhari and the auxiliary verb “cannot”

Figure 4 above shows that the name ‘Buhari’ (noun) co-occurs with the auxiliary verb “cannot” and the main verbs: “achieve,” “do,” “stop,” “deliver,” “pull,” “remember,” “change” and “revamp.” This negative form of ‘can’ (a modal verb signifying ability) is used to construct Buhari as incapable of running the country. In line 16 the phrase “cannot change” constructs the rigid and inflexible ex-military General who cannot change the values that he acquired in the army that are based on following orders without question. The phrases in line 10 “cannot pull through two hours of hot debate” and “cannot remember his phone number” (line 33) are insults on Buhari’s intellectual ability. Reference to his inability to stand the rigor of two hours debate illustrated in line 10 and inability to remember his phone number in line 33 suggests that because of his limited intellectual capacity, he cannot deal with processing complex issues that a leader needs to deal with, especially dissenting voices that are at odds with his line of thinking. The following verb phrases: “cannot achieve that within four years,” (Line 1), “cannot do a better job of tackling Boko Haram” (4), “cannot deliver,” (9) are attacks on Buhari’s suitability as a leader, that he cannot rule the country if voted into power. In lines 6 and 7, Buhari is represented as being no match for Jonathan in that he “cannot stop Jonathan’s re-election” (line 6) and “cannot do better than Jonathan” line (7) irrespective of his potential. Buhari is represented as being unable to repair the damaged economy he might inherit if he won the elections (1583). However, these negative constructions of Buhari by the media has the effect of influencing voters not to have enough confidence in him and therefore vote against him.

CONCLUSION

The study used triangulation methodology to analyze media portrayals of Buhari during the 2015 Nigerian political campaigns. The findings showed that Buhari was depicted more negatively than positively, often linked with *corruption*, *Boko Haram* and the verb *cannot*. The media used various linguistic techniques, like metaphor, noun, verbs, pronoun, preposition, adjectival phrases, material, relational and verbal processes to attack his intellectual ability, portray him as corrupt and labeled as Boko Haram financier. Despite his positive association with former head of State Obasanjo, which helped his election success, he was also linked to crime.

The corpus analysis showed that newspaper articles are platforms for negative and positive words that frequently occurred with the node words. Therefore, the study concludes that the media is not neutral in the representation of Buhari but expresses the opinions and attitudes of those whose interest are being served.

The study is significant because it shows that the triangulation method is plausible as it reveals how media influences public perception and how critical discourse analysis can effect change in Nigerian politics. The study recommends that media should report ethically on political developments, recognizing that negative portrayals can be ineffective, as seen with Retired General Buhari's election victory at the poll despite negative coverage.

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