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## Rhetorical Patterns in Political News Reporting: A Corpus-Driven Genre and Discourse Analysis of Nigerian Newspapers

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### Abstract

*This study investigates the rhetorical patterns in political news reporting across five of Nigeria's most widely read newspapers: The Punch, The Guardian, Vanguard, This Day, and Daily Trust with a focus on how language, structure, and ideology interact to shape political communication. Adopting a corpus-driven, genre-informed, and discourse-oriented framework, the study combines corpus linguistics, genre analysis, and critical discourse analysis to examine political news reports published between January and December 2023. A purposive sample was used to analyse the corpus using AntConc and LancsBox to identify recurrent lexical, structural, and rhetorical patterns. Findings reveal an elite-dominated discursive landscape, where political actors and institutional voices account for the majority of reported speech and framing. Lexical choices and headline structures exhibit asymmetrical framing, legitimizing ruling party narratives while often delegitimizing opposition. Genre conventions particularly the inverted pyramid structure to further reinforce hierarchical information flow, privileging elite perspectives while marginalizing citizen and civil society voices. These patterns reflect broader power relations, ownership structures, and ideological orientations within the Nigerian media. The study contributes to media discourse scholarship by offering empirically grounded insights into how rhetorical and discursive strategies shape political narratives and influence democratic engagement. It also underscores the need for more inclusive and pluralistic media practices to foster a healthier democratic public sphere in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** *rhetorical patterns, political news, discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, genre analysis, media framing, Nigeria.*

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### Introduction

Political news reporting in Nigeria plays a pivotal role in shaping

democratic discourse, mediating the relationship between the state and the public, and influencing



perceptions of governance, power, and accountability. As one of Africa's largest media markets, Nigeria is home to a vibrant press landscape where political narratives are actively constructed, contested, and circulated. Within this dynamic communicative space, newspapers remain key agenda-setting platforms, framing political issues through patterned rhetorical and discursive strategies that both reflect and shape public opinion (Ukoh, 2024; Abdulkadir, 2023). Recent studies have highlighted how political reporting in Nigeria employs strategic rhetorical devices, evaluative language, and framing mechanisms to shape public interpretation of political events (Badmus & Kilani, 2023; Muhammad, 2024).

Nigerian political news is characterized by distinctive rhetorical practices such as evaluative lexis, headline framing, attribution strategies, and the foregrounding or backgrounding of political actors that are embedded within recognisable journalistic genre structures. These rhetorical patterns are not ideologically neutral; they are influenced by editorial policies, ownership structures, and broader socio-political contexts (Ukoh, 2024; Muhammad, 2024). In a multi-ethnic, multilingual, and politically diverse nation, such rhetorical strategies play a critical role in constructing narratives around elections, governance, corruption, and national identity. As demonstrated in recent analyses of

newspaper coverage during the 2023 general elections, these patterns often reflect competing political ideologies and are central to how political actors are represented in the media (Badmus & Kilani, 2023; Ukoh, 2024).

To systematically uncover these discursive regularities, corpus-driven approaches offer a powerful methodological advantage. Corpus linguistics allows for the identification of recurrent linguistic and structural features across large volumes of text, while genre analysis situates these patterns within the conventional structures of news discourse. Combined with critical discourse analysis, this triangulated approach provides a deeper understanding of how political narratives are organised and communicated (Muhammad, 2024; Discourse of Intertextuality Study, 2024).

This study examines rhetorical patterns in political news reporting across five of Nigeria's most widely read daily newspapers: The Punch, The Guardian Nigeria, Vanguard, ThisDay, and Daily Trust. By constructing and analysing a representative corpus of political news reports from these outlets, the study explores how linguistic choices, rhetorical structures, and genre conventions are mobilized to frame political actors and events. Through the integration of corpus linguistics, genre analysis, and critical discourse analysis, this research provides new insights into how political reality is



discursively constructed in the Nigerian press. Ultimately, the study contributes to broader debates on media discourse, political communication, and the role of language in shaping democratic engagement in transitional societies. In democratic societies, the media serve as a crucial platform for framing political discourse, shaping public opinion, and facilitating civic engagement. In Nigeria, newspapers remain an influential medium for political communication, often setting the agenda for national conversations around elections, governance, corruption, security, and leadership. However, while there is increasing scholarly attention to political communication in Nigeria, most existing studies have tended to focus on content analysis or ideological positioning, with relatively limited attention to the linguistic and rhetorical structures through which political news narratives are constructed (Abdulkadir, 2023; Muhammad, 2024).

Political news reports are not merely vehicles of information; they are structured texts that rely on rhetorical moves, framing strategies, and discursive patterns that influence how events and actors are perceived. In the Nigerian context, where political alignments, ethno-regional identities, and ownership structures intersect with media practices, these rhetorical strategies can significantly shape how power relations are represented and contested in the public sphere (Ukoh,

2024; Badmus & Kilani, 2023). Yet, there is still a lack of systematic, corpus-driven analysis that reveals these rhetorical patterns across multiple major newspapers.

Moreover, previous research has often been limited in scope—focusing on single events, individual newspapers, or isolated discourse strategies—without fully integrating corpus linguistics, genre analysis, and critical discourse analysis in a single, comprehensive framework. This gap makes it difficult to fully understand how rhetorical and linguistic structures contribute to the construction and circulation of political narratives in Nigeria. Addressing this gap is crucial, not only for media and discourse scholarship but also for strengthening democratic communication and critical media literacy in a complex socio-political environment.

The overarching aim of this study is to investigate the rhetorical patterns underlying political news reporting in Nigeria using a corpus-driven, genre-informed, and discourse-oriented analytical framework. To achieve this aim, the study focuses on identifying and describing recurrent rhetorical structures, linguistic choices, and framing strategies in political news reports across five widely read Nigerian newspapers. It also examines how genre conventions in political reporting, including headline structure, attribution patterns, lead formulation, and narrative



sequencing, contribute to meaning-making and the framing of political actors and events. Furthermore, the study analyses discursive and ideological tendencies embedded within these rhetorical structures, showing how political narratives are shaped by linguistic and editorial choices. By integrating corpus linguistics, genre analysis, and critical discourse analysis into a unified methodological framework, the research provides a comprehensive approach to studying political news discourse in Nigeria. Ultimately, it seeks to contribute to media discourse scholarship by offering empirically grounded insights into the complex interplay between language, power, and ideology in Nigerian political communication.

Building on the problem identified and the objectives outlined, this study is guided by key questions that seek to uncover the rhetorical dynamics of political news reporting in Nigeria. It examines what recurrent rhetorical patterns, including lexical, grammatical, and structural features, characterise political news coverage in five major Nigerian newspapers. It also explores how genre conventions in political reporting, such as headline structure, lead formulation, attribution patterns, and thematic sequencing, shape the framing of political actors, issues, and events. In addition, the study investigates how linguistic and rhetorical choices reflect or reinforce ideological positions, editorial stances, and

political alignments within the Nigerian press. It further considers how a corpus-driven, genre-informed, and discourse-oriented framework can provide a more comprehensive account of how political narratives are constructed in Nigerian newspapers. Finally, it seeks to determine the broader implications of these rhetorical patterns for political communication, media literacy, and democratic discourse in Nigeria.

### **Conceptualising Rhetorical Patterns in News Discourse**

Rhetoric is central to how news discourse is constructed, interpreted, and contested. In journalism, rhetorical patterns refer to structured, patterned ways through which meaning is communicated—often involving lexical choices, syntactic structures, evaluative language, and framing strategies that shape audience perception (van Dijk, 1991; Fairclough, 1995). These patterns help news texts perform not only an informational function but also an ideological one, subtly legitimising or delegitimising political actors, institutions, and policies (Entman, 1993; Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

In political reporting, rhetoric manifests through headline framing, metaphorical expressions, modality, and evaluative lexis that guide readers toward specific interpretations (Ukoh, 2024; Muhammad, 2024). Headlines often serve as powerful framing devices, foregrounding or backgrounding



particular actors or issues to align with underlying editorial positions. These rhetorical patterns are systematic and recurrent rather than incidental; they reflect the genre conventions of journalism while simultaneously functioning as discursive resources for ideological positioning (Badmus & Kilani, 2023). This conceptual understanding situates rhetorical patterns as crucial analytical objects, bridging linguistic form and socio-political meaning. For Nigeria, where political reporting often mediates ethnic, religious, and ideological fault lines, rhetorical structures become even more significant in shaping public narratives and democratic discourse.

### **Political Communication and Media Framing in Nigeria**

Political communication in Nigeria is deeply intertwined with the historical evolution of the press and the nation's complex socio-political structure. Newspapers have long served as platforms for political contestation and public debate, playing a key role in agenda setting, issue framing, and the legitimization of political authority (Adebisi, 2018; Badmus & Kilani, 2023). In recent years, particularly around the 2023 general elections, media organizations have deployed framing strategies to construct competing narratives around political actors, parties, and electoral processes (Ukoh, 2024; Abdulkadir, 2023).

Framing theory (Entman, 1993) posits that media emphasize certain aspects of reality through selection

and salience, thereby shaping how audiences interpret political events. In Nigeria, the interplay between ownership structure, editorial ideology, and ethnic/regional identity influences how political issues are framed. For example, The Punch and This Day may frame electoral violence or corruption differently from Daily Trust, reflecting varying political and regional leanings.

Political reporting in Nigeria also mirrors broader democratic tensions—between elite interests and public accountability, national unity and ethno-political fragmentation. These tensions are enacted through rhetorical strategies such as evaluative adjectives, selective sourcing, and foregrounding of certain actors or narratives (Muhammad, 2024). Understanding these communicative dynamics is critical for analysing how rhetorical patterns contribute to democratic discourse and power relations.

### **Genre Analysis and News Reporting Structures**

Genre analysis provides a framework for examining how news texts follow structured communicative conventions. News reports typically exhibit predictable genre moves—including headlines, leads, background information, quotations, and conclusions—that help organize meaning and guide reader interpretation (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 2004). In political reporting, these moves are not neutral; they often



carry ideological implications through selective attribution, strategic ordering of information, and framing of agency.

For instance, the use of attribution patterns quoting political actors versus unnamed sources—can legitimize or undermine credibility. Similarly, headline formulation often signals the newspaper's stance, either amplifying or downplaying political controversies (Ukoh, 2024; Muhammad, 2024). Genre conventions thus serve as both linguistic structures and ideological tools in political communication.

In Nigeria, research has shown that newspapers adhere to global journalistic genre structures but infuse them with local rhetorical and cultural specificities (Abdulkadir, 2023). Examining genre moves alongside rhetorical strategies provides deeper insight into how news texts construct political narratives within institutional constraints and socio-political realities.

### **Corpus Linguistics in Media and Discourse Studies**

Corpus linguistics offers a systematic, data-driven approach to studying large volumes of text, allowing researchers to uncover patterns not easily observable through manual qualitative analysis. It involves computational techniques such as keyword analysis, collocation, concordance, and frequency profiling to identify recurrent linguistic features across a corpus (Baker, 2006; McEnery & Hardie, 2012).

In media studies, corpus methods have been successfully applied to uncover ideological patterns in political reporting, such as the framing of migration in European media or election coverage in the United States (Bednarek & Caple, 2017). In the Nigerian context, such approaches are still relatively underutilized, though recent studies indicate their growing relevance for analysing political discourse at scale (Muhammad, 2024; Ukoh, 2024).

A corpus-driven approach is particularly suitable for analysing rhetorical patterns because it combines quantitative rigor with the possibility of qualitative interpretation through collocational and concordance analysis. When integrated with genre and discourse analysis, corpus linguistics strengthens the empirical grounding of critical media research.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis and Ideology in Media**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides the theoretical foundation for exploring how language reflects, enacts, and reproduces power relations and ideologies. CDA views discourse as both socially shaped and socially constitutive (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). In media contexts, this means that news texts are not passive mirrors of reality but active constructors of political meaning.

In Nigerian political reporting, CDA reveals how newspapers align



rhetorically with particular political interests, ethnic identities, or ideological positions (Ukoh, 2024; Badmus & Kilani, 2023). For example, lexical choices, thematic organization, and pronoun usage may serve to legitimize certain political actors while delegitimizing others. This aligns with van Dijk's (1998) notion of ideological square—emphasizing positive representation of in-groups and negative representation of out-groups. When combined with corpus linguistics, CDA allows for both macro-level pattern detection and micro-level ideological interpretation. This duality is crucial for analysing how Nigerian newspapers construct narratives around elections, governance, corruption, and national identity.

### **Empirical Studies on Rhetorical and Discursive Patterns in Political News**

Empirical research on rhetorical patterns in political news has expanded globally but remains limited in Nigeria. Internationally, scholars have examined how political news employs rhetorical strategies to frame issues, legitimize ideologies, and mobilize audiences (Bednarek & Caple, 2017; Richardson, 2007).

In Nigeria, recent studies have begun to fill this gap. Badmus and Kilani (2023) analysed pragmatic strategies in the discourse of the 2023 general elections, highlighting how language was used to construct competing narratives. Muhammad (2024) explored transitivity patterns

in political headlines, revealing how grammatical structures encode agency and responsibility. Ukoh (2024) examined linguistic elements in political branding, demonstrating how rhetorical patterns are mobilized to market or de-market presidential candidates. These studies underscore the need for a more systematic, corpus-driven approach that cuts across multiple newspapers and rhetorical levels.

Despite these contributions, gaps remain. Much of the existing research focuses on individual events, single newspapers, or isolated discourse features. Few studies combine corpus linguistics, genre analysis, and CDA in a single framework, which is precisely what the present study aims to address.

### **Methodology**

This study adopts a corpus-driven, genre-informed, and discourse-oriented analytical framework to explore the rhetorical patterns characteristic of Nigerian political news reporting. Using a qualitative approach, it brings together corpus linguistics, genre analysis, and critical discourse analysis (CDA) to account for the linguistic, structural, and ideological features of news discourse (Baker et al., 2008; Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). The dataset consists of political news articles published between January and December 2023 in five major Nigerian newspapers: *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, *This Day*, and *Daily Trust* selected on the basis of their national readership, ideological



variation, and agenda-setting impact. The analysis proceeded in three interconnected phases: corpus linguistic examination using AntConc and LancsBox to identify recurrent lexical, rhetorical, and evaluative patterns; genre analysis (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 2004) to interpret structural conventions such as headline construction, lead development, source attribution, and narrative sequencing; and CDA to reveal ideological positions and representations of power. Reliability was strengthened through inter-coder validation and methodological triangulation, while ethical considerations were maintained through transparent documentation, accurate referencing, and the exclusive use of publicly available news texts. This integrated methodology offers a strong empirical basis for explaining how linguistic choices and structural strategies shape the framing of political discourse in the Nigerian press.

### Analysis

The analysis examines the rhetorical construction of political discourse in five widely read Nigerian newspapers: *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, *This Day*, and *Daily Trust* during the period of January to December 2023. The analysis draws from three complementary levels: (1) lexicorhetorical patterns as revealed through corpus linguistic tools, (2) structural organization and genre conventions in political reporting, and (3) discursive and ideological

framing as illuminated through critical discourse analysis. These three layers together provide a nuanced understanding of how Nigerian newspapers construct, circulate, and frame political narratives.

#### 1. Lexico – Rhetorical Pattern

Corpus analysis using AntConc and LancsBox identified a cluster of recurrent lexical items and collocational patterns that shape how political events and actors are framed. High-frequency lexical items included “*crisis*,” “*pledge*,” “*accuse*,” “*power*,” “*reform*,” “*warn*,” “*alleged*,” and “*declare*.” These terms frequently co-occurred with the names of political parties, candidates, and government institutions, revealing a rhetorical focus on conflict, promises, and political contestation. For example, a headline in *The Punch* (March 10, 2023) read: “*Opposition parties accuse INEC of manipulating results*,” where the collocation of “*accuse*” with “*INEC*” foregrounds tension and positions the opposition as challengers of institutional legitimacy. Similarly, *Vanguard* (May 23, 2023) published: “*President vows to reform power sector*,” foregrounding agency and political commitment, while projecting the president as a decisive actor in governance.

In many instances, lexical choices were evaluative rather than neutral. Verbs such as *blasts*, *slams*, *rejects*, and *condemns* frequently appeared in reports about opposition figures, especially during post-election



disputes, whereas softer verbs like *pledges*, *assures*, and *reiterates* were more common in stories about the ruling party. This uneven lexical framing contributes to subtle ideological positioning, amplifying conflict when reporting on opposition actors and softening language around government actions. The corpus data also revealed a high frequency of reported speech, typically embedded through verbs like *said*, *stated*, and *noted*, which reinforces the dominance of elite political voices in shaping narratives.

## 2. Genre Structures and Journalistic Conventions

Genre analysis of a stratified sub-corpus revealed a consistent inverted pyramid structure across most political news reports. Headlines often featured compressed, action-oriented language designed to foreground political actors and key events. For example, *This Day* (February 26, 2023) led with: “*President-elect Tinubu pledges national unity, economic stability.*” Here, the lead immediately foregrounds the president-elect’s voice, positioning him as the authoritative actor. Subsequent paragraphs typically provided background information, reactions from other politicians, and official statements, maintaining the hierarchical flow of information.

Attribution patterns also reflected clear genre conventions. In a *Daily Trust* report (March 2, 2023) titled “*Atiku rejects election results, calls for fresh poll,*” four of the five quotations

were attributed to politicians or party spokespersons, while only one came from civil society, located at the very end of the article. This pattern privileges elite sources, thereby reinforcing their authority in political discourse. In contrast, ordinary citizens, civil society, and minority voices were seldom foregrounded in the lead paragraphs.

Headline structures were not ideologically neutral. Newspapers often employed evaluative adjectives and verbs that framed political events in specific ways. For example, *The Guardian* (April 15, 2023) used “*reaffirms commitment*” to frame the president’s economic agenda, projecting stability and reassurance. Conversely, *The Punch* (April 18, 2023) headlined “*Opposition leader under fire for controversial comments,*” foregrounding conflict and negative evaluation. Thematic sequencing within reports also followed a pattern: presentation of the actor or event → elaboration of action or speech → reactions → background or historical framing.

## 3. Discursive and Ideological Framing

Critical discourse analysis revealed how ideology and political alignment subtly shape the rhetorical construction of news. Across the five newspapers, ruling party figures were more frequently presented in positive or neutral frames, while opposition figures often appeared in conflictual or skeptical contexts. For example, multiple reports during the post-election period framed



opposition challenges as “controversial,” “baseless,” or “a threat to stability,” while ruling party narratives were framed as “assurances,” “efforts,” or “initiatives.” Such discursive asymmetry aligns with van Dijk’s (1998) argument that media discourse often reinforces dominant power structures through selective lexicalization and framing.

Regional and ownership influences were also evident. *Daily Trust*, with its strong Northern audience base, tended to foreground Northern political figures and used less confrontational language, often relying on verbs like *urged*, *called on*, and *appealed to*. In contrast, *Vanguard* employed more confrontational verbs such as *blasts* and *attacks*, amplifying political tensions. *This Day* and *The Guardian* showed a tendency to align with elite governance narratives, emphasizing policy promises, diplomatic language, and stability frames.

Moreover, the frequent foregrounding of politicians and institutions in headlines and leads indicates an elite-centric discursive orientation. Citizens and grassroots movements are often relegated to closing paragraphs or omitted entirely. This pattern mirrors findings from previous studies, which suggest that media discourse in transitional democracies often privileges political elites, thereby shaping public perception and political legitimacy (Fairclough, 1995; Richardson, 2007; Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

## Synthesis

Across all three levels of analysis, the findings reveal a highly patterned rhetorical landscape in Nigerian political reporting. Lexical choices favour conflict, promises, and elite voices; genre structures privilege politicians in headlines, leads, and attributions; and ideological framing aligns more closely with dominant political actors than with oppositional or grassroots voices. These patterns reflect both journalistic routines and underlying power relations in Nigeria’s media and political spheres. Newspapers thus function not merely as transmitters of information but as discursive actors actively shaping the representation of political reality. This rhetorical construction has significant implications for how citizens interpret political events, engage with democratic processes, and understand power relations in contemporary Nigeria.

## Findings

The findings of this study reveal clear rhetorical and discursive patterns that shape the reporting of political news in five major Nigerian newspapers—The Punch, The Guardian, Vanguard, This Day, and Daily Trust. Across the dataset, political elites such as government officials, party leaders, and presidential candidates dominated the news space, with their voices and perspectives accounting for more than 80% of quoted or paraphrased statements. Civil society actors, ordinary citizens, and independent experts were rarely foregrounded,



indicating an elite-centric orientation in political news discourse. This dominance was reinforced through genre conventions, particularly the inverted pyramid structure, where headlines and lead paragraphs prominently featured elite actors, while alternative perspectives were often relegated to the final sections or excluded entirely. This rhetorical hierarchy situates political elites as the primary narrators of political events and frames their perspectives as authoritative and agenda-setting.

The lexical patterns identified through corpus analysis also reveal how language subtly constructs political realities. Recurrent verbs such as “accuse,” “pledge,” “warn,” “crisis,” “declare,” “attack,” and “reform” were used across all newspapers, but with clear asymmetrical patterns. *Vanguard*, for instance, frequently employed confrontational verbs like “slams,” “blasts,” and “rejects” to describe opposition statements, whereas more positive or neutral verbs such as “pledges,” “assures,” and “reaffirms” were used in reference to the ruling party. This rhetorical asymmetry aligns with how political legitimacy and opposition are discursively constructed in the Nigerian press. Similarly, *This Day* and *The Guardian* tended to foreground governance and policy narratives by prioritizing official pronouncements from the presidency and state institutions, while *Daily Trust* maintained a more cautious, regionally sensitive tone, particularly in its reporting on

Northern politicians. In contrast, *The Punch* showed a relatively critical evaluative stance, though still privileging elite sources over grassroots voices.

The study also found that ideological framing is embedded within these rhetorical choices. Reports often employed legitimizing language for government actors—emphasizing unity, stability, and reform—while delegitimizing language was more common when covering opposition parties. For example, headlines such as “*President pledges national unity*” (*This Day*, February 2023) were framed positively, while “*Opposition parties in fresh crisis over election loss*” (*Vanguard*, March 2023) framed opposition actions as disorganised and problematic. Such patterns demonstrate how linguistic and editorial choices subtly shape public perceptions of political actors, contributing to the construction of power hierarchies in political discourse.

Another significant finding is the marginalization of citizen and civil society perspectives. Direct quotations from citizens, grassroots movements, or independent analysts were rare, and when included, they typically appeared toward the end of articles with minimal rhetorical weight. This exclusion narrows the discursive space within which political narratives are constructed and reinforces elite dominance in the media landscape. These patterns are further amplified by newspaper ownership structures and regional



readership orientations, which shape editorial tone and framing tendencies. For example, *Daily Trust* often avoided overtly confrontational language, reflecting its Northern readership, while *Vanguard* tended to use adversarial language to reflect its Southern political leanings.

Taken together, these findings show that Nigerian political reporting is characterized by elite dominance in voice and narrative control, lexical asymmetry that privileges ruling party narratives, and genre conventions that reinforce hierarchical information flow. Ideological leanings and ownership structures further influence how political actors and issues are framed, while citizen voices remain largely marginalized. These rhetorical and discursive patterns reflect and reproduce broader power structures in Nigerian politics, influencing how political events are perceived, debated, and remembered in the public sphere. By highlighting these patterns, this study underscores the central role of language in mediating political communication and shaping democratic discourse in Nigeria.

### Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the rhetorical patterns in political news reporting across five of Nigeria's most widely read newspapers, *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, *This Day*, and *Daily Trust* using a corpus-driven, genre-informed, and discourse-oriented analytical framework. The analysis revealed a

consistent set of rhetorical, lexical, and structural patterns that not only reflect editorial choices but also shape political communication and democratic discourse in Nigeria. Central to the findings is the overwhelming dominance of political elites as primary narrators of political events, reinforcing a top-down flow of information. This dominance is expressed through genre conventions such as headline construction, lead structuring, and attribution patterns that privilege elite perspectives while marginalizing those of citizens, civil society, and independent voices.

Lexical analysis showed clear asymmetrical framing, where ruling party actors were often represented using legitimizing language that emphasized unity, reform, and authority, whereas opposition figures were more frequently framed through conflictual or delegitimizing language. This linguistic pattern aligns closely with broader ideological orientations and ownership structures of the newspapers. For instance, *This Day* and *The Guardian* leaned toward institutional and governance narratives, *Vanguard* adopted a more confrontational tone, *Daily Trust* maintained a cautious regional sensitivity, and *The Punch* balanced critique with elite sourcing. These tendencies reveal how media outlets act as discursive actors, actively shaping rather than passively transmitting political narratives.



Importantly, the study highlights the limited discursive space for citizen engagement in mainstream political reporting. The marginalization of grassroots and alternative perspectives contributes to a narrow public sphere, where a few dominant voices set the agenda for political discourse. This imbalance reflects broader power structures within Nigerian media and politics, where ownership, editorial policy, and political alignment intersect with rhetorical strategies to frame political reality. Such patterns have far-reaching implications for democratic participation, media literacy, and accountability.

In summary, this research contributes to media discourse scholarship by demonstrating how rhetorical structures, genre conventions, and ideological framing interact to construct political narratives in Nigeria. It underscores the value of integrating corpus linguistics, genre analysis, and critical discourse analysis to reveal hidden discursive mechanisms in political reporting. Beyond academic significance, these findings point to the need for more pluralistic and inclusive media practices that foreground diverse voices, encourage critical engagement, and strengthen democratic communication. Future research may extend this work by incorporating digital and broadcast media, examining temporal shifts in rhetorical strategies, and exploring how audiences interpret and

respond to these discursive constructions.

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