



Assessment of Discursive Maxims and Ideological Constructions on ... Ojo, O. I. (2026)

Assessment of Discursive Maxims and Ideological Constructions on Police Assaults of Journalists among Editorials in Nigerian Newspapers

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Abstract

Police assault on journalist has become a regular occurrence in discourse study. Several studies have focused on editorials from numerous topical issues with only few ones having deeper explanation of police recklessness. This paper has therefore, investigated the discursive maxims and ideological constructions of some Nigerian newspaper editorials about police assaults with a view to use discursive maxims and their functions as well as analyzing the ideological constructs behind them. Aspects of Grice's cooperative principle (1975) and Van Dijk (2014) socio-cognitive model of the critical discourse analysis served as framework for this study. Data were obtained from Nigerian newspaper editorials. This paper found out that maxims of Grice's cooperative principles were deployed in editorials to firmly engage the readers. Maxims of Quality displayed truthfulness of the message, maxims of Quantity presented the use of illustration and labelling to foreground implicature. Textual coherence is revealing in maxims of relation while maxims of manner ensure clarity. The use of Gricean maxims underscored enduring resilience of the press in the face of socio-political landscape state violence and media suppression. It requires more attention from medial organizations to invest more in building institutional resilience as a way of ensuring press freedom

Keywords: Discursive Maxims, Ideological Constructions, Journalists, Editorials, Newspapers

Introduction

The media in democracies is regarded as a pillar of government support, or the "Fourth Estate." It is primarily responsible for keeping power in check, defending civil liberties, and holding people accountable. In Nigeria, however, the journalism culture is increasingly under threat by institutionalised violence, especially by state security agents. Of all these, the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) has been consistently accused of physical harassment of journalists, illegal detention, intimidation, and harassment (Media Rights Agenda [MRA], 2023; Premium Times, 2022). Such attacks not only signify violations of human rights but also a violation of the pillars of democracy, more specifically, freedom of the press. The consequences of such crimes extend far past bodily harm; each contributes to the public culture's discursive discussion, affects what society understands by justice and legitimacy, and undermines the ideological identifications of media institutions. Theoretical framing of CDA provides a handy paradigm to dismantle these ideological levels. CDA, as developed by scholars such as Fairclough (1995), Wodak (2001), and van Dijk (2006), emphasises that discourse is a social practice expressing and building power relations. Media texts in CDA are not conceived as simple bearers of information but as instruments of ideology and hegemony. Applying CDA to Nigerian newspaper editorials on police brutality allows the study to unpack the indirect, strategic, and often ambivalent way that newspapers position themselves ideologically on the issue of state violence. Police brutality in Nigeria manifests in a various ways as shocking and also violates their fundamental human rights. Police are seen as the leading individuals who have been responsible for the violence against media personnel. The police, on many occasions, have inflicted injuries on the journalists, destroyed their properties and even killed them.

Police brutality against journalist in Nigeria is a widespread and long-standing issue, rooted in historical patterns of state harassment and systemic police misconduct. This is frequently seen through unlawful detention, physical assault, death threats and extra-judicial killings. Such harassment by the journalists was evident during the colonial era and is still evident in the current democratic dispensation. The police are identified with culture of impunity in their operation especially during protests like ENDSARS and special investigation as journalists and political things dwell heavily on the journalists who often suffer for no just cause. Police assaults on journalists are common occurrences and security personnel are the leading culprits. Police brutality come in forms of beating with gun butts, teargassing, unlawful arrest and detention confiscation of equipment (Phones, cameras, psychological intimidation, and extrajudicial killings).



Assessment of Discursive Maxims and Ideological Constructions on ... Ojo, O. I. (2026)

The centre for Journalism, Innovation and Development (CJID) strongly condemns the numerous incidents of attacks on journalists by security officials, particularly members of the Nigerian Police Force, during #ENDBADGOVERNANCE protests across the country. These attacks have been substantiated by multiple video and pictorial evidence that our press attack tracker has now documented. In video clip race CJID, police officers were seen physically assaulting, intimidating and violating the rights of journalists in different parts of Nigeria. On Wednesday, July 31, 2024, News Central Television reporter Bernard Akede was interrupted and harassed by police officers while reporting live at the Lekki Toll Gate area of Lagos State, disrupting the television station's live broadcast. In Abuja, Premium Times reporter Yakubu Mohammed was assaulted by police officers despite wearing a press jacket and identifying himself as a journalist. Yakubu was struck with the butt of a gun, resulting in a head injury, and his camera was damaged. A journalist with Daily Independent Newspaper, Jide Oyekunle, (who is also the Chairman of the Nigerian Union of Journalists, (NUJ, FCT chapter), was roughly handled by a policeman in Abuja. According to him, the Commissioner of Police ordered that his phone to be confiscated for covering the protest. Also in Abuja, Kayode Jaiyeola, a photojournalist with Punch Newspaper, was arrested by a police officer attached to the National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu. Jaiyeola was handed over to members of the FCT Police Command who detained him. News Central Television journalist Mary Adeoye was tear-gassed by police officers while covering the protest in Abuja. Jonathan Usbal, the Managing Editor of Cross River Watch Newspaper, was assaulted and arrested at the Mary Slessor roundabout area of Calabar. He was taken to an undisclosed location where he was detained for several hours. The study contributes to media discourse on institutional power and democratic accountability in Nigeria. Methodological novelty will also be provided by integrating pragmatic and critical approaches to discourse in a context that remains under-researched but socially topical.

Statement of the Problem

From the perspectives of several scholars, a number of studies have been carried out on newspaper editorials. Talabi, Nwokolo & Celestine (2021) in “modelling safety challenges journalists faced in reporting anti-police brutality protest (ENDSAR protest) in Nigeria “present a catastrophic encounter of the journalist in the hands of the police. The study extends literature in this direction by providing model that explains the safety challenges that journalists faced in reporting the 2020 ENDSARS protest in Nigeria. The study is a survey of 470 journalists with questionnaire as the instrument of data collection.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to critically investigate how discursive maxims and ideological constructions are employed in some Nigerian newspapers' editorials about police violence against journalists. The study seeks to investigate the pragmatic and ideological resources used in editorial discourse for constructing public opinion of press freedom, institutional accountability, and state brutality. Specific objectives are to:

1. Identify and analyse the discursive maxims embedded in Nigerian newspaper editorials about police brutality against journalists.
2. Explain the contextual issues shaping the pragmatics and ideological constructions in the editorial discourse of selected Nigerian newspapers about police brutality against journalists.
3. Examine the relevance of discursive strategies of Van Dijk's socio-cognitive models in selected Nigerian Newspapers editorial.

Research Questions

The research questions raised to pilot the inquiry are:

1. In what ways are discursive maxims embedded in Nigerian newspaper editorials concerning police violence against journalists?
2. What are the contextual issues shaping the pragmatics and ideological constructions in the editorial discourse of selected Nigerian newspapers about police brutality against journalists?
3. What are the relevance of discursive strategies of Van Dijk's socio-cognitive models in selected Nigerian newspapers editorial?

These questions are posed to analyse both the micro-linguistic aspects of editorial discourse (via discursive maxims) and the macro-sociopolitical functions of language (via ideological constructs) in line with contemporary trends in Critical Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics.



Assessment of Discursive Maxims and Ideological Constructions on ... Ojo, O. I. (2026)

Significance of the Study

The research is significant on various levels - academic, professional, institutional, and societal - since it is exploring a crucial relationship between language, ideology, and freedom of the press in contemporary Nigeria. Firstly, the study has the potential to add to the existing body of research in discourse studies, pragmatics, and media linguistics by showing how Grice's Cooperative Principle may be fruitfully used within the CDA framework to question ideological constructions in editorial discourse. This synthesis bridges the gap between ideological macro-analysis and pragmatic micro-analysis, offering a combined approach to media text analysis in contexts of political conflict and institutional violence. Secondly, such theoretical importance as mentioned above has the capacity to bear a novel methodological paradigm on the research of editorial discourse through incorporating discursive maxims and CDA instrumentation (i.e., transitivity, modality, presupposition, and representation of social actors). This blended analysis model can be applied or imagined in other discourse studies, particularly media discourse studies in postcolonial or authoritarian contexts. Among media practitioners' vocabularies of editors, journalists, and editors, this study offers new evidence regarding how editorial communication can reproduce or challenge ideological positions unknowingly (or knowingly). It raises awareness about the effects of editorial use of language in constructing public attitudes and institutional accountability, and hence helps media practitioners critically reflect on their language ethics, editorial policy, and institutional slant. By revealing how ideological frames are constructed around police assaults on the media, the study contributes to the broader advancement of press freedom, human rights, and democratic accountability in Nigeria. The findings can be beneficial to civil society actors, human rights organizations, and policymakers in drawing attention to subtle types of media complicity or opposition to state repression. Finally, with Nigeria's troubled socio-political climate, characterized by state violence, media repression, and ideological fragmentation, the study comes at a suitable time and is relevant. It addresses immediate concerns about the security of journalists and public debate integrity in a crisis-ridden democratic polity. This explains its timeliness.

Theoretical Background

Grice's Cooperative Principle and its four maxims of quality, quantity, relation, and manner have found widespread application in media text analysis (Thomas, 1995; Mey, 2001). Other research shows how flouting or violating the maxims serve a rhetorical and an ideological function, such as euphemism, concealment, and persuasion (Kumar, 2016; Adebayo, 2018). For example, Akinyemi (2019) analyzes how Nigerian dailies strategically breach the maxim of quality in political news reporting to subtly endorse or discredit political leaders. Similarly, Eze (2020) analyzes how vagueness (breach of manner) in editorials enables newspapers to navigate sensitive issues without direct confrontation. Empirical analyses of Grice's maxims in the language of the media have grown over the past two decades. For instance, Adegbija (2011) analyzed Nigerian political editorials and determined that violative application of the maxim of quality was a common method for presenting irony and decrying corruption in politics without overt accusations. His analysis showed how pragmatic infelicities have a tendency to seek out ideological ends, but it did not make direct connections between these strategies and police brutality or journalism. Similarly, Olajide (2015) examined the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigerian newspapers and uncovered widespread violations of the maxim of relation, by means of which irrelevant or inaccurate information was utilized in order to conceal the shortcomings of the state. This technique had ideological advantages, inasmuch as it presented acts of the government in a favorable context. While the foregoing research illustrates the relevance of pragmatic analysis, it does not explore how discursive maxims are used in editorials on police assaults on journalists—a more politically sensitive and less-explored area. Flouting occurs when a speaker fails in observing the maxim but expecting a hearer to recognize the implied meaning cutting (2002) Grice (1975) refers to it as “the process in which a conversational implicature is generated by exploiting the maxim” flouting maxims openly conveys extra meaning through sarcasm or irony. It is about language user of choosing not to observe one or more maxims with the deliberate intension of creating an implicature. Flouting occurs in terms of Quantity, Quality, Manner, and Relevance. At these levels, the individual deliberately ceases to apply the maxims to persuade their listeners to infer the hidden meaning behind the utterances (Conversational implicature). That is: The flaunted traffic in unless and overtook at the bend. Violating happens in order to deceive a hearer with letting the hearer only know the surface meaning of an utterance. Grice refers to this as involving “lying undermining the integrity of communication”. This is about using unclear expression to convey message which affects presentation through the use of irrelevancies, thereby violating maxim of relevance. Grice refers to this as when a speaker intentionally provides false or misleading information, undermining the expectation of honesty in conversation.



Assessment of Discursive Maxims and Ideological Constructions on ... Ojo, O. I. (2026)

Violation of the maxims are the specific rules that the interlocutors need to follow if they want the conversation to go on successfully. Grice (1989) refers to violation as the “unpretentious or quiet non-observance of a maxim”. Violation is about deceptiveness and uncooperativeness and it affects the truthfulness of the text which indicates that the literal meaning is not the intended meaning - it is about lying or having an intent to deceive. This study uses the socio-cognitive model of CDA proposed by Van Dijk (2006). Van Dijk (2006) draws attention to the cognitive interface between social frameworks and discourse structures, delving deeper into the ways in which discourse strategies fuel polarization between "in-group and out-group" representations and exposing ideological disparities in how issues are portrayed and those involved (Osisanwo, 2024). Van Dijk's socio-cognitive theory examines how language either upholds or challenges social dominance, power, and inequality. Social structures (like media and institutions) and cognitive structures (like knowledge and mental models) are among the topics of focus. Furthermore, according to the theory, language's function includes three interrelated dimensions: Discourse, cognition, and society all demonstrate this interdependence. The content of written or spoken communication, including vocabulary, organization, rhetorical devices, and other components, is referred to as discourse. The mental images that people use to understand, interpret, and cognitively process discourse—including beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies—are referred to as cognition. Van Dijk emphasizes the importance of "mental models" or "context models." The last component is society (social structures and power), which focuses on ideas, group membership, power relations, and social institutions. It also examines how language either supports or contradicts societal injustices, such as racism, misogyny, and similar problems. CDA is a cutting-edge, interdisciplinary approach that tackles many important social concerns and seeks to clarify the hazy connection between social structures and discourse practices.

Research Methodology

The study uses a qualitatively interpretative research design reminiscent of a CDA strategy. Given that the study is concerned with how editorial discourse encodes, supports, or troubles ideologies, qualitative approaches are most apt to determine the concealed and implicit dimensions of meaning-making in language. CDA is complemented by pragmatic analysis (Gricean maxims) and framing analysis in a bid to carry out multi-theoretical examination of the rhetorical and ideological structures of editorials. The study adopts a descriptive survey method with a special focus on editorial texts as institutional discourse. The editorials are examined as purposive communicative acts that manifest ideological stance and discursive strategies regarding police violence against journalists. This is founded on Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of CDA: As earlier mentioned, the study is purposively selective in its coverage. The purposive data sampling is informed by the fact that, unlike headlines and other news items, editorials are specialized kinds of official presentations that require tact, and are, therefore, not so common. This thus, has led to indiscriminately picking from within the period of (2020–2024). This is chosen for the reason that, firstly, there was an intensified level of police brutality against journalists, both during and after the #EndSARS protests (2020), through the subsequent election periods, and into the beginning of the Tinubu administration - a period marked by heightened state-media relations. Consequently, about 8 data-extracts were used to address issues of Police brutality, Assaults or harassment of journalists, Press freedom and state repression. Purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting the editorials that explicitly discuss police brutality against journalists. On the basis of National coverage and readership, Institutional longevity and editorial consistency, Ownership and ideological pluralism. Four national newspapers were selected from the population. They include The Punch, The Guardian, Vanguard and Daily Trust. Ten, 8 editorials (two from each paper) were purposively selected based on the criteria that they Appeared in the 2020–2025 timeline, Report specific instances of police brutality against journalists, reflect institutional opinion rather than individual opinion columns. Data were collected by archival retrieval of online and print copies of the selected newspapers. The editorials were collected from Newspaper official websites, Media monitoring websites (e.g., Media Rights Agenda, Press Reader) and University digital libraries and national press archive websites. Each editorial was downloaded, transcribed and organized for systematic analysis.

Presentation of Result

Identifying the discursive maxims

Discursive Maxims of Quality observed in selected Nigerian Newspaper Editorials about Police Brutality

Extract 1: The dust has yet to settle on the outrage sparked by the illegal arrest, detention and torture of a newspaper editor, Segun Olatunji, over a report published in the first News online newspaper. The military only let go Olatunji after frontline media and civil society interest groups started asking questions.

Vanguard 18 April, 2024



Assessment of Discursive Maxims and Ideological Constructions on ... Ojo, O. I. (2026)

Extract 2: The arbitrary arrest and detention of journalists, which have recently proliferated in Nigeria, indicate a regression into authoritarianism and must not be permitted to continue in a nation that purports to uphold democratic governance.

The Guardian, July 2, 2024

1. Discursive Maxims of Quantity in selected Nigerian Newspaper Editorials about Police Brutality

The Maxim of Quantity is observed through the provision of precise, digestible facts that help the reader make sense of a fast-moving, violent situation. Instead of vague descriptors, the report supplies exact numbers: “At least 50 journalists were arrested,” “nearly 700 protesters... arrested across the country,” and “nine officers have been injured.” Such quantification avoids ambiguity and prevents interpretive inflation. Similarly, references to “videos reviewed by the Associated Press” and “six journalists... who spoke to the AP on the record” give the reader sufficient evidence without overwhelming the narrative. The specificity of locations such as “the Nigerian national stadium,” “the capital city, Abuja” also ensures that the report is grounded in verifiable detail, avoiding the looseness that could invite misinterpretation. This disciplined presentation contrasts with editorials where maximalist or vague generalizations are used for ideological framing.

2. Contextual issues Shaping the pragmatics and ideological Constructions in the Editorial Discourse of Selected Nigerian Newspapers about Police Brutality

Variation in problem definition across the papers reveals profound ideological fault lines within the Nigerian media. On one pole, The Punch is a radical oppositional voice, committed to exposing state failure and demanding democratic accountability. On the opposite pole, Daily Trust is a system-maintaining conservative voice, moderating criticism with appeals to order and security. The Guardian and Vanguard are compromise voices, varying in levels of institutional moderation.

“The Media Rights Agenda (MRA) has accused Nigerian security and law enforcement agencies of turning against the very people they are mandated to protect, journalists, in what it described as a disturbing trend of state-sponsored repression.”

Daily Trust, 2025

ON November 3, coinciding with the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists, the Media Rights Agenda, a media-centric NGO, released a damning 129-page report titled “When Protectors Become Predatory: The State Against Freedom of Expression in Nigeria.”

The Punch, 2025

Ideological Functions of Flouting

Flouting Gricean maxims in editorials is not typically inadvertent. Rather, it performs ideological work. It allows newspapers to express meaning indirectly, especially when open confrontation can tempt state censorship or retaliative action. It allows for plausible deniability, under which newspapers can claim neutrality while operating in secret conformity with or defiance of power bases and it allows ideological hedging, which allows media institutions to reconcile press freedom with survival by the editorials in a politicized world.

3. Relevance of Discursive Strategies of van Dijk’s Socio-Cognitive Models in Selected Nigerian Newspapers Editorial

Critical Discourse Analysis and the linguistic indices as Ideological Strategies

The analysis here is set to make a close linguistic and ideological examination of the editorial texts by using the instruments of CDA. The aim is to discover how lexical and syntactic choices (often hidden or even implicit) operate ideologically to represent or challenge inherent power relationships. Taken primarily from the writings of Fairclough (1995), van Dijk (2006), and Wodak (2001), the following analysis explains how language in the editorials codes meaning, attributes agency, and legitimates or resists state violence. Notable recent cases underscore the brutality: In March 2024, Segun Olatunji, then editor of FirstNews, was abducted by armed military personnel from his Lagos home, blindfolded, handcuffed, flown to Abuja and chained in an underground military detention cell before being dumped under a bridge two weeks later without charges. He subsequently resigned.

The Punch, 2025

“He hit me with a gun butt,” Premium Times newspaper reporter Yakubu Mohammed told the Committee to Protect Journalists, recalling how he was struck by a police officer while reporting on cost-of-living



Assessment of Discursive Maxims and Ideological Constructions on ... Ojo, O. I. (2026)

protests in Nigeria's capital of Abuja on August 1. Two other officers beat him, seized his phone, and threw him in a police van despite his wearing a "Press" vest and showing them his press identification card.

Daily Trust, 2024

Ideological Implications

The foregoing-mentioned linguistic choices are no stylistic coincidence but are the way in which each newspaper negotiates its ideological balancing act between state and public:

- (i) The Punch constructs an ideological battleground between media and authoritarian rule, presenting itself as a defender of openness and civil liberties.
- (ii) The Guardian is a centre-left liberal ideology, negotiating the institutional imperative with critique.
- (iii) Vanguard assumes an ideologically neutral stance, employing depoliticized language and syntactic avoidance to fend off state aggression.
- (iv) Daily Trust assumes a conservative institutional ideology, advocating order and state legitimacy over media victimhood.

Concluding Remark

Four top Nigerian dailies were used in response to police attacks on journalists within a three-part analysis framework covering Framing Analysis, CDA, and Gricean Pragmatics. The findings show dazzling diversity in the manner newspapers frame, interpret, and respond to press oppression news, along ideological precepts, institutional agendas, and overall socio-political forces. Employing thematic framing, the research discovered distinguishable structure in terms of how each news agent within these frames presented the issue, assigned blame to an individual or entity, conveyed moral judgment and suggested remedies. CDA also pointed how lexical and syntactic choices embed ideological bias supporting or undercutting state discourses. Lastly, pragmatic analysis showed how the dailies intentionally observed or flouted Grice's maxims as they navigated through politically sensitive issues. Thus, on the whole, this analysis shows that editorial discourse in Nigeria gives not opinions and views only, but it is a vivid battle of ideologies where language plays a central role as a tool that represents state power, public accountability and institutional legitimacy.

Summary

The current research was aimed at examining the editorial framing of police brutality that journalists suffer in Nigeria through Framing Theory, CDA, and Gricean Pragmatics. By the adoption of a thematic, discursive and pragmatic stand points, the study examines the editorials on four major Nigerian dailies: The Punch, The Guardian, Vanguard, and Daily Trust - to identify how these media frame, negotiate and position themselves ideologically on issues related to police brutality against the media. The results that were presented in Chapter four are examined in this chapter. The discussion is organised as follows:

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1

In what ways are discursive maxims embedded in Nigerian Newspaper editorials concerning police violence against journalist?

The use of discursive maxims illustrates that language in Nigerian editorials is not merely a stylistic tool but a deliberate mechanism for negotiating authority, legitimacy, and resistance. By carefully structuring information, emphasizing collective institutional responsibility, and occasionally broadening the narrative to international contexts, the newspapers reinforce the resilience of the press as a watchdog of democracy. These linguistic strategies ensure that the press can perform its oversight function in a volatile landscape characterized by state violence, political repression, and legal instruments, such as the Cybercrime Act, employed to curb journalistic autonomy.

Indeed, The Punch celebrates this position as a professional obligation to 'name and shame' to guarantee an open society and responsibility of every government. The less combative styles adopted by The Guardian, Vanguard and Daily Trust are more of a compromising act as it helps in dealing with issues that arise in the course of operation within the media space that are constrained due to political intimidation, or threats of repression or the complexities that come with national security system.



Assessment of Discursive Maxims and Ideological Constructions on ... Ojo, O. I. (2026)

Research Question 2

What are the contextual issues shaping the pragmatics and ideological constructions in the editorial discourse of selected Nigerian Newspapers about police brutality?

The pragmatic use of strategies that flout Gricean maxims express the subtle balance struck by daily papers between truth and profitability. These editorial tactics that are both revealing and concealing, criticizing and obliging at the same time, which makes media's role as "Fourth Estate" more complex. This study highlights the need for a well-branded press that will be immune to any kind of harassment and also keep its professional dignity so as to create a democratic culture in which state abuses will be constantly and publicly pointed out. They are indicative of the underlying forces, such as ownership trends, political loyalty, citizens' aspirations and the deeper social media context of the Nigerian media culture. All these combined powers decide how state repression and freedom of the press are publicized to be fought for and debated among the masses. It is apparent that the findings have demonstrated that Nigerian newspaper editorials function as sophisticated vehicles for ideological contestation. Through strategic manipulation of linguistic and discursive norms, they navigate institutional constraints, reflect regional ideological orientations, and assert the press's role in defending democratic governance. The editorials' careful negotiation of clarity, ambiguity, and agency not only illuminates systemic patterns of repression but also exemplifies the enduring capacity of Nigerian journalism to resist, critique, and maintain accountability in a complex and often hostile political environment.

Research Question 3

What are the relevance of discursive strategies Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive models in Selected Nigerian Newspapers editorials?

Findings show that Nigerian dailies are not homogeneous conversational agents but rather splintered and sometimes conflicting discourses of voices on police brutality against journalists. Editorial discourse is a site of crucial interest where ideology, power and pragmatics meet/come together and intersect to voice of the people and political accountability system. The results of the content analysis tell us that there is a wide range of editorial positions. *Punch* has a very vivid, structural conceptualization of police abuse as an institutional issue that loudly denounces police impunity and asks for reform. *The Guardian* keeps with a moderate professionalist stance on the sides, stressing professional failings in the police and not turning to blanket condemnations. *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* sometimes will report incidents, attributing them to single officers or journalists, using evasive terms, euphemisms or passive construction so as to water down criticism.

In more precise term, the analysis of the selected Nigerian newspaper editorials has revealed that these texts operate as subtle instruments of ideological negotiation, carefully balancing critique and caution to navigate the polarized socio-political environment of the country. Across the editorials, spanning publications such as *Daily Trust*, *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, and *Vanguard*, the manipulation of Gricean maxims, through strategies like withholding details, vague phrasing, hedging, topic diversion, and obscured agency, emerges as a consistent linguistic pattern. These strategies allow the press to highlight institutional failures, expose state violence, and call for accountability, while simultaneously mitigating direct confrontation with powerful actors. For example, references to actions being carried out "on orders from above" or incidents occurring "allegedly" serve to signal critique without explicitly naming individuals, thereby preserving the newspaper's credibility and safeguarding its operational space in a context marked by threats to press freedom. The editorials also reflect regional ideological sensibilities, with northern and southern media outlets showing distinct rhetorical tendencies. Northern publications, such as *Daily Trust*, often employ hedging and cautious phrasing, signaling respect for hierarchical authority while still critiquing state actors. Southern newspapers, including *The Punch* and *Vanguard*, demonstrate a more assertive stance, foregrounding systemic patterns of media repression, yet continue to strategically diffuse responsibility to avoid overtly antagonizing specific institutions or individuals. This regional variation underscores how editorials mediate between local socio-political norms and the broader imperatives of press advocacy.

Conclusion

The study conducted language construction of ideologies in selected Newspaper editorials targeting the issue of police brutality. Through a careful investigation of the textual elements and linguistic strategies employed in these selected Editorials, this research has brought to light on how the issue of police assault is displayed and discussed in the Nigerian media terrain. The research effort has revealed the underlying beliefs, values and manifestation of the discourse on police brutality in Nigeria. These features not only offered the presentation of information but also shape readers' view and understanding of police brutality facing the journalists in Nigeria.



Assessment of Discursive Maxims and Ideological Constructions on ... Ojo, O. I. (2026)

The relevance of this exploration goes beyond mere descriptive or textual analysis. By discussing how language is used explain police brutality, this study contributes to our understanding of the role of media in shaping public issue in our nation, especially in police brutality. It offers issues of power, language in framing issues and its revealing influence on readers. Also, this research provides framework for further studies on media discourse analysis particularly in the context of sensitive and pressing issues. It offers a call for using language construction of ideologies, using discursive maxims to understand how language is used to construct and disseminate editorials about social and political challenges.

Recommendations

Drawing from the findings and conclusions of this study, it is possible to formulate strategic recommendations aimed at improving Nigerian journalism as an instrument of police brutality / reporters' protection / ensuring democratic accountability. These suggestions are connected with the problems of legal reform, editorial judgment, raising journalists' and media's capabilities, civil activism and further researches. Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations emerge to strengthen the role of the Nigerian press as a credible watchdog and to safeguard journalistic freedoms in the country.

1. There is a pressing need for both federal and state governments to institutionalize mechanisms that ensure accountability for attacks, harassment, and intimidation of journalists.
2. Security agencies, including the police, military, and intelligence services, should be trained and regularly reoriented to respect the laws governing press freedom and the constitutional rights of citizens. Clear protocols must be established to prevent abuses, including arbitrary arrests, detentions, and physical assaults, while ensuring that complaints against journalists are addressed through lawful channels rather than extrajudicial measures.
3. There must be a boost in the media autonomy and there should be proper protection for journalists. All-encompassing changes and legal reforms are to be put into place so as to safeguard media practitioners and media institutions from the increasing threats of intimidation, arbitrary detention, and brute force perpetrated by state security organs. The already existing press law needs to firstly be enforced more faithfully and secondly further developed, modified in a way to suit new challenges that arose in journalism.
4. media organizations themselves should invest in building institutional resilience through comprehensive safety policies, legal support, and advocacy networks that protect journalists on the frontlines. Editorial boards should continue to leverage the strategic use of language, as demonstrated in the study, to expose systemic failures and institutional shortcomings without compromising reporters' safety, while also promoting standards of clarity, objectivity, and ethical reporting. Professional training that emphasizes legal literacy, digital security, and ethical risk management can further equip journalists to operate safely in high-risk environments.
5. Journalist unions, media watchdogs as well as independent self-regulatory bodies need to play the leading role in supporting such reforms; they need to appeal to state authorities asking them to provide justice and ensure protection of those who have been victimized within profession of journalism. In this connection it is also necessary to ensure provision of assistance both in terms of granting legal aid and facilitating financial support.
6. There is a critical need for legal reforms to strengthen protections for journalists, particularly in the context of repressive laws such as the Cybercrime Act, which have been used to curtail press freedom. Lawmakers should engage in consultative reviews of such legislation to ensure that it aligns with constitutional guarantees and international human rights standards. By embedding structural safeguards, fostering professional solidarity, and promoting a culture of ethical, transparent reporting, the Nigerian media can continue to navigate ideological polarization and institutional constraints while asserting its indispensable role in democracy.
7. irrespective of whether or not there is legal protection, it is very clear that Nigerian media organizations need to work on their editing for it will help in the end. It was found out that the media had a raw deal by portraying different types of censors using different styles against the police. Newspapers would not find it harder to resist state pressure in case they joined hands more as a group with clearer editorial voice when criticizing police brutality and upholding freedom of the press. It is not an issue of engaging same voices side-by-side in arguments or opinions; however, unity in demonstrating democratic and journalistic values is crucial.
8. Besides, collaboration among the media - for example joint editorials, solidarity campaigns, and collaborative investigative reporting - has greater potential to intensify public disapproval without multiplying jeopardy for any one media outlet from government reprisals. Such collaborative efforts among civil society, press associations, and



Assessment of Discursive Maxims and Ideological Constructions on ... Ojo, O. I. (2026)

- international media freedom bodies should be intensified to monitor, document, and publicly challenge violations against the press. Platforms like the Nigerian Union of Journalists, the Nigerian Guild of Editors, and organizations such as the Media Rights Agenda can play proactive roles in lobbying for legislative reforms, protecting whistleblowers, and amplifying cases of repression. The study suggests that leveraging regional and global attention to media suppression can exert moral and political pressure on state actors, discouraging impunity and reinforcing democratic accountability.
9. It is also important to delve even deeper in the media education and ethically guided journalism practices. Journalists are not only expected to have skills that cut across different fields, but they must get a more profound awareness of the critical framing concepts, legal right and ethical consideration in reporting controversial issues which include state violence. Professional development should be continuous so that journalists can effectively negotiate the complex interplay between truth-telling and political danger. There also has to be focus on practical awareness - to let journalists identify and counteract infiltration of silent ideological shaping of language, as well as equipping them with skills to make deliberate choices in the use of language which are sensitive enough to balance clarity, critique, and safety.
 10. But prominently, the importance of the public role in safeguarding media freedom cannot be overstated. The ability to read the media and civic responsibility should be integrated through awareness' – raising campaign s education at school and by public discussion. Media watchdog groups, civil society organizations , and institutions of learning should join to heighten the public consciousness on the essence of a free press in a democratic state, and on the perils of unbridled police impunity. Educated and engaged citizenry are not mere recipients of services but active partners who makes politicians responsible and puts an end to oppression while building a democratic political culture.

These recommendations collectively underscore that sustaining media freedom requires a multifaceted approach, combining legal reform, professional development, institutional vigilance, and strategic advocacy to protect journalists and uphold the integrity of public discourse in Nigeria.

Suggestions for further studies

At the end, it cannot be missed that a recommendation is made for further research on how to use this knowledge. Future studies may widen the scope and consider other media outlets like broadcast and web-based news sources to observe whether framing strategies and ideological positions are shared. A further investigation on how audiences perceive these editorial constructs would provide invaluable insights on the role media discourse can play in manipulating public opinion, civic engagement, and democratic responsibility. This type of study will throw more light on a bigger picture of medias involvement in constructing political discourse and transformation in Nigerian society. By and large, their use would represent a significant step towards the improved Nigerian media as a powerful defender of democracy. Legal safeguards being consolidated, editorial support, professional journalism and public enlightenments by media give more force for the effective opposition to authoritarian trends and achieving the goal of forming such society in which justice, transparency and freedom of expression are no longer ideals but rather norms. Suggestions for Further Studies (Policy Brief Style). This research seeks to contribute new knowledge and guide further interventions so this research makes suggestions of the areas to be researched that will also help in the development of a knowledge base on media discourses, press freedom, and state violence in Nigeria

1. Extending to Other Media Platforms

While this study solely dealt with print editorials, forthcoming studies must consider broadcast (TV and radio) as well as Internet (web news sites, blogs, social media) media. These mediums will be read/viewed by more numerous, more diverse populations and their editorial or narrative format may differ significantly because of the format limitations, regulatory considerations or audience affinity.

2. The Study of Audience Reception and Effect

This type of research would then help to determine the nature in which divergence social groupings would think and react to the media coverage on the police brutality against journalists. This can be done through surveys, focus groups, or ethnographic approaches with a view to ascertaining whether editorial positions impact on public view, civic engagement or trust in media institutions.

3. Investigating Journalistic Conduct and Self-Censorship



Assessment of Discursive Maxims and Ideological Constructions on ... Ojo, O. I. (2026)

By empirical studies, it is possible to know how professional journalists working for themselves deal with the dangers of state repression, self-censorship being on the top list, and the role played by editorial gatekeeping as well as informal newsroom norms. These will show you the ceilings on what is published and how it is being done inside.

4. Blazing New Trails in Comparative Cross-National Studies

Contrasting the Nigerian case with any other sub-Saharan nation or any nation with such democratic and press freedom problems may be very pertinent for this. It positions it in the geopolitics in case you know that observing regional patterns, best practices, as well context-specific interventions may be very useful.

5. Assessing the Effectiveness of Media Advocacy Campaigns

There would be no research on the influence of the freely led press campaign coalition advocacy in which civil society organizations, unions or media houses take part. This will lead to understanding of the most effective approaches in repressive context and policy change mobilization.

By conducting such studies on the areas mentioned above, these groups can do more informed, intelligent and fact-based approaches to the problems of press freedom and preservation of democratic values that media promote in Nigeria and other nations.

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