

Labour and Agitation Discourse: Media Text Analysis of Industrial Crisis in Public Universities in Nigeria

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Abstract

The recurrence of labour conflicts between public universities and the Nigerian government has been a subject of media coverage and concern for researchers. Previous studies have paid attention to media reportage of industrial crises with little attention paid to framing patterns and discourse strategies employed by newspapers. This study, therefore, investigated media and agitation discourse reportage using ASUU-FGN industrial crises as a case study with a view to underscoring the discourse strategies employed by the media and the underpinning ideologies behind the textual representations. The critical textual analysis was adopted as design for the study. Four newspapers: *The Guardian*, the *Punch*, the *Daily Sun* and the *Daily Trust* were purposely selected based on North, West, East and South distribution of the country. Twenty-eight news articles were selected through critical case sampling. The data were subjected to theme mapping and critical textual analysis. Mediation of different agitation discourses were examined with the following discourse strategies: stereotyping, topicalisation, dominance, resistance, persuasive propaganda and legitimation to support socio power and impose media hegemonic views on readership. Media partisanship, journalistic values and ideological orientations of the media affected the credibility and effective mediation, thereby subjecting the labour agitation to rationalisation. The press should shun bias reportage in agitation discourses to labour disputes

Keywords: Media framing, Industrial crises, Agitation discourse, ASUU, Nigerian government.

Introduction

The recurrence of labour conflicts between the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in Nigeria and the federal government of Nigeria (FGN) over demands for adequate funding of public universities has been a subject of media coverage and concern to researchers. Previous studies (Oso, 1986; Oyeniran, 2013; Saraben, 2013) have paid attention to media reportage of parties to industrial crises. However, those studies have not empirically explained the different ideological perspectives of the parties to labour disputes. This study, therefore, investigated media and agitation discourse using ASUU-FGN industrial crises as empirical basis; to find out how the Nigerian print media reported and mediated various agitations between the contending parties. The essence of this is to underscore the discourse strategies employed by the selected newspapers and the underpinning ideologies. Agitation discourse is a type of protest, debate or argument from either the oppressed or from the capitalists to drive different ideological perspectives so as to maintain a status quo (Fairclough, 2000).

The media are considered as very powerful social agents. Hence, they pervade all aspects of private and public life. They (media), as observed by media theorists, have the capacity to tell us 'what' to think about and 'how' to think about public discourse (Severin & Tankard, 2001; Entman, 2002). The inevitability of the media in society and in day-to-day activity prompted van Dijk's (1998, p.36) submission that "who controls public discourse, indirectly controls the minds of people, and therefore also their social practices". The media wield so much influence on the socio-political behaviour of citizens through their purposive and selective information dissemination so as to influence the perception of people. Therefore, the study examines the discourse strategies the Nigerian newspapers adopted in reporting various agitations in the framing of the industrial crises between ASUU and FGN.

Literature Review

Media scholars and theorists have written so much on the symbiotic relationship between the media and society. The dialectical roles and functions of the media in any egalitarian society are important because the media tie together and unite different sections of the

society culturally, socially and politically (Matheson, 2005). Onabanjo (2002) is of the view that communication is not only potent but it also makes the society, because everybody, directly or indirectly, relies on the media for their daily information needs. Similarly, Meill (1999) adds that the mass media contribute to people's awareness of potentialities, dissatisfaction and desire to change either positively or negatively. The media, therefore, are like information channels circulating information in the society. Similar researchers such as Fairclough (2000); Cottle (2006); Wodak and Meyer (2009) have agreed that there is a relationship between media and power play. Power, here, means control of one group over another group or the ability of accomplishing or doing something or the right to control (van Dijk, 2004). Meanwhile, there is a political power derived from the electorate where political appointees wield power legitimately. Also, there is media power. Media power is what Kaun (2016) cleverly labels as 'media regime' (space power) in this submission that media regimes emerge not only in terms of time and space, but also in terms of representation. So, media power or media regime is the power of attorney the media possess constitutionally as the fourth estate to query and bring political power holder to accountability (p.101).

Hall (2005) argues on the intersection between communication and power. He submits that there is a relationship between those that hold political power (elites, politicians and bourgeois) and those that share or represent the views of the power wielders (media). Incidentally, there is constant rivalry between political power holders and media professionals because politicians have the mental illusion that the media are meant to serve the interests of political power holders. On the other hand, the media equally have the complex of being the society's watchdog and can use its constitutional power to expose any anomaly from government functionaries. Watson (2003) corroborates the view that the media have power to influence the psyche of the public by saying that: newspapers are weapons of influence with which the press barons could attempt to impose their views on the widest possible readership. Such barons are also delighted in the prestige their newspapers gained for them along the corridors of power...with few exceptions. Political power rather than political influence remains a dream for the press barons (p.92).

The foregoing summarises the media power and its purpose. That is, the media indeed have the power to influence the thinking and actions of the audience, but not necessarily having the power to control the action of the audience because media consumers are not passive but active. Researchers like Lippmann, McCombs, Shaw and others have sufficiently demonstrated that media effects are no longer in doubt, especially in electioneering (voting decision), deviant broadcasting and in the area of consumer behaviour (advertising) and other social phenomena. The media are sources of influencing government policies either to favour some 'cabal' or elite or to influence the populace to support government policy. This is where the ideological inherence of news does manifest to align with the interests of the owners. Berger (1999) and Matheson (2005) affirm that the media permeate and mediate individual lives right from the childhood stage to the grave; especially with information in the area of character and opinion formation, enrichment of knowledge base and other useful information capable of making or marring individuals.

In a broader conceptualisation of media power, Watson (2003) explains that the media perform three distinctive functions in the society. Namely, the communicative function, that is, the media have the fundamental role of informing the society. The media outlets equally promote pluralism necessary for enabling divergent views to be expressed by both the governors and the governed (the privileged and the less privileged). Fairclough (2000) and van Dijk (2004) believe that the media exercise some relative power to enact some dominance because it is assumed that mediated information is often conceited to change the thinking of the public. The second function of the media is what Vladislavljevic (2015) describes as the 'struggle site for battle and recognition'. What this implies is that the media is structured by its owners as manipulative agents to support popular opinion especially opinions from the elite, media owners and the government so as to present such views as if they are people's consensus. This media role, though does not explicitly manifests, but is subtly expressed in the media framing of events. This accounts for why media framing theorists posit that every media text is inherently ideological and metaphorical (Hallahan, 1999; Gemman, 2016). The media, from the review is powerful in society. They also present views in a way that suit the ideological orientation foundation of

the media outfit or individual whose interests they are meant to serve or preserve.

Methodology

The study adopted textual analysis as its design. The study analysed media representations of various perspectives of agitations and ideological stance that permeated the ASUU and FGN industrial conflicts and the roles newspaper journalists in Nigeria played in framing different perspectives about the labour disputes. Four Nigerian newspapers, *The Guardian*, *Punch*, *Daily Trust* and *Daily Sun* were purposively selected based on North, West, East and South distribution of the country. The study employed critical case sampling as the method of data collection. The sample size for the textual analysis was twenty-one (21) excerpts from straight news, features, headlines and editorials for qualitative data analysis.

Textual Analysis

The identified strategies deployed by the Nigerian print media to mediate the labour crises were subjected to theme mapping to understand power relations tussle between parties to the industrial disputes.

Stereotyping Stereotype is a conventional or systematic way of characterising individuals, groups or institutions in a way that the aforementioned groups are stigmatised, eulogised and prejudiced. The media selected print used stereotype as a discursive or narrative strategy either in the headline or the body of news stories as a subtle way to mediate ideologies of social power. The following textual presentations clarify how the selected newspapers deployed lexical collocations to stereotype parties to the labour conflicts and the likely hidden intentions of the text producers are provided:

Excerpt 1: We're ready for the worst, boast defiant lecturers (The Sun newspaper December 5, 2013)

In excerpt 1. The *Sun newspaper* presented the collective opinion about ASUU in its headline that the union is ready for the mass sack threat earlier issued by the Nigerian government for the non-yielding of the Union to suspend its labour action. However, the second part of the headline: 'boast defiant lecturers' is the

stereotypical portrayal of the labour union which was very subjective. Describing university teachers as 'defiant' is an explicit way of stigmatising the union. Defiant- in this context means rebellious and flagrant opposition to constituted authority. Therefore, qualifying ASUU membership in such a way is an implicit way of acting the script of the elite who never supported the labour agitation. The headline is a classic example of sarcasm, a rhetorical device employed by the newspaper to taunt the labour union.

Excerpt 2: ASUU Adamant as FG meets NANS today (The Sun newspaper December 3, 2013)

Similarly, in excerpt 2, the same newspaper (the *Sun*) used another negative word to qualify the university teachers as 'adamant'. The readers are offered the biased opinion of the newspaper on the union. The headline promotes the ideology of animosity and indignation that the newspaper harbours against the labour agitation. The lexical choice echoes Gramsci's 'hegemonic media discourse' which is meant to serve the interest of the elite. The headline, therefore, is rather judgmental, anticipatory and pre-emptive in context and meaning.

Excerpt 3: The insensitive approach displayed so far by the main stakeholders in the dispute especially the FGN and ASUU, explains why public education in the country remains one of the most backward globally. (The Punch newspaper editorial on 14 Thursday, July 23, 2009 titled: ASUU: Time to call off strike).

Excerpt 3 is an editorial opinion from the *Punch* newspaper. The paper explicitly condemned the 'insensitivity' of both ASUU and FGN over the recurrence of labour disputes which has led to the backwardness of the nation's education sector. The editorial's venomous submission is intended to challenge the labour stakeholders and spur them into action to settle their differences so as to move the country forward. Labelling the two social institutions as 'insensitive' is a strategy of mediation through which journalists perform their watchdog function to challenge and sanitise the nation's polity.

Excerpt 4: The insincerity has always given the dons the sinew to hold government to ransom; treat the public with contempt and mortgage the interest of students put in their care (the Punch editorial, Thursday, July 23, 2009: 14)

Excerpt 4 is an editorial from the *Punch* newspaper. The paper carefully chose some words to describe the actions of ASUU: 'insincerity', 'ransom', 'contempt' and 'mortgaged'-those words were chosen deliberately to generate morality media frame in order to appeal to the conscience of the university teachers. The lexical choice, therefore, is a persuasive propaganda and power play strategy of the media to mediate the labour disputes and to suppress the agitation voice of the labour.

Excerpt 5: We do not believe that our academics and their unions should behave like rag-tag trade union concerned only with the pecuniary benefits of the ivory tower alone. (Daily Trust newspaper editorial on July 1, 2009 titled: 'ASUU Strike').

Excerpt 5 is an editorial from the *Daily Trust* newspaper. The paper negatively stereotyped the academic staff in the university describing as 'ragtag' meaning that they are simply poor and as a result, their agitation is for their monetary gains. The statement is beyond stereotyping ASUU negatively; but, a ploy to be a mouth piece for the owners of material wealth, media owners and the elite who have the means to control mental production including the media. The newspaper is believed to be acting a written speech to malign the union and thereby delegitimising the labour action before the newspaper readers. From the above excerpts, descriptive words particularly adjectives were chosen as necessity to pass one-sided judgements on the parties to the labour disputes. Those descriptive words, though, uncomplimentary; the main reason for their selection is to stereotype the parties involved in the disputes in order to create negative mental pictures in newspaper readers' minds on the labour disputes. Language, from the analysis, has been the instrument of mediation, negotiation and manipulation in the hands of the media professionals. Stereotyping, therefore, is a power play discursive strategy adopted by the print media not only to mediate ideology but also used as a communicative strategy to enforce newspaper dominant sentiments on the parties to conflicts and newspaper readers.

Topicalisation

Topicalisation is a discourse focus strategy deployed by interlocutors or text producers to place emphasis on the topic of discussion by placing the subject first followed by comments on the topical issue. Also, it is a stylistic way of foregrounding the prominence of the social actor or agent with a view to drawing attention to the subject of discussion. It is one of the ways journalists mediate various issues though, not without some ideological undertone to support social order or downplay social actors. The textual analyses 6-9 below demonstrate how print journalists placed emphasis on the actors to the industrial disputes and the pragmatic import are thus provided:

Excerpt 6: ASUU Strike: An unending drama (The Guardian newspaper July 4, 2009)

Excerpt 6 placed emphasis on ASUU strike as focus of the headline. However, the intention was to downplay the pragmatic force that the strike should connote to the readers going by the comment that follows the topic: 'an unending drama'. The comment metaphorically turned the labour disputes to an object of derisive joke by comparing the dispute to soap opera. The underpinning intention was to down play the labour dispute before newspaper readers.

Excerpt 7: Strike: No retreat, no surrender (The Guardian newspaper July 4, 2013)

Excerpt 7 topicalised the issue of strike in order to direct the focus of the readers to the issue at stake. The headline however was silent on the reasons for the strike but placed their stylistic prominence on the issue of strike. Meanwhile, another dimension to the issue of ASUU-FGN industrial disputes was factored in by adopting war lexicon - 'no retreat, no surrender'. The lexical collocations implicitly painted war imagery with its accompanied hopelessness. The hidden intention of the text producer was to create tension and anxiety in the society. The headline was therefore intended to generate public outcry against the labour agitation for the labour dispute to lose its legitimacy.

Excerpt 8: ASUU is here again (The Sun newspaper July, 11 2013)

Excerpt 8 placed emphasis on ASUU as the focus of the headlines reported. Meanwhile nothing was said about the other party (federal government) to the labour conflicts. The headline is a classic example of blackmail-‘ASUU is here again’. The unspoken intention of the newspaper was to empathise with the students while de-emphasising the reasons for the industrial altercation.

Excerpt 9: ASUU: Time to call off strike (The Punch newspaper July 23, 2009)

Excerpt 9 is an editorial title of *the Punch* newspaper. The editorial focused on the labour union with a sharp command tone for ASUU to call-off its strike with immediate effect. The newspaper, through its editorial, represents the elite expressing their views or frustration with ASUU’s industrial action. The ideology of media dominance is being emphasised in the headline which is a ploy to enforce media opinion on both ASUU and newspaper readers. Topicalism, therefore, is a tactical discourse strategy deployed by the Nigerian print media to mediate and foreground social actors to the disputes with a view to creating lasting impression on the newspaper readers. ASUU as the most stylistically fronted social actor is ideologically driven to create a negative impression for commercial interest.

Dominance as a Form of Power Play

Dominance is an implicit or explicit exercise of power and control in the society. Dominance in speech or text manifests in the calibre or pedigree of text producer(s) and in the lexical choice that reinforces power with the aim of promoting or supporting inequality. Dominance in news reflects various institutional dominations based on ideological beliefs.

Excerpt 10: ASUU strike: ‘No-work-no pay’ rule, last option-FG (The Punch newspaper July 21, 2009)

Excerpt 10 clearly demonstrates institutional domination by the federal government. The government mandated the university teachers to go back to work or be ready to face the full wrath of the law regulating the organised labour- ‘no work no pay’. The threat, though, emanated from the presidency, the media is only being used to disseminate hidden opposition ideological stance.

Excerpt 11: ASUU Leadership inconsiderate says presidency (The Sun newspaper December 2, 2013)

Similarly, the paper adopted a direct speech credited to the presidency describing ASUU leadership as 'inconsiderate'. The headline is a response media frame designed by the powers from the presidency to weaken and discredit the agitation by ASUU due to the economic recession in Nigeria. Such a political gerrymandering is the ideology of the capitalist to keep the working class (labour) in perpetual servitude by advancing a common ground viewpoint.

Excerpt 12: ASUU strike and governance of deception (The Nigerian Tribune newspaper Dec. 21, 2011)

Excerpts 10-12 typify media agitation discourses and power play. It has been established by media theorists that the media has a relative power to tell us what to think and how to think about public issues. The excerpts, therefore, have demonstrated how the media exert some measure of influence on the psyche of newspaper readers by manipulating the thinking of the audience in presenting judgemental or prejudiced views on the labour disputes.

Resistance as a form of Power Play

Resistance in any discursive practice is an ideology adopted by a class of people who feel alienated and exploited by the powerful in the society. It is a form of antagonism the socially oppressed adopts to free themselves from the shackle of class infected society. Ideologically, social resistance is a form of social dominance especially if it comes from organised labour movement. The excerpts below demonstrate how the media reported ASUU's resistance ideological stance:

Excerpt 13: ASUU not under pressure to call off strike-president (The Punch Newspaper AUG. 7, 2013)

Excerpt 13 reinforced the hard-line posture of ASUU when the ASUU national president insisted that the Union would not bow to pressure or any threat. The statement credited to ASUU president is a clear demonstration of institutional domination against federal government and an explicit way of reiterating ASUU's resistance ideology

Excerpt 14: ASUU prepares for mass sack ...We're ready for the worst (The Sun newspaper December 5, 2013)

Excerpt 15: ASUU will wait until FG gets money, says ex-chair (The Guardian newspaper Jan. 22, 2012.)

Excerpt 16: ASUU vows not to abandon strike (The Daily Trust newspaper Dec. 22, 2011)

Excerpts 13-16 clearly demonstrate social resistance otherwise known as agitation discourses of ASUU to oppose and use the weapon of industrial action (strike) to fight the federal government. The headlines explicitly confirm the revolutionary movements of the organised labour to fight the federal government until the union achieves its set objectives. The persistent social struggle for equity and fairness by ASUU confirmed an anonymous quote that says 'when injustice becomes law, resistance becomes duty'. That implies that ASUU's resistance ideology is based on many years of injustice of the non-implementation of the past agreements signed by the government. The textual analyses on excerpts 10-16 have demonstrated that in social discursive practices, dominance and social control with reference to ASUU-FGN industrial reporting were exercised by the government to subdue the labour union. The labour union in turn exercised some level of social control by using the strike action to compel the government to accede to her demands, while the media also used its sentimental perspectives and ideological power of language to manipulate both government and ASUU to allow logic instead of upholding the ideology of absolutism.

Legitimation (authorisation)

Legitimation in media parlance is a newspaper's manipulative strategy to present issues in a seamlessly persuasive way to make such issues appear natural or sensible. It is a type of testimonial or statement credited to somebody who occupies a position of authority. Citing of sources by the newspapers (attribution) to enhance news credibility and thereby increasing reader's believability is a form of legitimation. Legitimation is used by the media to create partisan arguments by relying on the credence of the information source. Below are the media excerpts:

Excerpt 27: Lecturers' strike that disrupted academic activities of Universities across the country ... like I pleaded yesterday, government is pleading through the minister 'I am pleading with my brothers and sisters in ASUU as colleagues to understand the situation. I am still pleading that ASUU suspends the strike and return to the negotiation table' (The Daily Sun newspaper Dec. 7, 2011).

Excerpt 18: ASUU strike: 'No-work-no pay' rule last option-FG. We do not think that the situation will get to the stage when we begin to enforce no work, no pay, it is going to be the last option" (The Punch newspaper July 21, 2009).

Excerpt 17 demonstrates legitimation of the social dominance of federal government over ASUU. Hence, the newspapers reiterated the supremacy of the employers (government) over the employees by quoting the direct speeches made by government agents whose authoritative positions the newspaper felt could trigger the suspension of the strike action. Legitimation, in social discourse, is a mediation strategy which the media deployed to show support for power play.

Persuasive Propaganda

Propaganda is a rhetorical communicative strategy packaged to change or modify the decisions or behaviours of recipients. Below are excerpts on propaganda as discourse strategy deployed by the selected Nigerian newspapers to change the perspectives of the parties involved in the labour conflicts:

Excerpt 18: ASUU strike: our children are now at home (The Daily Trust June 30, 2009)

Excerpt 18 is an example of media morality frame intended to empathise with the plights and pains of students due to the prolonged labour strike by ASUU. The persuasive propaganda laid emphasis on the university students who bear the brunt of the failure of the Nigerian government and the persistent industrial strike by the union. Such morality media frame and persuasive media propaganda is a discourse strategy and tactical ploy through which the media mediate the labour disputes in order to appeal to the conscience of the parties involved. However, the excerpt under review sounds persuasive, but, the media never considered the plights of the striking university teachers. The

mediation, therefore, is rather one-sided hence; it is persuasive media propaganda and subtle manipulations of newspaper readers.

Excerpt 19: Strike: FG to raise dons' pay. The minister of Education, Dr. Sam Egwu on Tuesday said that the FG had agreed in principles to raise the salaries of ASUU. But, Egwu said it would not be able to meet the 109 percent salary increase being demanded by the lecturers, blaming decreasing oil revenue caused by the Niger Delta crisis (The Punch newspaper July 1, 2009).

Excerpt 19 is both political and response media frames coming from government representative to boost the morale of ASUU and newspaper readers. 'FG to raise dons' pay,' the minister was quoted advancing reason for the inability of the federal government in meeting the demands of the Union, "but, Egwu said it would not be able to meet the 109 percent salary increase being demanded by the lecturers, blaming decreasing oil revenue caused by the Niger Delta crisis." The media frame is a persuasive propaganda to manipulate newspaper readers.

Excerpt 20: ASUU strike: Return to class, FG urges varsity lecturers (The Guardian August 24, 2013)

In excerpt 20, readers were offered the appeal by the federal government for ASUU to suspend its industrial strike action. The reason advanced for the suspension is basically to allay the fears and the pains of the students who bear the brunt of the labour disputes. The appeal written in extremely bold headline is a persuasive propaganda and a ploy to make ASUU see reason why the labour dispute must end.

Excerpt 21: ASUU has grounded academic activities in the nation's public universities for about six weeks running... as the FGN and ASUU appeared not ready to shift ground. The insensitive approach displayed so far by the main stakeholders in the dispute especially the FGN and ASUU, explains why public education in the country remains one of the most backward globally (The Punch July 23, 2009).

Excerpt 21 is an example of media outburst of outrage on the industrial dispute. An editorial should be insightful, educative and instructive. Rather, the above editorial piece started with an attempt to blackmail the two parties involved in the

industrial dispute, and ended up writing unfavourably against public universities in Nigeria. The *Punch* newspaper did not hide its disposition and outburst of emotional purgation against the labour disputes. The paper went on to say that the Nigerian public education is the most backward globally. Such unsubstantiated consciously designed to psych up and appeal to the conscience of parties to the disputes. The statement reads thus: “the insensitive approach displayed so far by the main stakeholders in the dispute especially the FGN and ASUU, explains why public education in the country remains one of the most backward globally.” The excerpt is a persuasive communication campaign mounted by the *Punch newspaper* to appeal to parties to the labour conflict. The paper, through its uncensored lampoon and sarcasm, eventually succeeded to query and doubt the quality of university education in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

News framing is a journalistic device used to systematise various communication perspectives in order to achieve different media agenda as shown from the study. News framing, according to Kuypers (2010:12) “defines problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments and suggest remedies”. As earlier said, critical textual analysis is adopted to expose the ideological undertone underpinning the media representations on the labour crises by making the implicit intentions of text producer(s) to be explicit. There are two dominant social ideologies revealed in the study; ideology of dominance which is a form of power play and social control was exercised by the federal government, print media and ASUU, while the ideology of resistance particularly from the labour union formed the dominant ideological perspectives from the three stakeholders to the labour disputes. Consequently, the analyses reveal that news is a social discourse meant to serve some interests and purposes. Hence, it has social implication in promoting some beliefs, whether the beliefs of the few privileged in the society (elite) or the beliefs of the assumed voiceless in the society. That implies that every media text has implicit message to either maintain the status quo or challenge the status quo.

As well, the analyses reveal that newspaper journalists deployed various discursive strategies to mediate different ideologies of social power so as to maintain or challenge power

relations between the contending parties. These mediation strategies include: stereotyping, topicalisation, persuasive propaganda and legitimisation. The study reveals that print media journalists deployed language as rhetorical tools to justify (support) or condemn (weaken) some perspectives. The ideological function of language in crisis reporting as pointed out in the findings have confirmed the position of Waterell (1999, p.1) who submits that “the subtle use of language is to construct and create social interaction and diverse social world”. Language, based on the analysis, is used to create and maintain the dichotomy between the capitalists and the working class. Paltridge (2013, p.95) who broadened our understanding on the ideological function of language when he posits that “meaning is never arbitrary in that the choice of a particular genre or rhetorical strategy brings with it particular presuppositions, meanings, ideologies and intentions”. Language, in news discourse, has been established to be the major ingredient of socio-political power imbalance and dominance characterising the perspectives of parties to conflicts. Also, Eggins (1994) cited in Paltridge (2013, p.95), who discusses the non-neutrality of language in any discursive social practice: whatever genre we are involved in, and whatever the register of the situation, our use of language will also be influenced by our ideological positions: the values we hold (consciously or unconsciously), the biases and perspectives we adopt (Paltridge, 2013, p.95).

From the above, the study shows skilful manipulation of language by print media journalists in mediating different ideologies so as to support dominant perspectives or challenge opposition perspectives. Haig (2017) also addresses the ideological overtones of news production and news circulation when he affirms that: news texts have great ideological significance in contemporary societies and that the production and dissemination of news texts by mass media organizations and their consumption by audiences are key processes in the operation of ideology. It is reasonable to assume that this ideological salience of news accounts in large part for the attention given to it by CDA scholars (Haig, 2017, p.34). The above observations on the non-neutrality of language use in the media further confirms earlier submissions by Marcel (2015, p.8), that “newspapers are noted for using particular patterns of language in their discourse to mediate various ideologies, especially when writing on topical social issues”. Based

on this submission, newspaper is meant to raise or manipulate readers' awareness and control social practices. Scholars from critical discourse analysis such as Fairclough, van-Dijk, Wodak and a host of others have established that there is a correlation between media, language and power. It was also established from the textual analyses that the dialectics of language is instrumental to injustice and domination by the powerful, thereby contributing to social inequalities in the society

Conclusion

Based on the textual analysis, the Nigerian newspapers gave adequate coverage to the labour disputes between ASUU and FGN. The reportage, however, showed negative dispositions in framing patterns, headlines, and in narratives. The newspapers therefore exploited the agitation discourse to exercise some relative power so as to endorse some dominance because the mediated information is stuck-up to change the thinking of the public on the labour conflicts. The various power plays demonstrated by the selected Nigerian newspapers confirm the submission of van-Dijk (2004:10) who admits that "media power is generally symbolic and persuasive in the sense that the media primarily have the potential to control to some extent the minds of readers...." That presupposes that the media have relative influence in shaping human thinking and actions because the information supplied by the media will serve as mental groundwork on which the audience base their moral evaluation of the industrial crises. It is thereby recommended that Nigerian newspapers should shun partisan reportage of issues so as to enhance credibility.

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