

Tribal Concealment: A Nomenclatorial Analysis of Herdsmen Discourse in Nigeria Media

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Abstract

The Fulani herdsmen are nomad who settled in different locations throughout the country peacefully. The peaceful coexistence between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers/villagers have been tampered with in the recent time due to the constant quarrel and attack between and among the sects. The attack is somewhat monopolised by the Fulani herdsmen. This has make it look like a Fulani herdsmen attack on their host. Playing their oversight role in the society, the media is reporting the conflict between the sects and arrogating the attack to the Fulani herdsmen. Tactically, media has dropped Fulani from the phrase "Fulani herdsmen" and conceal the tribes' name while reporting the conflict. There are existing works on the study of herdsmen/farmers' conflict in the academic but there is none that studied tribal concealment in the discourse. This work therefore considered this a huge vacuum that needs to be filled by studied different strategies used to conceal Fulani as a tribe in the discourse and examine the implication of such concealments. Data are collected from two major Nigerian newspapers, the Vanguard and Punch newspapers. The work is content based analysis. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is adopted as the model and the work is analysed qualitatively. Concealment strategies like lexical replacement, nominalization, passivisation, hedging, use of pronouns and name dropping are identified. The work also discovered that the concealment has social, political and academic implication.

Key words: *Fulani, concealment, nomenclatorial, herdsmen discourse, media*

Introduction

The media is saddled with the moral and professional responsibility of reporting any event in the society. In their reports, they use different strategies to either background or foreground any participant or information they wish to background or foreground in the discourse. As much as the media keeps people in the society informed, they also escalate happenings beyond limit. This sometimes result in opinion and ideological formation that may make or mar the peace of the society. In herdsmen/farmers' conflict discourse, the media is playing significant role in reporting the conflict.

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Fulani herdsmen and farmers have been living together for decades with little or no quarrel which are easily settled by village heads, when occurred. According to Stride and Ifeka, (1973), Fulani migrated to Nigeria about the 6th and 7th century AD. Iloeje (1972) reports that they migrated from the north as invaders at different periods from the 13th century to the 19th. The Fulani migration history from the north suggested that they came into the country either from Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger or even the Senegambia region. Their usual mode of operation is to settle in any village where they find grass for their animals and cohabit with the villagers who are mostly farmers. Conflict ensue between the two sects when the herds graze on the crops of their host farmers. According to Dominic (2017:45), grazing constitutes a problem to local farmers, because in the process of finding feed (fodder) the cattle would ravage the farm produce in a manner that is painful to the farmer when considering the labour and loss of produce thus pitch them into warfare. This warfare has claimed several lives and properties. The herders on the other hand claimed that they lost their cattle to rustlers. This claim and counter claims are source of the conflict between the two sects. As a result of this, the peaceful cohabitation enjoyed by these sects have been tampered with. This mostly affects states like, Nasarawa, Ondo, Oyo, Taraba, Plateau, Delta, Kaduna and Benue States (*Vanguard 22nd June, 2016, Sahara Reporters, 20th February, 2017, PM News, 28th February, 2018, the Guardian Newspaper, 16th March, 2018, and The Punch Newspaper, 17th October, 2016 and 3rd January, 2018*). These states constitute the flash points of the herdsmen attack especially in the last two years. This has been ascribed to various reasons. While some claimed that it is political others think it is an ethnic rivalry. By and large, lives and properties are being exterminated on a daily basis. In reporting this news, the media conspicuously background the name of the major tribe in this discourse.

Animal rearing is a profession ascribed majorly Fulani as a tribe in Nigeria, unlike other tribes such as the Tiv in Benue state who are known for crop farming. This is justified in Eniola, (2007) cited in Bello (2013) that Fulani owns over 90% of the nation's (Nigeria) livestock population which accounts for one-third of agricultural GDP and 3.2% of the nation's GDP. This informs the phrase 'Fulani herdsmen'. They are so refer without acrimony. However, the name Fulani is being remove from the phrase in recent reports by the media. The media, in their reports tactically background this for a number of reasons. Some of the reason is to save the public self-

image of the Fulani and also to prevent aggravation of the crisis. Some also claim that they are doing this because the incumbent president is of Fulani extraction. In another parlance, it is said that Fulani are not the only tribe rearing animals. Some claimed that there are some rich men in Nigeria that rears animal but only hired Fulani to monitor it for them base on their expertise. Consequently, it will be wrong to ascribe the conflict to Fulani alone. Some even believe that the attack is not Fulani's attack, it is orchestrated by some hoodlums. However, the Miyetti Allah cattle breeders association of Nigeria (MACBAN) which is the umbrella body for the Fulani herdsmen had severally claimed responsibility for the attack.

There are existing work in the academic which studied herdsmen/farmers' conflict from different approaches. For example, the livelihood issue in herdsmen-farmers among farming communities in Kogi state, Nigeria was studied by Dimelu et al (2017). Okwor (2016) examines the political economy of the farmers and herdsmen conflict in the contemporary period. Okoli (2016) also studies the phenomenon of herdsmen militancy and states that ecological factor are the causes of the conflict. Ibrahim et al. (2015) study the herdsmen-farmers' relationship in Benue state. The authors use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in their study. In another approach, Alhassan (2013) historically studies the relationship between the two sects. Tenuche and Ifatimehin (2009) also investigates the traditional relationship between the farmers and herdsmen using sociological approach. These studies identify different causes of the conflict between the herdsmen and the villagers/farmers. Causes such as intolerance, disobedient to laws, lack of concern for others means of living, ecological, climate change and other natural phenomenon were identified by these scholars. These works are excellent and brilliant contribution to the study of the conflicts both in the academics and the contemporary society. However, none of the work examines tribal concealment in the discourse. This is the thrust of the present work.

Aims and Objectives

The major aim of this work is to do a nomenclatural analysis of herdsmen discourse in Nigerian media paying attention to how a tribal name is concealed in the discourse. Our objectives include the following.

1. To identify different concealment strategies used.
2. To explain the motivations for the concealment strategies.
3. To examine various implications of the strategies.

Research Questions

This work is a contribution to the study of herdsmen discourse in the media. Consequently, we should be able to answer the following questions at the end of the work.

1. What are the different concealment strategies used?
2. Why are the strategies used?
3. What are the implications of the strategies?

Theoretical Framework

The chosen model for this analysis is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This is because it helps to unravel inherent meaning concealed in any discourse. It investigates words in relation to other words in the same context and reveal hidden ideologies in the discourse. CDA is concerned with the investigation of the relationship between language use and social events. Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) explain that CDA engages in concrete, linguistic textual analysis of language use in social interaction. CDA therefore becomes a strong analytical tool to unravel hidden meanings in language use and social relation. There are various approaches to CDA by different scholars, such as Norman Fairclough, Teun Van Dijk, Van Leeuwen and Jorgensen and Phillips etc. However, this work adopts van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach to CDA. This approach studies language in relation to socio-cognitive skills of participants in any discourse. According to van Dijk (1993: 258), language used in conveying ideologies is the worldview which constitute social cognition.

Apparently, CDA as an analytical tool can be seen as a multidisciplinary model. The socio-cognitive approach investigates the cognitive process involved in participants' interactions. The contributions of Van Dijk have been enormous. Van Dijk approach to CDA is anchored on the assumption that the topics that people discuss about represent what exist in their minds. Consequently, topics of national interest, like national (in)security, religious (in)tolerance, youth restiveness, etc. are deposited on the participant's minds, and are deservedly reported on the pages of newspapers. Sequel to this, Tomasello (2009) opines that language is a social convention through which human beings direct one another's attention to various aspects of their shared environment. Based on this, language users manipulate, direct or redirect the thoughts of others, create agenda and create an entirely different but dominantly circulated assumption which tends to replace reality over a period of time. According to Al-Sharoufi, (2013: 10) manipulation is a

premeditated discourse mainly aimed to instigate people to take certain actions that serve the writer's ideology. This work therefore adopts the socio-cognitive approach because the tribal concealment strategies help to register ideologies, about the concealed tribe in the mind of readers.

Review of Relevant Literature

It is expedient to take a cursory look at existing literature related to the subject of this research. We shall therefore review relevant literature in this section and establish gaps in the academics that this work intends to fill.

Dimelu et al. (2017) use unstructured interview and focused group discussion (FGD) while studying livelihood issues in herdsman-farmers' conflict among farming communities in Kogi state. In the study, the authors assessed causes and effects of herdsman-farmers' conflicts on livelihood of agrarian communities in Kogi State. The author selected 135 crop farmers for the research. Having revealed that farmers in the studied area are small scale farmers, whose livelihood depends on their farm produce, it was gathered from the farmers that violation of laws/tradition, livelihood interference and cultural factors were the source of the conflict between the two group (herdsmen and farmers). Dimelu et al (2017) show that the conflict was caused by people's disobedience to existing law and tradition. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) was used by Ibrahim et al. (2015) to assess farmer-pastoralist conflict in Nigeria. The work investigates the controversy over land use conflict as the bane of farmer-pastoralist conflict in Nigeria. The work adopts geographical theory while we are adopting critical discourse analysis. Ibrahim et al. (2015) reveal that between 1976 and 1995, all land uses gain, attesting to the increase in population and competition over dwindling resources. The work also reveals that crop farming has encroached to the grazing areas. This resulted in serious conflict.

John (2014) reports that media are subjective in their report of herdsman attack. He argued that they are bias in reporting the evil perpetrated by the herdsman. Examining the predicaments of the pastoralists and farmers and the true stories behind their conflicts, John reveals that most of the media report only foreground cases where the herders accused the farmer of wrong doings but ignore the agitation of the farmers. He submits that the deliberate action of the media to background the loss of the farmers in the attack aggravated the crisis.

Akinyetun (2016) examines why Fulani has ignored their staff which they are known for in controlling their herds and resulted to the use of gun. He assesses the activities of the herdsmen as a businessmen. Akinyetun argues that the outcome of the action of the herders may result to routinization of violence, reprisal attacks, and offshoot of another deadly sect among others Simeon (2017) attempts to unravel the cause of the new behaviour of the herdsmen. The author adopts qualitative analysis to analyse collected data from a primary and secondary source. The author observes that, if the menace of herdsmen attack is not curbed early, it will endanger the security situation of the country.

Tenuche and Ifatimehin (2009) investigate the traditional relationship between farmers and Fulani herdsmen in the continuous conflict experienced in Kogistate. The study further queries how the incessant conflict affects the security of lives in the area. The researchers relied on in-depth interview and source for other materials from articles, books and other reports to leverage on the interview. In their findings, it was revealed that one of the source of the crisis can be traced to the land tenure system. Okwor (2016) examines the political economy of the conflict between farmers and Fulani herdsmen in the Contemporary era of climate change in Nigeria. It points out the causes of the constant clash between farmers and Fulani herdsmen. The researcher uses focus group discussion (FGD) and interview to gather data. In gathering his data, the author interviewed Berom farmers, Fulani herdsmen, NGO and relevant government institutions to get accurate and primary information. The study examines the perspectives of the Berom farmers and the Fulani herdsmen living in the environment to arrive at a logical conclusion and bring out cogent evident to support the claim for the reasons behind the conflict.

Alhassan (2013) studies and describes the historical hostile relationship that exist between the herdsmen and crop farmers in the North-Eastern Nigeria. The work adopts quantitative method of analysis. Random sampling procedure and structured questionnaire were adopted to elicit data. The research identifies different causes of the quarrel which include; destruction of crop, burning of range land, increasing rate of cattle theft and so on. The resultant effects of the conflict ranges from economic to physical and socio-psychological. The conflict of survival between the herdsmen and the farmers was the thrust of Abbass (2014). The author opines that conflict is a

serious battle that kept reoccurring in the affected areas. He states that the Fulanis are not ready to surrender until lasting solution is proffered because their livelihood depends on their cattle. He traces the source of the conflict to ecological, growing population and encroachment of pastoral paths by Fadama farmers.

Okoli and Atelhe (2014) examine the conflict between herdsmen and farmers and situate the cause, reason and effect of the crisis. The authors adopt qualitative analysis to analyse primary and secondary information anchored on the political-ecological perspective. The authors agreed that the conflict is prolonged due to ecological factor. This is a political ecology approach to the study of the conflict between herders and farmers in which the source of the conflict is traced to politics, economy and social aspect of the actors' lives. Okoli (2016) also examines herdsmen militancy in the central northern Nigeria. Okoli is of the opinion that the region is vulnerable to inter-ethnic crisis and has the highest case of the crisis in Nigeria. The author argues that the herders/farmers conflict is as a result of ecological contest between the two factions.

The reviewed works are excellence and great contribution to the study of herdsmen/farmer conflict in Nigeria. Different approaches have been channelled towards the investigation of the conflict ranging from; historical, sociological, ecological, legal, news framing and political approaches. The menace of herdsmen attack is rampant which makes it deserve multifaceted approach. Despite the huge and relevant contribution of the existing works towards this, none of them considered the role of the media in the crisis especially in representing a particular tribe. This is the thrust of this paper. This work propose to examine how Fulani as a significant tribe in the discourse is conspicuously backgrounded.

Methodology

This work is a content based analysis, therefore we adopt qualitative analysis. The work adopts critical discourse analysis as a model. This work will reveal concealed tribal name in media report of herdsmen/farmers' conflict in Nigeria using CDA. The work will critically examining different linguistic tools used by the media to conceal tribal name in the discourse. We shall investigate such concealment strategies as lexical replacement, passivisation, use of pronouns, nominalisation, hedge and name dropping. The work will investigate how these are used to conceal tribal name in the herdsmen attack discourse in Nigerian media.

Data for this research are collected from two major Nigeria dailies. They are the Vanguard and the Punch newspapers. The electronic version of the papers is adopted. The electronic version is preferred because it has a wider coverage compare to the print version. We followed the uniform resource locator (URL) of the newspapers to collect relevant data. The data were retrieved through the navigational search link of the newspapers using captions like; *herdsmen-farmer clash in Nigeria, herdsmen attack, and herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria* as the search term. We sampled over five hundred data that basically deals with reports on herdsmen attack. The data covers a period from May, 2016 to May, 2018. This is because the period witnessed the peak of the attack in Nigeria and attract media attention than before, locally and internationally.

The work adopts Purposive sampling in gathering the data. Headlines, news reports and opinion news that are relevant to this work are deliberately selected. The work adopts purposive sampling because it allows manual assessment of the media representation of the attack which reflect different thoughts, sentiments, subjectivities and bias. These are generally used to detect news and reports where tribal name is concealed by the media in reporting the issue under investigation. The work examines the data by investigating different lexical items and grammatical expressions used, in order to reveal different strategies used to conceal the name. This is done by examining words in relation to other words in the same linguistic environment.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section present data for analysis in order to achieve our aim and objectives.

Concealment Strategies

Concealment strategies are strategies used to withhold information from people. The user may use it to present information in an unclear way. While working on the concealment strategies used in the hospital premises, Odebunmi (2011) defines concealment strategy as the act of withholding information from clients. The author identifies four different reasons why doctors use concealment strategies. The reasons are preventive, palliative, cultural-compliant and confidentiality. Concealment strategies may be used in ideological formation especially in the media. The media is fond of using concealment strategy when representing a particular sect of

the society. Consequently, we want to submit that concealment strategies are also used to explain ideological issues in media discourse. They either do this to background the 'good' or 'bad' of the sect or to foreground their 'bad' or 'good'. In herdsmen discourse, such concealment strategies as; passivisation, lexical replacement, nominalization, hedging, name dropping and use of pronoun are identified.

In media report of herdsmen/farmers' conflict in Nigeria, Nigerian media adopts different strategies for different reasons. One of such strategies is concealment strategies. Different ideologies are concealed through different strategies. Social actors are at various point, concealed for different reasons as well. These concealment strategies have different implications for the society, readers, actors in the discourse, media and the government. In this work, we propose to investigate how a particular tribal name is concealed in the discourse. This section presents different strategies used taking instances from media report.

Lexical Replacement

The first noticeable strategy used to conceal Fulani name in the discourse is lexical replacement. In the discourse, other words are used to replace Fulani in their representation in the media. This helps to background the actor's name (Fulani) in the discourse. It makes the tribe's name obscure to readers as if they are not involved. Different words are used to mean different thing in the discourse, in attempt to background the tribal name. In some instances, Fulani is well represented but in most instances negative words are used to replace the tribal name in the discourse to foreground the evil action but background the actor. This is because of the bad effect of the attack. Richardson (2007:47), states that words convey the imprint of society and of value judgements in particular- they convey connoted as well as denoted meaning. Richardson explains further that all types of words, but particularly nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs carry connoted meaning in addition to denoted meanings. These category of words are often refer to as content or lexical words. In the following instances, content words are mostly used to replace the tribal name. This is to enact different meanings and form different ideologies.

1. There was a robbery attack on the highway by herdsmen. They attacked travellers and two of the victims are still

being treated in the hospital. Already, there are concerted efforts by all the Police divisions in that axis towards making sure that **the hoodlums** do not go scot-free.

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/04/herdsmen-attack-motorists-delta-injure-5/>

2. **The militant herdsmen** arrived Mondo settlement about 1am and started shooting sporadically at displaced persons who were asleep in the church which also has a primary school building. “Seven people were confirmed killed among them men, women and children. Many sustained injuries others are still missing. **The attackers** also burnt several houses and farmland, as we speak the entire area has been deserted.

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/04/herdsmen-attack-another-benue-church-kill-seven-idps/>

3. A grandmother, Victoria Akinseye, was raped in August 2017 by **two** herdsmen while working on her farm in Ore, Odigbo council area of Ondo State. Narrating the incident to newsmen, the 72-year-old had said, “I was working on my farm when **two men** attacked me from behind, held my neck such that I couldn’t ask for help. They tore my clothes and took turns to rape me.” She said a fellow farmer saw her where the herdsmen had abandoned her after the rape and took her home.
<https://punchng.com/five-herdsmen-attacks-that-shocked-nigerians/>
4. Vanguard gathered that **the invaders** also left scores injured while several houses and huts in community were set ablaze. According to our source, **the marauding**

herdsmen resorted to sacking the community after their entreaty to be allowed into the community with their cattle to graze was turned down by the youths and elders of the area. Later Saturday night around 11pm **armed herdsmen** stormed Agagbe and started shooting sporadically burning down the property of the people and injuring many

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/04/eight-feared-dead-scores-injured-fresh-attack-gwer-west-community-herdsmen/>

5. Nigerian and the people of Ondo State were thrown into a rude shock when a former Minister of Finance, Samuel Oluyemisi Falae, simply known as Olu Falae, was kidnapped by **seven herdsmen** from his farm in Ondo State on September, 21, 2015. His abductors demanded N100m as ransom. The elder statesman, who was then 77 years old, was released three days later. He claimed he was tortured. **The seven** were later apprehended, tried and sentenced to life imprisonment.

<https://punchng.com/five-herdsmen-attacks-that-shocked-nigerians/>

In the above excerpts, words such as **hoodlums, militants, attackers, seven, two, armed, marauding, invaders, dreaded** are used to replace Fulani in the discourse. Majority of the data sampled in the two selected newspapers have these representations. These lexical replacements are used to conceal the tribe's name from being known in the discourse. This is an attempt to present the action negatively to the society and exclude the tribe. With this replacement, the tribe (actor) becomes opaque to readers of the news. This will dissociate the tribal name from the cognitive memory of the society and save the tribe from the discourse. This is explain in Van Dijk (2003) that language and cognition works together. It therefore removes the cognition that mediates between society and discourse (Van Dijk, 1985). These words has different meanings but with similar

semantic relations. Except for the word seven which is used to state the number of the actors at the time of the attack, other words have negative connotations. This inform one of the reasons for the concealment of the tribe because their action is antihuman. Reporters adopt this to save the public self-image of the actor and strengthen the belief that Fulani is not the perpetrator but strangers.

Passivisation

Passivisation is a syntactic process where the active sentence is transformed to a passive sentence to conceal the actor of the action in the sentence. Amer (2013) asserts that Passivisation helps journalists manipulate and mystify the responsibility and agency of the warring parties. In a passivized sentence, the role of social actors are treated as objects or they receive benefit from the processes/activities in a positive or negative way. Social actors may be given a passivized role in order to background them and make them less known to the society. This also helps to background their role in any event. Depending on the choice of the writer, the passivized agent may be deleted or retained. When it is deleted, readers may have to read further to be able to identify the agent of the action. In what follows, we shall exemplify this taking instances from the media report of herdsmen attack in Nigeria.

6. A source in the area disclosed that those wounded were travelling along the road when they **were hit** by bullets, adding that the driver of the vehicle **was also attacked** with cutlasses on his right hand. The source said: “People were running in different directions before the Police and soldiers came to the scene.

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/04/herdsmen-attack-motorists-delta-injure-5/>

7. Five persons **were killed** on Thursday night by Fulani herdsmen at Okokolo village in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State.

<https://punchng.com/five-gruesome-fulani-herdsmen-attacks-since-january-2016/>

8. The climax of it started on 10th December 2017 when innocent aged women **were attacked and macheted** in-between Moro and Egelu villages for their refusal to submit themselves to be raped

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/02/herdsmen-attack-ogun-communities-sack-30-schools/>

9. The Stephanos Foundation says no fewer than 75 people **were killed** while 23 others **were injured** following attacks by suspected Fulani herdsmen in two communities in Irigwe Kingdom, Bassa Local Government Area of Plateau State. According to the foundation, about 13,726 persons have been displaced from the communities after the hoodlums burnt 489 houses during the attacks which occurred between September 8 and October 17, 2017.

<http://punchng.com/2017/10/27/herdsmen-attacks-75-killed-13726-displaced-plateau>

In the above excerpts, actor of the action is backgrounded through passivisation. Passivized verbs such as **were hit, was also attacked, were feared dead, were attacked and machete and were killed, were injured** are used to conceal the actors. This is done to background the actor from the discourse in order to present the action to the people and leave readers guessing the actor. Actions such as killing, dead, and attacking, are presented as if no actor perform them. They are presented without actor. With this, the writer has successfully hide the tribe from the discourse and leave the readers guessing who the actor is/are. The actor in this type of representation are not

known to the reader and so, it becomes a great deal to apportion blame. It is difficult to hold anybody responsible for the action. This is the aim of the media. They may report by stating the actor, even in a passive form. The statements are also possible in active form rather than the passive form but the reporter chose the passive form to conceal the tribal name. The media do not want any tribe help for the action, hence the concealment of tribal name. This reveals the fact that there is the socio-cognitive approach to language use (Van Dijk, 1985). It is an attempt to remove the tribe's name from the herders discourse as relates to the attack.

Nominalisation

This is another syntactic process where the verb is given a nominal role to conceal the noun (actor) in the sentence. The action word is raised to the status of a noun. When the verb is made the subject of the sentence by raising its status to that of a nominal category, the actor is backgrounded while the action is foregrounded. Nominalisation allows exclusion of the social actors as it makes no trace or reference to the social actors (Amer, 2013:87).

10. THE lawmaker representing Ivo State Constituency at the Ebonyi State House of Assembly, Hon. Oliver Osi, yesterday condemned **the attack** on one of his constituents and farmer, Mr Daniel Ngwoke following a clash between herdsmen and the farmer at Akaeze in Ivo Local Government Area of the state. Armed herdsmen He further called on his people to defend themselves in line with the laws of the land as no amount of cow can be compared with the sacredness of human life. The incident, Vanguard gathered caused hue and cry in the victim's community as the state government immediately set up a 10-man committee to investigate the immediate and remote causes of **the clash** and report accordingly

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/03/herdsmen-attack-lawmaker-urges-ebonyi-community-defend/>

11. **The attack** meted out on the peaceful farmers of Ivo Local Government Area of the state came as a shock to me because, so many measures had been put in place to ensure cooperation and peace between us and the herdsmen. It is like there is something in them that instigates them to cause violence, killings and destruction

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/03/herdsmen-attack-lawmaker-urges-ebonyi-community-defend/>

12. **The Benue State attacks** began on January 1, 2018 and are still ongoing. The government placed the official figure of fatalities at 73, but various reports estimated that actual figure may be over a hundred. **The severity of the attack** had prompted President Muhammadu Buhari to order the relocation of the Inspector General of Police, Ibrahim Idris, to Benue.

<https://punchng.com/five-herdsmen-attacks-that-shocked-nigerians/>

13. Eighty is the number we can say for now, **the attacks** have not stopped,” Benue State Emergency Management Agency executive secretary Emmanuel Shior told AFP by telephone. Shior said **the killings** had displaced thousands of people in the districts of Guma and Logo who are now seeking shelter in four camps. The number (of internally displaced people) is 80,000 now because **the killings** have

continued, some of the people in other states are running to Benue,” Shior said from the Benue state capital, Makurdi. We suspect these people are reacting against the open grazing prohibition put in place by the governor of Benue state.”

<https://punchng.com/breaking-death-toll-from-benue-herdsmenfarmers-clashes-reaches-80/>

In the instances above, verbs such as kill, attack and clash are raised to the status of noun to mask the actor of the action. This is made possible through pre-modification of the verbs with article ‘the’ which is the attribute of a nominal category. With pre-modification, the verbs turn to noun to exclude the actor in the discourse. The verbs turn to ‘the attack’, ‘the clash’, ‘the killing’ in the constructions. This conceal the real actor which is the Fulani herdsmen. It is a possibility for the reporters to mention the tribal name as the actor in the report. Here, the tribal name is concealed through nominalisation. The action is foregrounded here rather than the actor to prevent the tribe away from the herdsmen discourse in the society. This will help to prevent the tribe from being mentioned in the negative way in the society. While the actors remain unknown to readers, the action is pronounced by giving it actor’s role. It is also an attempt to save the actor from being held responsible for the action in the society. This is also an attempt to protect the oneness of Nigeria society. This remove the tribes name from the memory of readers and the society.

Hedging

Hedge is used to dissociate self from the truthfulness or otherwise of a statement. Following Hyland (1998a:1), hedging refers to any linguistic means used to indicate either a lack of complete commitment to the truth value of an accompanying proposition, or a desire not to express that commitment categorically. Hedging as a linguistic strategy may be used to facilitate turn-taking, show politeness and mitigate *face*-threats. Speakers make use of this to lessen threat to public self-image of others. Sometimes, hedge is expressed to conceal information. This is done through vagueness. Neary-Sundquist(2013:151) states that vague language is often produced through the use of hedges, which are single- or multi-word expressions used to indicate uncertainty about the propositional

content of an utterance or to diminish its impact. In herdsmen/farmers' discourse in Nigerian media, hedge is used to conceal a particular tribe, Fulani. This is seen in the following instances.

14. **Suspected herdsmen** early Thursday, allegedly invaded the Africa Church, Mbamondo Ukemberagya Logo local government area of Benue state killing seven persons who were taking refuge in the church after being displaced by the raging herdsmen crisis in the area.

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/04/herdsmen-attack-another-benue-church-kill-seven-idps/>

15. June 2015 recorded 97 deaths arising from **suspected Fulani herdsmen** attacks; September recorded three; October, 18; November, 22; December, 28; February 2016, 300; April 2016, 55; and May 2016, two. Last December, no fewer than 22 persons were reportedly killed when **suspected Fulani herdsmen** attacked Kwata in Jos South Local government area of Plateau State.

<https://punchng.com/b-haram-fulani-herdsmen-kill-3000-buhari/>

16. **KILLERS Suspected** to be Fulani herdsmen at the weekend launched a fresh attack on Tiv communities at different locations in the southern senatorial district of Nasarawa state. **The suspected killers** were said to have carried out the attacks simultaneously in Awe, Keana, Obi and Doma Local Government Areas of the state, leaving about 32 killed and 19 others with severe gun and machet

injuries. At the time of this report, over 10,000 Tiv villagers are currently trapped in Obi Local Government Area following the coordinated attacks by **the suspected** herdsmen

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/04/973946/>

17. THE reckless adventure of **persons suspected** to be Fulani herdsmen are on the increase and unsettling. In search of grazing pastures according to them, they have left their footprint in practically every host community in the country that has had the misfortune of having them as visitors.

<https://punchng.com/five-gruesome-fulani-herdsmen-attacks-since-january-2016/>

In the above instances, the writers did not want to be held responsible for calling or referring to Fulani as herdsmen or pointing accusing finger at a particular tribe or group of people. It is possible for the reporter to refer to the herdsmen as 'Fulani herdsmen' or to state that 'Fulani herdsmen attack' but in order not to accuse a particular tribe, the writer decided to hedge with the use of lexical item. The writers adopted the word '**suspected**'. This word is common to law enforcement agent or lawyers to prevent jumping into conclusion on the culprit. It is often said in the legal parlance that until a court of competent jurisdiction pronounce a person guilty, the person is still innocent and therefore refers to as a suspect. These writers also adopt this to prevent the public from knowing the real perpetrator of the action. This will also lessen threat to the face of the tribe in the society. With this strategy, the general public, government and readers of the newspapers will be left in the dark as to the real culprit. This is done to avoid presenting the negative of the tribe but of the action. The media does not want to be seen presenting the tribe in a negative way to the society. They want social equality among tribes. This is also in tandem with the social cognitive approach to discourse by Van Dijk (1985).

Name Dropping

Name dropping is a strategic way pointing at a particular person or entity in any act. There are different way of naming a person or a group or persons in discourse. In discursive act, a person is referred through his/her action and the knowledge of discussants. This will form the way he/she will be seen in the society. Richardson (2007:49) opines that the way that people named in news discourse can have significant impact on the way in which they are viewed. When a person is described in a negative manner in discourse the person is seen as such by the society. In herdsmen discourse, everyone in the society is condemning the actions of the herdsmen. This is because of the antihuman actions of killing, maiming, kidnapping and other evil act they are performing. People therefore do not want to be associated with such acts. Tribal name is therefore dropped totally by the media. For example,

18. **Herdsmen** attack motorists in Delta, injure 5

19. **Herdsmen**, armed with AK-47 guns and cutlasses, weekend, reportedly blocked the Umuachi-Afor axis of the Ughelli/Asaba Expressway, Ndokwa East Local Government Area, Delta State, inflicting bullet wounds on five travellers. **Herdsmen** on rampage. The herdsmen, who emerged from a nearby bush, stormed the road at about 6.30p.m., shooting at random for over 30 minutes. Panic-stricken motorists travelling from Asaba were forced to speed off for refuge at Umuachi-Ogo community, while those travelling from the opposite direction drove to Kwale and other neighbouring communities.

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/04/herdsmen-attack-motorists-delta-injure-5/>

20. A major crisis confronting the nation at the moment are the continued hostilities, wickedness and havoc being wreaked by **herdsmen** in various parts of the country with recent cases

being recorded in the Middle Belt region. Many people believe that with the poor handling of the menace and the audacity of **the herdsmen**, they could well be described as a new terrorist group distinct from the Boko Haram, Al-Shabab and the Islamic State in Iran and Syria and other militant groups.

<https://punchng.com/ending-deadly-herdsmen-attacks/>

21. Shortly after, **the herders** were seen with thousands of cow trying to enter the village which the people resisted. “They later came back and claimed that the cows had been killed but the people insisted that there was nothing like that. They insisted that it was a ploy by **the herders** to curry sympathy to allow them entry into the community.

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/04/eight-feared-dead-scores-injured-fresh-attack-gwer-west-community-herdsmen/>

22. A major crisis confronting the nation at the moment are the continued hostilities, wickedness and havoc being wreaked by **herdsmen** in various parts of the country with recent cases being recorded in the Middle Belt region. Many people believe that with the poor handling of the menace and the audacity of **the herdsmen**, they could well be described as a new terrorist group distinct from the Boko Haram, Al-Shabab and the Islamic State in Iran and Syria and other militant groups.

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In Nigeria, it is a known fact that the only tribe that is majorly associated with pastoralism is Fulani. This is because they are the professional herders in the country. According to Eniola, (2007) cited in Bello (2013), the Fulani own over 90% of the nation's (Nigeria) livestock population which accounts for one-third of agricultural GDP and 3.2% of the nation's GDP. This informs the reason the herdsmen are popularly refer to as "Fulani herdsmen" without any iota of hatred. This name they have been known for decades. Immediately the attack became popular and is widely condemned, they started rejecting the name and the media also tactically dropped the tribe's name from the phrase. In the media today, it is common to see herdsmen or herders as seen in the excerpts above, without the appellation "Fulani". This is an attempt to save the tribe's public self-image. This also prevent the society from ascribing any attack by the herdsmen to Fulani as an important tribe in the country. The successful dropping of this tribal name from the phrase is a strategy to conceal the tribe's name in the discourse. To this end, no tribe is publicly affiliated with the actions of the herdsmen. In other words, the conflict is now between herdsmen and farmers/villagers instead of having it between "Fulani herdsmen and farmers/villagers". However, the media is avoiding presenting the 'bad' of the tribe and the 'good' of others. We are able to reveal this through Van Dijk social cognitive approach to CDA.

Use of Pronouns

Pronoun is significant in its role to avoid repeating a name in discourse. This is done to avoid monotony. It is also use to deemphasise the involvement of a person in a discourse. According to Cornish (1986), Pronoun involves the avoidance of redundancy or repetition by the use of a semantically attenuated expression in place of a full lexical expression initially used. In the herdsmen discourse, it is not only used to avoid repetition but also to conceal tribal name. Emphasising a particular tribe in a discourse gives prominence to the tribe and put the tribe at the centre of the discourse. For this reason, pronoun is to replace the actor. In the following instances, pronoun in judiciously used to conceal Fulani as a tribe from the discourse.

23. FULANI herdsmen are the new face of
terrorism in Nigeria. Having

graduated from carrying bows and arrows, **their** deadly arsenal now boasts sophisticated weapons, including AK-47 assault rifle which **they** deploy against host communities across the country. In **their** latest atrocity, hundreds of cattle herders descended on Ukpabi Nimbo, Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State last week, leaving a bloody trail. In all, the herdsmen killed 46 people, injuring several others. **They** burnt down houses and vehicles in the village. This is callous.

<https://punchng.com/treating-violent-fulani-herdsmen-terrorists/>

24. The attack meted out on the peaceful farmers of Ivo Local Government Area of the state came as a shock to me because, so many measures had been put in place to ensure cooperation and peace between us and **the herdsmen**. It is like there is something in **them** that instigates them to cause violence, killings and destruction. **They** have to live up to the expectation of the people.

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/03/herdsmen-attack-lawmaker-urges-ebonyi-community-defend/>

25. THE reckless adventure of persons suspected to be **Fulani herdsmen** are on the increase and unsettling. In search of grazing pastures according to **them**, **they** have left their footprint in practically every host community in the country that has had the misfortune of having **them** as visitors. **They** have rendered some

villages in Benue State ‘a gaping wound, spewing forth a river of human blood’ as described in the editorial of the *PUNCH* on March 13.

<https://punchng.com/five-gruesome-fulani-herdsmen-attacks-since-january-2016/>

In the instances above, pronouns such as ‘**they**’**their**’ and ‘**them**’ are used to refer to Fulani herdsmen. In the excerpts 23 to 25, ‘**they**’**their**’ and ‘**them**’ are co-referential to Fulani herdsmen. Although the tribe’s name has been mentioned earlier, the attempt to use pronoun is however to deemphasize mentioning the name. With this strategy, the tribe is less referred to in the discourse and therefore will be less threaten in the public. The Fulani is excluded through the use of pronoun to avoid being seen as ‘bad’. The media has been able to present the news without referring to a particular tribe in a bad way, hence they chose to conceal the tribe with the use of pronoun to deemphasize the tribe from the discourse.

Implications of the Concealment Strategies

In media discourse, concealment strategies are used for various reasons. Chief in the reasons is ideological formation. It is done to either foreground or background ‘their’ good or bad. Concealment strategy which according to Odebunmi (2011) is the act of withholding information from clients is used for palliative or preventive measure. In this discourse for example, it is used mostly for palliative measure. This strategy however has some implications in the society. This implications ranging from social to political and cultural implications. There are implications for the government, the discourse analyst, the media and the readers. The implications are also for the general public. The tribal concealment strategies used in the herdsmen/farmers’ conflict discourse in the media have the following implications; social, political and academic implications.

Social Implication

In any discourse, the first thing to consider is how the discourse affects participants in the discourse. The discourse presents participants to the society. In discourse of this nature, there are ideological issues to be dealt with. The in- and out-group dichotomy is usually seen in this type of discourse. The discourse normally present to the public the good or bad aspect of any discussant. In ideological formation, the ‘bad’ of others are foregrounded while the

'bad' of self is backgrounded. In the same vein, the 'good' of others is backgrounded while the 'good' of self is foregrounded. Following Ramanathan and Bee (2015:65) ideologies emphasise the good and bad to portray a positive belief and deemphasise the good and bad to portray negativity. The way a person or group of persons is/are represented in discourse determines their social construction. Van Dijk (2000:44) submits that negative ideologies emphasis 'their bad things' and de-emphasis 'their good things'. In other words, the bad of others is emphasised while their good is de-emphasised. This public portrayal either threaten or save face. This ideological representation is registered in the memory of the general public.

The nomenclatorial concealment of Fulani in this discourse has a social implication for the tribe concealed. It serves as a palliative measure in the society to background their name in the 'bad' of the herdsmen. This would have threatened the public self-image of the tribe. The concealment helps to boost their image in the public. It also has a social implication for the media practitioners. It makes them appear unbiased in the society. The tribe concealed will not see them as 'enemy'. This allows them to be indifferent to apportioning blame.

The society is forced to see the tribe as innocent. This will be against the belief and assumption that the tribe is warmonger. It will therefore promote peaceful coexistence with the tribe. The tribe may be accepted in the society. This is important because the tribe is found in any part of the country. The representation also gives the society a peace of mind and alertness towards their environment by identify any strange face that may breach the security connection.

Political Implication

Another implication of the strategies is political implication. Nigeria is divided into different geopolitical zones. The tribe in question is from the northern geopolitical zone. This is the zone that is ruling the country at the moment. The incumbent president is of Fulani extraction. He is proposing another tenure in office. With this proposal, he needs the support of the general public. Representation of his tribe as the attacker or killer of other tribe in the country may have a damning implication on his political career. Negative representation of the tribe may also have a negative historical record for the tribe in the future. It will always be a point of reference that when the country has a Fulani president, the tribe killed and maimed other tribe in the country. This is also used to demystify the ethnic agenda ideology that is in the public domain. It is in the public

domain that the Fulani is using herdsmen attack to wipe other tribes in Nigeria because the president belongs to them.

The implication for the government is that the government is able to possibly narrow its security horizon and be focused. This is because it helps the government to look beyond tribal conflict and face the conflict as a national security issue. On the other hand, this concealment strategy may mislead the government on which area to divert attention. If the concealment is a political agenda or security agenda to divert the attention of the security agents, it may be a serious threat to the national security. This will make it difficult for the securities to track down the culprits.

Academic Exercise

For discourse analyst, tribal concealment strategies in media discourse of herdsmen/farmer's conflict are useful material for research. The strategies help to research and situate different CDA approaches in the academic within the discourse. It helps to investigate the socio-cognitive approach of Van Dijk and the language and social discourse of Fairclough. Through the tribal concealment, researchers will be mandated to investigate the effect of the discourse in the society. CDA experts will strive to reveal the mental representation of the discourse and that of the tribe in the society. The concealment strategy also reveals certain ideologies in the society. This is significant to discourse analyst because it helps to investigate what is meant but not written. The inference from the media intension also serves as an academic exploit for discourse analysts. The implication for discourse analyst is that it helps to see how media is able to save public self-image of an important tribe in the country.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This work examines concealment strategies in the media. The focus is on the tribal concealment. Our observation is that in herdsmen/farmers' conflict report in the media, the media has successfully backgrounded a particular tribal name in the discourse. We observed that Fulani as a tribe in the country is known for pastoralism and therefore refers to as Fulani herdsmen. However, in the media representation of the conflict, the name is conspicuously backgrounded. Consequently, we investigate various strategies used in concealing the tribal name. The work reveals that cognition mediates between society and discourse. This is seen in the response of the society to the concealment of **Fulani** from the herdsmen discourse. As

can be seen, the tribes name is successfully deleted from the discourse.

In this research, we discovered that there are various concealment strategies used for various reasons. Six concealment strategies are identified with three different implications for the media, discourse analyst, society, government and news readers. They strategies include; lexical replacement, nominalisation, passivisation, hedging, use of pronoun, and name dropping. These strategies are used to save the public self-image of the tribe (Fulani). It is also used to prevent the media from being seen as the enemy of the tribe. The media also conceal the tribe so as not to hold the tribe responsible for the attack. The media also do not want to take on the role of the court by pronouncing them guilty. This work revealed that the media acknowledged the assumption and power of cognition in society and discourse. This could have caused further crisis in the society, if not well managed.

This research reveals that the concealment has a number of implications. Among such implications are political, social and academic implications. The social implication protects the media and the tribe in the society. It helps to perceive the tribe as innocent in the society. The political implication is chiefly for the tribe and the incumbent. This helps to save the tribe politically. The academic implication for discourse analysts. We observe that the strategies became a useful tools for discourse analysts. It helps to situate critical discourse analysis within media discourse especially as it relates to the herdsmen discourse in Nigeria.

While we acknowledge the media effort in the use of concealment strategies to save faces, we also wish to warn that too much of it may be misleading, especially to the security agents in a discourse of this nature. We therefore suggest that they should be tactical about it without losing the content of their reports.

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