

**A Social Semiotic Study of Institutional Corruption in Editorial Cartoons of
Nigeria's *Vanguard* Online News Outlet**

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ABSTRACT

Editorial cartoon is a medium of socio-political critique and has received intellectual patronage. However, extant studies are yet to access the utilisation of semiotic resources for transmitting contextual meanings in editorial cartoons published within the Nigerian socio-cultural milieu. This article extends the frontiers of the existing literature by exploring the effect of context in the selection and appropriation of semiotic resources in selected editorial cartoons of *Vanguard* Online news outlet. The data include ten purposively-selected *Cartoon Sarge* editorial cartoons obtained from www.vanguardngr.com). The recurring themes in the cartoons were identified and discussed via content description while Kress and van Leeuwen's *Visual Grammar* and insights from Mey's *Pragmatic Acts* served as theoretical underpinnings for the data analysis. The analysis reveals that the processes of meaning making in the editorial cartoons is facilitated by semiotic resources appropriated in the editorial cartoons and extralinguistic variables such as shared background knowledge of word choices, referents, references and analogies included in the editorial cartoons also add as meaning making strategies. Also, the result of the analysis indicated that editorial cartoons published within the Nigerian clime is a viable medium through which sociopolitical satire can be hurled in the direction of defaulting government agencies.

KEYWORDS: Editorial cartoons; satire; semiotic resources; speech acts; context; vanguard newspaper

Introduction

Cartoons feature analogous representations of socio-political realities. They are single panel graphics that contain characters, objects and setting which serve as pointers to the messages projected in them. Diverse definitions of the editorial cartoon have been provided in the literature, however, these definitions seem to agree on the fact that the editorial cartoon is a drawing or painting in which persons, actions and situation are represented, caricatured or symbolised in a particular manner' (Chikaipa, 2019). Functionally, the editorial cartoon is a tool utilised within

mass media to tell, add, support or oppose issues going around our lives (Zakaria & Mahamood, 2018, p. 384). Editorial cartoons often dwell on current events, and they reflect the editorial cartoonists' take on public opinion as well. Hence, the analysis of visual and verbal semiotic resources utilised to educate readers on certain issues within the country.

The Editorial cartoonist is a journalist that draws and publishes cartoons in an editorial column set aside for cartoon publication. The cartoon production of editorial cartoonists imply that they often assume the role of judge, jury and executioner in the way public figures, social groups and institutions of government are constantly satirised on the basis of perceived misconduct that falls outside the set moral standards of their socio-political climes (Chikaipa, 2019). As a social critic, the editorial cartoonist is both an artist and activist that sets sociopolitical agenda by bringing his or her rich awareness of the progress of society and current issues to bear on cartoon publication (Zakaria & Mahamood, 2018). In fact, there have been scenarios where editorial cartoonists are apprehended by government security agencies on the basis of satiric contents they publish regularly. Despite this threat by the government, the editorial cartoon has continued to flourish as a veritable tool for educating and shaping public opinion through vivid representations that reflect existing social practices.

In the Nigerian socio-political clime, the editorial cartoon has served diverse purposes since the country gained independence in 1960. As the Nigerian nation navigated the doldrums of military dictatorship, the civil war and the civilian regimes till date, editorial cartoonists have contributed their quota to nation building by providing commentaries that are analogous to the socio-political situations of the country. In each of these periods, cartoonists have often served the purpose(s) of observers and reporters by following the trend of government (in) actions and major occurrences of national interest. They then use the information derived as the basis for drawing caricatures, commentaries, analogies and conclusions on what is normative or otherwise. Aside criticising the government, editorial cartoonists also satirise arms, institutions of government and agencies charged with social responsibility.

The Nigerian Police Force is one of the various paramilitary security agencies that are viciously satirised by editorial cartoonists in mainstream Nigerian media. Alongside other security bodies like the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) and the Mobile Police (MOPOL), the NPF are derided based on engagements in all sorts of unwholesome practices. The institution of the NPF is both historic and constitutional. Historically, Oluwaniyi (2011) avers that the institution of the police force in Nigeria dates back to colonial times, and was occasioned by the emergence of the state alongside the need to protect the colonial administrators of the state. Constitutionally, the NPF is recognised

as the primary security agency that is charged with the responsibility of safeguarding lives and property, maintaining law and order and establishing social control. To this end, Oluwaniyi (2011) avers that Section 4 of the Nigeria Police Act provides details about the social responsibility of the NPF as follows:

The police shall be employed for the prevention and detection of crime, the apprehension of offenders, the preservation of law and order, the protection of life and property and the due enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are charged, and shall perform such military duties within or without Nigeria as may be required....

(p. 71)

Strict conformity to the postulations of the Police Act is the Achilles heel of the NPF that has led the public to form diverse opinions about the security agency. The (in) activities of police officers have caused sections of the society to pass comments, and raise eyebrows at the NPF and academic scholarship is not an exemption. Existing studies on police corruption in Nigeria has touched on the emergence and development of the NPF (Otu, 2015; Alemika, 1993; and Alemika & Chukwuma, 2003), systemic failures in the NPF (Olusegun, 2016; Enweremadu, 2017; and Aborishade, 2018), human rights violation by the NPF (Salihu & Fawole, 2020), image crisis in the NPF (Ikuteyijo & Rotimi, 2014); the moderating effect of emotional intelligence on police corruption (Aremu, Pakes & Johnston, 2011), and public perception of the NPF (Oluwaniyi, 2011; Afon & Badiora, 2016). However, media representations of police corruption have been largely unaddressed. The present study makes up for this lapse in empirical studies by examining how Nigeria's *Vanguard* online news outlet utilise the *Cartoon Sarge* editorial cartoon column as a medium to satirise the Nigerian Police Force. The present study therefore contends that the semiotic resources appropriated in the editorial cartoons convey the satiric essence of the cartoon messages.

Editorial cartoons are replete with a variety of visual and verbal resources. One of the resources is the use of caricatures. These are stereotypical drawings of public figures, archetypal characters, objects and settings that are both conspicuous and representative. In the same vein, speech balloons or bubbles (indicating verbal processes), dressing, facial expressions, colour and gestural expressions are the other visual resources utilised for conveying meanings in the editorial cartoons. Editorial cartoonists make use of calligraphy via the emboldening of lexical items that are significant in the context of the messages. Also, speech acts and punctuation marks are equally utilised to ensure that the cartoon is a combination of clear drawing and good writing.

Cartoon Sarge

Cartoon Sarge is an editorial cartoon column in Nigeria's Vanguard Online Newspaper that addresses current issues bothering on institutional corruption by the Nigerian Police Force (NPF, henceforth). Hence, the analogies drawn in the editorial cartoons are more of a social criticism hurled in the direction of the of the NPF and its personnel. The editorial cartoonist leverages on the wide readership of the newspaper to educate and sensitise the readership about the vile perpetrations of the NPF. Turns out the analogies expressed in the editorial cartoons emerge from shared knowledge, and experiences of the average Nigerian who is, or has been in contact with the NPF at one time or the other. The cartoonist depicts NPF personnel in the editorial cartoons as extortionate, violent and power drunk while archetypes of members of the society are depicted at the receiving end of various unethical actions by the NPF.

Institutional corruption is harped on by means of caricatures and analogies that depict NPF personnel in the act of demanding bribe (popularly referenced by various monikers such as 'roja', 'egunje', 'riba' etc.), violating human rights, wilfully extorting money from motorists and members of the society, and misappropriating funds. Also, NPF personnel are equally depicted in the editorial cartoons to engage in power abuse. Power abuse manifests in the form of acts of violence and ferocity that is meant coerce members of the public to part with monetary inducements in exchange for their freedom from possible detention. Finally, image crisis is depicted in the editorial cartoons as another dimension of corruption in the NPF that bother on total committal to ethical conducts, moral ideals and professional courtesy. In reaction to the topical themes expressed in the editorial cartoons, the present study will provide an understanding of how public's shared background knowledge and opinion about the NPF influence the editorial cartoonist's choice of verbal and visual resources.

Review of some Relevant Earlier Studies on Editorial Cartoon

Chikaipa (2019) analysed editorial cartoon representation of Malawi's Joyce Banda. The author applied theories of feminism and representation to the analysis of *Point of Order* and *Puludzu* editorial cartoons collected from *The Nation* and *The Daily Times* newspapers. Chikaipa realised that the editorial cartoons presented an opportunity for deep pondering on attitudes and disposition concerning female presidency. Chikaipa argues that Malawian editorial cartoonists are well absorbed in the ideology that sees women as tailor-made for domestic roles. The

cartoonists were portrayed to legitimise misogynistic perceptions and gender stereotypes about female leadership.

Similarly, Kelley-Romano and Westgate (2007) applied the taxonomy of Medhurst and DeSousa (1981) to the analysis of cartoons aimed at satirising the former U.S President, George W. Bush. The catalyst for the satire bothered on the ex-President's policy decisions and handling of Hurricane Katrina's devastation on affected Americans. The results of the analysis suggest that the choices of verbal and visual resources utilised in the cartoons were geared towards constructing a negative image of the policy decisions of George Bush as well as to lunge a satirical attack in the direction of the political figure.

Benoit *et al.* (2001) study indicates that the reiterative use of metaphor and allusion created the leeway for multiple interpretations to be ascribed to the editorial cartoons in the impeachment and trial of former U.S president, Bill Clinton following allegations of infidelity and gross misconduct. The study further shows the opinion about editorial cartoons as instruments that convey nail-biting issues and make moral judgments on eminent public figures. In a similar vein, Prendergast (2017) examines the hypothesis that stems from the perception of editorial cartoons as one of the few forms of social critique. The scholar examines the hypothesis using political editorial cartoons collected from the fortnightly publication *Humor Registrado* during Argentina's last dictatorship (1982-1983). Kress and van Leeuwen's *Visual Grammar* and Barthes' *Semiology* formed the theoretical underpinning for the study. The analysis of the key social actors caricatured in the cartoons created a leeway for the appraisal of the role of the magazine in challenging the pitfalls of the military regime and institutions of government.

Al-Masri (2016) investigates Jordanian editorial cartoons drawn by Emad Hajjaj, a foremost Jordanian editorial cartoonist using van Dijk's theory of context models. The author finds that verbal, visual and socio-cultural models are taken into full consideration by Hajjaj in the way and manner in which visually stimulating images and relevant socio-cultural issues are presented in the cartoons. Also, the study presented an inventory of lexical devices and novel techniques deployed by Hajjaj in the editorial cartoons. In a similar vein, Zakaria and Mahamood (2018) conduct a critical analysis of salient political themes in Rossem's editorial cartoons. The findings of the study suggest that various contextual factors such as war, current political issues and daily social problems encountered in the Malaysian nation influence Rossem's production of the cartoons. The authors also argued that the cartoonist plays a pivotal role in disseminating and interpreting messages to the general public regarding socio-political issues.

Zainuddin and Mahamood (2018) examine the construction of national identity in

Malaysian editorial cartoons. The aim of the study is to identify and examine how national identity that has been demonstrated in the editorial cartoons of Lat; a prominent Malaysian cartoonist. The findings of the study indicate that unity, preservation of national heritage, goodwill features of the Malaysian society and the Malaysian culture are extolled in the editorial cartoons. The findings further show that Lat's editorial cartoons were not aimed at criticising specific persons but merely serve promotional purposes by presenting unbiased, neutral depictions of the social, economic and political systems in the country.

Olowu, Kayode and Egbuwalo (2014) examine mass media representation of the NPF using cartoons collected from the 2012 editions of *TELL* magazines. The findings of the study indicated the semiotic resources enhance the semantic quality of the cartoons. The scholars go further to quip that the visual resources conveyed meanings independently of the accompanying verbal components. Similarly, Ogbo and Nuhu (2016) conduct a critical discourse analysis of editorial cartoons aimed at satirising political-themed issues in Nigerian national dailies. The authors observed that the dominant concerns of the cartoons dwelled on corrupt practices, political and institutional failure, official irresponsibility, and acts of brutality.

Some other studies have interrogated the portrayal of dissident groups in editorial cartoons published in the Nigerian print media. For instance, Alimi and Fajuyigbe (2016) conduct a contextual analysis of editorial cartoons lampooning the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria. Through the analysis of cartoons published in the Nation newspaper, the study reached the conclusion that newspapers convey information about the socio-political reality by presenting vivid representation of Boko Haram's activities. The study demonstrated the effectiveness of newspaper cartoons as a visual artefact for transmitting crucial information to the newspaper readers. In the same Nigerian context, Brown et al. (2017) assessed the resourcefulness of editorial cartoons bothering on the Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) campaign in Nigeria. The responses retrieved from respondents indicated that the cartoon served its intended purpose(s) by galvanising social acceptance for the campaign. Also, the findings reinforced the prevailing perception of editorial cartoon as a tool for setting social agenda. In the section that follows, the contextual basis for the study is discussed.

However, the existing studies on editorial cartoons have not examined to a large extent the role of context in shaping and legitimising the cartoonist's portrayal of the NPF. The study intends to make up for this lapse in the empirical literature by examining the editorial cartoonist's appropriation of semiotic resources as tool for criticising the NPF.

The study attempts an analysis of the editorial cartoons to uncover the prevailing sociopolitical perception of both cartoonist and the readership about the NPF. This study therefore

adopts Mey's *Pragmatic Acts* and the social semiotic theory of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) for the analysis of selected editorial cartoons in *Vanguard* Newspaper. The study shows an understanding of how linguistic and visual resources are appropriated by the editorial cartoonist in representing the NPF with a view to examining, discussing and interpreting the semiotic resources deployed in representing the NPF.

In the literature on editorial cartoons, there is a burgeoning body of research examining the portrayal of institutions of government such as the NPF in Nigeria. These studies have observed the resources and mechanisms through which cartoonists represent and construct different identities for the NPF. For instance, Olowu, Kayode and Egbuwalo (2014) examine mass media representation of the NPF using cartoons collected from the 2012 editions of *TELL* magazines. The findings of the study indicated the semiotic resources enhance the semantic quality of the cartoons. The scholars go further to quip that the visual resources conveyed meanings independently of the accompanying verbal components. Similarly, Ogbo and Nuhu (2016) conduct a critical discourse analysis of editorial cartoons aimed at satirising political-themed issues in Nigerian national dailies. The authors observed that the dominant concerns of the cartoons dwelled on corrupt practices, political and institutional failure, official irresponsibility, and acts of brutality.

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Methodology

The data analysis is both descriptive and qualitative. The data for the study consists of 10 purposively selected editorial cartoons from the pool of editorial cartoons that were downloaded from the *Cartoon Sarge* archives of *Vanguard* Newspaper (located at www.vanguardngr.com).

The 10 sampled editorial cartoons will be treated as representative of the others in the archive by examining the editorial cartoonists' commentary on the NPF as legitimised by public opinion. The Vanguard newspaper was chosen due to its popularity as a national tabloid, robust readership and the current issues addressed in the editorial cartoons.

The content analysis was carried out via contextual description of the recurrent themes in the editorial cartoons while two approaches in modern linguistics: socio-pragmatics and social semiotics were employed for the data interpretation. The pragmatic interface of the analysis is executed by applying the main theoretical concepts outlined in Mey's *Pragmatic Acts* to the verbal components of the editorial cartoons, while Kress and van Leeuwen's *Visual Grammar* was used for the socio-semiotic analysis of the visual resources. This method was utilised as a viable instrument for analysing composite texts such as the editorial cartoons.

Kecskes (2010) avers that Mey's *Pragmatic Acts* belongs to the socio-cultural interactional interface of pragmatics that prioritises socio-cultural and social factors in meaning construction and comprehension. It adopts a socio-centric approach to the study of speech acts by accessing how utterances are used by people, for their own purposes and within their own respective limitations and affordances (Mey, 2001, p. 207). Mey (2006, p. 57), in his *Pragmatic Acts* theory posits that for a speech act to be considered licit, it has to originate and conform with the situation in which it is executed, and be acknowledged by the hearer as legitimate (Kecskes, 2010, p. 2890). This 'legitimacy', in Mey's (2006, p. 58) opinion is not proffered by the mere act of speaking or uttering words and expressions, rather it comes with the hearers' mastery of the situation that warrants the utterance of words. In essence, the author is of the opinion that speech acts analysis should not be executed independently of the 'situational conditions' behind their use. In the author's words,

"In order for a speech act to be properly executed, it has to be properly situated. This condition comprises not just the words spoken, but the presuppositions that are inherent in a situation, such as a nationally and culturally-oriented understanding of proper linguistic behaviour; a familiarity with conditions leading up to, as well as away from, a situated speech act; an understanding of the individual utterer's personal and social self-image; a correct interpretation of the accompanying body language and gestures; and so on and so forth."Mey (2006, p. 58)

In a nutshell, Kecskes (2010, p. 2896) notes that Mey's approach to pragmatic study addresses conversation as activity or action. In this regard, a high premium is placed on the situational context that facilitates meaning than the linguistic units that specify their conventional use. Mey's theory focuses on the environment in which speakers and hearers find their

affordances, such that the entire situation is brought to bear on what can be said in the situation, as well as on what is actually being said (Mey, 2001, p. 221).

The term ‘participants’ in social semiotics is what ‘interlocutors’ is to conversation analysis. Social semioticians hold the idea that visual communication occurs on different level; relationships between the participants within the picture frame, relationships between the producers of the representation and the represented participants in the picture frame, and relationship between the interactive participants who engage the representation and the participants within the picture frame. The term participant is not restricted to images of persons, but also include symbols, logos, or graphological texts included in the picture frame.

In a bid to provide understanding of the social semiotic approach adopted for this study, a quick delve into the intricacies of Kress and van Leeuwen’s theoretical assumption would suffice. The tripartite visual metafunctions possesses distinct system networks that work simultaneously in visual artefacts. The representational metafunction is concerned with the way participants in the layout showcase narrative or conceptual relationships among themselves. Narrative representations are images that present actions and qualities in visual representations (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 84). They present sequence of unfolding actions and events via vectors (line of gaze or direction of movement) that relate them to one another. Conceptual representations do not show participants to look at, or relate with one another rather they deemed ‘analytical’ because they show abstract, comparative or generalised categories (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 86).

The interactive metafunction possesses three system networks: contact, social distance and attitude. The system of contact is particular about the way participants represented in a text establish relationships with the viewer by looking directly or avoiding the viewers’ direct gaze (Bateman, 2008, p. 41). In this regard, dichotomy is made between demand and offer images that act by demanding reactions from the viewers or offer clues or information. In imagistic representations, participant negotiate interpersonal relationship at the level of social distance through gaze direction, image size and camera shot angle. Camera shot angle are frame choices that can either be close-up, medium or long shot where the close-up indicates intimate social distance, the medium indicates an impersonal social distance and the long shot indicate a detached social distance between the representation and viewers (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 41; and Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 97). Image size is facilitated by camera shot angle that render images as fullhead shot, upper body shot and full body shot (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 96). The three image size possibilities are intricately linked to the intimate, impersonal and detached social distance that exists between people in real life situations.

Finally, attitude is used to establish the truth value of visual representations. In *Visual Grammar*, the system of attitude alludes to ‘the degree of veracity, authenticity, or naturalness of image when juxtaposed with its likeness in real life’ (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 100). Attitude is represented in pictorial representation via modality markers that serve as means ‘to express meanings of truth and falsehood, certainty or doubt, credibility and unreliability, fact and fiction’ (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 154). In the authors’ interest, the authenticity of messages expressed via modality markers is dependent on the values, beliefs and practices of the culture under whose auspice the representation is produced and dissemination.

The compositional metafunction entails how visual properties in a picture frame coalesce through the systems of visual cohesion: salience, framing and information value. Framing occur in picture layout in the mould of frame lines and devices that align or demarcate aspects of the composition by highlighting similarities or differences between textual elements (van Leeuwen, 2006, p.143). Salience comes to fray in visual artefacts via semiotic resources and visual properties that foreground key elements that are significant while backgrounding those ones that are less significant. Information value relates to placement of images, text, symbols or logo at specific parts of the picture layout. The placement of visual properties at the right, left, top, bottom, centre or margin imbues them information value as either given or new. The present study is primarily concerned with the inter-relationships between the participants represented in the editorial cartoons and the interactive participants (the newspaper readership). This exercise would provide insight into how the readers deduce meanings from both representation and interaction.

Findings and Discussion

The analysis focused on the editorial cartoonist’s portrayal of the NPF with recourse to public opinion of the security agency. The study revealed that the editorial cartoonist use of different linguistic and visual resources is strategic to the intent of shaping and legitimising public opinion of the NPF. In the analysis presented below, representative samples of editorial cartoons which represent the various thematic interest of the cartoonist are examined. The thematic concerns identified include: graft, power abuse, and image crisis. The table below presents an overview of linguistic and visual resources deployed by the cartoonists to represent and portray the NPF and its personnel.

Table 1: Social Semiotic Representations of the NPF in the Selected Data

Figure 1, 2 & 3	Graft	Semiotic Resources: uniform, police officer(s), motorist, vehicle, assault rifle(s). Setting: Police station
Figure 4, 5 6 & 7	Power Abuse	Semiotic Resources: uniform, dressing, police officer(s), rifle(s), motorist(s), complainant, accused person. Setting: police checkpoint, police station
Figure 8, 9 & 10	Image Crisis	Semiotic Resources: uniform, police officer(s). Setting: police station, Divisional Police Officer's office and properties.

Graft

A unifying definition for corruption has proved elusive due to the different perspectives from which it has been approached overtime. Oluwaniyi (2011, p. 74) approaches the phenomenon of corruption from the standpoint of corrupt practices that manifests via devised methods and strategies of attaining personal enrichment. To the Transparency International (2004), corruption encompass 'the capacity to secure wealth or power through illegal means, private gain at public expense, or misuse of public power for private benefits' (as cited in Oluwaniyi, 2011, p. 69). In the context of this definition, police corruption will include acts of malfeasance in the police force such as bribery, extortion, money laundering, collaboration with politicians and criminals and so on. These acts have far-reaching effects for the achievement of the vision and mission statement of the NPF which centres on the safeguarding of public lives, properties. Enweremadu (2019)

highlight the effect of police corruption on the society to include loss of lives through extrajudicial killings; illegal arrest justice subversion and illegal detention of citizens. In the selected data, figure 1, 2 and 3 present analogies about corrupt motives and activities of NPF personnel.

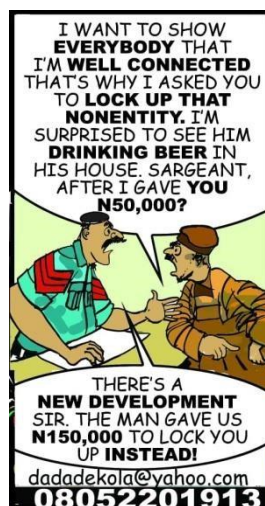


Figure 1. Bribery

The act of bribery as represented in figure 1 alludes to Punch's (1985, p. 14) definition of police corruption as a police personnel's act of receiving significant reward for doing something that he or she is under duty not to do. In the editorial cartoon, the police man's subversion of justice as a result of monetary inducements from the highest bidder to the amount of ₦150,000 as against the initially received bribe of ₦50,000 shows the extent of moral decadence and unprofessionalism in the NPF. Furthermore, the direct gaze maintained by the police officer and the complainant suggest that the ongoing action in the editorial cartoons is a heated argument. The police officer's description of the recent bribe as 'new development' that warrants subversion of justice highlights the extent of rot in the NPF. Bribes are received from defaulting motorists, criminals and erring members of the public who wield influence and wealth in exchange for freedom from prosecution and other disciplinary measures. The editorial cartoon in all its intent and purposes legitimises public opinion of the NPF as morally bankrupt.

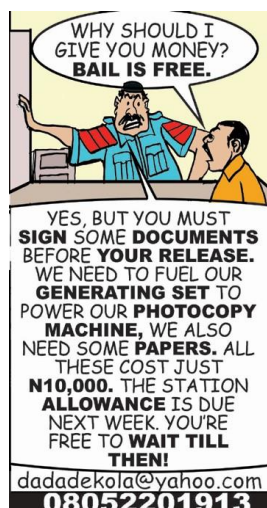


Figure 2 Wilful Extortion of Monetary Value

In figure 2, wilful extortion of monetary value is depicted as another dimension of institutional corruption in the NPF. The police officer represented seems hell-bent on extorting money from the detained suspect represented to the right of the layout. In the editorial cartoon, the representation of the police officer on an elevated plane implies that he possesses symbolic power over the detained suspect. Also, the policeman's low gaze in the direction of the detained suspect shows that there is unequal power relation between both participants. Wilful extortion of monetary value is thematised in the police officer's intent to use his privilege of office to hold the detained suspect to ransom. As prerequisite for his bail, the police officer's mention of the salient need to purchase fuel so as to finalise the suspect's bail is ironic in the context of the popular police slogan: 'BAIL IS FREE'

Formalising bail applications ought to be the sole responsibility of the police force since they are often allocated police station allowances, however, the analogy presented in the cartoon offers insight into the past and present experiences of some members of the society who have reported all sort of complications in bail applications. In the editorial cartoon, the declarative statement: 'YOU'RE FREE TO WAIT TILL THEN!' is a situated speech act that is understood within the Nigerian context as 'threat' of continued incarceration in police custody contrary to its overt outlook as 'suggestion.' Despite the criticisms levelled against the NPF on account of monetary extortion as is depicted in figure 2, some scholars have identified with the plight of the NPF personnel with regard to provision of welfare packages and proper funding. For instance, Aborishade (2018) notes that the states of underfunding in the police force have far-reaching ramifications for the NPF's motivation, job satisfaction and preparedness to combat crime and

violence. Underfunding implies that the police are put at great disadvantage and are often left with no other option than to utilise their priviledge of office for personal gains. Oluwaniyi (2011, p. 79) also cited poverty and bad leadership, or governance occasioned by successive government's nonchalant attitude towards the logistics, facilities and funds required to propel police proficiency as precipitating factors for NPF's indulgence in corrupt practices.



Figure 3. Fund Embezzlement

In the data samples, figure 3 offers analogy for power abuse by top hierarchies of the NPF who launder funds allocated to the NPF. In the data sample, visual possessive attributes: 'eye glass' and 'dressing' are utilised to differentiate the ranks of the represented police officers. The blue uniform of the police officer represented to the right of the cartoon layout is understood in the Nigerian socio-political context as that of a superior officer while the police officer represented on the left appears to belong to a junior rank. Like the analogy presented in figure 2, the utilisation of priviledge of office for financial gains is harped on via fund embezzlement. In the text, the prospect of acquiring new and improved fire arms to combat crime and terrorism is received with mixed feelings and reservations by a police officer who is in doubt about the sincere intentions of those in charge of putting said funds to good use. The junior officer buttresses his doubt by citing a similar scenario whereby funds meant to give the NPF a face-lift is embezzled.

Furthermore, lexical reiteration of the word choice: SOPHISTICATED in the adjectival phrases: SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS and SOPHISTICATED POCKET captures the satire in the editorial cartoon. The latter phrase is in fact a metaphor that describes the complex maze through which monetary votes meant for the smooth running of the NPF are subverted into personal accounts. Oluwaniyi (2011, p. 75) echoes this assertion thus: 'The case with senior

officers can be seen as internal corruption where official contracts are inflated for the benefit of the senior echelon, and funds allocated to specific police welfare programmes are transferred into private accounts to yield enormous interest.’ Hence, the word choices are utilised within the context of the editorial cartoon to deride police authorities concerned with fund utilisation as corrupt and self-centred.

Power Abuse

Abuse of power is portrayed in the editorial cartoons as a dimension of police misconduct where NPF personnel are depicted to utilise the privilege of office bequeathed by the state for personal interests or gains. In scenarios where this is expressed, archetypal or stereotypical characters that represent sections of the wider society are portrayed to suffer unjustly under the ‘jackboots’ of NPF personnel. The representations mirror the lived experiences of members of the Nigerian society who have alleged to have had their human rights violated via threats of unwarranted detention, arrest and confiscation of properties (Akpunonu-Ogu, 2014). Indeed, in some scenarios, brutality, physical assaults and extra-judicial killings have been meted on ‘uncooperative’ citizens. In figure 4, the analogy presented in the editorial cartoon bother on an ensuing conversation between a police officer and a commercial bus driver in a setting that appears to be a police checkpoint.



Figure 4. Indecent Arrest

The posture, and visual positioning of the police officer at the front of the yellowcoloured commercial bus (popularly referenced as ‘molue’ in Lagos metropolis) indicates that he wields symbolic power over the commercial bus driver. In the editorial cartoon, the motorists’ attempt to cite current socio-economic turbulence in the Nation as the causative factor for the ₦20 gratuity on offer is met with strong opposition. The police officer’s discontent with the amount is conveyed in the interrogative statement: ‘SO WHY ARE YOU GIVING ME ₦20.’ The speech act appears to be situated in the way it is used by the police officer to lunge criticism in the direction of the motorist as against ‘eliciting response’ like an interrogative statement would ordinarily do. In the overall context of the cartoon analogy, the statement is equally a rhetorical question that shows the unsatisfied and discontent emotional stance of the police officer.

The satiric thrust in the editorial cartoon is etched on the allegation of fraud levelled against the motorist as occasioned by the ₦20 gratuity on offer. Power abuse as perpetrated by NPF personnel is echoed in the imperative statement: ‘PARK PROPERLY’ which oozes power and authority. Furthermore, the declarative statement: ‘YOU ARE UNDER ARREST FOR TRYING TO CHEAT A POLICE OFFICER!’ shows commitment to bully the motorist into ‘cooperation.’ In this regard, it can be observed that indecent arrest equally finds expression in scenarios where NPF personnel insist on apprehending law-abiding citizens that they deem ‘uncooperative.’ In scenarios such as the analogy presented in figure 5, police officers appear to be unimpressed with citizens who fulfil all obligations to the extent that there are no valid grounds to have them arrested.



Figure 5. Indecent Arrest

In the editorial cartoon, an altercation between a police officer and an archetype of lawabiding citizens reaches a climax when the citizen refuses to succumb to the police officer's antics by parting with money. The declarative statement: "I'M NOT GOING TO GIVE YOU A KOBO!" indicates the resolve of the accused person who appears intent on rebuffing the NPF personnel. The Kobo itself is the least monetary unit in the Nigerian currency that is redundant for monetary transaction and no longer in circulation. Hence, reference to the currency unit shows absolute resolve to decline the NPF personnel. In the editorial cartoon, the fire arm strapped to the police officer's shoulder is a visual possessive attribute that is symbolic of extra-judicial killings, brutality and ferocity suffered by 'uncooperative' members of the society who have lost their lives or suffered series of bodily injuries in the hands of NPF personnel. The satiric essence of the cartoon analogy is expressed in the declarative statement: "YOU'RE UNDER ARREST FOR MISLEADING THE PUBLIC!" Apprehending a motorist based on a car sticker caption that reads: "I'M [A] CHEERFUL GIVER" creates the impression that the police officer is exercising his constitutional powers negatively by 'witch-hunting' rather than performing his civic duties.

Police ferocity is another dimension of power abuse by the NPF that is represented in the editorial cartoons. Public harassment as perpetrated by violent NPF personnel have been attributed to low emotional intelligence by scholars such as Oluwaniyi (2011, p. 76) who aver that the psychological state is a causative factor for police ferocity and the institution of corruption in the NPF. The scholar notes that 'in Nigeria, most police officers lack professional training; they also lack education in core ethics including the principle of beneficence, respect for persons, and justice in dealing with people.' In another study conducted by Afon and Badiora (2016, p. 243), the authors note that the report of a national study on the Nigerian criminal justice system indicates that out of the 882 respondents with experience as suspects in custody that were interviewed, approximately half of the total respondents (48.7%) offered insights into police ferocity. The respondents also stated that their arrests involved abuse or insult by the police. Another 35.9% admitted that they were slapped or rough handled; 7.4% admitted to being assaulted with police baton, while 1% stated that they were threatened with police fire arms. In figure 5, the represented participant represented to the left of the cartoon layout is an archetype of respondents who stated that their arrest involves abuse or insult by the police.

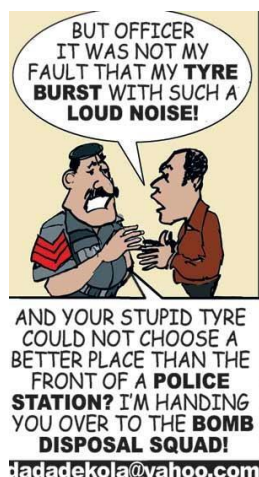


Figure 5. Police Harassment

In the editorial cartoon, an unforeseen incident of noise pollution as occasioned by a motorist's burst tyre is blown out of proportion by a police officer who seems resolved to make an example of him. In the editorial cartoon, police harassment find expression in the lexical choices utilised by the police officer. The use of swear expression: "STUPID" is a derisive linguistic item that show hatred, contempt and lack of professional courtesy. The ideal situation would imply that the police officer offer kind and soothing words that would make the motorist feel at ease given that he just suffered a loss however, the reverse is the case.

In the editorial cartoon, the rhetorical question: "AND YOUR STUPID TYRE COULD NOT CHOOSE A BETTER PLACE THAN THE FRONT OF A POLICE STATION?" is a situated speech act that perform the act of 'criticizing', rather than 'interrogating.' Furthermore, the declarative statement: "I'M HANDING YOU OVER TO THE BOMB DISPOSAL SQUAD!" embody the satiric thrust of the editorial cartoon. The use of abusive words and intent to hand the unfortunate motorist over to the Bomb disposal squad shows that power abuse in the NPF is intricately linked to low emotional intelligence among NPF personnel. More so, it shows that the popular police mantra: "POLICE IS YOUR FRIEND" is mere hear-say.

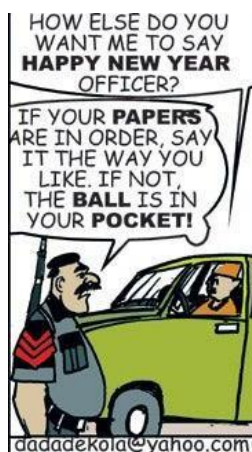


Figure 6. Police Harassment

Police harassment equally finds expression in figure 6. In the editorial cartoon, a conversation between a police officer and a motorist ensues on a setting that appears to be a police checkpoint. In the editorial cartoon, goodwill pleasantries offered by a motorist is rebuffed by a police officer whose interest seem to lie elsewhere. The interest of the police officer is indicated by means of conditional statements. Interestingly, the conditional statement: “IF NOT, THE BALL IS IN YOUR POCKET” is an alteration of the popular saying: “THE BALL IS IN YOUR COURT.” In the parallel structures, the substitution of the lexical choice: ‘Court’ for ‘Pocket’ show the motivation behind the harassment as monetary reward. The will to extort money, and receive bribe in the aftermath that the motorist’s vehicle particulars are incomplete or expired reveals the depth of rot in the NPF. NPF personnel are expected to subject erring road users to appropriate sanctions under the law rather than approach such incidents as an opportunity for personal enrichment.

On a general note, power abuse in the NPF is propelled by the will to seize every opportunity to amass wealth in exchange for leaving erring members of the public off the hook. For those officers in the higher echelon of the police force, power abuse manifests in the way privilege of office is utilised for personal enrichment. As unethical as the unprofessional acts of abusing power for personal interest and gains appear, the blame has not been laid solely at the feet of the NPF and its personnel. Scholars have cited inadequacy of social amenities such as incommensurate or irregular welfare packages, low level of professionalism within the force and political class interference in the operations of the police as stumbling blocks hindering the police from acting within existing moral standards.

Image Crisis

Image crisis is thematised in the editorial cartoons by means of analogies that allude to unprofessionalism, and lack of total commitment to the ethics of proper policing. The battered image of the NPF is intricately linked to the public's awareness of systemic failures in the NPF and illicit engagements involving the police. For instance, figure 8 features an ensuing conversation involving two NPF personnel bother on the eradication of corrupt practices perpetuated by the NPF. Both police officers with different cadres are represented in a setting that is labelled by the verbal text: 'DPO's office.' On closer look at the images represented, some visual features serve as clues to overtly differentiate between the represented police officers' cadres. The visual possessive attributes of the officer in the left which includes eyeglasses and bald head suggest that he is much older and probably more experienced. Hence, he can easily pass as the Divisional Police Officer (DPO). Also, the chair on which he sits suggests that the setting is his office.

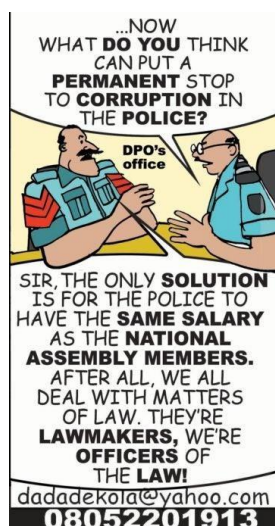


Figure 8.

The similar image sizes of the represented police officers on a horizontal plane relative to one another indicate equal power relations between the officers irrespective of their different ranks. Bar the address of the senior officer represented to the right as 'Sir', the DPO seems to descend from his lofty rank as superior officer to entertain suggestions from his subordinate. The utilisation of the interrogative speech act '...NOW WHAT DO YOU THINK CAN PUT A PERMANENT STOP TO CORRUPTION IN THE POLICE?' shows an intimate social distance, and familiarity between the represented police officers. In equal measure, the speech act denotes willingness to entertain suggestions that can alleviate the NPF's image crisis. The suggestion

proffered by the junior officer speaks volumes about the NPF's struggles in the quest to change public perception of the security agency. Stating equal pay alongside lawmakers as the sole solution to the eradication of corruption appears to be a defence mechanism that arises from the intent to deflect attention from attitudinal incongruities and low emotional intelligence displayed by NPF Personnel. In addition, the posture of the junior officer (arms akimbo) imply that his flimsy response resonates with his emotional commitment to the question asked.

In some other data samples, police personnel are depicted to state certain discomforts and threat to their own lives as an excuse to decline distress calls. In light of this, Aborishade (2018) opined that the Nigerian Police Force have failed to live up to expectations regarding the discharge of their primary responsibility which includes mitigating the spate of violence and crime (p. 4). Unwavering commitment to the safety of public lives and properties should be the hallmarks of policing in any context. It is in this spirit that the police force devises the popular mantra: 'To Serve and Protect' as a guiding philosophy. This is however not the impression illustrated in figure 9.



Figure 9.

In the editorial cartoon, failure to respond swiftly to an armed robbery attack is criticised by a superior officer who obviously seems incensed judging from the tone of the statement and posture represented. The response of the subordinate officer captures the theme of image crisis harped on in the cartoon. The interrogative statement: 'SIR, IF MY GUN IS LOADED AND I'M NOT, WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN?' is a situated speech act that performs the act of 'justifying' rather than 'requesting.' Furthermore, shared knowledge of the word choice: 'loaded' situates the target audience of the cartoon as exclusively Nigerians considering the

contextual implications of the word. The lexeme 'loaded' is understood as the act of ingesting food or any other forms of sustenance. The comparison between 'combat readiness' and 'food ingestion' as expressed in the conditional statement: 'IF MY GUN IS LOADED AND I'M NOT...' shows the depth of unprofessionalism that has become endemic in the NPF. Police officers now regard personal interests above public interests whereas the reverse ought to be the case. The endemic status of unprofessionalism within the NPF is equally reference in the editorial cartoon below.



Figure 10.

Figure 10 alludes to the social perception of the NPF as irresponsible to the security of lives and properties in the aftermath that monetary reward is not forthcoming. The analogy made in the editorial cartoon is in sync with Oluwaniyi's (2011, p. 78) aversion about the image crisis of the NPF. The author notes that 'In an ideal situation, police stations should be the first place of contact for victimised citizens, however, it is the worst place to seek justice, especially for the poor victims. Money determines how a case is handled by police officers.' In the text, a formal complaint bothering on armed robbery is lodged to NPF personnel. The ideal reaction would imply that an anti-robbery squad is dispatched to the robbery scene. However, the response of the police officer paints the current reality of police insensitivity to the safety of public lives and properties.

Aside the verbal text, the posture of the police officer fits the description of NPF personnel as insensitive since the act of putting hands in pockets is understood within the Nigerian context as a sign of indifference or carefree disposition. The interrogative statement: 'AND YOU

THINK THE RIGHT PLACE TO COME IS THE POLICE STATION?’ is a situated speech act that does not perform the act of ‘questioning’ per se rather, it resembles a ‘warning’ that indicates that the police officer finds both the robbery alert and complainant repugnant. It is in fact more of a thought-provoking rhetorical question that is well understood within the Nigerian context as a threat of possible arrest or detention. Cartoon analogies such as this legitimise the public perception of the NPF as inept.

Conclusion

This article presents a social semiotic analysis of editorial cartoons drawn from the *Cartoon Sarge* archives of Nigeria’s Vanguard Online Newspaper. This was done with a view to uncover the cartoonists ideological (re)production of the Nigerian public’s perception of the NPF. This article was able to substantiate the popular claim about editorial cartoons as a viable medium through which satire can be hurled in the direction of defaulting government agencies. The analysis also revealed that semiotic resources such as caricatures, lexical choices, situated speech acts, sentence constructions, rhetorical questions, analogy, metaphor, visual framing, and placement, possessive attributes, facial expressions, postures and gestures, are used by cartoonist to portray prevailing perceptions of, stereotypes and prejudices bothering on police activities and engagements in Nigeria.

The findings of the analysis further reveal that in addition to the semiotic resources, the processes of meaning making in the editorial cartoons is facilitated by extra-linguistic variables such as shared background knowledge of word choices, referents, references and analogies utilised in the editorial cartoons. From the standpoint of the analysis and discussions, this article suggests that the Nigerian mass media should intensify efforts to set socio-political agendas by exposing social ills, malaises and unprofessional acts perpetrated by institutions of government in their publications.

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