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SECTION B: LITERATURE

Metaphorical Representation of Ideologies in Media Reportage on *Japa* Discourses

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Abstract
Migration remains a global issue frequently framed metaphorically in media discourses, shaping public perception in ways that can evoke hostility and fear and ultimately influence attitudes and immigration policies. In the Nigerian context, the increasing desire among able citizens to relocate abroad has been metaphorically captured as Japa or the Japa syndrome. The Japa colloquium gained such widespread recognition and academic significance that it has now been officially incorporated into the Oxford English Dictionary. This inclusion not only legitimises its usage in formal and scholarly contexts but also highlights the extent to which Nigerian socio-cultural realities shape global conversations on migration, opportunity, and identity. Therefore, this paper examined the ideological contents of the metaphorical expression in Nigerian media reports on migration and critically identified the dominant metaphors used in Nigerian newspaper reports on migration as well as their ideological stances. A total of one hundred and twenty (120) newspaper online reportages, which were evenly distributed across six widely read Nigerian newspapers (Punch, Vanguard, Leadership, Daily Trust, The Cable, and Guardian), were obtained quarterly between 2020 to 2024. The metaphorical expressions from the obtained linguistic expression were manually identified using Pragglejaz Group's Metaphor Identification Procedure, and the punch dominates with 19% of the total metaphors. The mapping of the source and target domains using the Charteris-Black Conceptual Metaphor Theory revealed that migration discourses revolve around the domains of DISEASE, JOURNEY, WAR, CONTAINER, and OCEAN using metaphors like Disease, Perilous journey, Survival, Pipeline, and Tsunami, respectively, with a strong predominance of the first. This study reveals that 75% of Nigerian migration media discourse is anti-migration, largely driven by South-West-based outlets like The Cable and Punch. These narratives discourage emigration despite opportunities abroad, prioritising national retention over individual mobility. To counter negative framings, media practitioners should adopt balanced, context-sensitive reporting, while migration advocates must promote humane narratives that acknowledge migration's complex realities.
Keywords: Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Ideology, Media Discourse, Metaphorical Framing, Migration Discourse.

I.   Introduction

Migration is broadly conceptualised as the spatial and temporal movement of individuals or groups, manifesting in various forms and contexts (Wodak, 2015). It continues to be a significant global phenomenon, persistently shaping and influencing media narratives and public discourse. In the United States, for instance, Donald Trump's hardline approach focusing on border security and enforcement has dominated media discourses. While Trump's view on immigration is shaped by his previous administration's policies, which aimed to restrict legal immigration and tighten border security, his approach has been laced with criticism from many, including his presidential opponent Kamala Harris, advocating for immigration reform (Garrett, 2024). Europe is not spared on this migration issue as the region has continued to battle with the complex immigration issue of distinguishing refugees, economic migrants, and potential threats (Garcia-Zamor, 2017).

In European media discourses, for example, water-related metaphors such as "waves," "floods," or "flows" are commonly employed. These metaphors suggest an overwhelming, uncontrollable force, portraying migration as a crisis that must be managed, much like a natural disaster. This framing has been criticised for dehumanising migrants and contributing to anti-immigrant sentiments (Charteris-Black, 2019; Musolff, 2019). Additionally, migrants are sometimes metaphorically cast as a "burden" on the welfare system or economy, a representation particularly prevalent in political rhetoric. This portrayal fosters the view of migrants as drains of resources, further cementing the perception of them as liabilities rather than assets (Santa Ana, 1999; Wodak, 2015). Dehumanising animal metaphors, such as referring to migrants as "swarms" or "hordes," strip away their individuality and dignity, reinforcing negative stereotypes (Musolff, 2019). These metaphors not only shape public opinion but also influence policy debates, affecting how migrants are perceived and treated within European societies. Asia and Africa are not left out, as issues regarding refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants have been widely debated for their social, cultural, and economic implications. Media metaphorical strategies surrounding migration are globally resonant but locally inflected, reflecting shared discursive patterns shaped by distinct socio-political realities. Internationally, metaphors such as "floods" or "waves" of migrants often frame migration as a threat, fuelling fear and influencing restrictive policies. Similarly, in the Nigerian context, metaphorical expressions in media discourse, though shaped by local realities, serve similar functions. In Nigeria, for instance, the herder-farmers clashes have been investigated to be propelled by media framing (Igwebuike, 2021). Herding is conceptualised as a form of invasion. These invasions were described using three dominant metaphors: acts of cleansing, natural disasters, and hunting. Herders were depicted as forces of nature using terms like "storm", "flood", "rain", and "surge", portraying them as overwhelming and destructive, washing away farmers in their path. Furthermore, metaphors of cleansing, such as "sweep", "cleanse", and "wipe out", framed the herders as agents removing undesirable elements, implicitly casting farmers as waste or dirt. The hunting metaphor further portrayed farmers as prey, suggesting they were being ambushed, stalked, or

captured by herders. Collectively, these metaphors constructed a narrative where herders were portrayed as invasive forces, powerful, and farmers as vulnerable targets, reinforcing a perception of imbalance and victimhood within the conflict. This reinforces the idea that Nigerian media discourses are laced with metaphorical expressions that are far from neutral, as they often stir emotions and fuel tensions. In a similar vein, the metaphorical framing of migration in Nigeria has evolved into the term "Japa" or "Japa syndrome" (Okunade & Awosusi, 2023).

Japa, a modern Yoruba slang widely used on Nigerian social media, describes the recent trends of emigration within a specific demographic. The term means to flee quickly from a difficult situation (Oxford English Dictionary, 2024), accurately reflecting the attitude of many Nigerians toward the country's socio-economic challenges. This trend has contributed to an increased demand for foreign currencies, such as the U.S. dollar and the British pound, further weakening the Naira. Data from the UK government shows a significant rise in work visas issued to Nigerians, with approvals jumping from 3,918 in December 2019 to 15,722 by June 2022, marking a 303% increase (Olumoyo & Abiri, 2023).

The "Japa" trend predominantly affects professionals in fields such as medicine, finance, academia, and technology, prompting them to seek better working conditions overseas. This has led to a significant brain drain in Nigeria, hampering local knowledge development and innovation. The economic consequences of this migration are substantial, owing to huge visa fees, international English language testing system exams, and loss of revenue in the form of uncollected taxes (Olumoyo & Abiri, 2023). Therefore, it becomes necessary to understand the ideological underpinning of migration in Nigeria as the metaphoric language used in the media reportage is a discourse event (Abioye, 2011). Hence, this paper critically examined the metaphorical portrayal of migration in media coverage by *Punch, Vanguard, Leadership, Daily Trust, The Cable,* and *Guardian*. The selection of these six newspapers was based on their wide national circulation as major daily publications in Nigeria in both electronic and print forms. Additionally, their headquarters are strategically located across the country's geopolitical zones, with *Punch*, *Guardian*, *Vanguard*, and The Cable based in the southwest (Lagos), *Leadership*, and *Daily Trust* in the North (Abuja/Kaduna). Since media representations of constructions of realities and events may be biased, plain, or devoid of any hidden pursuit (Kamalu *et al.,* 2023), the random selection of this widely spread Newspaper will unveil the ideological stances of the Metaphorical Expressions in Nigerian Newspaper Reportage on Japa Discourse.

II. Metaphors of Migration

As a rhetorical tool, metaphor is a basic phenomenon in daily human conversations that has become a focal area of study in history, psychology, linguistics, anthropology, and other disciplines (Steen, 2003). This has enabled the metaphor to enjoy both critical and complimentary evaluations from diverse researchers owing to the inter-disciplinary scope of its perception, each of whom has had to view the concept relative to its operationality in their intellectual domain. Metaphors influence and structure the way we behave and think. According to Kövecses (2010), human thought, reasoning, and understanding are influenced and

structured by metaphor, and in the creation of cultural, social, and psychological reality. These perspectives represent metaphor as an important element in the expression and configuration of psychological, cultural, and social experiences. Identifying metaphor has remained an issue of methodological controversy for metaphor scholars after Lakoff and Johnson's (1980, p. 10) claims of its indispensability in our everyday conceptual system. For example, Ritchie (2008) has challenged the methodology of metaphor identification in conceptual metaphor theory, as the delimitation of conceptual metaphors does not permit the precise identification of specific linguistic items as related to them. Consequently, metaphor scholars have diverse intuitions about what makes up a metaphoric word or phrase. From Charteris Black's view on this situation, metaphor identification is based on context, as any word can be a metaphor if its context of use makes it so, and if its speaker intends it as such. This relativistic point, which applies particularly to conventional metaphors, will create some kind of conflict between the encoding and decoding processes of a metaphoric expression. Consequently, scholars cannot make transparent empirical classifications of metaphors. Equally, as the Pragglejaz Group (2007) anticipated, the situation makes it difficult to examine different empirical analyses and complicates any assessment of the theoretical claims on the frequency of metaphor, its organisation in discourse, and possible relations between metaphoric language and metaphoric thought (Cameron, 2003). Interestingly, the Pragglejaz Group and Jonathan Charteris-Black are two major approaches in metaphor research that tackle the problem of metaphor identification. Cognitive metaphor theory suggests that metaphors operate at a cognitive level, serving as figures of thought rather than mere figures of speech (Lakoff, 1986). This theory identifies two conceptual domains: the "source domain" and the "target domain." The source domain consists of concrete entities, attributes, processes, and relationships that are semantically linked and stored in our minds. The target domain is more abstract and is often represented through metaphorical language. The relationships in the target domain mirror those found in the source domain. For example, consider the metaphor "migrants are waves." Waves, as the source domain, refer to a concrete phenomenon characterised by movement, force, and volume. While migration, the Target Domain refers to an abstract group of individuals undergoing migration. In this metaphor, attributes and processes associated with waves are applied to migrants. Phrases like "a wave of migrants is approaching" or "the country is overwhelmed by waves of newcomers" utilise the language of waves to convey the movement and impact of migrants. This metaphor suggests that migrants are transient and can inundate an area, reflecting the dynamics of force and quantity found in the source domain (waves). This framing shapes how migrants are perceived in public discourse, often emphasising their impact on society.

Diverse scholarly research where migrants were the target in the metaphors often refers to migration as immigration instead of emigration, which equally interrelates with the conceptual framing of the country to which the 'outgroup' moves or is living. For instance, the nation as a family home, or the nation as a container nation, is the body. Other conceptual metaphors

discuss humans as a semantic feature such as invaders, criminals, and guests, and those that do not, such as pollutants, burden, water, animals, parasites, liquids, weeds, objects, commodities, and disease (Montagut and MoragasFernandez, 2020: 79). This humanizing/dehumanizing distinction which is the basic distinction in metaphors of migration was deeply established by Montagut and Moragas-Fernandez (2020). The humanisation metaphors, which 'endow the migrant with political action', may position migrants either as a subject (positively realised by journey metaphors) or as a source of conflict (negatively realised as conflict metaphors), while the dehumanising metaphors were seen as being intrinsically problematic. Similarly, Soto-Almela and Alcaraz-Mármol (2019) buttressed the role of metaphor in dehumanising migrants, and this is always featured in migration metaphors analysis. Arcimaviciene and Baglama (2018) grouped the metaphors detected in US and European migration discourse into two myths of moral dehumanisation and authority. The migrants are subsumed into dehumanisation while invaders and criminals are encompassed by moral superiority, leaving just guests as potentially ambiguous unless the metaphor is unwanted guests. To Arcimaviciene and Baglama (2018), these metaphors may serve to enhance or suppress emotions, such as fear or empathy, respectively. This established metaphor is an integral part of the discourse. Kopytowska (2017: 225) opines that 'metaphors can perform important social functions: they can be used to dehumanize the Other (in this case refugees and migrants), legitimize and delegitimize verbal and physical actions (e.g. verbal and physical violence against refugees, including hate speech and hate crime), as well as emotionalize

(evoke both fear and anger) and desensitize the audience'. A contradictory view of the negative framing of migrants was from the research of Catalano (2016), which concentrated on the self-representation of migrants. This proved a wider distinction between media and migrants' representations, with migrants perpetually framing the immigration process as either a journey or cultivation. In the public discourse surrounding migration, KhosraviNik (2009) identifies the use of water metaphors, particularly those associated with large volumes, such as "floods of." These metaphors often appear within the themes of "humanisation and individualisation," highlighting the complexities and nuances of how migrants are portrayed in discussions (p. 21). These findings are in agreement with the view of Nguyen and McCallum's (2016: 168) analysis of water metaphors in news articles, which they considered neutral and those advocating for better treatment of asylum seekers.

Salahshour (2016) similarly saw migrants as having an economic advantage using the water metaphors in financial media (e.g. a 'flow' which has 'dried up'). As KhosraviNik (2009: 487) disclosed, 'the function of metaphor use strictly depends on the social, cultural, political and cognitive elements constituting the "interpretative context"'. Thus, the intent of the speaker's evaluation may not be in tandem with the reception of the metaphor, as different readers of media texts may be primed by their previous textual exposures (as, for instance, in politics and 'dog-whistle' journalism). Therefore, caution must be exerted in the assumption that every speaker using a metaphor has the same intention or any conscious intent. The point about metaphor, just like discourse, metaphor

is cumulative and pervasive. For any lexical item to have a particular discourse connotation or prosody, every utterance doesn't need to conform to the evaluative positioning. Likewise, all the speakers must not use the language with the same degree of awareness and deliberateness at all times.

III. Methodology

The theoretical framework for this study merges and modifies insights from two significant approaches to discourse: Pragglejaz Group's Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP by Pragglejaz Group, 2007), Charteris-Black's (2004) Conceptual Metaphor Theory, and van Dijk's (2015) Socio-cognitive Framework for Critical Discourse Analysis. This synthesised framework is necessary because, while each theory is pertinent, neither alone can fully address all the analytical needs of the study's data.

a. Data Sources

The data for this study were gathered from newspapers in Nigeria. Online media was chosen due to its availability, easy content access, and wider audience reach, distinguishing it from broadcast media and print media. While numerous online media sources exist in Nigeria, this research concentrated on six widely read newspapers: *Punch, Vanguard, Leadership, Daily Trust, The Cable,* and *Guardian*. These selections hinge on their reputation for accurate reporting, extensive coverage, and commitment to investigative journalism. Additionally, these newspapers maintain a strong online presence that enhances the distribution of their editions, increasing their readership among Nigerians. To facilitate accessibility, electronic copies of migration reports were obtained from the official websites of the respective newspapers. The study focused on the period from 2020 to 2024, a time characterised by a significant increase in migration within Nigeria (Olumoyo & Abiri, 2023). To gather data, keywords related to migration, including synonyms like "japa", "travel", "journey" and "movement" were used to search the archives of the selected newspapers' official online websites. A total of one hundred and twenty (120) newspaper reports with equal representation from the six selected newspapers on migration were obtained from their online sources. To mitigate against any biases in the obtained data, the media reportage on migration was selected quarterly.

b. Data Analysis

The identified metaphors from the data were categorised and structured into components. This entails grouping the linguistic metaphors into classes based on their register. The next component is the category/source domain of a given set of linguistic metaphors. This was known by determining the field/domain from which a group of related linguistic metaphors were derived. In the source domain, such linguistic items have literal meanings. This is the domain where the linguistic item has a metaphorical meaning. These selected texts' metaphorical expressions were manually identified using the Pragglejaz Group's Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP by Pragglejaz Group, 2007). To establish the basic meanings, the corpus-based Macmillan Dictionary Online (https://www.macmillandictionary.com/) and the corpus-based Oxford Dictionaries online, complemented by OED, were used as a reference point. The conceptual metaphor resulting from the mapping of the source and target domains was determined using the Charteris-Black (2004) Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Finally, the ideological

stances of metaphorical expressions within the context of migration were determined using VanDijk's Social Cognitive approach to Discourse Analysis (ideology).

IV Findings and Discussion

From the one hundred and twenty (120) migration reports obtained from the newspaper's online official websites, the linguistic expressions that spanned across the selected newspaper were evenly distributed. However, the resulting five (5) conceptual Metaphors from the metaphorical framing of migration by the various media reportage were not evenly distributed as presented in the Table.1

Table 1: Conceptual Metaphor Frequency

S/n	Conceptual Metaphor	Frequency	Percentage
1	MIGRATION IS DISEASE	31	26%
2	MIGRATION IS A JOURNEY	11	9%
3	MIGRATION IS A CONTAINER	27	22%
4	MIGRATION IS AN OCEAN	25	21%
5	MIGRATION IS WAR	26	22%
	Total	120	

Table 1 shows that the conceptual metaphor of MIGRATION IS A DISEASE is a notable metaphor deployed by the selected Nigerian media in their attempt to frame Nigeria's migration. Whereas, MIGRATION IS A JOURNEY has less reportage compared to MIGRATION IS A WAR, MIGRATION IS AN OCEAN, and MIGRATION IS A CONTAINER. The

effective visualisation of the various newspaper contributions to the resulting conceptual metaphor frequency is shown in Figure 1.
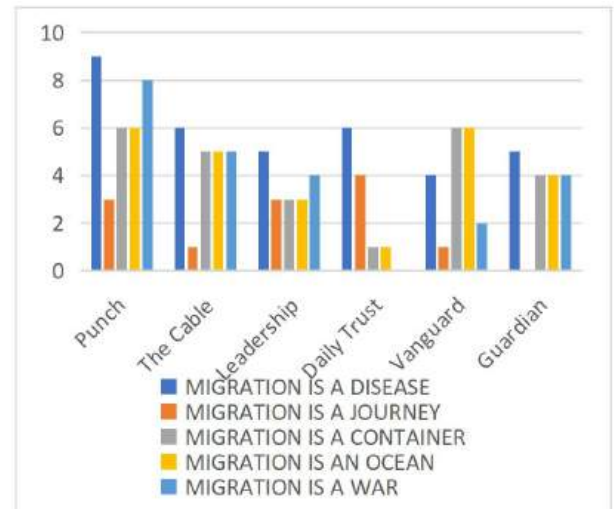
Figure 1: Conceptual Metaphor Distribution Across the Newspaper

From Figure 1, it is evident that *Punch* has the highest media reportage on MIGRATION IS A WAR and MIGRATION IS A DISEASE. Among the media reporters, only the *Guardian* newspaper does not capture any migration discourses on MIGRATION IS A JOURNEY. Each of the newspapers has at least two or three equal media reports on the conceptual metaphors. For instance, while the *Leadership* has three equal distributions on media discourses on MIGRATION IS A DISEASE, MIGRATION IS A CONTAINER, and MIGRATION IS AN OCEAN using the water metaphor, *The Cable* and *Guardian* media outlets gave an equal distribution on their media discourses on MIGRATION IS A CONTAINER, MIGRATION IS AN OCEAN, and MIGRATION IS A WAR. The *Vanguard, Punch, and Daily Trust* were not left out as they gave a fair distribution of their media discourses on MIGRATION IS A CONTAINER and MIGRATION IS AN OCEAN. Except for the *Vanguard*, each media report has a

dominant report on MIGRATION IS A DISEASE. These media reports use metaphors such as *Disease, Killer Enemy, Life*, *Death*, *Survival*, *Struggle*, etc, in their attempt to narrate the Nigerian migration surge.

a. Dominant Metaphors Used in Nigerian Newspaper Reports on Migration

From the conceptual mapping of the linguistic expressions into their source and target domains, a total of five (5) resulting conceptual metaphors were identified. The identified conceptual metaphors categories of dominant metaphors are explained below.

i. Migration is a Disease

Using the resources of Charteris-Black's (2004) conceptual metaphor theory, the metaphor **"MIGRATION IS A DISEASE"** can be examined to show how the source domain of disease maps onto the target domain of migration. This metaphor highlights attributes of disease, such as spreading, symptoms, affecting, and eating away, which are projected onto migration. For examples;

1. Migration VIRUS: Spreading Across The Youth Population *(Punch, 8/11/2023)*
2. A CANCER Eating Away at Nigeria's Growth: Migration Woes *(The Cable, 30/11/2022)*

The metaphor, as exemplified in example 1 and example 2, projects migration metaphorically as a harmful influx that is "spreading or eating away" uncontrollably, threatening societal stability in the same way a disease threatens physical health. Migration is metaphorically portrayed as a *virus*, an infectious agent that replicates within the living cells of a host organism. This analogy underscores its perceived adverse effects, likened to the destructive impact of cancer, where mutations in DNA disrupt normal cellular functions, leading to systemic dysfunction. Such imagery reflects the framing of migration as a destabilising force with far-reaching consequences. The mapping of this metaphor highlights the perceived dangers of migration and justifies the need for restrictive measures against migration. The metaphor, however, hides the other aspects of migration, like migrants' potential contributions to their host societies and their humanity.

The embodied nature of this metaphor is important, as it relies on fears and vulnerability associated with illness, drawing on universal human experiences of physical contamination and survival instincts to evoke fear and urgency. Furthermore, cultural models influence how this metaphor operates in specific contexts. In societies with strong notions of boundary maintenance and cultural purity, the metaphor resonates deeply, intensifying and framing migrants as a contagious disease that must not intrude. This mapping also has an important framing effect, shaping public perception and legitimising exclusionary policies by projecting migration as inherently dangerous.

The metaphor also engages in conceptual blending, merging the domains of disease and migration to produce a hybrid conceptual space where migration inherits the stigma, fear, and urgency associated with epidemics or disease outbreaks, further reinforcing its negative portrayal. Through these processes, the metaphor "MIGRATION IS A DISEASE" holds a significant influence on how migration is understood, discussed, and addressed in policy and discourse.

ii. Migration is a Container

The metaphor "MIGRATION IS A CONTAINER" conceptualises migration as something that occupies a bounded space, drawing on the source domain of a container and mapping it onto the target domain of migration. For example,

3. PACKED to the BRIM: Europe's strained

asylum shelters (*The Cable, 7/03/2023*)

4. The migration PIPELINE shows signs of

strain (*Punch, 12/07/2021*)

In expressions like "packed to the brim" and "migration pipeline," represented by examples 3 and 4, respectively, migration is visualised as filling a container, with phrases suggesting that systems, like asylum shelters or governmental structures, have a limited number of migrants they can handle before being overwhelmed. The metaphor suggests that migration is a resource or flow that, when it exceeds the container's capacity, can lead to strain, pressure, or even rupture. Hence, emphasising migration as a quantitative problem. The idea of a container having "boundaries" and "overflows" translates to the metaphor of migration as something that needs regulation and control. For example, a "pipeline" as captured in example 4 suggests that migration follows a controlled, linear process. Nonetheless, when this system is "strained", it risks becoming unmanageable. This framework emphasises the pressure on governments, asylum shelters, or local communities that are seen as nearing their limits in dealing with migration, focusing on a quantitative approach. Hence, migration is framed as a system with capacity that must be monitored or restricted.

Drawing on embodied experiences with physical containers, the metaphor makes migration seem like a manageable quantity, raising fears of resource diminution or overcrowding when limits are exceeded. The metaphorical framing highlights the finite nature of resources available to host countries and shifts focus toward logistical management, like building barriers, tightening borders, or deporting migrants, while trivialising integration, humanitarian concerns, and the root causes of migration, such as poverty, insecurities, and unemployment. Cultural models of scarcity and control reinforce this metaphor, particularly in politically or economically strained societies. Migration is often viewed as a burden threatening social and economic stability, shaped by narratives of overflow or invasion. These perspectives create a scenario similar to an "us vs. them" mentality, rightly opined by Arcimaviciene and Baglama (2018), thereby reducing migrants to objects filling space rather than individuals with rights and agency.

The metaphor also engages in conceptual blending, a process where two separate conceptual domains (migration and containers) are blended to create a new conceptual space. In the migration pipeline, for instance, migration is visualised as a controlled, mechanised flow, like water or resources moving through pipes. This metaphor blends ideas of industrial processes with the movement of people, reinforcing the perception that migration is a flow that must be managed and controlled. The strain on the "pipeline" suggests a breakdown or a need for urgent repair, leading to an emphasis on containment, monitoring, and restriction, rather than systemic solutions to the causes of migration or more inclusive approaches. This emphasises containment and

monitoring, framing migration as a breakdown-prone system needing urgent repair rather than addressing systemic solutions or inclusive approaches.

iii. Migration is an Ocean

The metaphor "MIGRATION IS AN OCEAN" conceptualises migration as a vast and uncontrollable force. This metaphor is grounded in the source domain of the ocean, drawing upon the imagery of large, powerful, and often destructive forces of nature, and mapping it onto the target domain of migration. From the obtained data, some expressions that capture this metaphor are:

5. Tidal WAVE of migrants SWAMPS Europe (*The Cable, 01/11/2024*)
6. Migration crisis hits shores like a TSUNAMI (*Punch, 27/01/2022*)

The expression "tidal wave of migrants" or "migration crisis hits shores like a tsunami", as expressed in example 5 and example 6, respectively, suggests that migration is a force that is uncontrollable and threatens to overwhelm the resources, infrastructure, and stability of destination countries. "Tidal wave" and "tsunami" bring to mind images of sudden, destructive forces, emphasising the danger and urgency of addressing migration. The "shores" or "borders" represent the receiving societies, while the water or waves symbolise the mass movement of migrants. This metaphor draws on the universal human fear of uncontrollable natural forces, portraying migration as a sudden, overwhelming threat that requires immediate action. However, it reduces migrants to mere objects of threat, obscuring their humanity and individual agency. This framing leads to a focus on border security and militarised

responses, rather than addressing the root causes of migration, like conflict, poverty, and human rights violations.

The metaphor also taps into cultural models of disaster management, where migration is treated as an emergency requiring containment, such as border controls, deportations, and refugee camps. Through conceptual blending, the metaphor fuses migration with natural disasters, amplifying its urgency and reinforcing the perception of migration as a force to be stopped, rather than a complex issue that demands compassionate, long-term solutions.

iv. Migration is a Journey

The metaphor "MIGRATION IS A JOURNEY" frames migration in terms of a physical journey that migrants undertake. This metaphor is deeply rooted in the source domain of travel or movement and maps onto the target domain of migration, where migration is seen as a series of steps or stages that migrants must navigate to reach a destination. Some notable expressions that conceptualised this metaphor are;

7. Nigeria's Youth Embark on PERILOUS JOURNEY to Foreign Shores *(Daily Trust,4/1/2023)*
8. Migrants Face LONG AND WINDING ROAD to Citizenship *(Punch,17/10/2021)*

The expressions "perilous journey" evoke the idea of a risky, dangerous, or treacherous path, while "long and winding road" emphasises the length, complexity, and uncertainty of the migration process. These expressions underscore the idea that migration is not an easy experience but one filled with obstacles, hardships, and challenges that migrants must endure. This metaphor

taps into the familiar experiences of travel, portraying migration as a path filled with difficulty, danger, isolation, and resilience. While focusing on individual migrants' perseverance, the metaphor often hides the structural factors that cause migration, such as unemployment, conflict, inequality, or political persecution. It downplays the systemic barriers migrants encounter, like discrimination or exploitation, in destination countries. Furthermore, the metaphor evokes cultural models of adventure and personal growth, portraying migration as a transformative journey and migrants as heroic figures pursuing a better life.

By emphasising individual struggle and resilience, the journey metaphor shapes public perception, focusing on the migrant's experience rather than addressing the broader political and economic conditions driving migration. Hence, influencing policies centred on managing migrants, such as asylum procedures and visas, without addressing the root causes of migration. The metaphor, through conceptual blending, creates a vision of migration as an individual quest with potential rewards, reinforcing the notion of migration as a transitory phase, and influencing public attitudes toward managing migration rather than resolving its underlying causes.

v. Migration Is War

The metaphor "MIGRATION IS WAR" conceptualises migration as a conflict or battle, framing the process of migration as a struggle, often with winners and losers, in which migrants face intense challenges. This metaphor relies on the source domain of war and conflict, mapping it onto the target domain of migration, where migration is seen as an adversarial and combative process. Some Expressions to buttress this framing are;

9. Nigeria's brain drain WAR: Losing Talent
    to Foreign Lands *(Guardian, 8/10/2024)*
10. BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL: Nigerian
    Migrants Face Uncertainty *(Daily Trust,*
    17/07/2020)

The "brain drain war" and "battle for survival" expressions captured in examples 9 and 10, respectively, emphasise the struggle, competition, and hostility inherent in migration, portraying it as a conflict that migrants must fight through, often against overwhelming odds. The metaphor frames migration as something that requires strength and resilience to conquer or survive, with the implication that migrants are involved in a fight for a better life or opportunity. For instance, the "brain drain war" likens the loss of skilled and talented individuals from Nigeria to a military defeat, framing it as a battle where Nigeria is on the losing side. Similarly, the "battle for survival" positions migrants as soldiers fighting to overcome difficult circumstances, facing uncertainty, danger, and opposition. This portrays migrants as fighters who face significant obstacles like harsh economic realities, strict immigration policies, and social exclusion.

This metaphorical framing highlights the tough and competitive nature of migration, where individuals must endure and overcome immense challenges, often under life-threatening circumstances. The idea of war naturally stirs emotions like loss, fear, and urgency; it makes migration seem like a crisis that demands immediate attention, but it also shifts the focus away from the deeper causes behind the migration, such as

poverty, political instability, or environmental challenges. Instead of addressing these root issues, the metaphor emphasises personal struggle, which can lead to overlooking the bigger picture of why people migrate in the first place. This way of framing migration can also make it harder to see migration as something positive or cooperative. It leans into the idea that migration is a zero-sum game, where one country's gain (like skilled migrants) is another's loss (a "brain drain"). For example, Nigeria is often seen as losing out, while destination countries are viewed as "winning" the competition for talent or resources. By comparing war migration, this metaphor encourages policies focused on defence, like stricter border controls or militarised responses, and creates an "us vs. them" mindset. This framing can divide people rather than unite them to find cooperative solutions to global migration issues. It also risks painting migrants as adversaries or invaders rather than as individuals looking for safety, opportunity, or a better life.

b. Ideological Stances of Metaphorical Expressions on Migration as Employed in Nigerian Newspapers

Metaphors are central to the language of Nigerian migration discourses, shaping the ideological stances portrayed by online media. As with other discourse genres, the function of metaphor in Nigerian migration narratives is highly context-dependent. Therefore, understanding the principles that govern its usage is essential for any meaningful analysis and interpretation of its discourse functions. By unpacking these metaphors, one can better grasp the underlying ideologies and attitudes they project toward migration.

Concerning their ideological stances, the five conceptual metaphor categories could be broadly categorised into two using Van Dijk's Social Cognitive approach to Discourse Analysis. The first group comprise the metaphors that depict the positive metaphor that favours either the destination country or Nigeria. The second group comprise the metaphors that depict and reveal the negative metaphor that affects either Nigeria or the destination country. Consequently, the Nigerian migration discourse has both positive and negative effects, generating pro-migration and anti-migration views depending on whether it is discussed from the perspective of Nigeria or the destination. Hence, the extent to which migration is positively or negatively viewed depends on whether Nigeria and the destination country perceive the inflow and outflow of citizens as either a threat or a benefit to society. These views create both pro-migration ideology and anti-migration ideology in the minds of the citizens. Nevertheless, when making these classifications about pro-migration or anti-migration ideological stances, there must be clarity about the difference between what favours the speaker and what favours the migrants being described. The reason hinged on the fact that the intent of the speaker using such metaphorical expressions may not mean that the problems for the migrants subsumed in that metaphor are eliminated, as opined by Bednarek and Caple (2017). These arguments are valid about metaphors that favourably construct migrants as an economic resource and may mask exploitation and erase other kinds of positive contributions made to society.

i. Pro-Migration

The pro-migration ideological stances conceptualise the Nigerian migration discourses as a positive social phenomenon that favours either Nigeria

or the destination countries. The degree to which these are seen in a positive light depends on whether society is viewed as requiring change and whether that change is considered beneficial or detrimental. The survival instinct associated with the Nigerian migration discourse gave a positive view of migration as a fight for survival. These survival metaphors, as captured in the conceptual metaphor MIGRATION IS A DISEASE, change the narrative of how migration is framed as the only threat in Nigeria. Hence, the survival metaphors are pro-migration metaphors. For example,

11. SURVIVAL Instinct Drives Nigerian
Migration
(Leadership,23/11/2023)
12. ESCAPING famine: Migration as a
lifeline (*Punch,* 17/08/2023*)*

The highlighted words and expressions framed migration as a means of survival using the linguistic elements of SURVIVAL and ESCAPING. In migration discourse, elements such as survival and escape are linked to mental models, ideologies, and societal structures. SURVIVAL evokes urgency and resilience, highlighting migrants' vulnerability and agency, while ESCAPING suggests urgency and danger but can also imply resistance or law evasion. These terms are shaped by context models, which frame migration either as a humanitarian crisis or a societal threat. Using the ideological square, the social cognitive approach reveals how discourse emphasises positive self-representation (for example, destination countries as compassionate). The terms also resonate with cultural models of struggle and endurance, fostering empathy or fear depending on framing.

Pragmatically, SURVIVAL often elicits compassion, while ESCAPING can evoke fear of instability. Conceptual blending further amplifies these terms by linking migration to larger frames like war or struggle, influencing public perception and policy responses. Thus, the social cognitive approach highlights how SURVIVAL and ESCAPING not only reflect migrants' experiences but also shape societal attitudes and policies through ideological and cultural framing.

ii. Anti-Migration Ideology
Unlike the pro-migration, whose ideological stances favour either the migrants or Nigeria and destination countries, the anti-migration ideology conceptualises the Nigerian migration discourses as a negative social phenomenon to both Nigeria and the destination countries. For instance, the conceptual metaphor "MIGRATION IS WAR" predominantly conceptualises migration as a *battle* or *conflict* using war metaphors. This reflects a combative stance, portraying migration as a struggle or opposition to be overcome. This perspective is substantiated by the metaphorical expressions highlighted in the following examples,

13. Fortified borders leave migrants STRANDED in no-man's land
(*Guardian 13/07/2023*)
14. Migrants face BRICK WALLS as
Policies tighten in Europe
(*Punch,* 19/12/2023*)*

Examples 13 and 14 expressions have emerged out of war discourse/military discourse to convey the idea of the current Nigerian migration. A war is a confrontation between two or more countries or parties due to conflict or opposition that exists between them. In such types of situations, every party tries to evoke solidarity among its members

to fight and win against the enemies/opponents. War metaphors in Nigeria's Migration discourse play the same functions. The conceptualisation of Nigerian migrants as an enemy necessitated the fortification of the borders as well as a strict policy. The ideological stances conveyed by these metaphors portray migrants as adversaries, fostering a narrative of resistance to migration. Consequently, receiving countries implement policies symbolised by metaphors like a brick wall, designed to fortify their borders and deter Nigerian migrants.

The anti-migration and pro-migration ideological stances identified in this research are in line with Montagut and Moragas-Fernandez (2020) established humanising/dehumanising distinct primary divisions in metaphors of migration. Just as the anti-migration metaphors are intrinsically against migration, the dehumanising metaphors are problematic as they strip individuals of their humanity and reduce them to animals, objects, animals, or forces. This kind of language makes it easier to ignore their struggles, rights, and dignity, fostering negative perceptions and justifying harmful actions or policies against them. The media's use of metaphors to narrate Nigerian migration reveals how metaphors shape public perception by reinforcing specific ideological positions. By framing migration in ways that align with political or economic narratives, these metaphors influence how migration is understood, discussed, and addressed, often reflecting the interests or biases of those controlling the narrative.

Anti-migration ideologies often emphasise the risks associated with migration, such as exploitation, death, or cultural alienation, to foster fear and discourage Nigerians from leaving. They project migration as a problem not just for the individual but for the nation, framing it as a brain-drain war where Nigeria loses its most capable citizens. This aligns with the ideological square by positively representing stayers as patriots and negatively framing migrants as deserters. Whereas the pro-migration metaphors counterbalance this by highlighting migrants' contributions and focus on migrants as agents of development, highlighting their potential to contribute remittances, skills, and international exposure to Nigeria. This counters the anti-migration narrative by reframing migration as an opportunity for personal and national growth rather than a loss. This pro-patriotic discourse highlights narratives of resilience, suggesting that enduring hardships at home are part of a collective national struggle. This framing taps into cultural and ideological constructs that associate migration with the loss of talent, cultural erosion, and the weakening of national identity. Hence, through this discourse, anti-migration rhetoric aims to foster a sense of national pride and responsibility, encouraging citizens to remain and contribute to Nigeria's development. However, by focusing solely on discouraging migration, this approach risks oversimplifying the root causes of migration, such as economic disparity, insecurity, and lack of opportunities. While it may promote patriotism, it often neglects systemic reforms needed to address why many Nigerians feel compelled to migrate in the first place.

Worthy of note is the distribution of the ideology in the 120 data. From the linguistic expression, the pro-migration and anti-migration ideology distribution across the selected media outlet is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Ideological Stances Distribution Across the Selected Media

S/n	Media Outlet	Pro-migration	Anti-Migration
1	Daily Trust	1	12
2	Guardian	3	13
3	Leadership	2	13
4	Punch	14	18
5	The Cable	6	18
6	Vanguard	4	16
	Total	30	90

From Table 2, it is evident that the anti-migration ideology has the highest media reportage with a total of 90 media reports across the selected six (6) media. This entails that the Nigerian migration media discourses are laced with negative social phenomena. Hence, the surge and urge to migrate have consistently been under media attacks owing to the perceived negative economic consequences. The selected media are used as a tool to reshape the minds of Nigerians from migrating. The distribution of these media reportages in shaping the minds of their reader on migration is presented in Figure 2.
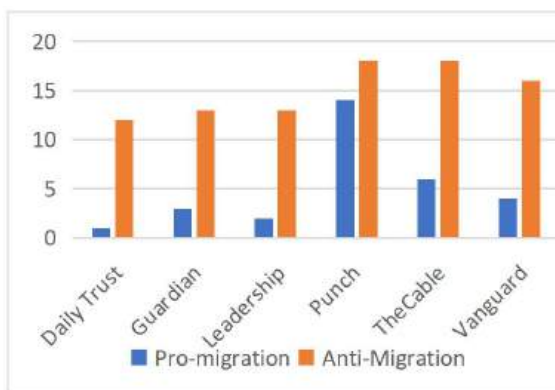

Figure 2: Ideological Stances of the Various Media Reportage

From Figure 2, *the Cable* and *Punch,* both from the South-West (Lagos), have the highest anti-migration ideological stances when compared with others. The reason hinged on the surge within the region as Nigeria's migration is laced metaphorically as *Japa. The Daily Trust* in the North (Abuja/Kaduna) has the least anti-migration ideology as well as the least pro-migration ideological report, as the region is not experiencing a migration surge.

IV. Conclusion

This study examined the ideological implications of metaphor usage in Nigeria's migration reportage from the 2020 to 2024 surge. It focused on how metaphors related to Disease, Ocean, Journey, Container, and War constructed an imagined reality where Nigerian migrants were depicted as undertaking a perilous journey, facing uncontrollable forces, killer enemies, burdens, and barriers. By analysing these metaphors through their ideological significance, it was found that the five conceptual metaphors are embedded with anti-migration and pro-migration ideologies. Anti-migration rhetoric aimed at instilling national pride and a sense of responsibility deters citizens from leaving the country, encouraging them to remain and contribute to Nigeria's progress. In contrast, pro-migration metaphors serve as a counterbalance by emphasising migrants' role as drivers of development, showcasing their ability to provide remittances, transfer skills, and bring international exposure that benefits Nigeria. Further analysis reveals that 75% of the media content reflects anti-migration ideologies, with *The Cable* and *Punch*, both Lagos-based outlets, dominating the coverage. These narratives often aim to discourage migration from Nigeria, particularly in response to the growing appeal of perceived opportunities in Western

countries. Discourse analysis uncovers how such ideologically charged framings shape public perception and reinforce a sense of national obligation over individual aspiration. To shift this discourse, media practitioners should prioritise balanced reporting that critically examines both the challenges and drivers of migration. Likewise, migration advocates should work to reframe migration as a legitimate response to systemic issues, while promoting informed public dialogue grounded in evidence and empathy.

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