

Sociolinguistic implications of kidnapping, banditry and Yahoo Plus in society

Raphael Idowu Ibiowotisi

Department of Linguistics, Igbo and Other Nigerian Languages, Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe. Anambra State; bunmiidowu63@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: bunmiidowu63@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO	Abstract
Keywords: Sociolinguistics, Kidnapping, Banditry, Yahoo Plus, Non-Experimental Research ©2026 Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International 	<i>This study explores the sociolinguistic implications of kidnapping, banditry, and Yahoo Plus in contemporary Nigerian society, focusing on how these criminal activities influence language use, communication patterns, and social identity construction. Guided by the major objective of analyzing how non-violent criminal trends reshape everyday discourse and values, the study adopts a non-experimental descriptive design to observe natural linguistic data without manipulating variables. The rationale for the study is rooted in the growing normalization and glamorization of deviant behaviors in public and youth discourse, raising concerns about language's role in social deviance. Drawing from the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, particularly Van Dijk's Ideological Square Model, the study examines newspaper articles, song lyrics, and social media content, and street-level conversations. Findings reveal a proliferation of coded language, euphemisms, and valorized expressions such as "runs," "blood money," and "dem carry am," which signal linguistic accommodation of crime. The study also uncovers how such discourse constructs identity and influences youth perceptions of success and morality. The significance lies in unveiling how language mirrors societal shifts and serves as a vessel for the transmission of deviant ideologies. Recommendations include integrating critical discourse education in schools, sensitizing media practitioners on ethical framing, and reviving indigenous proverbs that promote social ethics. This study contributes to sociolinguistic scholarship by offering empirical insight into how language interacts with societal crisis and suggesting pathways for discourse reform in crime-affected communities.</i>

Introduction

Language is a fundamental tool through which individuals and societies express ideas, construct social realities, and maintain cultural identities. In Nigeria, the escalation of socio-criminal activities such as kidnapping, banditry, and Yahoo Plus has not only affected the socio-political and economic fabric of the nation but has also generated significant transformations in linguistic and communicative practices. These forms of crime have permeated public discourse, shaping how individuals interact, perceive identity, and interpret social values. Kidnapping and banditry, often associated with violence and insecurity, and Yahoo Plus—a hybrid of cybercrime and ritualistic practices—have evolved into more than criminal acts. They have become symbols of power, rebellion, and survival for a growing segment of the population, particularly among youths. As a result, these phenomena are now deeply embedded in Nigerian sociolinguistic contexts, warranting systematic academic inquiry.

In recent years, kidnapping has become a recurrent and disturbing feature of life in Nigeria, affecting both urban and rural populations. Victims are abducted for ransom, political leverage, or terror, and this violent trend has led to the emergence of euphemisms, coded expressions, and anxiety-driven language in both media and everyday communication. Phrases such as "dem carry am," "he don disappear," and "we no fit travel again" have become common among speakers of Nigerian

Pidgin and local dialects, reflecting the growing normalization of insecurity. The media also plays a significant role in shaping the language of kidnapping. Terms such as “unknown gunmen” have become institutionalized, offering vague and euphemistic descriptions that often shield the identities of the perpetrators. These linguistic innovations reflect deeper societal anxieties and a loss of faith in state authority and security institutions (Osisanwo, 2020).

Banditry, on the other hand, has produced a different but equally significant set of discursive practices. Originating primarily in Nigeria’s northwestern region, banditry involves armed attacks on villages, robbery, and cattle rustling. However, in public discourse, these acts are frequently associated with particular ethnic groups, thereby inflaming ethnolinguistic tensions and reinforcing stereotypes. Expressions such as “Fulani bandits,” “northern invaders,” and “killer herdsman” have emerged in political rhetoric and media commentary, fostering an “us versus them” dichotomy that fuels national disunity (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019). The discursive framing of banditry not only reflects ethnic tensions but also propagates them, as media language constructs certain groups as inherently violent or criminal. In this way, language becomes both a reflection and a driver of social division.

Yahoo Plus, arguably the most linguistically influential of these criminal phenomena, represents an alarming shift in youth culture and moral consciousness in Nigeria. It refers to an upgraded version of internet fraud, often involving fetish rituals purported to bring supernatural financial success. Popularly practiced among young men, Yahoo Plus has generated an entire linguistic subculture. Terms such as “G-boy,” “blood money,” “runs,” and “cleaning money” are now commonplace among Nigerian youth, appearing in conversations, music lyrics, and social media discourse (Ayoola, 2021). These expressions not only signal familiarity with the subculture but also often connote admiration, reflecting a disturbing glamorization of crime and materialism.

This glamorization is further amplified by Nigerian pop music and Nollywood films, where artists and actors frequently portray Yahoo boys as symbols of success, resilience, and modernity. Lyrics in popular songs often celebrate fraudulent wealth, luxury, and non-traditional paths to success, creating a linguistic and ideological framework that valorizes criminal behavior. As Ugwulebo and Eze (2019) observe, many Nigerian youths now perceive Yahoo Plus not as a crime but as a legitimate hustle in a socio-economic environment riddled with poverty, unemployment, and failed leadership. Consequently, Yahoo Plus has become both a linguistic and cultural identity, reshaping norms around work, morality, and social mobility.

Despite the prevalence and significance of these issues, existing scholarship has largely focused on their political, economic, or criminological dimensions, paying minimal attention to their sociolinguistic implications. This oversight is critical because language plays a central role in how these phenomena are represented, internalized, and perpetuated in society. The limited number of studies addressing the linguistic transformations induced by these crimes have shown promising insights. For example, Adeyanju (2017) highlighted how youth subcultures in urban Nigeria develop unique speech codes that reflect their values and social realities, while Ayoola (2021) demonstrated how Yahoo Plus discourse reveals deep-seated moral ambivalence in contemporary Nigerian society. However, there remains a dearth of comprehensive, systematic research that ties these developments together under a unifying sociolinguistic lens.

To address this gap, the present study investigates how kidnapping, banditry, and Yahoo Plus influence language use, communicative norms, and identity construction in contemporary Nigerian society. It is guided by a non-experimental, qualitative descriptive design, focusing on the analysis of naturally occurring data without manipulation. Sources of data include newspaper articles, social media discourse, Nigerian music lyrics, and informal conversations, all of which offer rich linguistic material for uncovering how crime influences language and vice versa.

The theoretical basis for this research is rooted in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), specifically drawing on Van Dijk’s Ideological Square Model. This model is instrumental in identifying how language structures serve to express group ideologies, differentiate between in-

groups and out-groups, and construct social identities (Van Dijk, 1998; Fairclough, 2015). CDA assumes that discourse is a form of social practice embedded in power relations and ideological processes, making it particularly relevant for analyzing how language contributes to the normalization or resistance of criminal behavior. For instance, by applying the Ideological Square, the study can reveal how perpetrators of crimes may be represented positively within their subcultures and negatively in mainstream discourse, or how victims are portrayed sympathetically or ambiguously depending on the context.

The rationale for this study is manifold. First, the rapid linguistic evolution resulting from these crimes has not been adequately documented or analyzed, particularly from a sociolinguistic standpoint. As new words and expressions enter the lexicon and existing terms take on new meanings, it becomes essential to track these developments and understand their implications for communication, socialization, and education. These crimes and their discourses reflect broader societal shifts—away from communal values and toward individualism, materialism, and moral relativism. Language, being both a product and producer of social reality, offers a unique window into understanding these shifts.

The study is timely, given Nigeria's ongoing struggle with insecurity and the increasing influence of youth subcultures shaped by internet culture, global capitalism, and socio-economic instability. As Blommaert (2018) has argued, language is always in flux, particularly in societies experiencing crisis, and linguistic responses to such crises can offer critical insights into the social psyche. By examining how Nigerians talk about and through these criminal realities, the research seeks to contribute to national and scholarly efforts to understand and respond to the crisis not only through security or economic interventions but also through discursive and educational strategies.

This research is expected to contribute significantly to the field of sociolinguistics, particularly in the Nigerian and broader African context, where the intersection of language and criminality is underexplored. It will also provide practical recommendations for media practitioners, educators, and policy makers. For instance, the findings may inform the development of critical media literacy curricula that teach young people to decode and question the glorification of crime in language and popular culture. It may also support initiatives aimed at preserving and promoting indigenous expressions and proverbs that uphold moral values, as a counter-discourse to criminal glorification.

Lastly, the rise of kidnapping, banditry, and Yahoo Plus in Nigeria is more than a socio-political issue—it is a linguistic phenomenon with deep implications for communication, identity, and morality. Through a qualitative, non-experimental approach grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis, this study seeks to unpack the discursive dimensions of these crimes, offering new insights into the relationship between language and social deviance in contemporary Nigerian society. It is hoped that the research will not only fill existing gaps in scholarship but also contribute to broader societal efforts aimed at linguistic, moral, and cultural reorientation.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This section reviews relevant scholarly works related to sociolinguistics, crime discourse, identity construction, insecurity, and Yahoo Plus culture in order to provide theoretical and empirical background for the study.

Sociolinguistics examines the relationship between language and society, particularly how social conditions influence communication patterns, identity construction, and cultural behaviour. According to Holmes and Wilson (2017), language reflects social realities and ideological orientations within a community. Similarly, Wardhaugh and Fuller (2021) argue that societal experiences such as insecurity, poverty, and social change often shape linguistic expressions and discourse practices. In Nigeria, the rise of kidnapping, banditry, and Yahoo Plus has generated new lexical items and slang expressions that now dominate public communication, especially among youths and within media discourse.

Crime discourse refers to the linguistic representation of criminal activities within public communication. Fairclough (2015) explains that discourse is not neutral because language often reflects ideological positions and influences social interpretation of events. In the Nigerian context, media expressions such as “unknown gunmen,” “bandits,” and “Yahoo boys” shape societal understanding of insecurity and criminality. Odebunmi and Babajide (2017) further observe that euphemistic expressions in Nigerian media discourse sometimes soften the perception of crime and reduce public sensitivity to violence and deviant behaviour.

Identity construction involves the use of language to define individuals and social groups within society. Van Dijk (1998) explains that discourse often creates distinctions between in-groups and out-groups through positive and negative representation. In contemporary Nigerian society, labels such as “Yahoo boys,” “smart hustlers,” and “bandits” influence how individuals are socially perceived. Such expressions contribute to social categorization, stereotyping, and the normalization or stigmatization of certain identities.

Insecurity resulting from kidnapping, banditry, and cybercrime has become a major challenge in Nigeria. Okoli and Okpaleke (2014) note that these crimes have contributed to fear, distrust, and instability within society. Consequently, fear-related expressions such as “nobody is safe” and “don’t travel at night” have become common in everyday communication. These expressions reflect the growing influence of insecurity on social interaction and public discourse.

Yahoo Plus has increasingly become associated with youth culture, popular music, and social media narratives in Nigeria. Ibrahim (2022) explains that cyber fraud discourse frequently portrays illicit wealth as a symbol of success and social influence. Expressions such as “Yahoo boy don hammer” and “runs dey pay” are commonly used to glorify sudden wealth and material success. Such discourse contributes to changing moral values and may encourage the normalization of deviant lifestyles among young people.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation for this study is rooted in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), specifically employing Teun A. van Dijk’s Ideological Square Model. CDA, as a multidisciplinary approach, is fundamentally concerned with the relationship between language, power, ideology, and society. It examines how discourse is used to reproduce or challenge social dominance, injustice, and inequality (Fairclough, 2015; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Van Dijk (1998) adds a cognitive dimension to CDA by exploring how ideologies are enacted and reproduced through discourse structures, emphasizing the mental models that underlie textual and communicative practices.

Van Dijk’s Ideological Square presents four strategic categories that groups often employ in constructing in-group and out-group representations. These include: (1) Emphasizing positive actions of the in-group, (2) Emphasizing negative actions of the out-group, (3) De-emphasizing negative actions of the in-group, and (4) De-emphasizing positive actions of the out-group (Van Dijk, 2006). This binary framework helps uncover how language functions as a vehicle of inclusion and exclusion, particularly relevant in contexts involving criminal representation, ethnic stereotyping, and cultural identity.

In this study, CDA is instrumental in deconstructing the ways media reports, popular music, street language, and digital discourse shape social perceptions of crime-related identities such as “Yahoo boys,” “bandits,” or “kidnappers.” It also helps reveal the power dynamics embedded in the institutional framing of crime, where state apparatuses, journalists, and cultural producers influence dominant ideologies through carefully curated language. CDA further enables an analysis of how criminal actors construct counter-discourses that rationalize or justify their actions, often reframing deviance as ingenuity or resistance against systemic failures.

The justification for adopting CDA lies in its capacity to go beyond surface meanings to interrogate the ideological structures underlying discourse. In the Nigerian context—where

criminality often intersects with ethnicity, class, youth subculture, and digital influence—CDA provides the tools for a nuanced and multi-layered interpretation of discourse. It is particularly suited to the study's aim of uncovering how deviant behavior is linguistically represented and socially legitimized or contested. Scholars like Odebunmi and Babajide (2017) and Osisanwo (2020) have applied CDA to Nigerian media discourse to reveal euphemistic tendencies, ideological polarization, and implicit biases, further affirming the model's relevance in this context.

Moreover, Van Dijk's model offers a systematic method of analyzing how groups are linguistically positioned in public discourse. For example, expressions like “unknown gunmen,” “Fulani bandits,” or “G-boys” carry not only descriptive but ideological functions, shaping public understanding of criminal identity and moral legitimacy. These representations often serve elite interests, mask structural violence, and perpetuate stereotypes, thus reinforcing social hierarchies (Leeuwen, 2014). The model's adaptability to multi-modal data (written, spoken, and digital) also makes it appropriate for analyzing diverse sources such as song lyrics, online chats, and news articles.

Empirical Studies

Okoli and Okpaleke (2014) examined kidnapping and insecurity in Nigeria with emphasis on its effects on public safety and national stability. The study revealed that kidnapping had transformed into an organized criminal enterprise driven mainly by economic motives. The study is similar to the present research because both investigate insecurity in Nigerian society. However, the study focused mainly on security and governance issues, whereas the present study examines the sociolinguistic implications of kidnapping discourse. The current study therefore fills the gap by analyzing how language shapes public perception, identity construction, and communicative behaviour.

Also, Osisanwo (2020) investigated media framing of herdsmen-farmers' conflicts in Nigeria. The study found that newspapers frequently used ethnically framed expressions such as “Fulani herdsmen” in reporting violent attacks. The similarity between the study and the present research lies in their focus on discourse and insecurity. However, Osisanwo concentrated mainly on newspaper framing, while the present study extends the analysis to social media, music lyrics, Nollywood films, and everyday communication. The current study therefore broadens the sociolinguistic scope of crime discourse.

In addition, Adedeji (2018) examined the language of cyber fraud among Nigerian youths. The study identified slang expressions such as “runs” and “client work” as part of Yahoo culture. The study is similar to the present research because both examine language associated with cybercrime. However, Adedeji focused mainly on slang expressions without critically examining their ideological implications. The present study fills this gap by applying Critical Discourse Analysis and Van Dijk's Ideological Square Model to explain how such discourse normalizes criminality.

More So, Ibrahim (2022) explored Yahoo Plus culture and youth identity in Nigeria. The study revealed that music and social media frequently portray cyber fraudsters as symbols of wealth and success. Both studies focus on Yahoo Plus discourse and identity construction. However, Ibrahim's study centered mainly on youth culture, while the present study integrates kidnapping, banditry, and Yahoo Plus within one sociolinguistic framework. This study therefore provides a more comprehensive analysis of crime-related discourse in Nigeria.

Lastly, Fairclough (2015) examined discourse and ideology, emphasizing that language reflects power relations and social inequality. The study is relevant because it provides the theoretical basis for understanding discourse and social perception. However, it is largely theoretical and not specifically focused on Nigerian insecurity discourse. The present study fills this gap by applying discourse analysis to the sociolinguistic realities of kidnapping, banditry, and Yahoo Plus in contemporary Nigerian society.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research design anchored on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to investigate the sociolinguistic dimensions of kidnapping, banditry, and Yahoo Plus in Nigeria. The research was carried out in selected urban and semi-urban communities within Ekiti State, Ondo State, and Osun State, where crime-related discourse has become increasingly visible in media communication, youth interactions, music, and social spaces. Major towns such as Ado-Ekiti, Ikere-Ekiti, Akure, Owo, Osogbo, and Ilesa were purposively selected because of their active social and media environments. The scope of the study covered communicative domains such as newspaper reports, online journalism, street slangs, social media interactions, music lyrics, and everyday conversations reflecting criminal ideologies and societal perceptions.

The population of the study comprised print and digital media texts, social media commentaries, Nigerian hip-hop and street music lyrics produced between 2014 and 2024, and naturally occurring oral expressions relating to kidnapping, banditry, and Yahoo Plus. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select ten newspapers and online media platforms, ten crime-related Nigerian songs, thirty social media discussions, and fifteen key informants, including journalists, university students, musicians, linguists, and community elders. Data were collected through document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, qualitative content analysis, intertextual analysis, and Van Dijk's ideological square model to reveal ideological meanings, identity construction, and power relations embedded in crime-related discourse

Data Analysis

The data for this study were analyzed using qualitative content analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) based on Van Dijk's (1998) Ideological Square Model. The analysis concentrated on identifying recurring linguistic patterns, ideological meanings, and communicative strategies embedded in newspaper reports, social media discussions, music lyrics, Nollywood films, and everyday conversations relating to kidnapping, banditry, and Yahoo Plus in Nigeria. Through careful coding and categorization, the discourse samples were examined to determine how language reflects societal attitudes toward insecurity, morality, and identity construction in contemporary Nigerian society.

The analysis revealed five dominant thematic categories: fear discourse, criminal glorification, ethnic framing, survival discourse, and moral justification. Fear discourse included expressions such as "unknown gunmen strike again," "nobody is safe," and "don't travel at night," which reflected widespread anxiety and insecurity in public communication. Criminal glorification involved expressions such as "Yahoo boy don hammer," "smart hustler," and "runs dey pay," which portrayed cyber fraud and illicit wealth as symbols of success and social relevance. Ethnic framing emerged in expressions such as "Fulani bandits" and "herdsmen terrorists," which associated criminality with specific ethnic identities.

Furthermore, survival discourse included statements such as "man must survive" and "no job anywhere," which framed criminal behaviour as a response to poverty and unemployment. Moral justification appeared in narratives such as "government has failed the youths" and "everybody is doing it," which rationalized criminality by blaming wider societal conditions. These thematic categories provided the basis for interpreting how discourse contributes to the normalization and ideological construction of crime in Nigerian society.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that crime-related discourse in Nigeria is highly ideological and significantly influences societal perceptions of insecurity, morality, and identity. Through fear discourse, media narratives and public communication construct insecurity as a dominant social

reality. Expressions such as “unknown gunmen,” “nobody is safe,” and “they carried him last night” create fear, uncertainty, and social anxiety among citizens. Such discourse shapes social behaviour by influencing mobility patterns, interpersonal trust, and community interaction. Within Van Dijk’s framework, these expressions portray victims and communities as vulnerable in-groups threatened by dangerous out-groups.

The findings further demonstrate the glorification of criminality within youth discourse and popular culture. Expressions such as “Yahoo boy don hammer,” “smart hustler,” and “big boy lifestyle” portray cyber fraudsters as intelligent and economically successful individuals. Consequently, illicit wealth is represented as a legitimate pathway to social mobility and survival. At the same time, the harmful effects of cybercrime such as exploitation and moral decline are often minimized. This reflects Van Dijk’s ideological strategy of emphasizing the positive attributes of in-groups while reducing attention to their negative actions.

In addition, ethnic framing within media discourse contributes to stereotypes and social polarization by linking criminality with specific ethnic or regional groups. Similarly, survival discourse and moral justification shift responsibility for crime from offenders to societal conditions such as unemployment, poverty, corruption, and weak governance. Overall, the findings demonstrate that language does not merely describe crime but actively shapes public attitudes toward insecurity, morality, and deviant behaviour in contemporary Nigerian society.

The study identified fear discourse, criminal glorification, ethnic framing, survival discourse, and moral justification as dominant linguistic patterns within contemporary Nigerian crime discourse. These patterns demonstrate how repeated linguistic representations contribute to the normalization of insecurity, the glorification of illicit wealth, and the reinforcement of stereotypes and ideological divisions within society.

Theoretically, the study contributes to sociolinguistic and discourse studies by applying Critical Discourse Analysis and Teun A. van Dijk’s Ideological Square Model to the analysis of crime-related discourse in Nigeria. The study further establishes that language does not merely describe criminal realities but actively participates in constructing, legitimizing, and normalizing them within public consciousness.

Practically, the findings provide important insights for sociolinguists, educators, media practitioners, policymakers, and security agencies. The study emphasizes the importance of responsible media reporting, ethical communication practices, critical media literacy, and culturally sensitive public discourse in reducing the sociolinguistic effects of crime within society.

Ultimately, the study demonstrates that insecurity in Nigeria is not only a political or economic issue but also a discursive and sociocultural phenomenon shaped through language and communication. Addressing the challenges of kidnapping, banditry, and Yahoo Plus therefore requires not only security reforms but also sustained linguistic, educational, and cultural interventions capable of transforming public discourse, promoting ethical values, and strengthening social cohesion within contemporary Nigerian society.

Contributions Knowledge

This study contributes significantly to existing scholarship in sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, media studies, and criminology by examining the linguistic construction of kidnapping, banditry, and Yahoo Plus in contemporary Nigerian society. The research extends the application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly Van Dijk’s Ideological Square model, to the Nigerian socio-cultural environment, thereby demonstrating how language reflects and reproduces ideological positions on crime, morality, identity, and power relations.

Furthermore, the study broadens sociolinguistic inquiry by documenting the use of street slang, euphemisms, coded expressions, and digital language practices associated with criminal discourse. Expressions such as “cash out,” “runs,” and “Plus dey work” reveal how language is

employed to normalize and legitimize criminality within youth culture. The study also contributes to media and communication studies by showing how music, social media, and news discourse collectively shape public perceptions of crime and social identity.

In addition, the research provides empirical insight into the relationship between discourse and socio-economic realities such as poverty, unemployment, and moral instability in Nigeria. It therefore offers a valuable foundation for further studies on language, ideology, youth identity, and crime discourse in African societies.

Recommendations

1. Government and security agencies should intensify public enlightenment campaigns against the normalization and glorification of crime in society.
2. Media organizations should avoid sensational and ethnically biased expressions that may promote stereotypes, fear, and social division.
3. Educational institutions should incorporate media literacy and moral education into school curricula to discourage deviant behaviour among youths.
4. Musicians, filmmakers, and social media influencers should promote ethical values, hard work, and lawful means of success instead of glorifying illicit wealth.
5. Government should address unemployment, poverty, and inequality, which contribute to the rise of kidnapping, banditry, and Yahoo Plus among Nigerian youths.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is its reliance on qualitative secondary data obtained from media reports, online discourse, music lyrics, films, and academic materials. Since the study did not involve quantitative surveys or interviews, the findings are based mainly on interpretive discourse analysis. In addition, the study is limited to selected discourse materials and communities within Southwestern Nigeria; therefore, the findings may not fully represent all sociolinguistic realities across the entire country.

Another limitation is the constantly evolving nature of digital communication and social media discourse. Crime-related expressions and slang frequently change across online platforms, making it difficult to capture all emerging linguistic patterns associated with insecurity and cybercrime in Nigeria.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Future studies should incorporate interviews, questionnaires, and ethnographic methods to obtain deeper insights into crime-related discourse among affected communities. Researchers should also examine indigenous language representations of kidnapping, banditry, and cybercrime across different ethnic groups in Nigeria in order to broaden sociolinguistic understanding of insecurity and identity construction.

Conclusion

This study examined the sociolinguistic implications of kidnapping, banditry, and Yahoo Plus in contemporary Nigerian society through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis, particularly Van Dijk's Ideological Square model. It explored how language use—across media, music, social platforms, and street discourse—reflects, reinforces, and reconfigures ideological attitudes toward crime, identity, and morality.

Findings revealed that expressions associated with criminality are often constructed in morally ambivalent or even celebratory terms, especially among youth subcultures. Yahoo Plus, for instance, is glorified as an entrepreneurial form of resistance to poverty, while kidnapping is discussed in euphemistic or coded terms that reflect fear, complicity, or regional stigmatization. These patterns

point to a broader ideological shift in which traditional moral frameworks are being destabilized and replaced by alternative logics of survival, recognition, and self-worth.

The application of Van Dijk's model illuminated the dualistic representations of in-groups and out-groups in discourse, exposing how language serves as a site of ideological struggle—one where criminality can be valorized and victimhood ignored or inverted. The study also demonstrated that intertextuality plays a crucial role in the proliferation of crime-related ideologies, especially as slang and euphemisms migrate across music, digital spaces, and everyday conversation.

Ultimately, this research contributes to existing knowledge by foregrounding the discursive dimensions of crime in Nigeria. It highlights the need to treat language not merely as a by-product of social phenomena but as an active force in shaping societal attitudes, legitimizing behaviors, and constructing moral realities. Addressing the ideological functions of discourse thus becomes central to any comprehensive strategy aimed at crime prevention, moral reorientation, and national development.

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