

Parent-child Relationship Metaphors and Image Schemas in Nigerian Political Discourse

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Abstract:

This paper examines the use of parent-child relationship metaphors and image schemas in contemporary Nigerian political discourse. Drawing on a corpus of speeches by Nigerian presidents from 1999 to 2023, it identifies and analyzes conceptual metaphors that frame the relationship between political leaders and citizens in familial terms. The findings of the study reveals that metaphors such as ‘leaders of Nigeria at independence are fathers (and mothers)’ and ‘Nigeria is a child’ are common metaphors, which reflect cultural prioritisation of the family and the influence of patriarchal structures in Nigerian political discourse. These metaphors also elicit various image schemas, including ‘path’, ‘out-of’, and ‘enablement’. The paper discusses the implications of these metaphors and image schemas for political legitimacy, power dynamics, and national identity in Nigeria. It argues that while familial metaphors can evoke a sense of unity and shared responsibility, they can also reinforce societal hierarchical power structures. The paper contributes to understanding the role of metaphor in shaping political discourse and its impact on public perceptions and political processes in Nigerian political discourse.

Introduction

Given Nigeria's complex socio-political landscape, marked by its colonial past, vastly diverse ethnicities, and ongoing struggle with national integration, the use of familial metaphors offers a compelling lens to explore the construction of political legitimacy, power dynamics, and national identity. These metaphorical and schematic frameworks, particularly those invoking parent-child relationships, serve to forge connections between leaders and citizens in Africa's most populous nation. Such familial metaphors tap into familiar structures of authority, obligation, and care, positioning leaders as "parents" who are ostensibly responsible for the well-being of their "children"—the citizens. Critically, as this research shows, the most important relationships are not the ones with the current leaders but those with leaders in the past, particularly those credited with having laid the country's foundations heading towards independence. As Nigeria continues to navigate the challenges of democratic consolidation and national integration, the evolution and deployment of these metaphorical frameworks offer valuable insights into the complex relationship between language, power, and political legitimacy in African democracies.

Parent-child Relationships in Nigeria

Parent-child relationships in Nigeria have historically been embedded within a complex web of extended family and communal relationships characterized by collective responsibility, hierarchical respect systems, and shared socialization duties. Crucially, in traditional Nigerian society (as well as many other African societies), the parent-child relationship extends beyond

the biological parents to encompass a broader network of caregivers and authority figures. As Columbus (2014) notes, the African family system demonstrates considerable elasticity, where children may refer to uncles and aunts as fathers and mothers and cousins as siblings. This expanded conception of parenthood reflects what Fatimilehin and Hassan (2010) describe as a collectivist or interdependent culture, where community responsibility takes precedence over individual interests. The socialization of children traditionally occurred within this extended family framework, with specific roles assigned to different family members. Olutayo and Omobowale (2006) highlight the particular importance of elderly women, especially grandmothers and mothers-in-law, in child-rearing. The 'head' woman played a crucial role in establishing disciplinary standards, managing household duties, and coordinating child-rearing responsibilities among younger women.

Similarly, the older men, as heads of their families, were responsible for decision-making in their families as well as the collective governance of the community according to traditions, often regarded as “the traditions of the fathers”. This underscores the crucial role that fathers played in traditional Nigerian societies. To date, many Nigerians, due to a mix of religious and traditional influences, still hold the father’s role as primary in the family, and all other members of the family must defer to the father’s decisions as the final word on any matter. Due to these dynamics, a defining characteristic of parent-child relationships in Nigerian culture is the emphasis on hierarchical respect and deference to authority. Fatimilehin & Hassan (2010) emphasise that respect for elders is paramount, manifesting in specific cultural practices such as young women kneeling and men prostrating to greet elders (this is mostly applicable in Yorubaland, but other cultures have different practices for showing deference), regardless of their educational or economic status. This respect extends beyond immediate family members to all elders within the community, reflecting what Olutayo and Akanle (2007) describe as a system where “the conceptions of fatherhood and motherhood transcended biology”.

However, recent decades have witnessed significant transformations in parent-child relationships due to modernisation and urbanisation. Olutayo and Omobowale (2006) observe a gradual shift from communal parenting towards a Western nuclear family model, attributing this change partly to the market economy's emphasis on individual achievement. This transition has had profound implications for child socialization and family stability, which is particularly evident in urban areas. For instance, Olutayo and Akanle (2007) note that in Nigeria's megacities, family time has diminished as parents and children spend increasing amounts of time apart, sometimes reuniting only at dusk or after extended periods. This pattern represents a significant departure from traditional family structures where communal activities and shared responsibilities fostered close parent-child bonds. However, some traditional elements persist through modern adaptations. Columbus (2014) points to the emergence of “Town Unions” across Nigeria and in the diaspora as evidence of continuing efforts to maintain extended family connections. These associations serve as modern platforms for preserving traditional family values and relationships, albeit in modified forms.

As Nigeria continues to reconcile traditional family values with modern societal demands, the family’s role in child socialization remains paramount. Despite the influences of Western ideals, the Nigerian family still serves as a critical anchor of social identity and moral values. Scholars argue that reinforcing family values, even in a modern context, can foster

social cohesion and contribute positively to national development (Okojie, 2010). In sum, the evolution of Nigerian parent-child relationships illustrates a complex negotiation between continuity and change, tradition and modernity, as families adapt to shifting cultural and economic landscapes. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for comprehending the metaphorical extension of parent-child relationships into other domains of Nigerian society, including political discourse.

The Nature of Political Discourse

It is impossible to speak about politics without dwelling on power, for the former is the exercise of the latter, and just like the concept of power is accorded a myriad of definitions, descriptions of what politics means are imprecise; even more so political discourse, which connects power to language. As Wilson (2015) points out, political discourse may refer to specific productions made for politics, or it could be any kind of expression that is politically motivated; in the perspective of certain scholars, all use of language is inescapably political insofar as language is a means of establishing, negotiating, and maintaining social power. For (Fairclough, 2015), the power-language relationship can be divided into two kinds: ‘power *in* discourse’ and ‘power *behind* discourse’. The former is concerned with relations of power enacted in discourse, while the latter focuses on how social discourses are themselves shaped by power relations. What is clear is the fact that political discourse consists of various communicative modalities and theories (Wilson, 2015) and the goal of its analysis is, according to Dunmire (2023), to examine how discourse affects political practice and vice versa.

Initially, the study of politics in relation to language was limited to the skilful deployment of persuasive techniques in talk, known as the classical art of rhetoric. Rhetoric became an educational programme in the fifth century BC, a business of the Sophists, while Plato connected the ability to make elegant speech a matter of moral virtue; Aristotle, his student, focused on the social value of rhetoric and particularly the communication of truth (Rubinelli, 2023). In contemporary literature, political discourse or communication analysis operates at the nexus of various disciplines, such as political science, psychology, communication and media studies, and critical discourse analysis (Jacobs et al., 2023). As Joseph (2006) puts it, language is not simply a tool of political thought; language is itself political, and politics permeates language in many ways: different ways of speaking, talking to others, what ‘the language’ is, which language to speak, policing the language, thought and politicians, as well as choice. In short, consciously or otherwise, ideologies inform linguistic expressions and an expression is shaped by the relationship between the speaker and the hearer/audience. Therefore, even non-consciously political utterances inform what motivations hearers infer of the speaker and their perception of the speaker’s identity.

Besides word choice, presupposition and implicature, as well as grammatical constructions such as passive voice construction and nominalisation, can be used to create framing effects (Chilton, 2023). Therefore, reality is mediated through linguistic representation, and politicians are the masters of manipulating representations to generate worldviews that are consistent with their goals. It is the goal of political discourse analysis to explain the relationship between language and power and specifically, how language choice is manipulated for political ends (Wilson, 2015). What politicians bank on when they do this is the fact that

language triggers emotional reactions via brain processes, as evidence from psychology and neuroscience research has proven (Hinojosa et al., 2023; Kotz and Paulmann, 2011; Lindquist, 2021; Lindquist et al., 2015; Satpute and Lindquist, 2021). Language is not just a tool for communicating emotions; it constitutes them, and the best piece of evidence for this is the fact that disruptions of access to linguistic emotion concepts also impair emotion perception (Lindquist et al., 2015).

Contemporary Nigerian Political Landscape

Nigeria, officially known as the Federal Republic of Nigeria, is, like virtually all African nations, a country with a colonial heritage that has seeped into its politics despite attempts to rid itself of its vestiges. It has also suffered periods of military rule that stunted the growth of democratic institutions. Right now, though, Nigeria is in its 25th year of straight democratic rule, the longest in its history. There is a lot to learn from how the contemporary political landscape evolved since Nigeria's founding. From 1914, the British government administered the Southern Protectorate (including the Colony of Lagos) and the Northern Protectorate as one nation until 1960. In the decade preceding Nigeria's independence, the colonial administration instituted the federal system of government as a way of catering to Nigeria's heterogeneous complexity (Fashagba, 2021; Ojo, 2021).

Depending on one's source, Nigeria has between 200 to 400 ethnic groups, and even many more languages are spoken – Ethnologue lists 520 indigenous living languages (Eberhard et al, 2023). The colonial administration also bequeathed a parliamentary legislature, even though it initially played an advisory role and had no real lawmaking responsibilities (Fashagba, 2021). This contributes to why the executive maintains an outsized influence in Nigeria's governance, with the legislature (no longer parliamentary) and judiciary subordinated de facto; (Baba, 2018) calls this hyper-presidentialism.

Due to the complex multi-ethnic dynamics of the nascent Nigerian state, regional governments were initially established along the geographic approximations of the three major indigenous languages: Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo. As a federal system, each region was autonomous and had its own constitution, while the central government had greater responsibilities (Ekwueme, 1999). This arrangement seemed fine on paper, but according to Apine and Balogun (2021), it created ethnically supremacist political parties, and these sentiments ultimately led to the collapse of the government six years after independence. The major parties had enormous influence within the regions in which they were founded but exerted hardly any elsewhere and this became a bane to democratic progress. Away from the three- (and later four-) region structure that it began with, Nigeria now has 36 states, with an autonomous federal capital territory. Also, in contrast to the country's early days, Nigeria's major contemporary political parties are more national in their outlook. The Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), which held power from 1999 to 2015 started as a nationalist movement to protest military rule (Ashindorbe & Danjibo, 2022), while the All Progressives Congress (APC), which has held power since 2015 was established as a coalition of four party groups to crush the hegemony of the ruling PDP.

In any case, Nigeria's political system is hardly enviable, and a primary concern for citizens as well as international watchers is the pervasiveness of public corruption. Folarin

(2021) traces the history of institutionalised corruption in Nigeria to the pre-colonial era. The very acquisition of the colonies that made up Nigeria happened via fraudulent means, and the colonial administration perpetuated this corruption throughout their period of control. Nigerian politicians promptly inherited the culture of corruption amidst the challenges of protecting a fragile democracy and fostering national integration in a widely diverse state. That does not exonerate them, though and the government has, at various points implemented various measures at tackling corruption. During the era of military rule, there were Obasanjo's Jaji Declaration 1977, Buhari/Idiagbon's 'War against Indiscipline' in 1984, and Babangida's Structural Adjustment Programme Folarin (2021). Post-military rule, a number of outfits have been established to tackle corruption including the EFCC (Economic and Financial Crimes Commission), the ICPC (Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission), as well as the Code of Conduct Bureau.

Yet, corruption remains endemic, alongside other challenges to national integration. Some factors listed by Abdulahi and Baba (2021) as posing challenges to Nigeria's national integration include resource mobilisation and allocation, power sharing, structural arrangements, etc. For one, the discovery of oil in the south made Nigeria quickly dependent on the region as the primary source of its wealth, with a decline in the agricultural sector, which had previously excelled. The result of this is that communities where oil is mined continue to be impoverished and suffer environmental losses, while the central and state governments continue to tussle over allocations (Fashagba, 2021). As Elemo et al. (2018) put it, this has given birth to what is called neopatrimonialism, a system of bureaucratised patronage by which political leaders prioritise access to revenue in order to partake of sharing the 'national cake'.

Due to these threats to national integration, many people prioritise the interest of their ethnic group over national interest, while more concerned parties are calling for 'restructuring', by which they promote a renegotiation of the governance structure, particularly by implementing what has come to be known as 'true federalism', at least fiscally. Other components of the restructuring calls include state-led economic development, the establishment of state police forces, and increased income allocations to sub-national governments, among others (Elemo et al., 2018). As Ojo (2021) posits, Nigeria is geographically imbalanced, with the North being equal to the sum of the other two sections (West and East). Even though there are no more regional governments, the structured alliances from the colonial era continue to influence the polity, and the South continues to be disgruntled about the North's political domination. Meanwhile, the country also grapples with an inequitable representation of women in political leadership, despite them being very powerful when a politician curries grassroots favour and support (Ashindorbe & Danjibo, 2022).

It is against this historical backdrop that the contemporary landscape of politics in Nigeria is established. Therefore, it is no surprise why prebendalism is the order of the day in Nigeria and why elections (not just the presidential election) are coloured with ethnic and other sectoral (including religious) tension. So far, the central government has not done a great job at fostering integration at a national level.

Conceptual Metaphors and Image Schemas

Conceptual metaphors, popularised by Lakoff and Johnson (2008), are distinct from traditional linguistic metaphors in that they are not simply a matter of language but primarily of thought. The human cognitive system is conceptual, and metaphors are more pervasive than we think. It is not uncommon for the abstract notion of time to be conceived as a commodity that can be wasted, saved, spent, budgeted, or invested, characterising a mapping from one domain – money – to another – time. These cross-domain mappings are not algorithmic but are ‘fixed ontological correspondences’, which enable us to grasp novel metaphorical conceptualisations (Lakoff, 2006). In the neural theory of metaphor, which developed out of the conceptual metaphor theory as proof of the cognitive reality of conceptual metaphors, cross-domain mappings are regarded as neural circuit links between two brain areas (Lakoff, 2009). As individuals repeatedly encounter the association between time and money – such as earning wages based on hours worked – this neural circuit strengthens, leading to the automaticity effect (add source). For Kövecses (2015), metaphorical concepts are established in the human mind due to contextual factors in real discourse situations. So conceptual systems may vary cross-culturally even though cognitive operations and fundamental experiences are universal. He calls this the Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory, having integrated the role of context in the emergence of conceptual metaphors (Kövecses, 2020; Stadler, 2020)(Kövecses, 2020; Stadler, 2020).

Oguegbu and Chukwu (2020) and Oguegbu and Chukwu (2021) apply the conceptual metaphor theory to analyse presidential inaugural speeches by Olusegun Obasanjo, Goodluck Jonathan, Muhammadu Buhari, and Umaru Musa Yar’Adua on the one hand, and Obasanjo and Jonathan on the other hand, respectively. Some of the metaphors analysed include:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Time is money | Time is space |
| Time is an object | Time is a person |
| The administration is a person | The nation is a person |
| Time is a container | Governance is defence |
| Difficulties are barriers and burdens | Policymaking is a journey |
| Social evils are enemies | Confidence is a building |
| Politics is war, | etc. |

Kamalu and Iniworikabo (2016) studied the manifestation of conceptual metaphors related to disease and illness, building and construction, conflict and war, as well as the NATION AS A FAMILY in the presidential speeches of Olusegun Obasanjo, Umaru Musa Yar’Adua, and Goodluck Jonathan. The NATION AS A FAMILY conceptual metaphor has the following structure: the government represents the parents, citizens of the country are the children, and the African continent is the extended family. In addition, presidents assume the role of the traditional father figure with the duty to protect and secure his family.

On their part, Malah and Taiwo (2020) analysed four speeches delivered by President Muhammadu Buhari from the time of the primary elections to his inaugural speech (presidential primaries, nomination acceptance, election victory, first inaugural), drawing upon the conceptual metaphor theory. The most common metaphors he uses are the HUMAN, WAR,

and JOURNEY conceptual metaphors, with other metaphors such as FAMILY found to feature rather sparingly.

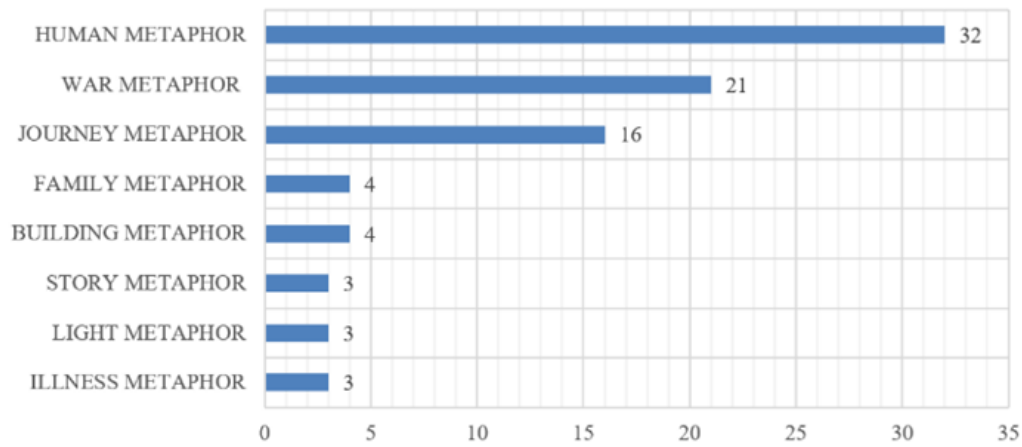


Figure 3: Conceptual Metaphors in President Buhari’s Political Rhetoric (Malah & Taiwo, 2020)

Two metaphors: THE LEADER IS A PARENT and CITIZENS ARE CHILDREN are highlighted. The goal of their study, however, was to examine the rhetorical import of Buhari’s political communication style by highlighting how metaphor is deployed to form legitimacy in his speeches, based on Charteris-Black (2009) contemporary model of metaphor and political communication.

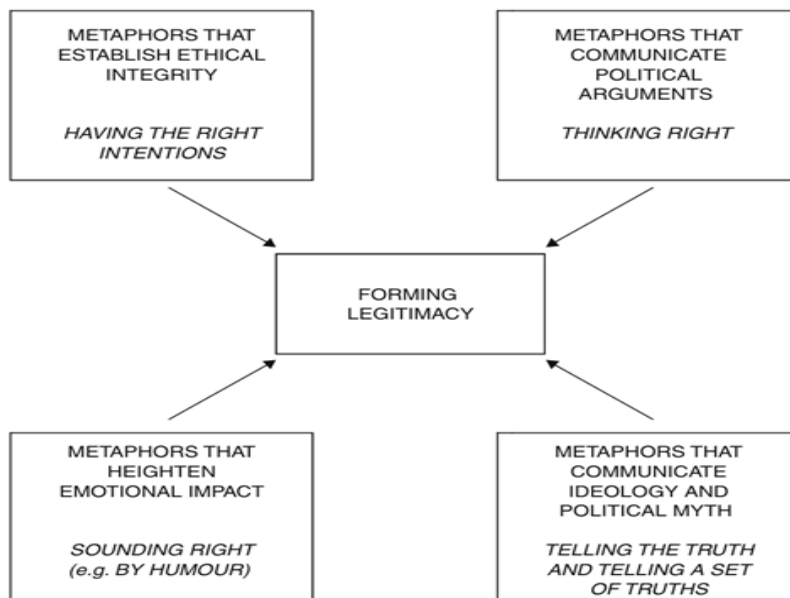


Figure 4: Contemporary model of metaphor and political communication (Charteris-Black, 2009)

In a similar vein, other researchers have focused on critical and stylistic approaches to studying conceptual metaphors used in Nigerian political discourse. Aremu (2017) deploys Charteris-Black's (2004) Critical Metaphor Analysis to explain conceptual mappings in the inaugural speeches of the five civilian presidents Nigeria had between 1979 and 2015: Shehu Shagari, Obasanjo, Yar'Adua, Jonathan, and Buhari. Where the nation is conceived in terms of a household, the political leader is represented as the head of the home, fulfilling the following roles: father, manager, and puritan, and overall, responsible for maintaining order in the home. Taiwo (2014) is more expansive than most, including not just political speeches of presidents but also reports and editorial commentaries in major newspaper publications. He uses speeches and addresses by Tafawa Balewa, Olusegun Obasanjo, Umaru Yar'Adua, Atiku Abubakar, and Shehu Shagari as well as reports by Sonala Olumhense and Reuben Abati of *The Guardian*, *The Sun* Editorial, etc. As related to THE NATION IS A FAMILY conceptual metaphor, his discovery is familiar: the leader is the father, Nigerians are the offspring, and the African content is the extended family.

Table 2: Conceptual Mappings of Targets and Domains in Nigerian Political Metaphors (Taiwo, 2014)

| NATION | POLITICIAN | POLITICS |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| NATION AS FAMILY NATION AS PERSON | POLITICIAN AS BUILDER | POLITICS AS BATTLE POLITICS AS JOURNEY |

An aspect that has been much overlooked in CMT literature in Nigerian politics is media representation of political discourse or key issues in political discourse. A major recent project in this area comes from Agugogbua and Ezeifeke (2023), who looked at the media representations of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) group in the following newspapers: *The Nation*, *Punch*, and *the Vanguard*. Their research also employed Critical Metaphor Analysis, examining the rhetorical and emotive strategies manifest in various conceptual metaphorical expressions from media reports related to IPOB published between 2016 and 2021. In the past, (Ezeifeke, 2013) also conducted critical discourse research to identify the ideological underpinnings of *The Guardian* newspaper's headlines and reports of teachers' protests over salary payment, using the CMT approach to justify the need for critical language awareness for media professionals. In addition, (Ononye & Osoba, 2020) applied a critical stylistic approach to examine the broad metaphorical code of HERDSMEN ATTACK IS GAME HUNTING in newspaper reports by *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, and *the Vanguard*.

Image Schemas

According to cognitive semantics, experiential knowledge comes via gestalts that result from sensorimotor activity as we interact with the world; these gestalts are known as image schemas (Gibbs Jr & Colston, 1995). It is in the same vein that image schemas are defined as "dynamic analogue representations of spatial relations and movements in space". Stadler (2020) posits

that image schemas exist at the “intersection between our sensorimotor interactions and the experiential domain.” So, while image schemas are not the sensorimotor processes themselves, they may be considered representations of these processes via the brain’s interaction with the world. For instance, the physical experience of moving towards objects elicits the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schematic structure. In fact, moving towards an object requires the coordination of multiple cognitive processes, including not just movement but also (visual) perception. Thus, from mundane activities, image schemas arise to structure and organise our knowledge of the world, including thought and language (Oakley, 2010). So, on some level, image schemas are the means of connecting the physical with the conceptual. It is via conceptual understanding and mental imagery that we can think about something in its absence or an event that is not occurring presently. Image schemas structure our memory for such recollection tasks, preserving the basic structure even when the details are lost (Mandler & Cánovas, 2014).

Lakoff (2006) claims that metaphors can be structured hierarchically and that the metaphors higher up the hierarchy are more schematic than lower mappings. He uses the following illustration, where ‘Level 1’ is the highest:

Level 1: the event structure metaphor

Level 2: A PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY

Level 3: LOVE IS A JOURNEY; A CAREER IS A JOURNEY

In addition, Kovecses (2015) identifies distinct levels of schematicity to explain the hierarchical structure of our knowledge of the world and also to resolve the terminological chaos in CMT literature. He calls this the multilevel view of conceptual metaphor. In this view, there are four levels of conceptual structures, namely mental spaces, frames, domains, and image schemas, where mental spaces are the least schematic and image schemas are the most schematic. For instance, the BODY domain presupposes image schemas of CONTAINER and VERTICALITY and is elaborated in frames of PERCEPTION, INGESTION, and EXERCISING; further specificity is achieved at the mental space level and in actual utterances. Saying “I see what you mean” to mean a person understands another person is a use of THE MIND IS THE BODY metaphor and a product of the conceptual structure illustrated.

Mandler and Cánovas (2014) take a different approach but still maintain a hierarchical structure: image schemas are spatial stories built from spatial primitives, which are formed in infancy as a person’s first conceptual structure. Then, schematic integrations are used to build concepts with non-spatial aspects. The spatial primitives (building blocks) include PATH, CONTAINER, THING, CONTACT, etc. while image schemas, from this perspective, consist of event representations, such as PATH TO THING, THING INTO CONTAINER, THING OCCLUDED BY ANOTHER THING, etc. In their view, all three notions are regarded as ‘image schemas’ in cognitive linguistic literature, but evidence from how the conceptual systems of infants are built makes such delimitation imperative. For instance, from near birth, infants can conceptualise motion, occlusion, path, in-out, container, etc. The exceptions include concepts of force, emotions, taste, and touch, which is a general lack of awareness that babies have of their own bodies.

Methodology and Results

For the study, speeches by presidents of Nigeria between 1999 and 2023 were selected. 1999 marked the end of military rule in Nigeria and the beginning of a new era of democratic civilian rule, which has remained unbroken. During the period, there have been five presidents of Nigeria, namely Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007), Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (2007-2010), Goodluck Jonathan (2010 - 2015), Muhammadu Buhari (2015 - 2023), and Bola Ahmed Tinubu (2023 - date). The speeches selected are the ones delivered on Nigeria's Independence Day anniversary (October 1st), Democracy Day (June 12th, May 29th prior), the inauguration of said President, and each year's Budget Presentation speech. These speeches were selected because they feature nationwide broadcasts that allow the sitting president to address all Nigerians in Nigeria and abroad. They are important events that mark turning points in the nation's history. Budget presentation speeches are delivered not directly to Nigerians but to the National Assembly. However, the National Assembly represents the Nigerian populace, and more so, budget presentation speeches allow the president to set their agenda for the coming year and determine how their plans will affect Nigerians. This warrants their inclusion in the data.

57 speeches, comprising 171,006 tokens were collected, in total.

Due to the volume of the text collected, a corpus analysis approach was used to analyse the data. Specifically, the research employed AntConc (Anthony, 2024), a freeware corpus analysis toolkit for text analysis, to build a corpus comprising the collected data, having uploaded text files containing the speeches to the software. The AntConc software is a collection of various functions, including building word and phrase lists by frequency, n-grams, collocations, and so on. The Key-Word-In-Context (KWIC) feature was particularly used for this project. It allows the user to search for words and phrases in a corpus of texts, with results displayed alongside the context in which the words and phrases appear. Using the KWIC feature, words for familial relations were searched against the corpus of data collected, and their contexts were identified. Subsequently, applying the MIPVU methodology, only instances of metaphorical expressions featuring parent-child relationships were selected for the research. In all, 49 instances of metaphorical parent-child relationships were found in the data, with the frequency presented in the table below:

| CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR | NO. |
|--|-----|
| LEADERS OF NIGERIA AT INDEPENDENCE ARE (FORE)FATHERS | 24 |
| NIGERIANS ARE NURTURANTS | 6 |
| NIGERIANS ARE BEQUEATHERS | 4 |
| NIGERIANS ARE INHERITORS | 4 |
| THE PRESIDENT IS A BEQUEATHER | 4 |
| NIGERIA IS A CHILD | 3 |
| *Other (single occurrences) | 4 |

Results and Discussion

With about 50% of occurrences, the overwhelming frequency of the LEADERS OF NIGERIA AT INDEPENDENCE ARE (FORE)FATHERS conceptual metaphor made it the focus of this study, including the image schemas evoked by such a relationship. As it is made clear in this section, the broader LEADERS AS FATHERS metaphor permeates other specific instantiations of parent-child relationship metaphors, particularly when it comes to roles such as nurturing and bequeathal.

1. Leaders as fathers

The word ‘father’ and the concept of fatherhood often evoke authority. In traditional African homes, the father is considered the head of the home. Fathers also head the community and various social organisations. As such, the position of fatherhood is one of immense authority over the goings-on in the family/home. In the context of the speeches analysed, the presidents call upon Nigerian citizens to honour and seek to replicate the so-called founding fathers, not just because of the factor of causation, but also the authority that they wielded over Nigeria, and still wield over the national polity, even while they are no more.

Fathers, and parents generally, also play nurturing roles but in the data analysed, there is a sense in which the nurturant refers to all Nigerian citizens and another sense in which they refer specifically to elected officials, as illustrated in the examples below:

- a. *Fellow Nigerians, if we do not decide to build and nurture a new image, build and sustain a new Nigeria... (ID_2005_OBJ)*
- b. *...such dispositions to ensure the nurturing of development and the sustenance of democracy must and should not be confused with, or taken for weakness. (ID_2005_OBJ)*

- c. ...all elected officials at State and Local Government levels. These officials have made vital contributions to the **nurturing of grassroots democracy**, which indeed is the base for our national democracy (ID_2003_OBJ)

At other points, the owner of the responsibility for parenting is not explicitly defined

- d. *Democracy requires **constant nurturing** and eternal vigilance.* (DD_2010_GEJ)
e. *Nigeria needs to be served and to be saved not only by words but **also nurtured by firm, patriotic, courageous and committed action** devoid of self and selfish interests* (ID_2005_OBJ)
f. *Let me however point out that **democracy must, like love, be nurtured, protected, appreciated, encouraged and massaged** at all times.* (DD_2006_OBJ)

In the case of *d*, democracy is conceived of as an infant who not only requires constant nurturing but also eternal vigilance. It is critical for new parents to watch their infant round the clock. Nigeria has a lengthy history of non-democratic military rule. At the time President Jonathan made that statement, Nigeria was only 11 years into unbroken democratic governance, which came after 16 years of straight military dictatorship (except for a brief period of fewer than three months when a civilian interim national government was in power. It is also critical to mention that Democracy Day 2010 was Jonathan's first as president, following the death of President Yar'Adua, who had battled a lengthy illness. During the time of his predecessor's illness, Jonathan served as the Acting President, but he could only take office after a long-drawn legal and legislative battle, since the current president had not, and could not, properly hand over power. This backdrop offers a more nuanced understanding of why President Jonathan, in his second national broadcast since becoming president (the first was a very brief inaugural speech), would talk about democracy requiring 'constant nurturing and eternal vigilance', considering the challenging circumstances of his ascension to office.

While examples *e* to *f* above do not necessarily assign the nurturing role to any specific persons, they reinforce the ethical and social responsibilities involved in nurturing and parenting, as well as the challenges of fulfilling those responsibilities. In Matiiash-Hnediuk et al. (2024) analysis of the conceptualisation of parenthood in American media discourse, notions of ethical and social responsibilities as well as the challenges of parenthood combined accounted for over 81% of the entire data used in the study.

References to nurturing indicate responsibility imposed on one party to be exercised in favour of the growth of another's growth. However, nurturing, as applied in parenthood, also necessitates authority. This gives rise to the NURTURANT PARENT vs STRICT FATHER dichotomy, which was introduced by (Lakoff, 2008) to examine distinctions between Liberals and Conservatives in American politics and has been extensively discussed in the metaphor literature. Such notions are not included in the focus of the current study, which is focused on examining image schemas based on the conceptual metaphors of familial relations.

The focus of this section of the analysis, though, includes references to the 'founding fathers' (and 'mothers', on one occasion) in the data, which often evoke the idea of causation as well as a sense of responsibility. Fatherhood in this sense, implies causation (socially, it also

implies authority, but that is explored later). What is common to these references is the fact that a certain class of Nigerians from previous generations, especially the leaders of Nigeria at Independence, caused Nigeria by their various actions and sacrifices, examples of which are given below:

- a. *It is a day to honour our founding fathers who toiled to establish our republic and every Nigerian who has worked tirelessly to sustain it.* (DD_2020_GMB)
- b. *On this solemn yet hopeful day, let us commend our founding fathers and mothers. Without them, there would be no modern Nigeria.* (ID_2023_BAT)
- c. *Our founding fathers discharged their historic responsibility by fighting and winning our national freedom.* (DD_2010_GEJ)

It is, thus, necessary to analyse the image schemas evoked by these and similar conceptual metaphorical expressions in the data.

2. The path image schema

Fatherhood, viewed through the PATH schema, frames the experience as a progressive journey marked by significant stages and milestones. This journey begins with the birth of a child, symbolizing the starting point, and continues through various developmental phases, akin to waypoints along a path. In the same conceptual vein, Nigeria is conceptualised as a child born at its independence from British colonialism. So, in a way, the period before independence can be conceptually regarded as the time the nation was in the womb (of Britain). The leaders of Nigeria at independence, and particularly those who fought for its achievements, are collectively regarded as Nigeria's founding fathers or ancestors. Since then, generations and generations of Nigerians have existed, up to the current generation, which has inherited the legacies of the past leaders. Notably, The PATH schema in parenting extends beyond fatherhood to encompass the broader roles expected of someone in that role. Parenting involves setting goals, providing direction, and helping children navigate their developmental paths. Similarly, by pushing for Nigeria's independence, those leaders provided direction and nurtured the nation till birth and afterwards.

At various points in the data, there are references to words related to bequeathal, such as 'bequeath' itself, 'legacy', 'heirs', etc. These words evoke the concept of responsibility, and not just that, but the transfer of the same. The concept of bequeathal involves the transfer of possessions, wisdom, or values from one generation to the next. This process is also conceptualised through the PATH schema, where the bequeathal is a journey that begins with the giver (source) and ends with the receiver (goal). In the case of the data analysed, the giver typically represents the 'founding fathers', that is, people who served as leaders and key political figures in time past, especially in the years immediately preceding and succeeding the independence of Nigeria from British colonial rule.

As a subset of the act of giving, bequeathal belongs to the CONTROL domain, as explicated by Newman (1996). This is due to the fact that bequeathal indicates object transfer specifically between a higher authority (typically a parent) and a lower authority (a heir), with the former being the giver and the latter the receiver. This is seen in the following examples:

- a. *We, therefore, give thanks to and remember our founding fathers who laboured so hard and sacrificed so much to build and **bequeath to us this wonderful nation**. It is our duty to consolidate this great **legacy**.* (ID_2018_GMB)
- b. *Furthermore, we as Nigerians must remind ourselves that we are **heirs to great civilizations**: Shehu Othman Dan fodio's caliphate, the Kanem Borno Empire, the Oyo Empire, the Benin Empire and King Jaja's formidable domain. The blood of those great ancestors flow in our veins. What is now required is to build on these legacies, to modernize and uplift Nigeria.* (IN_2015_GMB)

David (2021) and Tatone & Csibra (2024) are more recent accounts of the schematic frame of giving, the latter focusing on evidence for the GIVING schema in developmental psychology. Importantly, people, right from infancy, perceive an asymmetry between giving and taking – even though they seem to be two sides of the same coin – as more emphasis is placed on the former, not just socially but even encoded in language. In this event representation, giving is the more salient action because it denotes responsibility. In example *a* above, President Buhari demonstrates that Nigerians must rise up to their responsibilities since the ‘founding fathers’ have performed theirs. In the second example (*b*), same President Buhari highlights the action of taking but he still ends up by emphasising that a responsibility has been imposed on living Nigerians to give their descendants a befitting legacy.

3. The out-of image schema

To the so-called founding fathers in the data are attributed the causative factors for the Nigerian state. To fully explain how the idea of parenthood evokes causation, it's important to consider instances in the data where conceptual metaphors are used to map the notion of birth onto the nation of Nigeria. Examples are below:

- a. *Nigerians were filled with expectations as the Union Jack was lowered and the green-white-green flag was raised in its place. **A new country was born**. A new journey had started on a road never taken before. The future was pregnant with promise.* (ID_2010_GEJ)
- b. *Thus we recognise, with due humility, that there is considerably a lot more that needs to be done, to get us closer to our ultimate goal of **a truly re-born and truly great Nigeria**.* (IN_2003_OBJ)

These examples draw upon two image schemas. Firstly, the CONTAINER schema, which has already been discussed in the previous section. For a baby to be born, it must have first resided in its mother's womb, which is a type of CONTAINER. However, birth also involves movement, as the newborn exits its previous location for the outside world. So, the second schema evoked is the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema. The womb represents the source, the goal is the world outside womb, while the path is the process of birth. Together, these two schemas form the composite schema, OUT-OF, and this is what structures notions of birth as

examined in the data. According to Lakoff & Nunez (2013), the following is the structure of the OUT-OF schema:

1. The Out schema: consisting of a Container schema, with the Exterior profiled and taken as Landmark
2. The From schema: consisting of a Source-Path-Goal schema, with the Source profiled and taken as Landmark
3. Correspondences: (Interior; Source) and (Exterior; Goal)

To be clear, the OUT-OF schema is a realisation of the PATH schema and not separate from it. It has implications for how causation is conceptualised, and this is also seen in the data analysed. According to Lakoff & Johnson (1999), there are two ways in which causation is conceptualised in image schematic terms: LOCATION EVENT-STRUCTURE and OBJECT EVENT-STRUCTURE. In both instances, the primary metaphors CAUSES ARE FORCES and CHANGES ARE MOVEMENT are at play. The birth of a baby is (forced) movement OUT-OF the womb; so, in *a* above, when President Jonathan, presenting his Independence Day anniversary speech, recalled the day of Nigeria's independence as birth from the womb of Britain, the former colonial master of Nigeria, he was acknowledging Britain as the causal factor in the making of the Nigerian nation. In the second example, President Obasanjo mentions Nigeria being re-born, which is simply a repeated OUT-OF action. This implies a recurrent cycle of causes, each leading to a better nation.

In one instance, reference is made to abortion, which is also a kind of OUT-OF move, since an aborted foetus still exits the body in some way. In the example, which is presented below, the cause of the OUT-OF move is simply stated as 'military fiat', but the specific cause can be inferred by listeners and readers who are familiar with the context of the event being referred to: the annulment of the 1993 presidential elections. In that case, the cause of the abortion is the military head of state at the time, Ibrahim Babangida, who decreed the annulment. Thus, this is a case of a negative OUT-OF move, with the negation imposed by context.

- a. *The abortion, by military fiat, of the decisive victory of Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola of the defunct Social Democratic Party (SDP) in the June 12, 1993, presidential election...* (DD_2023_BAT)

Having considered how the LOCATION and OUT-OF play crucial roles in the conceptualisation of causation in the presidential speeches analysed, it is also important to examine the data for instances in which the OBJECT EVENT-STRUCTURE metaphor was used to conceptualise causation. Such examples are presented below:

- a. *Fellow Nigerians, our freedom from the colonial yoke in 1960 marked **the birth of modern Nigerian nation.*** (DD_2002_OBJ)
- b. *Fellow Nigerians, please join me in dedicating this National Day to **the birth of optimism** in our land.* (ID_2003_OBJ)

In both examples, CAUSES ARE FORCES and CHANGES ARE MOVEMENT are still at play, except that now the event is nominalised as an object. Both instances still point to causation. In the first example, the cause of the modern Nigerian nation is freedom from colonial yoke. In *b*, the 2003 Independence Day is considered the cause of newfound optimism. This is notable, considering that at the time, Nigeria was only four years into democracy, after spending more than eighty percent of the 33 years prior to 1999 under various military dictatorships. After four years, a new civilian president had exhausted his tenure and the nation had gone through a new cycle of democratic elections. By making this statement during the Independence Day anniversary, the president was making an allusion to another moment of optimism, which occurred in the past.

4. Enablement image schema

ENABLEMENT as an image schema involves understanding the conditions under which a potential action can be realized. This schema typically involves components such as an agent, a goal, and enabling conditions. It is understood through bodily experiences where we perceive the world as either facilitating or obstructing our actions. This schema can be metaphorically extended to abstract domains, such as politics or personal growth, where conditions are seen as either fostering or hindering progress. In the data analysed, ENABLEMENT is evoked to articulate the vision and necessity for national development and democracy. Thus, the ENABLEMENT schema is most noticeable in conceptual metaphorical expressions about nurturing, which is an important responsibility in parenting. Examples from the data include:

- a. *Fellow Nigerians, if we do not decide to build and nurture a new image, build and sustain a new Nigeria, and create for ourselves an image that is different from the past in word and action, no one will do it for us. (ID_2005_OBJ)*
- b. *I know that we all want a stable, united, peaceful and prosperous democratic nation. But how do we build and nurture such a nation? (ID_2005_OBJ)*
- c. *Let me however point out that democracy must, like love, be nurtured, protected, appreciated, encouraged and massaged at all times. (DD_2006_OBJ)*
- d. *These officials have made vital contributions to the nurturing of grassroots democracy, which indeed is the base for our national democracy. (IN_2003_OBJ)*

The first statement above highlights the necessity of proactive action (ENABLEMENT) to achieve a new national identity. The metaphorical use of "build" and "nurture" implies that collective effort and supportive conditions are crucial. A similar sentiment is evoked in *b*, which is a rhetorical question that underscores the requirement for sustained and supportive actions to ensure national development. The juxtaposition of words and action highlights the transition from potential to realization, integral to the ENABLEMENT schema. Additionally, it is seen how ENABLEMENT schema is evoked through verbs indicating support, such as 'nurtured,' 'protected,' 'encouraged'). In *d*, away from the responsibility of all Nigerians towards nation-building, the speaker focuses on the contributions of officials, which should be enabling factors

in the development of democracy from the grassroots level, reinforcing the idea that democracy requires supportive actions to flourish.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated the pervasiveness of parent-child relationship metaphors in Nigerian presidential discourse from 1999 to 2023. The analysis revealed how conceptual metaphors, particularly LEADERS OF NIGERIA AT INDEPENDENCE ARE FATHERS (AND MOTHERS) and NIGERIA IS A CHILD, are strategically employed to construct specific narratives about national identity, political legitimacy, and the roles and responsibilities of both leaders and citizens. The evocation of image schemas such as PATH, OUT-OF, and ENABLEMENT further enriches these metaphors, providing a deeper understanding of how they frame political processes and historical events.

In any case, while these familial metaphors can foster a sense of unity, shared responsibility, and historical continuity by emphasizing the legacy of the "founding fathers," they can simultaneously reinforce hierarchical power structures and potentially stifle dissent. The metaphorical framing of Nigeria as a child, while emphasizing the nation's potential for growth and development, can also imply a need for paternalistic guidance, potentially limiting agency and democratic participation. Moreover, the emphasis on bequeathal and inheritance, while underscoring intergenerational responsibility, can also be used to justify the status quo and resist calls for radical change.

This research highlights the importance of critically examining the use of metaphor in political discourse, recognizing its power to shape public perception and influence political processes. Future research could explore the use of these metaphors in other forms of Nigerian political communication, such as national assembly debates, campaign speeches, and social media, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their impact on the Nigerian political landscape. Furthermore, comparative studies with other African nations could illuminate the cultural specificity and broader implications of familial metaphors in post-colonial political contexts.

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