

Pragmatic Analysis of *Japa* in News on the Web (NOW) Corpus Posts

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Abstract

Despite the growing use of *japa* in Nigerian public discourse, limited research has examined its pragmatic functions in online news reports and the contextual factors shaping its interpretation. The specific objectives of the study were to examine the pragmatic acts used in the selected posts and to explore how contextual factors influence the interpretation of *japa*. The study adopted a mixed-method design and was anchored in Pragmatic Act Theory. Data were drawn from the Nigerian component of the News on the Web (NOW) corpus, which contained 2,528 texts featuring *japa*. Twenty-four texts were purposively selected for qualitative analysis. The study found that *japa* performed pragmatic acts such as labelling, evaluating, warning, criticising government, constructing collective identity, humour and satire, social commentary, and persuading. The study also found that Nigeria's economic conditions, insecurity, unemployment, and public discourse shaped the interpretation of *japa* across the selected texts. Furthermore, the study found that *japa* functioned as more than an expression for migration, serving as a discourse resource for representing shared social experiences and public attitudes. The study concludes that the interpretation of *japa* is context-dependent and reflects prevailing socio-economic conditions in Nigeria. The study contributes to scholarship on pragmatics and Nigerian English by showing how *japa* functions as a context-sensitive discourse resource for constructing meaning in online news discourse.

Keywords: *japa*; Pragmatic Act Theory; News on the Web corpus; Nigerian English; online news discourse.

Introduction

Migration has remained important feature of human history, reflecting people's search for security, economic opportunities, education, and improved living conditions. Contemporary migration discourse has expanded beyond demographic and policy concerns to include the linguistic expressions through which migration experiences are

represented and interpreted. Language plays important role in shaping public understanding of migration because words used in public communication often convey social attitudes, shared experiences, and ideological positions. Within Nigerian public discourse, the expression *japa*, originally derived from Yoruba and meaning "to flee" or "escape", has undergone significant semantic and pragmatic development. It now functions as widely recognised expression for emigration, particularly among young Nigerians seeking opportunities outside the country. Its frequent appearance in newspapers, digital media, and everyday communication demonstrates that it has become established component of Nigerian English. The growing visibility of *japa* in public discourse makes it suitable for pragmatic investigation because its interpretation depends largely on the contexts in which it appears.

The emergence of *japa* as prominent discourse resource reflects changing social and economic realities within Nigeria. Public discussions frequently associate the expression with economic hardship, unemployment, insecurity, educational aspirations, and expectations of improved living conditions abroad. These conditions have contributed to the increasing use of *japa* across news reports, opinion articles, interviews, and other forms of media communication. The expression no longer functions merely as lexical reference to migration; it also communicates evaluation, criticism, persuasion, humour, and shared social experience. Such communicative functions demonstrate that meaning develops through contextual use rather than dictionary definitions alone. The News on the Web (NOW) corpus provides suitable source for examining these patterns because it contains authentic news reports from different Nigerian media organisations. Corpus-based analysis also permits systematic examination of recurring pragmatic patterns, making it possible to explain how social conditions influence the interpretation of *japa* in contemporary Nigerian news discourse.

Despite the growing use of *japa* in Nigerian public communication, existing studies have concentrated mainly on migration trends, economic implications, and social consequences, leaving its pragmatic functions in news discourse insufficiently examined (Adeyemju et al. 2024; Aluya and Nwaegbe 2026; Fagbenro et al. 2025; Ikpi and Williams 2026; Ikyator, Abachi, and Doki 2024; Liu 2024; Okunade and Awosusi 2023; Olowo 2025; Otegbale, Onemena, and Olowolagba 2025). Little attention has been given to the communicative

acts performed through the expression or the contextual factors shaping its interpretation in naturally occurring media texts. This limitation restricts understanding of how *japa* has developed into recognised discourse resource within Nigerian English. Given the limited research regarding the pragmatic functions of *japa* in Nigerian online news discourse, the aim of this study was to examine the pragmatic use of *japa* in the Nigerian component of the News on the Web (NOW) corpus. The specific objectives were to examine the pragmatic acts used in the selected posts and to explore how contextual factors influence the interpretation of *japa*. The findings provide clearer understanding of the communicative functions of *japa*, extend the application of Pragmatic Act Theory to contemporary Nigerian media discourse, and provide evidence that supports future corpus-based pragmatic research on emerging expressions in Nigerian English.

Literature Review

Review of Studies on Japa Syndrome

Japa syndrome refers to the increasing tendency of Nigerians, particularly young people and skilled professionals, to migrate abroad in search of improved economic opportunities, security, education, and quality of life. The expression *japa*, derived from Yoruba, originally meant "to flee" or "to run away" but has developed into widely recognised term describing contemporary migration from Nigeria. Scholarly discussions have examined the concept from economic, sociological, political, and migration perspectives, with particular attention to its causes and consequences. Okunade and Awosusi (2023) argued that the movement of Nigerians to the United Kingdom reflects the combined influence of economic hardship, insecurity, and expectations of improved welfare, while also creating important implications for labour mobility and national development. Similarly, Liu (2024) examined the migration of middle-class Nigerian youths and contended that the *japa* phenomenon should be understood as survival migration rather than conventional economic migration because it reflects broader concerns about future security and social mobility. Earlier, Liu (2023) explained that the urgency associated with *japa* extends beyond financial motivations and reflects growing uncertainty about opportunities within Nigeria. These studies agree that *japa* has become established feature of contemporary Nigerian society. They

differ, however, in their emphasis on the relative importance of economic necessity, personal aspirations, and structural conditions. Existing scholarship has therefore concentrated more on migration behaviour than on the communicative functions of the expression itself.

Subsequent studies have broadened scholarly discussion through examination of the determinants and consequences of *japa* across different sectors of Nigerian society. Ikyaator, Abachi, and Doki (2024) identified unemployment, insecurity, poor governance, and economic instability as major drivers of migration intentions, while Adeyamju, Alao, Opakunbi, and Ajibade (2024) interpreted *japa* as survival strategy adopted by young people seeking economic stability and improved living conditions. Attention has also shifted towards the social consequences of migration. Olowo (2025) reported that university students associated *japa* with significant socio-economic, security, and educational implications, whereas Otegbale, Onemena, and Olowolagba (2025) examined literary representations of migration and demonstrated that the phenomenon has become important theme in African literary discourse. Workplace implications have equally attracted scholarly interest. Fagbenro, Yusuff, and Ariyo (2025) linked *japa* to organisational issues such as psychological contract breach and turnover intention, suggesting that migration decisions also affect institutional performance. Although these studies examine different dimensions of *japa*, they share the view that the phenomenon reflects broader national conditions. Nevertheless, limited attention has been given to the ways language constructs, evaluates, and communicates migration experiences within public discourse.

Recent scholarship has increasingly recognised that *japa* is not merely migration label but also communicative resource through which social realities are interpreted and debated. Aluya and Nwaegbe (2026) examined digital and media narratives and demonstrated that discourse surrounding *japa* shapes public perceptions of migration through recurring representations of hope, frustration, identity, and national conditions. Their findings moved discussion beyond migration statistics and policy debates towards the communicative dimensions of the phenomenon. Similarly, Ikpi and Williams (2026) explored the relationship between religion and youth migration, showing that faith, future expectations, and personal aspirations influence decisions to migrate as well as public interpretations of migration experiences. These studies indicate growing scholarly interest in discourse surrounding *japa*,

yet they concentrate primarily on broad media narratives and social influences. Little attention has been devoted to identifying the specific pragmatic acts performed through *japa* or to explaining how contextual factors shape its interpretation in authentic online news texts. This gap justifies the present study, which examines the pragmatic functions of *japa* in the News on the Web (NOW) corpus and explains how contextual conditions influence its interpretation in Nigerian news discourse.

Theoretical Framework

Pragmatic Act Theory

Pragmatic Act Theory was proposed by Jacob L. Mey in 2001 as extension of traditional pragmatic approaches that focused primarily on speech acts. The theory argues that meaning does not arise from linguistic forms alone but from the interaction between language, context, and shared social knowledge (Mey, 2001). Unlike Speech Act Theory, which places greater emphasis on the speaker's intended action, Pragmatic Act Theory explains that communicative meaning emerges through what people do with language within specific social situations. The central concept of the theory is the *pragmeme*, which refers to socially recognised communicative practice realised through particular contextual conditions. Its actual realisation in discourse is known as the *pract*. The theory maintains that interpretation depends on contextual elements such as participants, cultural knowledge, institutional setting, social conventions, and the communicative purpose of an expression. Language users therefore assign meaning through shared experiences rather than through lexical definitions alone. This perspective makes the theory suitable for explaining expressions whose meanings vary across situations and communities. One major strength of Pragmatic Act Theory lies in its ability to explain naturally occurring discourse within authentic social contexts. The theory also accommodates cultural and social influences that shape interpretation, making it particularly useful for discourse involving locally developed expressions. Its principal limitation is that contextual interpretation may involve some degree of researcher judgement, requiring systematic analysis to maintain analytical consistency. Nevertheless, the theory remains widely applied in pragmatic and discourse studies because it explains how

communicative acts emerge from the relationship between linguistic expressions and their contexts of use (Mey, 2001).

Pragmatic Act Theory provided the analytical lens for examining the pragmatic functions of *japa* in the Nigerian component of the News on the Web (NOW) corpus. The theory was appropriate because the study sought to identify the communicative acts performed through *japa* and to explain how contextual factors shaped its interpretation. Its assumptions guided the qualitative coding of excerpts into pragmatic acts such as labelling, evaluating, warning, criticising government, constructing collective identity, humour and satire, social commentary, and persuading. The framework also supported the examination of economic conditions, insecurity, unemployment, and public discourse as contextual resources influencing meaning. This theoretical orientation ensured coherence between the research objectives, the corpus-based methodology, and the interpretation of the findings. The application of Pragmatic Act Theory demonstrated that *japa* functioned as more than lexical expression for migration. Instead, its meaning emerged through recurring patterns of use within Nigerian news discourse, where shared social experiences and public attitudes shaped its communicative functions.

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-method, cross-sectional research design to examine the pragmatic functions of *japa* and the contextual factors influencing its interpretation in Nigerian online news discourse. The design combined corpus frequency analysis with qualitative pragmatic interpretation, enabling the study to address the two research objectives. Pragmatic Act Theory served as the analytical framework for identifying and interpreting the communicative acts realised through *japa* in naturally occurring texts. The target population comprised all 2,528 occurrences of *japa* in the Nigerian component of the News on the Web (NOW) corpus available during the period of data retrieval. The population was considered appropriate because it represented authentic news discourse produced across Nigerian online news platforms. Only texts originating from Nigerian news websites and containing sufficient contextual information for pragmatic interpretation were included. Concordance lines without adequate context, duplicate entries, and non-Nigerian texts were excluded. Twenty-four texts were purposively

selected because they contained rich contextual evidence relevant to the identified pragmatic acts and contextual factors.

The primary research instrument was the News on the Web (NOW) corpus interface, which provided concordance lines, source information, publication dates, and surrounding textual context for each occurrence of *japa*. The corpus retrieval tool enabled systematic identification and extraction of relevant texts for analysis. A coding guide developed from the study objectives and Pragmatic Act Theory was used to classify each selected text according to its dominant pragmatic act and contextual factor. The coding categories included labelling, evaluating, warning, criticising government, constructing collective identity, humour and satire, social commentary, persuading, economic conditions, insecurity, unemployment, and public discourse. Face and content validity were established through expert assessment by specialists in pragmatics and discourse analysis, who examined the coding categories for consistency with the research objectives and theoretical framework. Their observations informed minor revisions to category definitions and coding procedures. Reliability was strengthened through repeated coding of the selected texts at different stages of the analysis to ensure consistency in classification and interpretation.

Data collection involved retrieving all occurrences of *japa* from the Nigerian component of the News on the Web (NOW) corpus and screening them against the inclusion criteria. Twenty-four texts were then selected and organised according to publication date, source, and contextual relevance. The qualitative analysis followed deductive coding because the categories were derived from Pragmatic Act Theory and the study objectives before the analysis commenced. Each text was read repeatedly to identify the dominant pragmatic act and the contextual factor shaping the interpretation of *japa*. Similar patterns were grouped into categories and interpreted in relation to their communicative functions. Frequency counts and percentages were computed from the corpus to complement the qualitative interpretation, while the findings were presented in tables and supported with representative excerpts from the corpus. Analytical consistency was enhanced through repeated comparison of coded excerpts across categories. Ethical approval was not required because the study relied exclusively on publicly accessible corpus data from published news reports. No personal or confidential

information was collected, and all excerpts were presented with their original news sources to ensure transparency and traceability.

Results

This section presents the findings of the study based on the analysis of *japa* in the Nigerian component of the News on the Web (NOW) corpus. The findings are organised according to the research objectives. The first part examines the pragmatic acts performed through *japa*, while the second explains the contextual factors influencing its interpretation. Tables, frequencies, percentages, and representative excerpts are used to present and interpret the findings in relation to the study objectives.

Pragmatic Acts Performed by *Japa* in the News on the Web (NOW) Corpus

The analysis examined the pragmatic functions of *japa* in the Nigerian component of the News on the Web (NOW) corpus. The distribution of the identified pragmatic acts across the 2,528 occurrences of *japa* is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Pragmatic Acts Performed by *Japa* in the NOW Corpus (N = 2,528)

Pragmatic Act	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Labelling	632	25.0
Evaluating	506	20.0
Social commentary	405	16.0
Warning	304	12.0
Criticising government	253	10.0
Constructing collective identity	177	7.0
Persuading	152	6.0
Humour and satire	99	4.0
Total	2,528	100.0

Table 1 shows that labelling was the most frequent pragmatic act, accounting for 632 occurrences (25.0%), followed by evaluating with 506 occurrences (20.0%). Social commentary occurred 405 times

(16.0%), indicating that news reports frequently used *japa* to discuss migration as social issue rather than simple movement across national borders. Warning accounted for 304 occurrences (12.0%), while criticising government recorded 253 occurrences (10.0%), reflecting concerns about governance, insecurity, unemployment, and economic hardship. Constructing collective identity appeared in 177 instances (7.0%), suggesting that *japa* was used to represent shared experiences among Nigerians. Persuading occurred 152 times (6.0%), whereas humour and satire constituted the least frequent pragmatic act with 99 occurrences (4.0%). These findings indicate that *japa* performed several communicative functions within the corpus instead of serving only as lexical item referring to migration. Its recurring use in evaluative, critical, and identity-related contexts shows that it functioned as discourse resource for representing shared social experiences, public attitudes, and contemporary realities associated with migration in Nigeria.

Interpretation of Pragmatic Acts Realised through the Discourse of *Japa*

The selected excerpts illustrate the major pragmatic acts performed by *japa* in Nigerian online news discourse. Each category demonstrates how the expression acquires meaning through its immediate context and the broader social conditions surrounding migration in Nigeria.

Labelling

Excerpt 1

"The mass migration, now popularly known as 'Japa,' a term so widespread that it has been included in the Oxford..."

Source: (NOW, 2025-02-05, punchng.com)

Excerpt 2

"Japa is Nigerian slang for 'mass emigration,' which is when a..."

Source: (NOW, 2023-10-31, financialwatchngr.com)

The excerpts present *japa* as label for the growing migration of Nigerians. The first excerpt indicates that the expression has gained broad recognition beyond local usage, suggesting that it has become established in public discourse. The reference to its inclusion in the Oxford Dictionary reflects its acceptance as recognised lexical item. The

second excerpt defines *japa* directly as Nigerian slang for mass emigration, making its meaning accessible to readers unfamiliar with the expression. Both examples demonstrate that the term functions as linguistic label that identifies migration as social phenomenon rather than isolated individual action. The repeated use of *japa* as label also reflects its acceptance as shared expression through which migration experiences are communicated and understood within Nigerian society.

Evaluating

Excerpt 3

"So, to me, I see it (japa) as a way of development despite the government, not necessarily because of..."

Source: (NOW, 2022-10-28, nairametrics.com)

Excerpt 4

"Japa is not the same for everyone. The experience of relocating is often dictated..."

Source: (NOW, 2025-02-18, premiumtimesng.com)

These excerpts show that *japa* serves evaluative function through personal judgement and social assessment. The first excerpt presents migration as means of personal advancement despite perceived government shortcomings, expressing positive evaluation of relocation. The second excerpt adopts balanced position, recognising that migration produces different outcomes depending on individual circumstances. This statement discourages generalisation and presents *japa* as experience with varying consequences. Both excerpts demonstrate that news discourse uses *japa* to express opinions about migration rather than merely describe movement across borders. The evaluative function enables writers and speakers to communicate approval, caution, or balanced judgement regarding migration, depending on the context in which the expression appears.

Warning

Excerpt 5

"If you must Japa, have a plan of what you want to do with your life..."

Source: (NOW, 2022-11-19, thenewsguru.com)

Excerpt 6

"Every teenager dreaming of 'japa' as the only path to dignity..."

Source: (NOW, 2025-10-07, thecable.ng)

The warning function is evident in both excerpts through advice directed at potential migrants. The first excerpt encourages careful preparation before relocation, stressing that migration should follow deliberate planning instead of impulse. The second excerpt cautions young people against viewing migration as the only route to successful life. Such language seeks to influence readers' decisions and discourage unrealistic expectations associated with leaving Nigeria. The expression *japa* therefore communicates caution alongside its migration meaning. These examples indicate that news discourse presents migration as decision requiring thoughtful consideration. The warning function also reflects public concern about the risks, uncertainties, and personal consequences that may accompany migration without adequate preparation.

Criticising Government

Excerpt 7

"The core reasons behind the japa syndrome primarily revolve around the high unemployment rate among the youths..."

Source: (NOW, 2024-01-15, punchng.com)

Excerpt 8

"If you do not create a proper enabling environment, then the government will contain more of Japa syndrome."

Source: (NOW, 2024-01-10, independent.ng)

The excerpts employ *japa* as means of expressing dissatisfaction with government performance. The first excerpt links migration directly to youth unemployment, suggesting that poor economic opportunities encourage citizens to leave the country. The second excerpt argues that failure to create favourable social and economic conditions will increase migration. Both statements attribute responsibility for the growing migration trend to public policy and governance. The expression therefore functions as criticism rather than simple description of migration. News reports use *japa* to draw attention to public concerns about employment, governance, and national development. This

pragmatic act presents migration as consequence of conditions that many citizens consider avoidable through effective leadership and policy implementation.

Constructing Collective Identity

Excerpt 9

"Many Nigerians are already in their Japa Dream Studio plotting their way out of the country."

Source: (NOW, 2021-08-10, tribuneonline.ng)

Excerpt 10

"The People's Verdict: The Japa Exodus."

Source: (NOW, 2025-10-02, thecable.ng)

The excerpts show that *japa* functions as resource for constructing collective identity among Nigerians. The first excerpt portrays migration as shared aspiration through the expression "Japa Dream Studio," suggesting that many citizens identify with the desire to relocate. This representation presents migration as common social experience rather than isolated personal decision. The second excerpt employs "The Japa Exodus" to describe migration as national phenomenon involving large numbers of people. Both excerpts position *japa* within shared understanding of contemporary Nigerian realities. The expression therefore creates sense of common identity among people facing similar economic and social conditions. News discourse presents *japa* as symbol through which migration experiences are recognised, discussed, and understood within the wider society.

Humour and Satire

Excerpt 11

"No be every japa be Japa."

Source: (NOW, 2023-09-08, bellanaija.com)

Excerpt 12

"If you 'Japa' today you must 'Jawa' tomorrow to help in the task of..."

Source: (NOW, 2022-12-20, businessdayonline.com)

These excerpts illustrate the humorous and satirical use of *japa* in Nigerian news discourse. The first excerpt employs wordplay to

distinguish different forms or motivations for migration, creating humorous effect while encouraging reflection on the meaning of the expression. The second excerpt introduces the contrasting term "Jawa" to suggest returning home after travelling abroad. This creative contrast presents migration as temporary process linked to national responsibility. Humour reduces the seriousness often associated with migration while still communicating important social messages. Satirical expressions also encourage readers to reconsider assumptions about leaving the country. The use of humour demonstrates that *japa* has developed beyond literal reference to migration and has become productive expression for social criticism and public reflection.

Social Commentary

Excerpt 13

"People have lost hope. Everybody wants to 'japa'. 'Japa' is the new trend."

Source: (NOW, 2025-10-18, sunnewsonline.com)

Excerpt 14

"The drive to leave Nigeria—what we call japa in local parlance—among our compatriots would never be well understood unless stories..."

Source: (NOW, 2022-07-31, premiumtimesng.com)

The excerpts demonstrate that *japa* functions as vehicle for social commentary on contemporary Nigerian society. The first excerpt links migration to declining public confidence and presents it as widespread response to prevailing conditions. The expression "the new trend" suggests that migration has become normalised within public consciousness. The second excerpt argues that the reasons behind migration require careful consideration of people's lived experiences. Both examples move beyond simple reporting of migration and encourage reflection on the circumstances influencing citizens' decisions. The pragmatic function of *japa* therefore extends to commenting on economic challenges, public expectations, and national conditions. News reports employ the expression to stimulate discussion about issues affecting everyday life in Nigeria.

Persuading

Excerpt 15

"I don't want to see 'japa'. I don't want to see the best and the brightest leave..."

Source: (NOW, 2025-06-01, businessdayonline.com)

Excerpt 16

"Look inward and believe in our country. The 'japa' syndrome should be for one to travel overseas; learn and come back."

Source: (NOW, 2023-01-22, punchng.com)

These excerpts reveal the persuasive function of *japa* in public discourse. The first excerpt appeals to readers' emotions through concern about the departure of skilled citizens, encouraging support for national development instead of permanent migration. The second excerpt promotes temporary migration for education or skill acquisition while encouraging return to Nigeria. Both statements attempt to influence attitudes towards migration through direct appeals rather than factual description alone. The expression *japa* therefore becomes persuasive resource for promoting national commitment and responsible migration practices. News discourse uses the term to shape public opinion, encourage reflection on the consequences of migration, and support discussions about retaining skilled professionals for national growth.

Contextual Factors Influencing the Interpretation of *Japa* in the News on the Web (NOW) Corpus

The analysis also examined the contextual factors that shaped the interpretation of *japa* in the Nigerian component of the News on the Web (NOW) corpus. The distribution of these contextual factors across the 2,528 occurrences of *japa* is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Contextual Factors Influencing the Interpretation of *Japa* in the NOW Corpus (N = 2,528)

Contextual Factor	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Economic conditions	885	35.0
Public discourse	657	26.0
Unemployment	531	21.0
Insecurity	455	18.0
Total	2,528	100.0

Table 2 presents the contextual factors that shaped the interpretation of *japa* in the corpus. Economic conditions recorded the highest frequency with 885 occurrences (35.0%), indicating that migration discourse was commonly associated with financial hardship and the search for improved living conditions. Public discourse accounted for 657 occurrences (26.0%), showing that media discussions and public conversations played an important role in shaping the meaning attached to *japa*. Unemployment appeared in 531 instances (21.0%), reflecting concerns about limited employment opportunities as motivation for migration. Insecurity constituted 455 occurrences (18.0%), suggesting that safety concerns also influenced the interpretation of the expression. The distribution demonstrates that the meaning of *japa* depended on prevailing social conditions rather than its literal sense alone. The findings further indicate that *japa* functioned as more than an expression for migration. It served as discourse resource for representing shared social experiences, public attitudes, and national concerns surrounding economic uncertainty, insecurity, employment challenges, and public debates. The recurrent association of these contextual factors with *japa* confirms that its interpretation was shaped through social realities reflected in Nigerian news discourse.

Interpretation of the Contextual Factors Influencing the Discourse of *Japa*

The selected excerpts demonstrate that the interpretation of *japa* depends on the social conditions surrounding its use. The expression acquires different meanings through references to economic realities, insecurity, unemployment, and public discussions, showing that its interpretation extends beyond the literal act of migration.

Nigeria's Economic Conditions

Excerpt 17

"The mass movement of Nigerians—especially youths—known as Japa to Europe and other Western countries in search of greener pastures is due to..."

Source: (NOW, 2025-06-21, guardian.ng)

Excerpt 18

"While the 'japa' wave reflects deep concerns over economic instability, Nigeria has yet to fully maximise diaspora remittances."

Source: (NOW, 2024-11-24, businessday.ng)

The excerpts show that economic conditions strongly shape the interpretation of *japa*. The first excerpt associates migration with the search for better economic opportunities, presenting relocation as response to difficult living conditions. The reference to "greener pastures" reflects expectations of improved employment, income, and quality of life outside Nigeria. The second excerpt connects *japa* with economic instability while recognising the contribution of diaspora remittances to the national economy. This perspective presents migration as issue with both costs and potential benefits. The meaning of *japa* therefore extends beyond physical movement to represent economic aspirations, financial uncertainty, and public concern about national development. The expression reflects the influence of economic realities on migration decisions and public interpretation.

Insecurity

Excerpt 19

"Whether our youths Japa to Sudan, Niger, Chad or Morocco or even America or France..."

Source: (NOW, 2023-05-05, sunnewsonline.com)

Excerpt 20

"The japa syndrome takes them to anywhere one can imagine. Even with the war in..."

Source: (NOW, 2023-04-25, tribuneonlineng.com)

The excerpts indicate that insecurity influences how *japa* is understood in public discourse. The first excerpt suggests that young people are

prepared to relocate to different destinations regardless of distance, reflecting the urgency associated with leaving unfavourable conditions. The second excerpt strengthens this interpretation through the suggestion that migration continues even when destination countries face conflict. Such language portrays migration as response to circumstances considered more difficult than the risks encountered elsewhere. The interpretation of *japa* is therefore shaped by concerns about personal safety, uncertainty, and protection of future prospects. News discourse presents the expression as reflection of decisions influenced by insecurity as well as economic considerations, reinforcing its association with contemporary national challenges.

Unemployment

Excerpt 21

"The increasing youth unemployment and the 'Japa' migration trend show a lack of optimism about the country's future."

Source: (NOW, 2025-03-21, punchng.com)

Excerpt 22

*"The core reasons behind the *japa* syndrome primarily revolve around the high unemployment rate among the youths who constitute about..."*

Source: (NOW, 2024-01-15, punchng.com)

These excerpts present unemployment as major factor shaping the interpretation of *japa*. The first excerpt links rising youth unemployment with migration, suggesting that limited employment opportunities reduce confidence in the country's future. The second excerpt identifies unemployment as principal explanation for the increasing migration trend among young Nigerians. Both examples portray *japa* as response to restricted economic opportunities rather than personal preference alone. The expression therefore reflects concerns about career prospects, income security, and future expectations. News discourse associates *japa* with the desire to obtain stable employment and improved living conditions abroad. This pattern demonstrates that unemployment remains significant contextual influence on the meaning attached to migration within contemporary Nigerian society.

Public Discourse

Excerpt 23

"There are conversations about the impact of japa, new environment and culture on marriages."

Source: (NOW, 2024-03-11, bellanaija.com)

Excerpt 24

"Social media about these as Nigerians abroad share their 'japa' experiences."

Source: (NOW, 2025-10-14, thecable.ng)

The excerpts demonstrate that public discourse shapes the interpretation of *japa* through continuous discussion in traditional and digital media. The first excerpt shows that migration is examined in relation to marriage, family life, and cultural adjustment, extending its meaning beyond relocation. The second excerpt points to social media as platform where migrants share personal experiences, creating wider public understanding of migration outcomes. These discussions influence how audiences interpret the expression and evaluate migration as social practice. The repeated circulation of migration stories contributes to shared knowledge about opportunities and challenges associated with relocation. The meaning of *japa* therefore develops through public communication, personal narratives, and media discussions that influence attitudes towards migration in contemporary Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Limited attention has been given to the pragmatic functions of *japa* in Nigerian online news discourse despite its growing prominence in public communication. Previous studies have concentrated largely on migration trends, socio-economic consequences, and policy debates, with less attention to how the expression functions in context to communicate social meanings. This study addressed that gap by examining the pragmatic acts performed through *japa* and the contextual factors shaping its interpretation in the Nigerian component of the News on the Web (NOW) corpus. The results indicate that *japa* serves communicative purposes that extend beyond its literal association with migration. The data suggest that its interpretation depends on social and situational

contexts in which it appears. These findings support the central assumption of Pragmatic Act Theory that meaning emerges through contextual use rather than lexical meaning alone. The study therefore demonstrates that *japa* has developed into recognised discourse resource for expressing attitudes, evaluations, and shared experiences relating to migration in contemporary Nigerian society.

The results indicate that *japa* performs several pragmatic acts, including labelling, evaluating, warning, criticising government, constructing collective identity, humour and satire, social commentary, and persuading. These functions demonstrate that the expression operates as communicative resource capable of performing different social purposes according to context. The predominance of labelling and evaluating suggests that public discourse has adopted *japa* as recognised expression for identifying and assessing migration experiences. This finding is consistent with earlier studies that describe language as social action rather than simple transmission of information (Sheikh, 2024; Jegede, 2025). The evidence also extends previous research on Nigerian English, showing that locally developed expressions can acquire broad communicative functions through sustained public use (Aririguzoh, 2022). Humour and satire appeared less frequently than other pragmatic acts, yet their presence indicates that migration discourse also accommodates creativity and social criticism. Such variation strengthens the argument that pragmatic meaning is shaped through context and communicative intention rather than fixed lexical definitions.

The data also suggest that economic conditions, insecurity, unemployment, and public discourse strongly influence the interpretation of *japa*. Economic conditions recorded the highest frequency, indicating that migration is commonly discussed in relation to financial hardship, employment opportunities, and expectations of improved living standards. This pattern supports earlier studies that identify economic pressure as important motivation for migration among young Nigerians. Public discourse also emerged as significant contextual factor, indicating that media reports, public debates, and digital communication contribute to the evolving meaning of *japa*. The findings extend previous observations that language develops through repeated social use within particular communities (Zamiri & Esmaili, 2024; Jegede et al., 2024). Although insecurity accounted for fewer occurrences than economic conditions, it remained important in explaining migration decisions. This

result suggests that migration cannot be explained through single factor alone. Instead, the interpretation of *japa* reflects the combined influence of economic, political, and social realities that shape public understanding of migration in Nigeria.

The findings also demonstrate the explanatory value of Pragmatic Act Theory in accounting for context-dependent meaning in contemporary media discourse. The identified pragmatic acts correspond with the theory's position that language users perform communicative actions through expressions interpreted within shared social knowledge. The evidence indicates that *japa* functions as discourse resource for expressing public concerns, evaluating government performance, constructing common identity, and encouraging particular attitudes towards migration. These observations support theoretical positions that regard meaning as product of context rather than dictionary definitions (Jegede, 2028; Osuchukwu, 2022). Methodologically, the use of the News on the Web corpus strengthens the credibility of the findings because the analysis relied on naturally occurring news texts instead of elicited responses. The combination of corpus evidence and qualitative interpretation produced sufficient evidence for explaining recurring pragmatic patterns. The findings therefore contribute useful evidence for corpus pragmatics, media discourse studies, and research on contemporary Nigerian English.

Certain limitations should be recognised when interpreting the findings. The analysis focused on twenty-four purposively selected texts drawn from the Nigerian component of the News on the Web corpus. Although these texts provided sufficient evidence for qualitative interpretation, they cannot represent every possible use of *japa* across media platforms or communicative settings. Different patterns may emerge from spoken interactions, social media conversations, broadcast interviews, or other forms of public communication. Future studies could examine larger datasets, compare different media genres, or investigate changes in the pragmatic functions of *japa* across different periods. Comparative studies involving other African English varieties may also improve understanding of how locally developed expressions evolve into widely recognised discourse resources. Despite these limitations, the findings provide convincing evidence that *japa* has developed beyond its original meaning to function as important communicative resource

through which migration, public attitudes, and shared social experiences are expressed in Nigerian news discourse.

Conclusion

This study examined the pragmatic functions of *japa* in the Nigerian component of the News on the Web (NOW) corpus and found that the expression performs communicative functions that extend beyond its literal meaning of migration. The study found that *japa* realised pragmatic acts such as labelling, evaluating, warning, criticising government, constructing collective identity, humour and satire, social commentary, and persuading. The findings also showed that Nigeria's economic conditions, insecurity, unemployment, and public discourse shaped the interpretation of *japa* across the selected texts. These findings addressed the research objectives and helped to close the identified gap concerning the pragmatic use of *japa* in Nigerian online news discourse. The study concludes that the meaning of *japa* is context-dependent and emerges from the social realities within which it is used rather than from its lexical meaning alone. This study contributes to knowledge by demonstrating that *japa* has developed into context-sensitive discourse resource for expressing public attitudes, shared experiences, and social evaluation in contemporary Nigerian news discourse. The findings also extend the application of Pragmatic Act Theory to emerging lexical items in Nigerian English and provide evidence for corpus-based pragmatic research. Future studies should examine the pragmatic use of *japa* across social media, broadcast media, political discourse, and everyday interactions to determine whether similar communicative patterns occur across different discourse domains.

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