

## Between Civil and Criminal Violence: Nominal Groups and Ideology in the News Reports on OPC Crises in Nigerian Tribune and Daily Trust Newspapers

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**Abstract:** Using Norman Fairclough's three-tier model of discourse as social practice, this paper analysed nominal groups describing conflict agents in the reports of the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) from the *Nigerian Tribune* and *Daily Trust* Newspapers within the broad tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis. At the description stage, the nominal groups were analysed using the experiential structure of Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar. The interpretation and explanation stages found the formal features of Epithets, Classifiers, Things and Qualifiers of the nominal groups with semantic patterns that are consistent with the ethnically motivated sentiments associated with each newspaper. The cumulative effect of the discussion reveals that the violent actions of the group were portrayed as 'civil' by the *Nigerian Tribune* and 'criminal' by *Daily Trust* respectively.

**Keywords:** nominal group, ideology, Oodua People's Congress, Critical Discourse Analysis.

### INTRODUCTION

This study examines the ideologies vested in the language of Nigerian national newspapers within the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). As an approach to language study, CDA investigates discourses with emphasis on their linguistic patterns as loci for argumentations on ideology and power relations.

In this inquiry, the focus is specifically on expounding the socio-political sentiments that are buried in the structure of nominal groups describing the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) and its members in two Nigerian newspapers. The broad purpose is using Nigerian context to establish the dialectical relations in the trio of language, media and ideology.

Nominal group is crucial in any news discourse because it is the unit of language that reveals the identity of news actors, locations and situations. Also, the relative complexity and flexibility in the system of its experiential structure, which allows the use of all, part or none of the auxiliary elements of Deitic, Numeral, Epithet, Classifier and Qualifier together with the mandatory Thing, make it a susceptible instrument of ideological manipulation in reporting events. Interestingly, research on language, power and ideology in newspapers focuses on nominalization which demonstrates the avoidance of nominal groups by agency suppression [1-4]. Curiously, however, the essential requirement of 'who' in the news made this study to argue that nominal groups are not completely avoidable in reporting; hence, the need to investigate the attendant ideological interplay in their construction.

On the social variable for the study, Falola and Genova [5] describe OPC as a 'political organization created in August 1994 in response to the annulled election of 12 June 1993'. The name was derived from Oduduwa who is generally believed to be the collective ancestor of the Yoruba people of western Nigeria. Dr. Frederick Fasehun, a Lagos based medical practitioner, is generally believed to be its founder with the support of prominent Yoruba leaders [6]. The organization was believed to attract violent reputation since its factionalisation beginning from 1999 with the militant actions of a group led by Ganiyu Adams which caused death and injury to 'hundreds of civilians' through series of clashes with 'other ethnic based organisations' [7].

Major incidents associated with OPC happened from 1999-2002 in the southwestern part of Nigeria with the Yoruba ethnic group killing members of other ethnic groups, especially the Hausas, in thousands [8, 5]. Guichaoua [9] documents several instances in the period of the coverage of this study (1999-2002) in which OPC engaged in clashes with the police and other ethnic groups in western Nigeria leading to the loss of hundreds of lives and damage to valuable properties. Such instances include Sagamu incident in Mid July 1999 where OPC supported the Yorubas in their clash with the Hausas which recorded over sixty death;

Ketu/Mile 12 Market crisis in Lagos that led to the loss of over one hundred lives majority of them Hausas and other tribes of northern Nigerian decent perceived to be Hausas on 25 and 26 November 1999; acid attack by OPC men on policemen leading to the death of more than 18 personnel of the force between 2000 and 2001 and a clash with the Hausas at Idi-Araba in Lagos that led to the loss of more than seventy lives on February 2-4, 2002 [10].

The crises had been a subject of sustained media coverage in print and broadcast. Different episodes of the conflicts formed the content of Nigerian newspapers as news, editorials, opinions and columns. Each of the conflict had actors in form of individuals or groups that feature whenever events related to it are reported. Constructing the identity of news agents with the extended resource of English nominal group is arguably at the discretion of the editorial team of any newspaper. To this end, this study seeks to linguistically trail the ideological disposition of Nigerian national newspapers from the perspective of their choices in the structure of nominal groups in relation to the agents of the conflicts in question.

Motivation for the study draws from the observation that since the inception of Critical Linguistics in the 70s to the development of Critical Discourse Analysis in the 80s, researchers have succeeded in linking language with the ideological landscape of Europe. Issues of migration, racism,

nuclear war and economic struggles of liberalism, neo-liberalism and marketisation have been addressed by researchers from critical linguistic perspective [4, 11, 12]. The same could not be said with Africa in its diverse social frames and problems. For example, despite the magnitude of the crises constituting the interest of this work little was done of research along critical line on its narratives [13].

**Theoretical Framework**

Fairclough’s model of ‘Discourse as Social Practice’ [14, 3, 12, 15] is used as the theoretical framework for the study. The model of Discourse as Social Practice is best appreciated in the light of its three-tiered view of discourse, and the three corresponding analytical stages for the tiers. According to this model, any instance of discourse should be seen simultaneously as a *text* which is a product rather than process; as an *interaction* that bears the influence of the immediate process of production and interpretation and as *context* that is determined by the broad and remote conditions of social structures. The framework is developed on the premise that the relationship between language and society is an ‘internal’ and ‘dialectical’ one. This perspective is meant to change the symmetrical views that expressions like ‘language and society’ tend to suggest. From this point of view, society is seen as a whole with language as one of its many (social) strands. The following table provides the attributes of each of the three features of discourse in the model from the reading of Fairclough [12, 15].

**Table-1: Highlights of Fairclough’s three-tier model of CDA**

Text	Interaction	Context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A product of the process of text production.</li> <li>• Refers to both written text and ‘spoken text’.</li> <li>• Its formal features serve as <i>traces</i> of the productive process and <i>cues</i> in the process of interpretation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The view of discourse as a process of <i>text</i> production, distribution and consumption.</li> <li>• The dimension of discourse as a process that revolves around ‘members’ resources’ (MR) i.e cognitive properties used in producing or interpreting a text .</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflection on the non-linguistic social conditions of <i>text</i> and <i>interaction</i>.</li> <li>• The dimension of discourse as a practice at three levels of social organization (situational, institutional and societal levels)</li> </ul>

Another essential component of Fairclough’s [12, 15] model is the three stages of analysis namely *description*, *interpretation* and *explanation* stages. At the *description* stage, the process is identifying and labelling the formal features of a text such as vocabulary, grammar or textual features with their experiential, relational, expressive and connective values. At the level of *interpretation*, the focus is on expounding the cognitive process of participants in text production with close reference to the social context and intertextual context. Analysis of situational context entails asking about ‘what is going on?’, ‘who is involved?’, ‘in what relation?’ and ‘what is the role of

language?’ Features of attraction in interpretation are presuppositions, frames, script, schemata, speech acts, topic and point. The *explanation* stage, on the other hand comprises identifying the relationship between transitory social events (interactions) and more durable social structures that shape and are shaped by the events; determining the reproductive effects that discourses have cumulatively on social structures in terms of changing or maintaining them. Using relevant social supplements to unravel ideological struggle and power relations associated with the discourse at situational, institutional and societal levels.

The analysis of nominal group, the grammatical unit constituting the focus of *description* stage, is made in experiential and logical perspectives. The experiential description is based on the linear order of five semantic domains: Deitic, Numerative, Epithet, Classifier, Thing and Qualifier. The nucleus of the group is 'Thing' because it can constitute the structure alone or by selecting from all or some of the other

elements. The logical description on the other hand is based on the dependency relations in the order of Premodifier, Head and Postmodifier. The nucleus of the logical structure is the 'Head'; it conflates with Thing in the experiential structure while 'Premodifier' conflates with Deitic, Numerative, Epithet and Classifier and Postmodifier conflates with Qualifier. The following table provides a graphic description of both relations:

**Table-2: Analysis of some nominal groups on logical and experiential function from [28]**

Premodifier				Head	Postmodifier
Deitic	Numerative	Epithet	Classifier	Thing	Qualifier
These	Two	New	Light	Switches	
The	Two		Domestic	Flights	Available
The	Many	Large	Oil	Companies	in operation
	Several	Dirty		Ones	
The		Complete		Dismantling	of the gear box
The			Keyboard	Layouts	
A		Careful		Study	of this matter
An		Effective	Prediction	Scheme	

**Methodological Considerations and 'description' of the data**

The Nigerian newspaper industry is rich with a wide range of serials that differ in their frequency of appearance as daily, weekly or monthly. They also differ in terms of the languages they use between English and Nigerian languages especially the major ones such as Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. There is also status related distinction as local, regional or national. The interest of this research is with Nigerian newspapers of national category which characteristics include use of English as a medium, national spread and prestige in relation to elite readership. This category of newspapers is often taken for granted as 'Nigerian newspapers' at the expense of others [16, 17]. *Nigerian Tribune* and *Daily Trust* are chosen from the category for this study in consideration of the perception of regional ideology along Southern and Northern divides and the origin of their publishers [18-24].

Although the coverage of OPC incidents is found in different genres of the newspapers, only news reports are selected for the purpose of this study. News report is one aspect of the newspaper that is expected to be free from bias and prejudice especially when compared with other aspects such as editorial, opinion, letters to editor, columns and commentary which reflect either the official opinion of the publishers or the personal opinion of the readers. This choice was informed by the need to challenge the frame of trust and objectivity that is often vested in the genre.

A total of forty (40) news reports serve as the source of data for the study. Twenty (20) of the reports were drawn evenly from four consecutive years of OPC crises (1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002) in each of the chosen newspapers. The data was generated from the serial sections of Bayero University Kano Library,

National Library Abuja, National Library Kaduna and Kaduna State Library. The data collection was made through direct visit by the researcher to the libraries. However, the assistance of staff of the libraries and other associates in Kano, Abuja and Kaduna was sought in filling the data gaps realized after visiting the libraries.

The nominal groups of choice for the study are those describing OPC as collective entities as well as those describing its members in general form that is similar to the traditional concept of common nouns. Similarly, nominal groups related to two principal individuals from the group namely Dr. Frederick Faseun and Ganiyu Adams are selected in both their general and specific manifestations.

Table 3 provides a description of the manifestation of nominal groups on OPC and its members in the *Nigerian Tribune* on the experiential scale of the structure; the first five examples are about the group while the last three are about its members. Conversely, Table 4 below presents the manifestation of the nominal groups in *Daily Trust* newspaper following the same pattern as Table 6.

**Interpretation and explanation**

Ideology is viewed in many related ways as 'a system of beliefs' [25]; 'a systematically organized presentation of reality' [26]; 'sets of ideas involved in the ordering of experience, making sense of the world' [1]; 'the belief systems which are held either individually or collectively by social groups' [27]. For this reason, the ideologies of the newspapers are determined from the various frames that are generated by the experiential components of the analysed nominal groups.

**Table-3: Experiential features of Nominal groups on OPC and its members in *Nigerian Tribune***

Deitic	Numeral	Epithet	Classifier	Thing	Qualifier
The	-	Banned	-	Oodua Peoples Congress	
The	-	Militant	-		
-	-	-	-		which caused the death of several scores of northerners in Lagos and Kwara states
The	-	Dreaded	-		
the	-	Dreadful	Yoruba	Militia	of the militant wing of the banned Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC)
the	-	-	-	Leader	
-	-	-	OPC	Militia	who also burnt 20 houses belonging to the Hausa community and others with the preponderance of Hausa tenants
-	-	-	Ethnic	gangs	that left more than 55 dead and more than 200 wounded

**Table-4: Experiential features of Nominal groups on OPC and its members in *Daily Trust newspaper***

Deitic	Numeral	Epithet	Classifier	Thing	Qualifier
A	-	socio-cultural	-	Group	that is fighting for peoples right
An	-	-	-	organization	widely accepted by the Yorubas
	-	-	Gani-Adams	Faction	-
the	-	-	-	Oodua Peoples Congress	-
A	-	-	-	Platform	for the defense of Yoruba interest
	-	-	National	President	of the OPC
The	-	-	OPC	coordinator	-
	Five	Innocent	Yoruba	Citizens	-

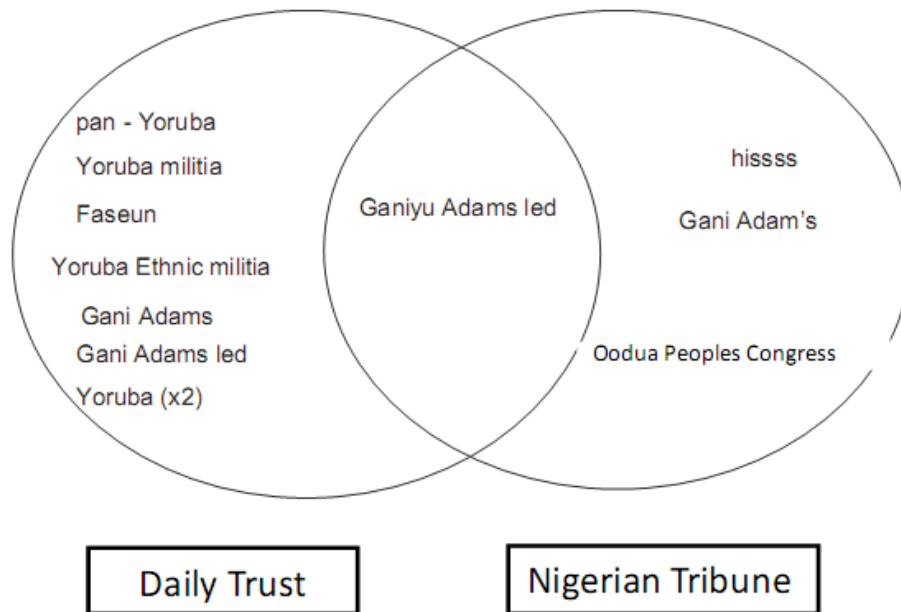
A wide range of conflicting ideological frames are discernible from the interpretation and explanation of the structural units of the nominal groups. For example, while one framing in *Daily Trust* emphasizes the ethnic motive of OPC, another in *Nigerian Tribune* downplays it. On the other hand, when *Nigerian Tribune* highlights the civil character of the group, *Daily Trust* underscores its criminality. An account of the interplay of this descriptive paradox is presented in the following sub-themes using Venn diagram to visualize the relationship between the experiential units of the nominal groups.

#### The frame of ethnicity

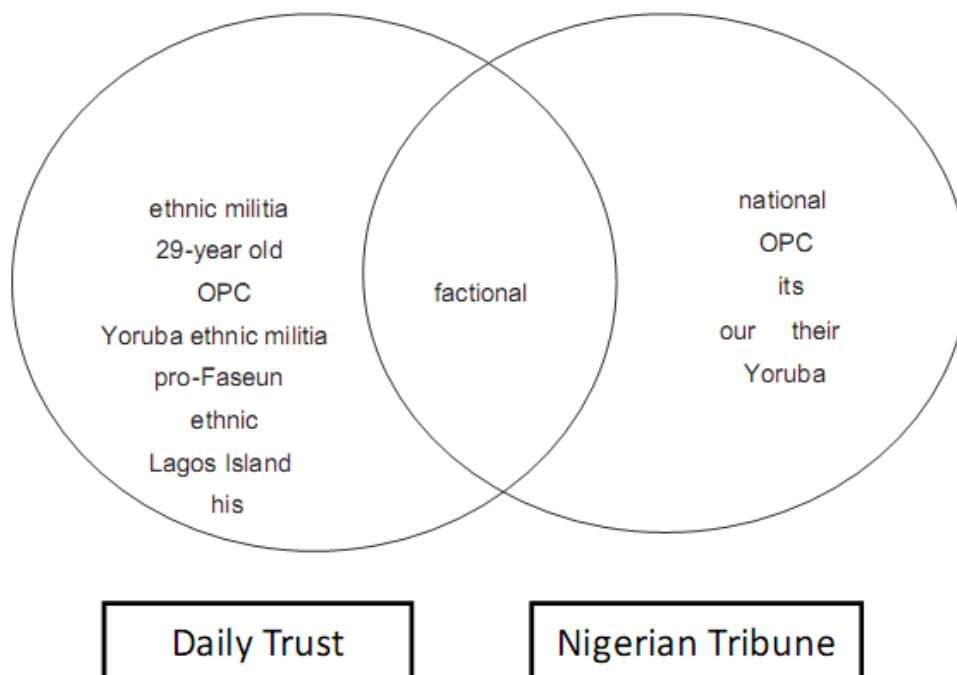
The choices made in the *Daily Trust* in constructing nominal groups associated to OPC unequivocally featured the crises as generally ethnic. In contrast, ethnicity was extremely marginal in the constructions of the *Nigerian Tribune's*. Similarly, of

all the elements of the nominal groups, this frame is located more in the Classifiers of the group structure than in any other elements.

The ethnic configuration in the Classifiers of nominal groups on OPC is clear in Figure 1 with the choice of five out of the eight Classifiers to point to the ethnic affiliation of the group. On the other hand, *Nigerian Tribune* completely avoided the ethnic reference in its choice of Classifiers. Instead, its selection focused on the person of one of the factional leaders of the groups, Ganiyu Adams. In the same direction, the ratio of Classifiers in *Nigerian Tribune* and *Daily Trust* in the figure shows how the former generally avoids selecting those elements thereby avoiding the most potential lexicons in the context –the ethnically pointing ones.



**Fig-1: Classifiers on OPC in *Daily Trust* and *Nigerian Tribune***



**Fig-2: Classifiers on the leaders and members of OPC in *Daily Trust* and *Nigerian Tribune***

The role of Classifiers in emphasizing the ethnic character of OPC is also manifest in the nominal groups describing individual members of the group as it is in describing the group in general. Ethnic classification dominates nominal groups on OPC members and leaders such as Dr. Frederick Faseun and Ganiyu Adams more than any other. On the other hand, *Nigerian Tribune* downplayed that classification by using pronominals with vague connotation. These relations are depicted in Figure 2 below:

**The frame of Violence and Civility**

Different features of the nominal groups point to the ideological disparity between *Daily Trust* and *Nigerian Tribune* from the view point of depicting the group and its members as violent or civil. This division reflects more conspicuously in the choice of Thing for both the groups and members. Figure 3 shows how Things representing OPC from *Daily Trust* are dominated by lexical items signifying violence (force, militia, army, detachment) while those from *Nigerian Tribune* project orderliness and formality that are typical of a civil organization.

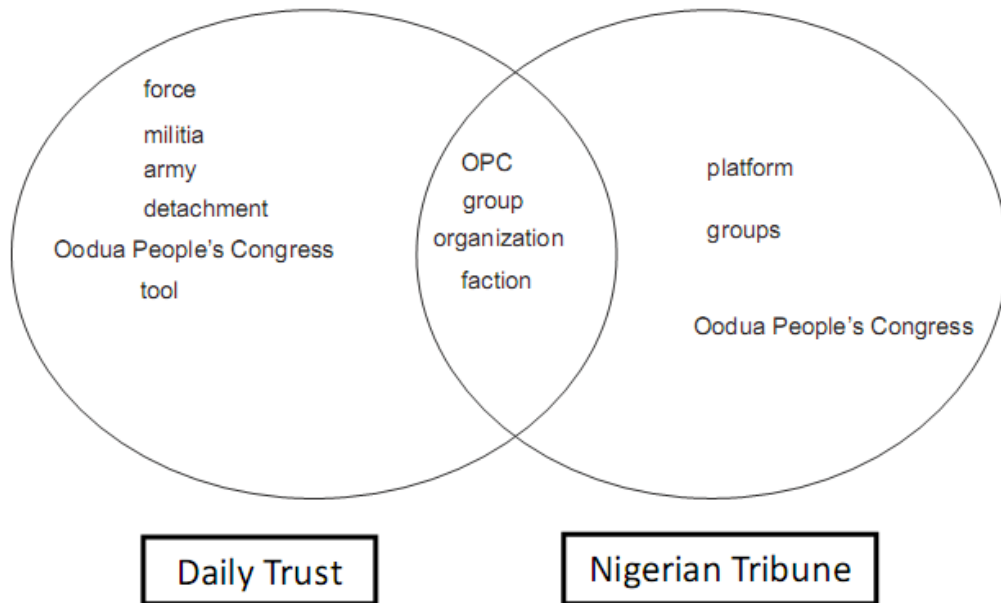


Fig-3: Things on OPC in *Daily Trust* and *Nigerian Tribune*

The role of Thing is also consistent in nominal groups describing members of the OPC from the two newspapers in terms of associating and distancing the group from violence based on the ideological locus of the newspaper. Things signifying human elements with destructive tendency such as 'hoodlums', 'gangs',

'invaders' are common in the *Daily Trust* but generally absent in *Nigerian Tribune*. In their place, the latter newspaper uses civil oriented lexicons such as 'President', 'scribe' and 'boss'. Figure 4 provides an image of this relation.

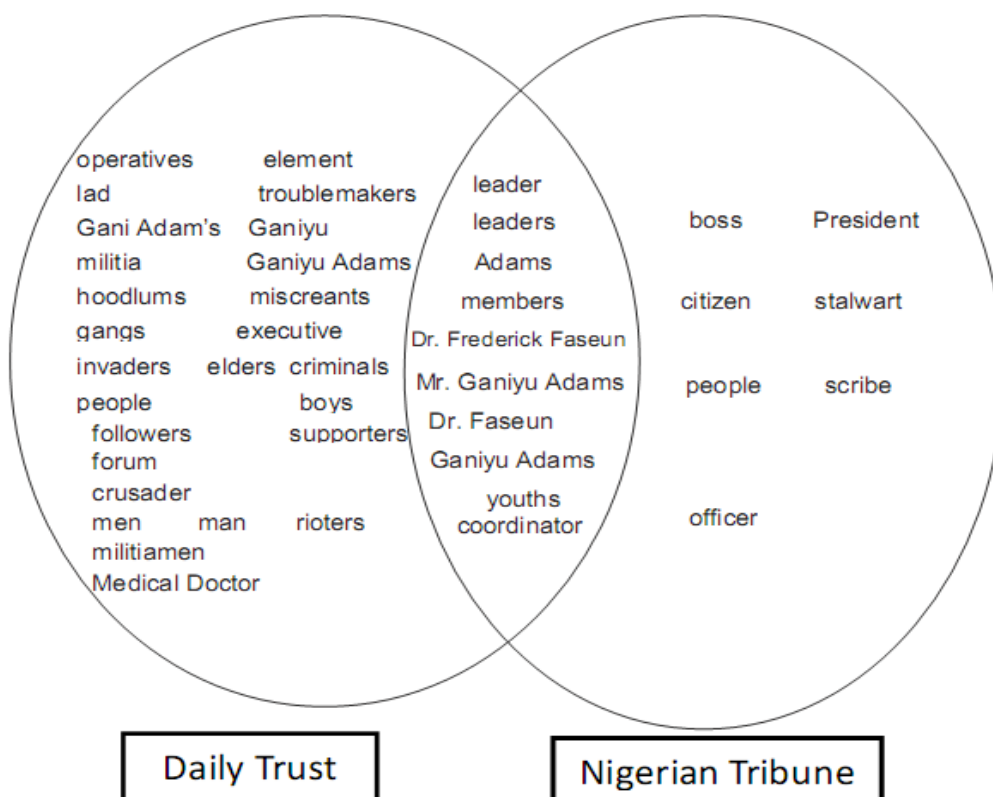


Fig-4: Things on OPC members and leaders in *Daily Trust* and *Nigerian Tribune*

**The frame of lawlessness and criminality**

The legality or otherwise of OPC and its activities is another interesting dichotomy in the

nominal groups of the newspapers about the group. This perspective is crucial because the carnage and loss of property that normally results from OPC activities is

often rationalized by the group and its supporters as an act of self-defense in form of vigilante activities against armed robbers and thieves. The two newspapers struggle in their construction of nominal groups to establish this or refute. *Daily Trust* is obviously

committed to the latter task by emphasizing the illegality of OPC and, by implication, criminalizing its activities. The components of nominal groups that play a role in this ideological work are the Qualifiers.

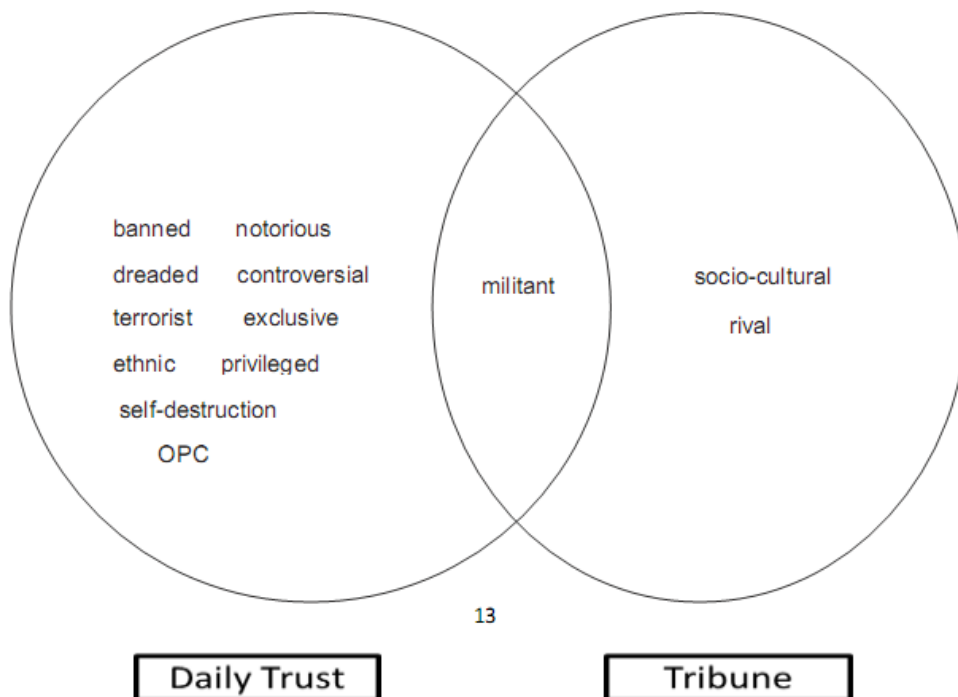


Fig-5: Qualifiers on OPC in *Daily Trust* and *Nigerian Tribune*

It is discernible from the figure that *Daily Trust* uses Qualifiers that express maximum violence related to OPC that make it criminal and lawless. This is reinforced by the expression of contempt on government for exempting OPC from the ‘general ban on ethnic armies’ and for allowing another ‘army’ to operate in the country. Reference to ‘terrorism’ in two Qualifiers of the newspaper also point to the

lawlessness of the OPC at global level which in turn provides a premise for same at the local stage. In contrast with the *Daily Trust*, Qualifiers from *Nigerian Tribune* generate propositions that underscore the general acceptability of OPC in its area of operations with the powers of declaring some citizens and public officials wanted.

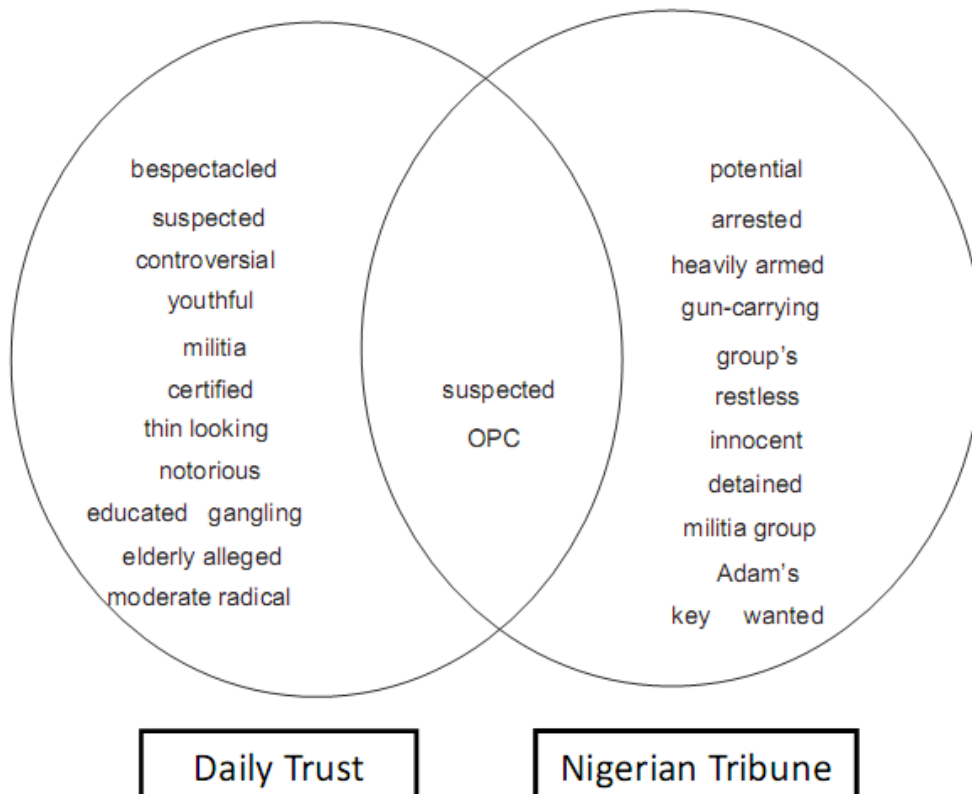
*The frame of general condemnation and sympathy*



**Fig-6: Epithets on OPC in Daily Trust and Nigerian Trib**

*Daily Trust* and *Nigerian Tribune* also differ in the area of portraying the universal condemnation of OPC. Variation in the choice of Epithets reveals this

relation when OPC is associated with notoriety and controversy by the *Daily Trust* while *Nigerian Tribune* ascribes socio-cultural posture to it.



**Fig-7: Epithets on OPC members and leaders in Daily Trust and Nigerian Tribune**



Appendix I: Sources of reports from *Daily Trust*

HEADLINES AND STRAP LINES	DATE/SERIES
Gamji Club wants OPC curbed	October 8-14, 1999
A day in Mile 12 Market	December 3-9, 1999 Vol. 2 No. 40
Mile 12, Ketu: After the bloodbath	December 3-9, 1999 Vol. 2 No. 40
Mile 12 Mayhem: Tinubu Takes on Hausa Traders	December 3-9, 1999 Vol. 2 No. 40
OPC Tackles OPC -Anarchy looms in Lagos*	December 24-30, 1999
Game over for OPC? -As police close in on Ganiyu Adams	April 7-13, 2000
OPC's reign of terror in Lagos	August 4-10, 2000
Police petitions court over release of OPC members on murder trial	September 1-7, 2000
OPC: State Police at last?	October 20-26, 2000
Merging Ilorin with South-West: NEW OPC AGENDA	October 27 –November 2, 2000; Vol. 3 No. 37
OPC is a terrorist organization –Police	January 30, 2001
Traditional Rulers Condemn OPC	February 1, 2001 Vol. 1 No. 12
OPC orders Hausas, Ijaws to leave Ibadan	September 6, 2001 Vol. 2 No. 35
OPC, a terrorist organization	September 25, 2001
Gani Adams gets bail	September 25, 2001
<u>OPC, HAUSA CLASH</u> Curfew declared over Idi-Araba	February 4, 2002 Vol. 3 No. 20
'We are afraid of night time'	February 4, 2002 Vol. 3 No. 20
We lost 30 houses –Sarkin Hausawa	February 4, 2002 Vol. 3 No. 20
OPC, Hausa CLASH IN LAGOS Fighting Spreads	February 5, 2002 Vol. 3 No. 21
<u>OPC Genocide</u> The Big Cover-up	February 8-14, 2002 Vol. 5 No. 4
Ban on ethnic militia: Is OPC exempted?	November 1-7, 2002

The condemnation frame is visible in Figure 6 through the avoidance strategy of *Nigerian Tribune* which uses minimal Epithets (three) compared to *Daily Trust* with twelve most of which express condemnation. The dimension of sympathy on the other hand featured in the Epithets from nominal groups describing leaders and members of OPC with the use of participial adjectives as Epithets to position the group as an

innocent victim of detention and arrest as shown by the relations of Epithets in Figure 7.

Epithets such as 'innocent, 'detained' and 'arrested' by *Nigerian Tribune* bear salient accusative mood to government for instance while 'potential', 'heavily armed' and 'gun carrying' mitigate murderous violent acts of the group to potentialities.

Appendix II: Sources of reports from *Nigerian Tribune*

Tinubu places N. Im on OPC members' heads	15 September, 1999 No. 12, 156
We don't believe in violence -OPC boss	16 September, 1999
OPC Cries out <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Five killed</li> <li>• 13 missing</li> <li>• Denies involvement in violence</li> <li>• Vows to defend members</li> </ul>	2 December, 1999 No. 12, 214
Three killed as OPC, students clash	3 December, 1999 No. 12, 215
OPC, Hausa may clash again <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At Lagos abattoir</li> </ul>	8 December, 1999 No. 12, 218
OPC takes over Ibadan	28 December, 1999 No. 12, 232
OPC kills DPO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drops body in Lagoon</li> <li>• Trails lam to church</li> <li>• Gani Adam's aide arrested</li> </ul>	11 January, 2000 No. 12, 242
OPC: Group flays Obasanjo	27 January, 2000
OPC burns 28 houses in Lagos	13 July, 2000 No. 12, 374
Police stormed OPC meeting with armoured tanks	12 June, 2000 No. 12, 351
OPC storms Lagos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrests 12 robbers</li> <li>• To hand them over to police</li> </ul>	3 July, 2001 No. 12, 627
OPC, Police clash <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 killed</li> <li>• Adesanya keeps mum, YCE comments</li> <li>• Informant'll get N100, 000 –Okiro</li> </ul>	24 August, 2001 No. 12, 665
Disregard Saraki on OPC, ACF told	5 September, 2001 No. 12, 673
Lagos mayhem continues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Another 5 feared killed</li> <li>• Area boys, not OPC caused crisis –Tinubu</li> </ul>	4 February, 2002 No. 12781
Police arrest 15 over mayhem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As calm returns to Lagos</li> </ul>	6 February, 2002 No. 12, 783
OPC members hold Faseun residents hostage	12 February, 2002
Impeach Obasanjo see hell –OPC warns N/Assembly	2 October, 2002 No. 12, 953

**CONCLUSION**

A concluding remark that follows from the overall discussion is that the semantic connotations of the key components of Epithets, Classifiers, Thing and Qualifiers in the nominal groups on OPC are consistent with the institutional formation of the *Nigerian Tribune* and *Daily Trust* and systematically corresponds with the anticipated ideological struggle of the two newspapers. Specifically, the discussion establishes the existence of dialectal relations between the language of the two newspapers in question and the north-south regional sentiments along the divergent indices of ethnicity, criminality, violence, and condemnation. This makes the same group exists with the conflicting identities of civility and illegality with corresponding reflective

effect on its violent posture based on the linguistic choices of the newspapers.

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