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MANIPULATIVE STRATEGIES IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF MAHAMUDU BAWUMIA'S SPEECH IN GHANA

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Abstract: The exploration of the discourse-power interplay has been the motivation behind Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) research orientation. CDA analysts have and continue to display vivid interest in the discourse of the dominant groups, particularly politicians, with the objective of describing and elucidating how existing social structures – power abuse, dominance, and inequality – are enacted, reproduced and sustained. While there is a vibrant literature on political speeches, not much work has been done on discursive manipulation as a form of social power abuse and dominance in political discourse from the Ghanaian perspective. This study therefore presents a critical analysis of a political speech by Mohammadu Bawumia, presidential candidate for the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP), with the aim of investigating how the Vice-President discursively represents himself, the government, and the past government as a strategy for accomplishing his manipulative goal. Drawing on van Dijk's ideological square framework for analysis, the result shows the use of the macro-strategy of positive representation of the in-group (government) and negative representation of the out-group (opposition or former government), which manifests at all levels of discourse through the use of other minor discursive strategies: positive self-presentation, authority, number game rhetoric, active/passive structures, implication, and presupposition. Key findings include the strategic use of statistics to enhance credibility, the deployment of passive constructions to conceal government failures, and the use of metaphors to dissociate Bawumia from the government's shortcomings. The outcome of the study implies that political speeches are imbued with covert ideologies, asymmetrical power relations, power abuse, dominance, inequality, and deception, which can only be exposed and resisted through the application of CDA tools. The study therefore recommends advocacy by policymakers and other civil society groups to awaken the consciousness of readers and listeners of political speeches to scrutinize political utterances, given their opaque nature and partisan or ideological functions.

Keywords: manipulation, manipulative strategies, ideology, political discourse, critical discourse analysis, ideological square.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s, the presumption that discourse (language use) is socially constitutive and socially determined has culminated in a growing scholarly interest in the exploration of the relationship between discourse and social power within critical discourse analysis (henceforth, CDA) (Fairclough, 2003; Cap, 2014; Boyd & Llamas, 2018). CDA has been primarily concerned with how existing social power structures — power abuse, dominance, and inequality — are enacted, reproduced, sustained, and resisted through the text and talk of dominant groups, particularly politicians (Fairclough, 2001, 2003; van Dijk, 2003). While there is extensive literature on the speeches of politicians from various parts of the world, discursive manipulation in presidential rhetoric remains underexplored, particularly from the Ghanaian perspective. Existing literature on Ghanaian political discourse mainly focuses on ideologies, power, and solidarity (Anderson, 2014; Addy & Ofori, 2020; Danquah, 2020; Antwi, 2022; Aday, Danquah, Hamidu & Agyei-Yeboah, 2023).

To address the gap identified above, the current study analyzes Mohammadu Bawumia's outdoor speech, with the aim of exploring the linguistic/discursive tactics and techniques he utilized to achieve his manipulative goal in the speech. As purposely intended for the outdoor of Bawumia as a candidate for the 2024 presidential election, this speech represents various social groups — the candidate himself, the government, the opposition party, and the Ghanaian electorates — either in positive or negative light. Consequently, it generated a talking point in the Ghanaian media landscape, making it an appropriate material for critical analysis. The current study is unique as it is the first Ghanaian study to examine Bawumia's speech through the lens of critical discourse analysis. The relevance of the current study, therefore, lies in its potential to contribute to the vibrant literature on critical discourse analysis of political discourse, in general, and Ghanaian political discourse, in particular. More specifically, it attempts to uncover the hidden intention behind the strategies and structures deployed in the speech. Further, it hopes to enhance the understanding of the discourse-power interplay by establishing how political text and talk contribute to the enactment and reproduction of power abuse and dominance. Finally, it is envisaged that the outcome of the current study will contribute immensely to awakening the consciousness of the Ghanaian electorates to be critical of political language to resist political manipulation, dominance, and discrimination.

1.1. Background

H. E. Dr. Mahamadu Bawumia is the current Vice President of the Republic of Ghana and a Former Deputy Governor of Ghana's Central Bank. Between 2008 and 2016, he was a running mate to the then flagbearer of the New Patriotic Party (henceforth NPP), Nana Akufo-Addo. While in opposition, Bawumia delivered several public lectures on the Ghanaian economy, attacking the then government for mismanaging the economy. This made him popular in the Ghanaian political landscape, both within and outside his party. Unfortunately, since 2020, the state of the Ghanaian economy has not been in good shape.

Consequently, many Ghanaians, including the opposition, have attributed the current economic crisis to the government's bad policies. A few months ago, as another general election looms, the Vice-President was elected the flagbearer of the ruling NPP. This generated talking points, both in

the traditional media and on social media. Critics, including some members of the party, claimed the NPP committed political suicide for choosing the Vice President as its flagbearer on the account that he failed to fix the Ghanaian economy. On February 7, 2024, Vice President Bawumia addressed the nation on the achievements of the government, his vision/priorities, and why he is the best candidate for the presidency. Not surprisingly, the speech garnered attention in the media landscape as well as from political analysts from different academic disciplines. While some analysts opined that the Vice-President dissociated himself from the failure of the government, others embraced the speech.

1.2. Research Questions

The current study analyzes Bawumia's political (outdoor) speech, with the aim of investigating the ideological discursive strategies utilized by the speaker to represent himself, the government, and the opposition while manipulating the audiences. Thus, the study seeks to explore the various ways in which the speaker discursively establishes and maintains power and dominance in connection with the binary opposition between Us and Them in his speech. The study is therefore guided by the following specific questions:

- a) What discursive strategies are employed in the speech?
- b) How do the discursive strategies assist the speaker in exercising power and dominance over his audience?

1.3. Organization of the study

The study is structured as follows: the next section presents the theoretical background, where the theoretical foundation underpinning the study, key concepts, related literature, and analytical framework are discussed. Section three deals with the method, data and analysis procedure while section four is devoted to the results of the study. Section five deals with a discussion of findings while the final section presents the conclusion and implication(s) of the study.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

The current study employs a CDA methodological approach to investigate how power abuse and dominance are reproduced and sustained by political text and talk. Proponents of CDA (Fairclough, 2001, 2003; van Dijk, 2001, 2015; Wodak, 2007; van Leeuwen, 2009) postulate that discourse (language use) contributes to reproducing and sustaining power abuse, dominance and exploitation. Therefore, CDA's aims at demystifying text and talk by uncovering the occurrences of power abuse, dominance and exploitation are embedded in it. Van Dijk (2001, p. 352) defines CDA as "a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. Thus, CDA analysts explore the communication strategies and structures that are employed to influence or manipulate audiences. The CDA approach is multifarious – it is not derived from one single specific theory but rather from "different theoretical backgrounds, oriented towards different data and methodologies" (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 5). While a detailed

description of these approaches is beyond the scope of this study, it is imperative to mention four notable ones that have offered immense contributions to the growth of CDA: Fairclough's (2001) Dialectical Relational Approach, Wodak's (2007, 2015) Discourse-Historical Approach, van Leeuwen's (2008) Social Representation framework and van Dijk's CDA approach (2001).

2.2. Ideology

One of the crucial notions of critical discourse analysis (CDA) is ideology, as it constitutes the basis of social power structures. Traditionally, ideologies are false consciousness, rigid or misguided ideas shared by the dominant groups (Richardson, 2007; Wodak & Meyer, 2001; Van Dijk, 2004). By contrast, from a contemporary perspective, ideologies are positive properties shared by both dominant and dominated groups (van Dijk, 2004). Fairclough (1989, 2001) regards ideologies as common-sense assumptions which contribute to reproducing and sustaining unequal power relations, and are often taken for granted. In this respect, ideologies are the property of discourse structure and events (discourse is a material or observable form of ideology) (Fairclough, 2013). Van Dijk (1998, 2004), on the other hand, approaches ideology from a sociocognitive perspective, defining it as the foundation of social representations shared by group members. For van Dijk (1998), ideologies cannot be seen as taken-for-granted commonsense assumptions because they are often explicitly taught, acquired, and expressed by group members. Unlike Fairclough, Van Dijk (2004) states that ideologies invest in discourse structures through cognitive representations shared by group members. This means that the relationship between discourse structures and social structures is mediated by social representations (cognition) (see also Chilton, 2005). Despite the diversity in the approaches to ideologies, all the scholars seem to be emphasizing the relationship between discourse (language use) and social power.

2.3. Manipulation

The essence of political discourse is the attainment of power and dominance; hence, social power is a crucial notion of CDA. Van Dijk (2006b) discusses two forms of social power: persuasion and manipulation. Persuasion refers to the legitimate exercise of control by dominant groups over the dominated groups. Thus, in persuasion, interlocutors have access to information and therefore act depending on whether or not they accept the argument of the persuader or speaker. However, this study is concerned with manipulation – the ultimate goal of all discourses and practices of politicians. Manipulation is a form of social power abuse – dominance – “the exercise of a form of illegitimate influence by means of discourse” (van Dijk, 2006b, p. 360). In manipulation, unlike persuasion, interlocutors believe or act in the interest of the manipulator and against their own interests, which contributes to the reproduction of inequality in democratic states (Emeka-Nwobia, 2016). Thus, manipulation is “a communicative and interactional practice, in which a manipulator exercises control over other people, usually against their will or against their best interests” (van Dijk, 2006b, p. 360). It is a social, cognitive and discursive phenomenon that involves control of dominated group members' actions and discourses, control of their minds and is reproduced by text and talk (van Dijk, 2006b; van Dijk, 2016; Qaiwer, 2020). More importantly, it thrives on privileged access to, and control over public discourse (Van Dijk, 2003, 2006b). That is, by virtue of special access to public discourse and communicative events, speakers may use discourse structures in a way that enables them to control or influence the knowledge, attitudes,

norms, values and ideologies of their audiences. In this respect, discourse is synonymous with other valued social resources on the basis of which power is exercised, and to which there is unequally distributed access.

2.4. Political discourse

The term *political discourse* is used multifariously to denote discourses and practices associated with asymmetrical power relations, dominance and resistance. Schaffner and Chilton (2002, p. 5) see *political discourse* as “the struggle for power between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it”. For the purpose of this current study, however, political discourse is used in its narrow sense to denote text and talk of professional politicians, such as presidents, ministers, parliamentarians, presidential candidates, and so on, emphasizing the dialectical relationship between discourse (language-use) and politics (van Dijk, 1997); Chilton & Schaffner, 2002; Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012; Wilson, 2001, 2015). Van Dijk (2004, p. 24; 2006a, p. 728) regards politics as “one of the social domains whose practices are virtually exclusively discursive as well as ideological, and political cognitions are largely reproduced by text and talk”. Political ideologies are shared by group members and are expressed through language-use (discourse), presupposing that, as Fairclough (2001) states, discourse (language-use) shapes ideologies and is shaped by ideologies. Kpeglo and Gidi (2022, p. 92) assert that “language-use is ideological in nature since it involves the careful selection of linguistic forms that express the user’s desired message”.

2.5. Empirical Studies

A plethora of existing studies on political speeches examine ideologies and social power relations through pronominal choices (Blass Arroyo, 2000; Allen, 2007; Sharndama, 2016; Shyam, 2022; Putri & Kurniawan, 2015; Wieczorek, 2013; Adegoju, 2014; Wirth-Koliba, 2016; Allami & Barzegar, 2020). Others are also devoted to discursive manipulation, which is the focus of the current study (van Dijk, 2006; Nazish et al., 2014; Cabrejas-Peñuelas & Díez-Prados, 2014; Vadai, 2017; Qaiwer, 2020). Van Dijk (2006) analyzes Tony Blair’s parliamentary speech on the war against Iraq in 2003, using his Triangulated framework. Van Dijk (2006b, p. 380) reports that manipulative discourse features the following strategies: enhancing the power, moral superiority and credibility of the speaker(s), and discrediting dissidents, while vilifying the Others, the enemy; the use of emotional appeals; and adducing seemingly irrefutable proofs of one’s beliefs and reasons. Subsequently, Vadai (2017) applies the Power, Ideology and Manipulation Identification (PIMI) instrument to analyze the same speech by Blair. Akin to van Dijk, Vadai (2017, p. 126) reports the following strategies: “a focus on ‘Our’ positive acts and ‘Their’ negative acts, giving few or many details, being general or specific in connection with certain topics, being vague or precise, and explicit or implicit.” The author concludes that while ideologies constitute the basis of manipulation (illegitimate influence), manipulation might enhance the power of the speaker through ideologically biased utterances.

Among existing studies on campaign speeches, Cabrejas-Peñuelas and Díez-Prados (2014) conducted a corpus analysis of the pre-electoral debate between candidates of the two main political parties in Spain. Using Martin and White’s analytical framework for the analysis, the co-authors find that both candidates used evaluative devices as a strategy for winning votes while representing

their opponents negatively. Similarly, Nazish and Illahi (2014) analyze the campaign speech of Benazir Bhutto, Prime Minister of Pakistan by applying van Dijk's Sociocognitive framework. The co-authors find that the speaker used a propagandistic strategy to construct a good image for herself and her members and a bad image for the opposition party. They conclude that the linguistic choices made by the speaker reproduce inequality and dominance. Further, Qaiwer (2020) applies three theoretical approaches to examine the representation of Islam and Muslims in President Trump's 2016 campaign speech: epistemic discourse analysis theory, discourse and manipulation framework and social actors' representation framework. The author finds that the representation of Islam and Muslims and how the representation was legitimized by Trump reproduced positive representation in one context and negative presentation in another. Emeka-Nwobia (2016) applies Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis to analyze the electoral campaign speeches of Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo and Goodluck Jonathan. The paper aims to determine how language is utilized as an instrument for manipulating the electorates by politicians and the result reveals that the two presidents utilized manipulative language to market their agenda by portraying themselves to be humble servants, and political redeemers, aligning with the vast majority of the suffering. Similarly, using Culpeper's (1996) Impoliteness theory to analyze the '2019' campaign speeches by Mohammedu Bukhari and Atiku Abubakar, Oso (2019) reports that rather than focusing on issues, the political parties and their candidates launched face attacks, using impoliteness strategies to discredit their opponents in order to sway the electorate in their favour: name-calling, dissociating from the opponent and seeking disagreement.

Existing Ghanaian studies relevant to the current study are Abdullai (2013) and Logogye (2021), which examine Us and Them polarization in Ghanaian political discourse. Drawing on van Dijk's (2004) ideological square framework for analyzing the 2008 campaign speeches of the two dominant parties: the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC), Abdullai finds that both parties deployed the overall strategy of positive self- and negative other-presentation, implemented through the use of other micro-discursive strategies and structures: *implication*, *lexicalization*, *actor description*, *categorization*, *disclaimers*, and *evidentiality*. In terms of differences, whereas members of the ruling NPP deployed more rhetorical devices: *metaphor*, *comparison*, and *irony*, the opposition NDC members deployed *compassion*, *hyperbole*, *norm* and *value violation*, *generalization*, and *presupposition*. Similarly, Logogye's (2021) analysis of Nana Akufo-Addo's State of the Nation address reveals the use of the overall strategy of positive self- and negative other-presentation, manifested through the use of other minor discursive strategies: polarization – us and them, number game, evidentiality, authority, and hyperbole.

It is clear that literature on discursive manipulation in Ghanaian political discourse is scarce and more needs to be done; hence, the current study seeks to shed light on how manipulation is enacted and reproduced by the political (outdoor) speech of Mohammadu Bawumia.

2.6. Theoretical Framework

The current study applies van Dijk's (2004) ideological square framework situated within CDA for analysis, given that "political manipulative discourse is ideological and therefore features a polarized structure" (van Dijk, 2006b). The framework is predicated on the presumption that ideologies invest discourse structures through mental models of group members. Thus, discourse structures and social structures are mediated by cognition. The main tenet of the framework is that ideologies often have a polarized structure, which ultimately affects the biased personal mental

models of group members. Again, since these mental models control the contents of discourse, discourse often features the overall strategy of positive representation of ingroup members and negative representation of outgroup members, referred to as ideological square as a result of its four complementary macro-strategies:

Emphasize our good things

Emphasize their bad things

De-emphasize our bad things

De-emphasize their good things (Van Dijk, 2004, pp. 15-16).

The above four macro-strategies may be applied to all levels of text and talk – action, meaning and form – as shown below:

- Overall interaction strategies
 - Positive self-presentation
 - Negative other-presentation
- Macro speech act implying Our ‘good’ acts and Their ‘bad’ acts, e.g. accusation, defence
- Semantic macrostructures: topic selection
 - (De-)emphasize negative/positive topics about Us/Them
- Local speech acts implementing and sustaining the global ones, e.g. statements that prove accusations
- Local meanings Our/Their positive/negative actions
 - Give many/few details
 - Be general/specific
 - Be vague/precise
 - Be explicit/implicit
- Lexicon: Select positive words for Us, negative words for Them
- Local syntax
 - Active vs passive sentences, nominalizations: (de)emphasize Our/Their positive/negative agency, responsibility
- Rhetorical figures
 - Hyperboles vs euphemisms for positive/negative meanings
 - Metonymies and metaphors emphasizing Our/Their positive/negative properties
- Expressions: sounds and visuals
 - Emphasize (loud, etc.; large, bold, etc.) positive/negative meanings
 - Order (first, last; top, bottom, etc.) positive/negative meanings (van Dijk, 2006b, p. 373).

Thus, the overall strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation is implemented through other micro-discursive strategies and moves, such as positive self-presentation, authority, agency, number game rhetoric, implication, metaphor, presupposition, disclaimer, polarization, generalization, actor description, comparison, consensus, and so on. The analysis of the text aims at exploring the micro-discursive strategies used by the speaker to influence the minds (belief, knowledge, norms, values, etc.) of his audiences.

3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This current study was situated within the framework of the qualitative research paradigm, given that CDA is itself a qualitative-oriented analytical method and concerned with the analysis of language use in its natural social-political context. Qualitative research, according to Tagoe (2009),

attempts to understand or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. Data for the analysis comprises a written version of Mohamadu Bawumia's vision statement address to the nation delivered on 7th February, 2024 (see the Appendix), which was downloaded from the website of city news, a Ghanaian private radio station (Arthur, 2024).

A coding method was adopted to prepare the data for analysis. Initially, the data was read thoroughly to become conversant with its content in order to select the relevant part (fragment) that coheres with the objective of the study. Subsequently, based on Van Dijk's (2004) ideological analytical categories, the selected fragment was parsed into various excerpts and the discursive strategies used in each excerpt were identified. For easy identification, each excerpt was labelled using the initials of its discursive strategy. This was followed by the categorization of the excerpts. Applying van Dijk's (2004) ideological square framework, analysis was conducted at both the macro- and micro-levels. At the macro level, the underlying meaning of the macrostructures (topics) was uncovered. The micro-level analysis (the focus of the study), on the other hand, aimed at exploring how the discursive strategies contribute to the reproduction of positive self- and negative other-representation. Therefore, a content analysis procedure was applied to critically analyze and interpret the excerpts in order to explore their underlying discursal/ideological meaning.

4. ANALYSIS OF DATA

The analysis of the data has been guided by Van Dijk's (2004) ideological square framework. The result shows that the macro-discursive strategy used in the speech is positive self-presentation for Vice-President Bawumia and his NPP-led government and negative other-presentation for the previous NDC-led government. This overall strategy is implemented at all levels of the text through the use of other micro-discursive strategies and moves; positive self-presentation, authority, agency, number game rhetoric, implication, metaphor, and presupposition. The results of the macro- and micro-level analysis are presented as follows.

4.1. Global Meaning Analysis

Analysis at the macro level aims at uncovering the macro-structures or topics on which the entire speech is based (van Dijk, 2009). The result reveals these macrostructures: a) Bawumia's presidency offers selfless leadership Ghanaians desire; b) Bawumia is the best candidate for the presidency; and c) the current government has a superior record in all sectors of the economy. These macrostructures are underpinned by the overall macro-strategy of positive self- and negative other-presentation, which is also implemented at the local level of the text through the use of other minor discursive strategies.

4.2. Local Meaning Analysis

Analysis at the local level explores the discursal/ideological meaning underpinning the micro-discursive strategies used in the speech. To enhance understanding, each micro-discursive strategy is defined. The domain of discourse analysis to which it belongs has also been added as presented below.

4.2.1. Positive self-presentation (macro-semantic strategy)

The first micro-discursive strategy found in the address is positive self-presentation. According to van Dijk (2006a, p. 739), “whether or not, in combination with the derogation of outgroups, group-talk is often characterized by another overall strategy, namely that of ingroup favouritism or positive self-presentation” and “this may take a more individual form of face-keeping”. The use of the positive self-presentation strategy is evident in the following excerpts.

Excerpt 1:

I believe the time has now come for me to speak to you, the good people of Ghana, about my candidature, what we have experienced as a nation, my vision and priorities, and why I believe I am the best candidate for the presidency of this country in the 2024 Presidential election. I recognize that submitting myself to your service, the electorate, to vote for me as President, is no different from interviewing for a job. One needs to tell a prospective employer what he has accomplished in his previous job, and how he can successfully deliver in the new position he is seeking.

Bawumia begins his address with the strategy of positive self-presentation by demonstrating his democratic belief: informing the electorates about his candidature. Van Dijk (2006a, p. 377) refers to this move as *captatio benevolentiae*. Bawumia further enhances his democratic credentials by representing the campaign for political office as a job interview and the electorate as the employer: *I recognize that submitting myself to your service, the electorate, to vote for me as President, is no different from interviewing for a job*. Using such a simile, Bawumia acknowledges the power of the electorate in democratic settings. Although he allegedly seeks to accomplish his personal dream, he suggests that his presidential bid be motivated by his desire to serve the ordinary Ghanaians. This is aimed at influencing the audience for acceptance. Beard (2000, p. 41) observes that “politicians often claim humility and service to the people as their motive for wanting power in order to justify the confidence of the populace as well as portraying themselves as down to earth, having listening ears and worth listening to because of their humility”. In the following excerpt, the overall strategy of positive self-presentation is further enhanced.

Excerpt 2:

For me, to lead is to solve. Indeed, all my adult life, my biggest motivation is about finding solutions; solutions that improve lives; solutions that make public services efficient and accessible; solutions that make society progress; solutions that protect the public purse; solutions that make our businesses competitive. I derive my greatest satisfaction from solving problems and I have done so whenever I am given the opportunity and will do more if I am given the mandate to do so.

In the above excerpt, Bawumia portrays himself to be a leader who is so committed to solving challenges and problems confronting Ghanaians. He claims that since he assumed the Vice President position, he has made public services efficient and accessible, protected the public purse, and made Ghanaian businesses competitive. It presupposes that he is not seeking to be president in his interest; but rather in the interest of the ordinary Ghanaian. In view of the above, he appeals to the

Ghanaian people to vote for him to continue his good work: *I derive my greatest satisfaction from solving problems and I have done so whenever I am given the opportunity and will do more if I am given the mandate to do so.* Making public services efficient and accessible implies that Ghanaians are offered job opportunities and other services, yet many Ghanaians are always complaining about unemployment and economic hardships. In the following excerpt, Bawumia projects the image of the government while representing the opposition negatively.

4.2.2. Authority (Argumentation)

The next micro-discursive strategy utilized by Bawumia to manipulate his audience is authority. According to van Dijk (2006), many speakers in an argument have recourse to the fallacy of mentioning authorities to support their case, usually organizations or people who are above the fray of party politics, or who are generally recognized experts or moral leaders. International organizations (such as the United Nations, or Amnesty), scholars, the media, the church or the courts often have that role. In the following excerpts, Bawumia employs this strategy to implement the intended positive self- and negative other-presentation.

Excerpt 1:

Ladies and Gentlemen, when we assumed office in 2017, we were confronted with an economy with declining economic growth along with several problems and challenges. A graphic description of the state of the economy at the time was provided by the former President and my main opponent for the 2024 presidential election, who announced to the nation when he was President that all the meat was finished and the economy was left with bones.

It can be noticed that Bawumia represents the current government positively and the opposition negatively. He does this by claiming that the government inherited a weak economy from the previous Mahama-led administration. Using the blame-game strategy, Bawumia seeks to vilify his opponent while legitimizing the government's economic management performance. Thus, he wants Ghanaians to believe that there was no economic growth under the previous administration. For the audience to accept his claim, he references the Former President, John Dramani Mahama as the source of his claim: *a graphic description of the state of the economy at the time was provided by the Former President and my main opponent for the 2024 presidential election, who announced to the nation when he was President that all the meat was finished and the economy was left with bones.* We notice that Bawumia's reference to the Former President's utterance is aimed at expressing his ideology of objectivity and enhancing his public credibility. Clearly, Bawumia's motive for using the blame-game strategy is to shed responsibility as the chair of the Economic Management Team and also enhance his electoral chances while diminishing the chances of his opponent.

Excerpt 2:

However, between 2020 and 2022, we experienced severe challenges, triggered by the pandemic which brought the world and our country to a thundering halt. We may be tired of hearing it but there is no avoiding the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic

resulted in the greatest economic depression in the world since the 1930s, with most countries recording negative GDP growth. The severity, especially of the Pandemic, was captured in the words of the IMF Managing Director.

In excerpt 2, Bawumia attributes the economic challenges confronting Ghanaians to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the economic hardship is not the result of weak policies and programs of the government: *We may be tired of hearing it but there is no avoiding the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the greatest economic depression in the world since the 1930s.* Again, for the audience to accept his claim and also protect his public image, he references the IMF Managing Director to suggest that he is sharing the official report. So, we observe clearly that the motive behind Bawumia's claim is to legitimize the economic challenges while concealing the government's failure and escaping responsibility.

4.2.3. Agency (form)

Another strategy deployed by Bawumia to implement positive self- and negative other-presentation is the use of passive construction to hide ingroup negative action. According to van Dijk (2006a), in ideological discourse, active and passive constructions are deployed by speakers to emphasize the positive action of ingroup members and the negative action of outgroup members. To hide our negative actions, agentless construction may be used. The use of agentless construction to conceal ingroup negative action is evident in the succeeding excerpts.

Excerpt 1:

The fiscal deficit which was reduced from 8.4% in 2016 to 4.1% by 2019 increased to 10.8% in 2020 (as a result of revenue declines in the midst of increasing expenditures). In addition, our debt became unsustainable. Along with many emerging market economies, Ghana lost access to international capital market financing. This resulted in a balance of payments crisis as Ghana had to continue to honour its debt service obligations, energy payments and the import bill. We faced a serious global and domestic economic crisis.

From the above excerpt, we observe that Bawumia employs passive constructions without agents as a rhetorical strategy to emphasize the opposition party's negative action while concealing that of his government. He concedes that fiscal deficit and national debt are on the increase, yet he believes the increase happens as a result of revenue declines, not the government's actions and inactions. So, the removal of the agent responsible for the actions is aimed at concealing the failure of the current government. Mooney and Evans (2015, p. 37) observe that "the deletion of the actor serves to foreground the goal and background the person responsible". Also, according to Vadai (2017, p. 121), "a major ideological device at the syntactic level is the placement of important topics in subject positions". Bawumia's motive is to escape responsibility and appear credible in the sight of the audience (Fairclough, 2001). Interestingly, however, in seeking sympathy for the government, he resorts to the use of active construction: *We faced a serious global and domestic economic crisis.* The use of the agentless construction continues in the succeeding excerpt.

Excerpt 2:

Ghanaians were hit by rising food prices, increased exchange rate depreciation, rising fuel prices, rising transport fares. Bond holders also saw a sharp decline in their net worth following the debt restructuring program. We faced very challenging times. But with calm leadership and the support and understanding of the good people of Ghana, we weathered the storm. The government had to seek IMF support to stabilize our economy and restore fiscal and debt sustainability over the next three years.

Although Bawumia sympathizes with Ghanaians for experiencing economic hardship, in respect of rising food prices, he does not attribute the problem to anybody. He adopts the same move while addressing the bond holders. He suggests that the decline in their net worth came as a result of a debt restructuring program, even though the debt restructuring was sanctioned by cabinet. Therefore, the removal of the agent is a deliberate attempt to conceal the in-group (government) failure or negative action. In other words, using the agentless construction, Bawumia is suggesting that government is neither responsible for the rising food prices nor the decline in the net worth of bond holders. Just as we observed in the previous excerpt, here, too, Bawumia uses active construction to seek sympathy for the government: *We faced very challenging times.*

4.2.4. Number Game Rhetoric (Argumentation)

The analysis of data reveals that Bawumia mostly employs number-game rhetoric to construct positive self-image and negative other-image. According to van Dijk (2006a, p. 738), “much argument is oriented to enhancing credibility by moves that emphasize objectivity. Number and statistics are the primary means in our culture to persuasively display objectivity”. The use of this micro-discursive strategy can be seen in the following excerpts:

Excerpt 1:

Ladies and Gentlemen, the good news is that the data shows that the economy is recovering from the crisis we faced. Inflation has declined from 54% in January to 23% in December 2023. Economic growth is rebounding, spending is under control with the fiscal deficit as a percentage of GDP has declined from 10.8% in 2020 to 4.2% in 2023. The debt to GDP ratio, after increasing from 61.2% in 2019 to 76.6% in 2021 has declined to 66.4% in 2023. And exchange rate depreciation has also slowed down sharply since February 2023, Whereas the exchange rate depreciated by 30% in 2022, between February and December 2023, it only depreciated by 9%.

In the above excerpt, Bawumia uses a number-game strategy to construct a positive image for the current government by claiming that the Ghanaian economy is recovering from the crisis. The purpose of providing the statistics is to enhance his credibility and objectivity. It is worth noting that Bawumia uses deictic temporal adverbials (*in December 2023, in 2020, in 2022, in 2021*) not just to situate his argument in an appropriate historical context, but rather to emphasize the good things happening under the current government. Thus, the selection of such deictic temporals is aimed at drawing audiences' attention to the achievements of the government. It is worth noting that, even as Bawumia emphasizes in-group positive action, he uses agentless constructions. Clearly, such a discursive move is not intended for concealment but rather for the exhibition of

humility. In other words, being aware of the veracity of the economic challenges, he does not want to be seen praising himself and his government (Danquah et al., 2023). However, in the succeeding excerpts, Bawumia employs number-game rhetoric to construct a positive image for himself and the government while vilifying the previous administration.

Excerpt 2:

What is remarkable is that notwithstanding the domestic and global crisis that we have experienced between 2020 and 2022, the economic performance as measured by the key economic indicators (such as GDP growth, Agricultural growth, industry growth, Trade Balance, Exchange rate depreciation, lending rates, Gross international reserves and jobs) is better than that of the 2013-2016 period when there was no global crisis. Let me give some examples: On GDP growth, it is worth noting that between 2013 and 2016, Ghana's GDP growth averaged 3.9%. During our first term (2017-2020) GDP growth increased to an average of 5.3%. Following COVID-19 and the global slowdown, Ghana's GDP growth declined to an average of 4.9% between 2017 and 2022. What is remarkable about this performance is that notwithstanding the global economic crisis from COVID-19, economic growth under our government is still stronger on average than under the 2013-2016 era preceding our coming into office.

Unlike the previous excerpt, the above excerpt expresses the overall strategy of positive self- and negative other-presentation through the use of number-game rhetoric. Bawumia claims that the current government's economic management record is superior to that of the previous government by providing statistics, aiming at enhancing his credibility and objectivity. Thus, the essence of the statistics is for the audience to know that he is not expressing a biased opinion. Again, as I indicated previously, Bawumia's motive for using the deictic temporal adverbials (*between 2020 and 2022, 2013-2016 era, etc.*) is to contrast the performance of the current government and that of the previous government. It implies that the current government has managed the economy better than the previous administration. The use of number game rhetoric for positive self-projection and negative other-projection continues in the following excerpts.

Excerpt 3:

Industrial GDP growth also followed a similar trend. After averaging 3.3% between 2013 and 2016, industrial growth increased to an average of 7.5% between 2017 and 2020. Industrial Growth however declined after the global crisis with a recorded average growth rate of 5% between 2017 and 2022. Again, what is remarkable about this performance is that notwithstanding the global economic crisis from COVID-19, industrial growth under our government is still stronger on average than under the 2013-2016 era.

Here, Bawumia's biased assessment of the performance of the two governments in the management of the economy focuses specifically on industrial GDP growth. He claims that his government has performed better than the previous government as far as industrial growth is concerned. For political reasons, subsequently, Bawumia attributes the decline in industrial growth between 2017 and 2022 to the global crisis, implying the decline is not caused by government policies:

Industrial Growth however declined after the global crisis with a recorded average growth rate of 5% between 2017 and 2022. Clearly, Bawumia's strategy is aimed at concealing the failure of the government while demonizing the previous government. Bawumia continues his in-group favouritism and outgroup demonization in the succeeding excerpts.

Excerpt 4:

Ghana's trade balance (the difference between exports and imports) prior to 2017 was in persistent deficit (for the best part of 30 years!). Between 2013 and 2016 the trade deficit averaged \$2.5 billion. The trade balance improved significantly to a surplus that averaged \$1.8 billion between 2017 and 2020. Notwithstanding the global crisis, Ghana has continued to record a trade surplus which has averaged \$1.9 billion between 2017 and 2022, a better performance than in the 2013-2016 period when there was no global crisis. This is evidence that we have indeed increased productivity and exports relative to imports.

Bawumia continues with his biased assessment of the performance of the two administrations in the management of Ghana's trade balance. As expected, he associates good performance with his government and poor performance with the opposition. The use of statistics to show objectivity is also evident here. It is also important to take note of the use of the word *surplus* in the third and last sentences. The word is used hyperbolically to enhance or exaggerate the good works of the current administration in the area of trade balance.

Excerpt 5:

Ghana's gross international reserves also increased from an average of \$5.8 billion in the 2013-2016 period to an average of \$7.9 billion between 2017 and 2022. On the performance of the cedi exchange rate, it is interesting to note that between 2013 and 2016 the cedi depreciated by an average of 17.7%. Between 2017 and 2020 there was a significant decline in the cedi depreciation to an average of 7.5%. The average cedi depreciation further declined to 6.8% between 2017 and 2021. However, following the 30% depreciation of the cedi in 2022, the average cedi depreciation between 2017 and 2022 is 10.75%. So again, notwithstanding the domestic and global economic crisis, the depreciation of the cedi under our government is lower than what we inherited from the 2013-2016 period.

As we can see from excerpt 5, Bawumia now focuses attention on the performance of the current and previous governments in the management of Ghana's gross international reserves and cedi exchange rate. He contends that, whether gross international reserves or cedi depreciation, his government has performed better than the previous government. In 2016, while in opposition, Bawumia argued that the depreciation of the cedi reveals the weak foundation of the Ghanaian economy: *if the foundation of your economy is weak, the exchange rate will expose you* (GhanaWeb, 2022). It is therefore not surprising that, in supporting his above claim, Bawumia relies on the use of average percentages rather than nominal figures. The motive behind his discursive move is to conceal the government's inability to resolve the cedi depreciation and how weak the foundation of the Ghanaian economy has become. The following excerpt presents Bawumia's biased representation of Bank lending rates under his government and the previous government.

Excerpt 6:

In the area of Bank lending rates, the story is the same. Bank lending rates averaged 27.5% between 2013 and 2016. During our first term, average bank lending rates declined to 23.7%. Following the global and domestic crisis, bank lending rates increased slightly to an average of 25% between 2017 and 2022. Even though bank lending rates increased to 35% in 2022, on average interest rates have been lower in the 2017-2022 period.

From the above excerpt, we observe the implementation of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation through the use of statistics and deictic temporal adverbials. Bawumia argues that his government's record in the area of lending rates management is superior to that of the opposition. Although he concedes lending rates have been on the rise under his government, he attributes the increment to global and domestic crises: *following the global and domestic crisis, bank lending rates increased slightly*. The use of the adverb *slightly* is aimed at mitigating the negative representation of in-group action (government's failure). A further mitigation of in-group negative action is implemented through the use of the subordinate clause in the last sentence: *even though the bank lending rates increased to 35% in 2022*. The use of such discursive move and strategy is intended to obscure reality and influence the audience for political gain. The excerpt that follows shows the use of the number-game strategy for positive self-presentation:

Excerpt 7:

What is probably the most remarkable development in terms of the economy is that our government has created 2.1 million jobs between 2017 and 2022 notwithstanding the global economic crisis. The public sector recruited 1.2 million people while the private sector created 975,000 jobs (per SSNIT data). We recruited 100,000 more health workers, 100,000 more teachers, more than doubled the fire service personnel, etc. Our government has quite clearly created more jobs in a seven-year period than any government. This is truly remarkable under the circumstances even though we still have to create more jobs.

Bawumia explicitly emphasizes the achievement of his government in the area of job creation through the use of the nominal phrase *our government* and the deictic inclusive *we*. In essence, he seeks to make the agent (government) of the action (job creation) the focus of his discourse to solicit applause from the audience. In other words, Bawumia constructs a positive image for his government through the use of active structures. From all indications, Bawumia sees the government's job creation record as a tool for enhancing his electoral chances, as he repeated in his recent manifesto launch speech. Interestingly, however, according to analysts who have interrogated the manifesto launch speech, the Vice President's claim of *21 million jobs* is not supported by official records of some state agencies, Ghana Statistical Service and the Controller and Accountant Department, according to analysts. This clearly depicts people's awareness of the strategies politicians deploy to privilege their partisan/ideological interest over that of the masses, hence the need to resist such tendencies of power abuse and dominance. Thus, if people have access to alternative information, they are able to resist political manipulation (van Dijk, 2006b; Vadai, 2017).

4.2.5. Implication (meaning)

Another micro-discursive strategy discovered in the Vice President's speech is the use of implicature. According to van Dijk (2006a, p. 737), "for many pragmatic (contextual) reasons, speakers do not (need) to say everything they know or believe. Indeed, a large part of discourse remains implicit, and such implicit information may be inferred by recipients from shared knowledge or attitudes and thus constructed as part of their mental models of the event or action represented in the discourse".

Excerpt 1:

Supply chain disruptions and the rising price of oil resulted in major increases in the prices of fuel, freight and food across the globe. I believe it is worth pointing out that in addition to the external factors, there were two major items of expenditure that are critical to understanding the difficult economic situation we have faced. And these are the banking sector cleanup and the energy sector excess capacity payments. The three items (including COVID-19 expenditure) cumulatively amounted to GHC50.1 billion and this was financed from borrowing.

From the above excerpt, Bawumia conceals his government failure while seeking sympathy from Ghanaians by suggesting that the increment in fuel and food prices was caused by external factors: *supply chain disruptions and rising price of oil*, and internal factors: *the banking sector cleanup and energy sector excess capacity payments*. Thus, the increment was not the creation of government. It is interesting to note that, although prices of goods are still high, the Vice President creates the impression that the economic challenges are over, as signalled by his choice of the past tense. Bawumia's move reflects the Former Finance Minister's claim that "the country has turned a corner". Following the mitigation of in-group failure, Bawumia proceeds to tout the achievement of his government while implicitly demonizing the past government, as evident in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 2:

We were elected into office in December 2016 to solve many of the systemic problems and challenges that our citizens were facing and which we had highlighted in our manifesto (e.g. no unique identity, no property address system, fake birth certificates, etc.). We have lived with many of these problems since independence.

The Vice President and Flagbearer of the governing New Patriotic Party (NPP) demonstrates an understanding of the mandate given to him and the President in 2016, which was to resolve problems and challenges confronting Ghanaians. He suggests that the NPP-led government has just done that – challenges that preceded their government have been resolved: *no unique identity, no property address system, fake birth certificates, etc.* This implies that all previous governments failed to proffer resolution to the problems and challenges that confronted Ghanaians; therefore, if under his watch such problems have been fixed, it is only fair that Ghanaians consider him for the Presidency. The implementation of such self-projection is repeated through the use of implication as evident in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 3:

I had long held the view that many of these problems facing the economy could be resolved through digitalization. In fact, in my 2010 book on Monetary Policy and Financial Sector Reform in Africa, I proposed digitalization amongst others as the way forward for African countries. So, when we assumed office in 2017, as Vice-President, I made the decision, with the blessings and support of the President, to focus on the critical but underdeveloped systems that would expand the economy, improve systems, and create jobs through digitalization. Therefore, as the Minister for Finance oversees the budget (fiscal policy) and the Governor of the central bank also focuses on monetary and exchange rate policy, I focused on the complementary data and systems improvement that would ensure the ease of doing business and change the fundamentals of the economy.

Bawumia's quest to dissociate himself from the failure of his government is evident in the above excerpt. It is widely recognized that, since the inception of the Fourth Republic, a Vice President has always been in charge of the management of the economy, yet Bawumia claims that, as the Chairman of the Economic Management Team, his core mandate has been digitalization while management of the economy has been the responsibility of the finance minister and the Governor of the central bank. Thus, Ghanaians should not hold him responsible for the economic challenges. The use of such an exclusionary move is motivated by his intention to avoid public criticism and blame, thereby protecting his public image as well as his presidential ambition. Bawumia's attempt to dissociate from the bad record of the current is further implemented through the use of another discursive strategy, presupposition in the following excerpts.

4.2.6. Presupposition (meaning)

Presupposition (meaning) is a well-known semantic device often used to assume the truth of some proposition when such truth is not established at all or properties assumed to be known as if they were common sense and need not be specifically asserted (van Dijk, 2004, 2006a). Mooney and Evans (2015, p. 50) assert that due to the function of semantic presuppositions, "they can be used to efficiently incorporate a 'truth' into a text". In the excerpts below, Bawumia utilizes presupposition to conceal his inability to fix the economy.

Excerpt 1:

I was, thankfully, appointed as Chairman of the Economic Management Team (EMT). As a sub-committee to the Cabinet, we do not have any decision-making powers, but I am very proud of the quality of advice we have been providing over the years to Cabinet. As Vice-President, I was asked by the President to assist in solving some of the problems that were inhibiting the transformation of Ghana's economy. My approach was to help formalize the economy through digitalization as stated in our 2016 manifesto. This is why my office has had oversight responsibility for many of the government's digitalization projects.

The above excerpt depicts Bawumia's attempt to avoid the assumption of responsibility as he implicitly dissociates himself from the government's failure. The claims that the Economic Management Team (EMT) under his leadership only offers advice to cabinet implies that the economic

crisis cannot be attributed to him and, by far, the EMT: *I was, thankfully, appointed as Chairman of the Economic Management Team (EMT). As a sub-committee to the Cabinet, we do not have any decision-making powers.* It is instructive to note that the powerless status of EMT is represented as common knowledge through the use of the opening phrase: *as a sub-committee to cabinet.* If Bawumia and his team have been offering advice to the cabinet and yet the economy is in a bad state, then, it presupposes such quality advice is often rejected by the cabinet: *I am very proud of the quality of advice we have been providing over the years to cabinet.* Clearly, Bawumia's attempt to shed responsibility to enhance his credibility is an indication that he admits the government has failed to fulfil its electoral promise to manage the Ghanaian economy prudently. Let us consider the next excerpt.

Excerpt 2:

Ladies and Gentlemen, in this regard, I have been engaged in a lot of consultation and doing a lot of thinking in the last few months about lessons of the last seven years as well as my vision and priorities as I seek to become President of the Republic of Ghana. Clearly, the initial conditions that we inherited in 2017 are not the same as will be in 2025. Therefore, my priorities will be different. We have done many good things and I will be seeking to build on them.

According to Bawumia, he is prepared to assume the political office to offer new and better leadership, having consulted and taken notes of the mistakes of the current government. He is confident the new government under his leadership will inherit a strong economy which will enable him to deliver to the satisfaction of all Ghanaians: *clearly, the initial conditions that we inherited in 2017 are not the same as will be in 2025.* The use of the above expression presupposes that, while Bawumia admits the current government has failed, he attributes the failure to the weak economy they inherited from the previous government. Bawumia continues to avoid the assumption of responsibility through the use of another discursive strategy, metaphor, as shown below.

4.2.7. Metaphor (Meaning, Rhetoric)

Another micro-discursive strategy deployed by Bawumia is metaphor. According to van Dijk (2006a, p. 738), metaphor refers to “abstract, complex, unfamiliar, new, or emotional meanings” made “more familiar and more concrete” in text. Mooney and Evans (2015, p. 50) state that “metaphors create and assert equivalence between two things”.

Excerpt 1:

Ladies and Gentlemen, as Vice-President I am like a driver's mate. But if, by the Grace of God, you make me President, I will be in the driver's seat with constitutionally mandated authority to pursue my vision and my priorities. So, what do I want to do in terms of vision, priorities and policies if you give me the opportunity, by the Grace of God, to become President of the Republic of Ghana?

Bawumia continues to enhance his credibility while concealing his failure to discharge his mandate as the chair of the EMT through the use of a special metaphor driver's mate. This metaphor asserts unequal power relations between a driver and his mate. Therefore, using such a metaphor implies that, as a Vice President, he wields no decision-making powers. In other words, he is

saying that he has not been in charge; hence, Ghanaians should not blame him for all the economic hardships. This is an exclusionary strategy that enables Bawumia to implicitly dissociate himself from the failures of his own government, as signalled by the second sentence: *but if, by the Grace of God, you make me president, I will be in the driver's seat with constitutionally mandated authority to pursue my vision and my priorities*. Thus, if he becomes president, that is the only time he will take responsibility for his policies and actions.

5. DISCUSSION

So far, the current study has been analyzing Mohammodu Bawumia's recent outdoor speech, with the aim of exploring the discursive strategies the speaker employed to influence and control the minds of his audience to accept his message. Analysis of the data reveals that Bawumia enacted and legitimized manipulation through the use of the overall strategy of positive self- and negative other-presentation. This overall macro-strategy manifested in the speech through the use of other micro-discursive strategies and structures such as *positive self-presentation, authority, number game rhetoric, agency, implication, presupposition, and metaphor*. The outcome of the analysis proves that manipulation features the usual polarized structure of ideological discourse. The speech is replete with a biased representation of reality in favour of the speaker's own interests while blaming negative situations and events on his opponent. This revelation is in tandem with Wirth-Koliba's (2016) observation that power and dominance thrive on binary opposition between *Us* and *Them*. Wiczorek (2013) similarly reports that the discursive projections of positive self-image and negative other-image are to be expected during the struggle for power, particularly in single-turn political speeches.

The number game rhetoric has been the frequent micro-discursive strategy. This is not surprising as it aided the speaker in enacting a biased representation of reality (economic management record of the current and previous government) through the provision of statistics. The provision of statistical evidence contributed to making the speaker appear credible and objective, given that the audiences lack access to such statistics. Thus, by assuming the role of an assessor of the Ghanaian economy, the speaker established an unequal relationship with his audiences and influenced such relationships to exercise domination over his audiences. According to Vadai (2017, pp. 113-126), by having privileged access to information, politicians take "the role of an omnipotent character, the knower of the information, the seer of the future, who has an influential position". Again, van Dijk's (2006b, p. 379) analysis of Tony Blair's speech reveals that manipulative discourses feature strategies such as "emphasizing one's own power and moral superiority, discrediting one's opponents, providing details of the 'facts', polarization between *Us* and *Them*, negative Other-presentation, ideological alignment, emotional appeals, and so on".

The speaker also employed agentless passive constructions to execute his manipulative agenda. In most cases, the speaker placed circumstances at the subject position to enhance the bad record of the opposition while concealing that of the current government. Apart from concealing in-group negative action, he also utilized agentless construction as a strategy for marking humility. This occurred when he did not want the audiences to know he was showering praises on the government. However, in emphasizing the in-group positive action (government's job creation record) and seeking sympathy for the government, he utilized active constructions. Clearly, passive constructions are used in political speeches as an ideological strategy for concealing or mitigating

the in-group negative acts and avoiding the assumption of responsibility (Vadai, 2017). Thus, to attain a manipulative goal, politicians “hide the negative within particular formulations such that the population may not see the truth or the horror before them” (Wilson, 2001, p. 400).

Further, the analysis shows that the speaker employed metaphor as a rhetorical strategy to attain his manipulative goal. Specifically, the speaker used the phrase *driver's mate* to implicitly dissociate himself from the failure of the government and legitimize his presidential ambition. Even though Bawumia has been Vice-President for the past seven years, he used the presupposition strategy to portray himself as the new messiah whose preoccupation is to take Ghanaians to the promised land. The analysis also shows the use of *positive self-presentation*, *authority*, and *implication* by the speaker to portray himself as objective, visionary, and humble. However, the motivation behind his discursive move is the attainment of public approval and support. According to Qaiwer (2020, p. 340), “speakers may represent the speech of the other in a fallacious argument in an attempt to highlight the evidentiality of their claim” (Qaiwer, 2020, p. 340). Finally, the outcome of the study shows that Bawumia represented social reality from his own biased perspective, with the aim of imposing his political interest and ideologies on the audiences for electoral gain. On that score, the study supports Qaiwer's (2020, p. 328) assertion that “power abuse may be exercised when arguments are based on manipulative or coercive attempts”.

6. CONCLUSION

This study attempted an analysis of the discursive reproduction of manipulation in Moham-madu Bawumia's political speech. Drawing on a critical discourse analytical approach, it sought to uncover the partisan/ideological motive behind the choice of subtle ideological discourse structures in the speech. The result showed a biased representation of social groups in a manner that serves the interest of the speaker and undermines the interests of the audience. Thus, the speech is characterized by a binary opposition between *Us* and *Them*, with the *Us* group (in-group) represented positively and the *Them* group (out-group) represented negatively at all levels of discourse.

In all, the results of the study established the dual function of the discursive strategies and structures employed by the speaker: they are used not only for disseminating information but also for influencing the cognitive representations of audiences for electoral gain.

However, the results revealed that discursive strategies employed by politicians do not all the time conform to the postulates of van Dijk's ideological square concept, as there is an instance where the speaker deemphasizes the positive action (achievements) of the government in the speech.

6.1. Limitation(s)

As a CDA-based study, it did not analyze the entire speech but focused on a fragment that contains the ideological/discursive strategies it sought to explore. Again, although it would have been prudent to add speeches by other Ghanaian political leaders for a comparative analysis, the scope of the study made it impossible. Further, in tandem with the CDA approach, the discursive strategies were subjectively selected based on the explanation offered by van Dijk (2004). Finally, the excerpts were subjectively analyzed by applying the interpretative content analysis procedure and taking into account the social-political context of the speech. In spite of the foregoing, it is worth stating that the analysis was not in any way influenced by personal bias.

6.2. Implication(s)/Recommendation(s)

In spite of the limitations, the findings of the current study bear far-reaching implications. The findings imply that language use in a social-political context is imbued with underlying partisan/ideological motives. Thus, politicians impose their ideas and ideologies on their audience through strategic use of language, making it difficult for the audiences to uncover the real intention behind their utterances. Again, the findings imply that the underlying partisan/ideological constructs embedded in the political text and talk can only be studied and exposed through the lens of CDA.

In view of the foregoing, policy-makers and other civil society groups ought to use their platforms to draw politicians' attention to the perlocutionary effect of political language. Again, and more importantly, media consumers ought to be sensitized on the need to be critical of political language to resist manipulation, inequality, discrimination, and deception, especially during electoral campaigns. In addition, as an academic contribution to resisting social power abuse and domination, there should be further critical discourse studies examining, for instance, the use of deictic elements and rhetorical resources for discursive manipulation in electoral campaign speeches, manifesto-launch speeches, and state of the nation addresses. It is also worth examining how gender inequality is discursively reproduced and resisted by the text and talk of Ghanaian parliamentarians.

Conflict of interest

The author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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