



## **Newspaper Frames of Sub-Saharan Immigrants in Morocco**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this article is to understand how the media framed the arrival of Sub-Saharan immigrants to Morocco. Indeed, Media consumers around the world are regularly confronted with media reports or depictions of migrants crossing the Mediterranean. However, the situation of those migrants in Morocco has grabbed media attention, especially in newspapers; hundreds of articles and reports have been written in newspapers, criticizing or denouncing the phenomenon. Although the currently available body research has tended to neglect the linguistic ways in which such media convey meaning along the side of their use of images, little attention has been paid to language-based media. In this study, I will focus on newspaper headlines because they convey the main story of the news story. The goal is to analyse the headlines of four newspapers Almassae, Assabah, Akhbar Al Yaoum, and Alahdath before the migration reform of 2013. With these objectives in mind, the article applies content analysis methodology to examine how news media framed and portrayed the arrival of ‘African’ immigrants in news headlines.

**Keywords:** Headlines, Sub-Saharan immigrants, Metaphors, newspapers, Content Analysis

### **1. Introduction**

Media Analysis contributes to the understanding of different social realities such as the arrival of immigrants to a particular society. Media offer

information that is considered true for different readers. Therefore, mass media are not only a source of knowledge and expression of opinions but also, as Van Dijk points out "the main institution of ideological reproduction" (Fernandez and Lorila, 2012) The press remains the most reliable source of information; it has the power to spread any message with its greatest capacity to propagate ideologies. Analyzing mass media is considered the greatest way to grasp the agenda of a certain society. Nowadays it is a well-known fact that mass media significantly shapes how individuals perceive the world. They convey attitudes, opinions, and stereotypes, thus shaping people's perceptions of the situation. (Van Dijk, 2000) The core problem of the study is to investigate how the four selected print newspapers: *Almassae*, *Assabah*, *Akhbar Al Yaoum*, and *Alahdath* use a metaphoric tone in news headlines to depict 'black African' immigrants in Morocco.

A newspaper is an excellent medium that may be used to express and transmit ideas, demonstrate strength, or even persuade readers. It is also possible to assert that newspapers are a source of influence on society. It's possible because it's well recognized that words, whether spoken or written, are never neutral; instead, they always convey a hidden message that reflects the speaker or writer's interests. (Fiske, 1994) Newspaper headlines play a significant role in news discourse as a subgenre of media genre. Headlines have been given a variety of roles as an introduction to their pertinent primary text. It has been said that headlines and leads are the categories that make up "an initial summary" of news reports. (Van Dijk, 1988, 53) While headlines often serve these purposes in news reports, some newspaper headlines confuse readers with fairly difficult puzzles that neither summarize nor display the news reports' details.

The variety of newspaper texts indeed makes it difficult to ascertain the function of the headlines. In other words, some newspapers report news, offer opinions, and provide information. Newspaper editorials, as a type of opinion text, differ from other forms of news discourse in that they are expected to offer evaluations and observations on news events that have already been covered by the newspapers. (Khamahani, 2014) In this study, the researcher will not look at the specific discursive elements of the language employed in the headlines from a merely linguistic standpoint. However, the focus of this work is on the broader theoretical and methodological issues surrounding the use of headlines in research. the role they play in influencing the readers' views on migration from Sub-Saharan Africa; the shared cultural setting they conjure. The article continues by stating that headlines are especially representative of the social and cultural images that are permeating Moroccan society.

Headlines are particularly important to readers who skim an article's content. Perhaps today's readers won't find headlines as interesting as they once did. Without a doubt, the advent and growth of visual media have received more attention in headlines in modern media. Nevertheless, since there are no current readership reports, to my knowledge in Morocco, support the concept that headlines have been the only bases for formulating opinions. According to the researcher, headlines continue to have a significant impact on customers. For the majority of Moroccan readers, it is reasonable to assume that headlines have a considerable impact on readers' assessments of news content. As a result, it's critical to comprehend the language used in headlines, and doing the research is worthwhile.

## 2. Research setting

The media is crucial in spreading information and raising public awareness of key national issues. The media's power goes beyond merely disseminating news. According to several studies, the media is crucial in connecting with and informing the public about events, which makes the public dependent on them. (Happer and Philo, 2013) Media coverage has been able to influence the thoughts of people over certain issues, from the portrayal of women in society to race and minority stereotyping of 'African immigrants'. Immigration has been an interesting subject to the public and it seemed to be a prominent wedge issue in Morocco between 2010 and 2013. Immigration coverage has shifted over the years, from a demographics, and humanitarian perspective to the overall impact of immigration in society.

An increase in the number of Sub-Saharan migrants arriving in Morocco received extensive attention from the four selected newspapers. The so-called migrant "crisis" that has been portrayed as a national concern in the country's mainstream media is what inspired this study. The dehumanization of migrants has occurred through the use of figurative language in media headlines. For example, the Moroccan regional magazine *Ashamal* named its cover page "**Black Locust invading Northern Morocco**" in September 2005. Another contentious headline that appeared on the Moroccan weekly *MarocHebdo's* cover page in November 2012 was "**The Black Peril**" (*Le peril Noir*). Newspapers are likely to place a significant emphasis on using metaphor as a cognitive heuristic when presenting their cognitive frames of opinions on social issues.

The examples demonstrate how metaphor usage and consistency in media texts play a big part in the unfavorable perception of migration. The term "migration crisis," which also serves as the heading for the section of the media under which the migration-related articles are published, acts as the central metaphor for the overall migration story. (Castles et al, 2014) This study attempts to identify and decipher the ideological connotations of

metaphors concerning Sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco, even though many scholars have already sufficiently addressed the metaphorical portrayal of migration.

The analysis of headlines can indicate the social and cultural representations that were circulated at that time. Based on Fairclough's model, to build a model of discourse analysis that contributes to social and cultural analysis, he combines the tradition of textual analysis. with the context of the wider community. Norman Fairclough's focus is on seeing language as a practice of power. He built a model that integrates discourse analysis based on linguistics, social thought, and politics, and is generally integrated into social change.

### **3. Literature Review**

The migration of people from the Sub-Sahara to Morocco has drawn the attention of numerous academics from various fields. Most studies to date have concentrated on how sub-Saharan migrants are integrated into Morocco (Bitari, 2020; Bendra, 2017; Berriane et al., 2014, J. Berriane, 2013). All of these researchers emphasized the Sub-Saharan immigrants' incorporation into Moroccan society. For instance, Bendra looks into how immigrants' status (legality/illegality) and the sociopolitical environment of the nation may affect their likelihood of integration or exclusion. In addition, Bendra discusses how migrants' access to the labor market, housing, healthcare, education, and social networks affects their quality of life in Morocco. (I. Bendra, 2019) In a similar vein, Sébastien R. G. Bachelet's ethnographic study examines how 'irregular' sub-Saharan migrants deal with violent abuse and try to take control of their lives in a Moroccan marginal neighborhood of Rabat city. This study engages with recent critical debates in anthropology over 'mobility' and 'illegalization'. It focuses primarily on migrants' limited agency as well as developing social bonds and political involvement while exploring the imagination and hope of migrants. (Bachelet, 2016, 19)

Other studies (Tyszler, 2021; Gazzotti, 2020), on the other hand, focus on the humanitarian approach and violence near borders; Elsa Tyszler (2021), for instance, pays particular emphasis to the embodied experiences of the border. Tyszler's contribution shows that humanitarianism as practiced in a border town in Northern Morocco is also a space for modernizing racial and gender relations, which, in contrast to its claims, can result in even more restrictions on the mobility of those being "helped," particularly women, and can reproduce a racialized and gendered order at the border. To my knowledge, only a small number of studies have attempted to understand African migration in Morocco from a gendered perspective. Among those studies are those by Inka Stock (2011) and Jane Freedman (2012). They

follow the journey of a group of female Sub-Saharan Africans who were trying to get to Morocco and eventually reach Europe. Both studies have shown that female migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa do so to escape their economic, physical, and social anxieties. They also do so to create gender roles and identities that will give them more access to opportunities for social and physical mobility.

All of the aforementioned studies have concentrated on the topic of migration in terms of the challenges that migrants encounter during the integration process in some cities, how gender is interpreted with this kind of movement, as well as the sexual violence that migrants experience while crossing borders. However, this research sheds light on how Sub-Saharan migrants are portrayed in various Moroccan newspapers. The primary goals of this study are to evaluate:

- ❖ How this topic is portrayed in four print newspapers?
- ❖ How are 'black' African immigrants presented in news headlines?
- ❖ What impacts may this portrayal may have on the readers?

For this purpose, we have chosen some reports from the four widely-read daily newspapers: *Almassae*, *Assabah*, *Akhbar Al Yaoum*, and *Alahdath*.

#### **4. Methods of Analysis**

The present study used purposeful sampling for data collection mainly aimed at focusing on only headlines of editorials of criticism. Adopting a non-random purposeful sampling, the present study has selected 54 headlines so far to analyse the role of headlines in guiding Moroccan readers' attention to the topic of 'African migration' towards Morocco. The selected headlines are chosen between the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January 2012 and Jan 2013. The objective of choosing this period is to have a general view of the portrayal of 'African' migrants in *Almassae*, *Assabah*, *Akhbar Al Yaoum*, and *Alahdath* newspapers. The main motives for choosing this period are due to two reasons. First, the so-called 'migration crises' had been presented as a public concern in the mainstream media, especially in print media. Second, there were huge debates worldwide about human conditions and media coverage of immigrants after the awakening of what was called the 'Arab spring'. Some north African countries went through difficult moments in security that inspired some Sub-Saharan immigrants to attempt to cross the Mediterranean.

In this study, the information acquired from the chosen newspapers was analyzed using content analysis. Presenting essential facts in text, graphics, and tables. Since this research is mostly thematic, qualitative content analysis was performed. Thematic analysis is viewed as a type of

qualitative research analysis since it is a technique for locating, analyzing, and summarizing themes found in data. This study used a broad-based content analysis defined by Krippendorff as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use”. (Krippendorff, 2018, 18) For him, content analysis involves certain steps that can be learned and are independent of the researcher's own authority. As a research method, the content analysis offers fresh perspectives, deepens a researcher's comprehension of specific phenomena, or inspires useful action. numerical records.

The content analysis takes text as its starting point because of the use of text within a social context, and the analysis of text serves as a convenient metaphor in content analysis "a text means something to someone, it is produced by someone to have meanings for someone else, and these meanings, therefore, must not be ignored and must not violate why the text exists in the first place." (Krippendorff, Ibid) The headlines of the chosen newspapers between 2012 and 2013 were analyzed in this study using content analysis. This study examines a certain theme, such as how ‘Black African’ migrants are "problematized" and turned into a discursive crisis in Morocco. The portrayal of Black African migrants in Moroccan media was examined through the analysis of fifty-four pieces that appeared in those publications.

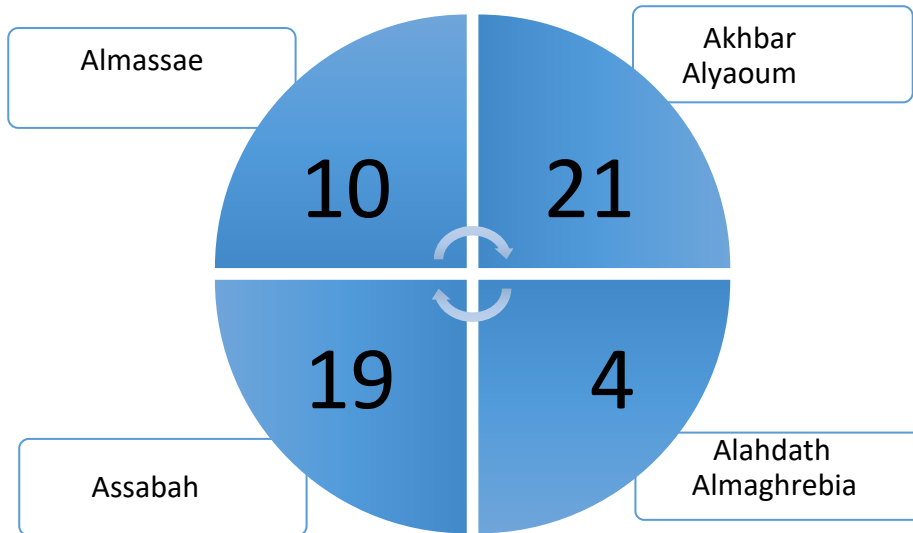
The basic objective of media information analysis is to ascertain its deeper implications and the most likely interpretation that results from the texts. The qualitative content analysis investigates the connection between the text and its likely readers' understanding because media texts are subject to various interpretations depending on the context. Along with the text, it focuses on the audience, the media, and relevant factors. The information below is offered for analysis using qualitative content analysis following the criteria listed below: (1) general representation of sub-Saharan migrants before the migration reform (either negative, positive, or balanced); (2) common themes categorisation, by this I mean the most common reports' focus (criminality, violence, job stealers) The use of content analysis is essential to this study because it gets to the heart of social communication, which over time can provide illuminating historical, social, and cultural information. In this case, the text of newspaper news headlines is examined directly to examine communication.

## **5. Findings**

Data collection of the newspapers' items related to the portrayal of immigrants from Sub-Saharan countries indicates that the topic was regularly spotlighted in these daily newspapers. From January 2012 to Jan 2013. A

total of 54 headlines and reports were written in *Almassae*, *Assabah*, *Akhbar Al Yaoum*, and *Alahdath* newspapers. there is a slight difference in terms of the number of headlines as the following figure shows.

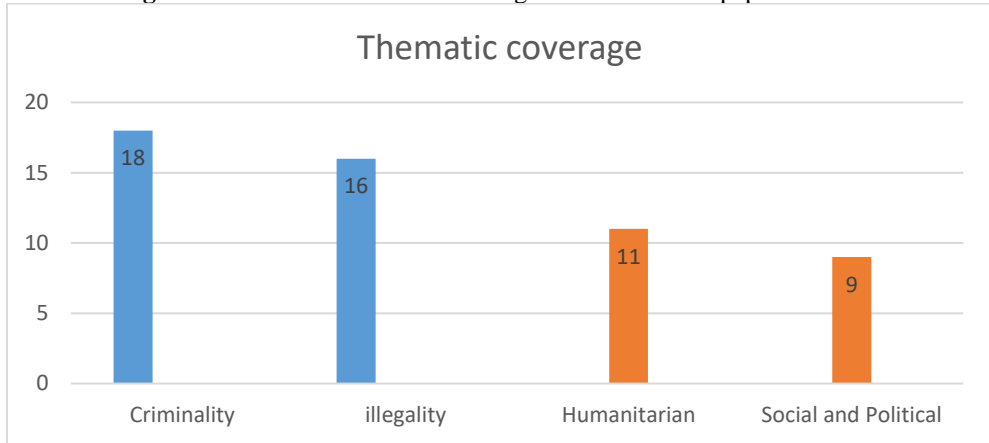
**Figure 1:** shows the total number of headlines in 2012



To draw a small comparison between the coverage of the arrival of those migrants to Morocco, I gathered the number of headlines before the launch of the new migration reform. All headlines were classified and evaluated to provide answers to the interconnected research objectives that were addressed while assessing news coverage frames regarding African immigrants. The first research question looks at how are African immigrants portrayed in the four selected newspapers over one year 'of 2012'.

Before going deep into the discursive analysis of headlines, I have categorised the headlines found in the articles that were published before the migration reform. The findings indicate that the portrayal of African immigrants has been concentrated in four categories: illegality, crimes, humanitarian, and political and social themes. (See figure 2) Generally, the coverage of the four newspapers was mainly related to the crimes and the illegal crossing and living situations of Sub-Saharan immigrants in Morocco as the sample pictures indicate (Figures 3, 4, and 5)

**Figure 2.** Shows the thematic coverage of the four newspaper headlines



The following samples are chosen to give an idea to the reader about the style of headlines and the lexical choice used to depict 'African immigrants'. These samples can also give a vision of the classification of headlines the researcher attempts to highlight.



**Figure 3.** Suspension of Nigerians filming pornographic films in Casablanca (*Assabah*, Sep 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012, N 3876)



**Figure 4.** African immigrants ... between sympathy and racist tendencies (*Akhbar Alyaoum*, Sep 8 and 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012, N 852)





**Figure 5.** Illegal immigrants return to the forests of Ksar Esghir (*Almassae*. Nov 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012. N 1923)

The following headlines are examples taken from the newspaper before the migration reform. The purpose of choosing some headlines is to investigate the salient role of the lexical choice in the headlines. According to Van Dijk's schemata, Headlines have been given a variety of roles as an introduction to their pertinent primary text. It has been said that headlines and leads are the categories that make up "an initial summary" of news reports. (Van Dijk, 2013, 53)

**Table 1.** Headlines showing metaphors in the four selected newspapers

No.	Headlines showing metaphors
1.	<p><b>Headline</b> مقتل جندي في هجوم أفارقة على حدود مليلية</p> <p><b>Transliteration</b> killed soldiers in attack Africans on the borders of Melilla</p> <p><b>Translation</b> A soldier was killed in an attack on African immigrants on the borders of Milela</p> <p><b>Source</b> Assabah, July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012</p>
2.	<p><b>Headline</b> الجيش يتصدى للمهاجرين السريين بحدود مليلية، استنفار أمني لمواجهة موجة جديدة من محاولات التسلل بالقوة</p> <p><b>Transliteration</b> the army confronts immigrants secret in the borders Melilla, alert security to confront wave new from attempts to sneak in by force</p> <p><b>Translation</b> The army confronts clandestine immigrants at the Melilla border, a security alert to confront a new wave of infiltration attempts by force</p> <p><b>Source</b> Assabah, Oct 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012</p>
3.	<p><b>Headline</b> مطاردات يومية للمهاجرين الأفارقة بوجدة</p> <p><b>Transliteration</b> Chases daily of immigrants Africans in Ouajda</p> <p><b>Translation</b> Daily chases of African immigrants in Ouajda</p> <p><b>Source</b> Assabah, Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012</p>
4.	<p><b>Headline</b> مهاجرون أفارقة متورطون في جرائم حرب</p> <p><b>Transliteration</b> Immigrants Africans involved in crimes of war</p> <p><b>Translation</b> African Immigrants are involved in war crimes</p> <p><b>Source</b> Assabah, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012</p>
5.	<p><b>Headline</b> جرائم هزت المجتمع أبطالها مهاجرون هدفهم الوصول الى الجنة الأوروبية</p> <p><b>Transliteration</b> Crimes shocked the society heroes immigrants aimed to reach paradise European</p>

<b>Translation</b>	Crimes that shocked the society, its heroes are immigrants whose goal is to reach the European paradise
<b>Source</b>	<b>Assabah, Sep 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012</b>
<b>6. Headline</b>	الجيش يفتح النار على مهربيين أفارقة
<b>Transliteration</b>	The army opens fire on smugglers Africans
<b>Translation</b>	The Army opens fire on African smugglers
<b>Source</b>	<b>Assabah, Sep 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012</b>
<b>7. Headline</b>	حملة مدهامات تستهدف مهاجرين أفارقة بالرباط، تقارير للاستعلامات يتحدث عن انتماء بعضهم الى تنظيمات إجرامية أو مليشيات إرهابية
<b>Transliteration</b>	Campaign raids target immigrants Africans in rabat, reports inquiries say that they belong to organisations criminal or militias terrorist
<b>Translation</b>	
<b>Source</b>	<b>Assabah, Aug 23rd, 2012</b>
<b>8. Headline</b>	ارتفاع متزايد في أعداد المهاجرين السريين الأفارقة بشمال المغرب
<b>Transliteration</b>	Increasing more in numbers of immigrants secret Africans in north Morocco
<b>Translation</b>	An increasing number of African clandestine migrants in the north Morocco
<b>Source</b>	<b>Akhbar Alyaoum, Dec 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012</b>
<b>9. Headline</b>	حالة استنفار بمليلية بعد اقتحام مهاجرين أفارقة للسياح الحدودي و دخول المدينة
<b>Transliteration</b>	state alert in Melilla after stormed immigrants Africans fence borders and enter the city
<b>Translation</b>	A state of alert in Melilla after African immigrants stormed the border fence and entered the city
<b>Source</b>	<b>Akhbar Alyaoum, Aug 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012</b>
<b>10. Headline</b>	المغرب ينتظر تدفقا كبيرا للمهاجرين الأفارقة مع الاستعداد للحرب في مالي
<b>Transliteration</b>	Morocco wait for an influx huge of immigrants Africans with the preparation of war in Mali
<b>Translation</b>	Morocco is waiting for a large influx of African immigrants, with preparations for war in Mali
<b>Source</b>	<b>Akhbar Alyaoum, Nov 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012</b>
<b>11. Headline</b>	السلطات الأمنية تطارد المهاجرين غير الشرعيين بالشرق و الشمال
<b>Transliteration</b>	Authorities security chase immigrants illegal in the east and north
<b>Translation</b>	The security authorities are chasing illegal immigrants in the east and north
<b>Source</b>	<b>Alahdath Almaghreb, Sep 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012</b>

## 6. Discussion

This discussion depends on the semantic analysing of the chosen headlines from the four daily newspapers. Semantics refers to the study of meaning in language. It involves the meaning or the interpretation of a word,

sentence, or other language forms. The most frequently used features in headlines under the semantic field are metaphor and metonymy. Yet, this article relies only on the role of metaphors is obvious in shaping and reshaping public opinion. Metaphor is one of the semantic aspects used in these newspaper headlines to garnish the headlines and to attract the attention of the reader. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), a metaphor is not merely a decorative device but is a cognitive mechanism whereby a concept is partially mapped onto another concept. Thus, a single metaphor may be worth 100 words in headlines and can have an interesting value that motivates the curiosity of readers about the news. The use of metaphor usually helps readers shape an understanding of an activity as an extraordinary activity that is not actually happening. Writers use metaphors to communicate or transform complex ideas into what is perceived as real or familiar and concrete: for example, the table below highlights the most common and repeated words and phrases in covering this migration crisis

Each word has a connotation as well as a denotation. When words are employed in newspapers, it is clear that they tend to convey meanings other than those that are explicitly stated. The vocabulary choices in the headlines above suggest several connotations. Headline N 1 the word 'هجوم' literally means 'to attack' which is not something abstract. However, in this headline, the word is used to express a military attack on the borders of Melilla. The doer 'Africans' are full of the anger of soldiers to initiate an attack on the 'borders' of another country that resulted in a 'killing' of a soldier. In this headline, the word is chosen over others in that it conveys ferocity and violence indicating what the doer did was wrong legally and socially. The act of a soldier being killed in this 'soldier attack' is extremely unacceptable in society. Therefore, these words convey all together a vivid image by combining violence with the killing of a soldier.

In headline N 2, the phrase 'استنفارأمني' a security alert is used metaphorically to indicate that 'the new waves' should be stopped as they enhance an 'alarm' in terms of police and military soldiers. 'The attempt' of snacking into by 'force' also expresses the ferocity of the attempt of 'illegal immigrants'. Alarming soldiers and police at the same time indicate the danger of these people coming to launch a military attack by using power can attract readers to this headline. Snacking into Melila by force, using power in several attempts illustrates the metaphoric use of these lexical words in this headline.

Headlines N 4 and 5 appear to employ the same implicit meaning of crimes of 'African Immigrants'. These crimes are compared to 'war crimes'. These crimes 'هزت المجتمع' shocked society, as indicated in headline N 5. The metaphoric meaning of this phrase is fundamental as it is considered like an earthquake that destroyed the public mindset and left a shocking emotion not

only in the region but in the whole society. These cries according to the headline are committed deliberately simply because these 'African immigrants' have an obvious goal that can push them to do anything illegal to achieve it is 'الوصول الى الجنة الأوروبية', arriving in the European paradise. To reach paradise, for headlines 4 and 5, it is normal for these 'Africans' to kill or commit crimes that can be done only during 'wars'.

Another worth mentioning metaphor that can be deduced from headlines N 3, 7, and 11 are 'chasing African immigrants' in different parts of the country. 'مطردات يومية، مدهامات، السلطات الأمنية تطارد' all these words and phrases have an implicit meaning of these 'African immigrants' should be chased as they are illegal, as they are involved in 'تنظيمات إجرامية أو ميليشيات' being part of a 'criminal or terrorist organisation' is seen by the headlines as a must for policemen to chase these 'dangerous' immigrants.

Due to insecurity or economic difficulties, some African immigrants continued to gather in the north of Morocco longing for a chance to enter Europe. These attempts have been portrayed as a 'highly increasing' 'large influx' that the country should be waiting for and expecting. Headlines N 8 and 10 illustrate the fear of the country in receiving 'waves' and 'influx' of immigrants from these countries. As the examples show, the Natural Phenomena metaphor is evoked by these verbal occurrences that refer to a massive and uncontrolled movement. These all imply the unexpected nature of migration, which adds to the expressions of the unfavorable appraisal of the migrant movement. The use of these phrases undoubtedly contributes to the general sense of fear and panic that people feel in the face of natural disasters.

In brief, the vocabulary of these headlines, particularly the employment of hyperbolic metaphors, is typically their most blatant characteristic. Therefore, the presence of "African migrants" is conceptualized as "attackers," which denotes the military "invasion" of African "black" migrants from Africa who are not legally allowed to be there. Of course, such metaphors are far from innocent, and the usage of such terminology could reinforce the idea that African immigrants pose a threat to everyone in Morocco.

## Conclusion

The findings and the analysis of headlines have demonstrated that the tone of headlines was almost negative before the migration reform in 2013. Although the aim of this study does not focus on the grammatical aspects of headlines, the results reveal that verbs and phrases of negative connotation have been used to portray the issue of Sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco. Besides, the study highlights the role of headlines in resuming the main story for the reader and the function of headlines in each position; combining

metaphoric word with numerical figures have a crucial role in stirring negative emotion in the reader. This study gives a sample of how ‘African immigrants’ were portrayed and depicted from various points of view and a verity of daily newspapers. Their presence has shifted, to some extent, the public opinion at that period to violence, illegality, and humanitarian aspects. However, the media's involvement goes beyond merely disseminating information; it also serves as a reflection of and a contributor to how the discussion of illegal immigration is interpreted and processed. Particularly, how social and political topics, like immigration, are presented in the public discourse and how individuals react to this contentious issue are significantly influenced by the way the media frames debates. This study has certainly motivated the researcher to compare the analysed findings of headlines to the ones after the migration reform in further studies.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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