

Discourse Constructions of Gender-Based Crimes in Newspaper Reports

by

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Abstract

This paper is an examination of how social actors in gender-based crimes are being represented in newspaper reports in Nigeria. The study adopts van Leeuwen's socio-semantic approach as its framework. A corpus of four news reports was collected from four different Nigerian newspapers, the Guardian, the Cable, the Punch, and Vanguard newspaper, on the report of a serial sexual assault involving two male suspects and a female victim who is reported to have been impregnated by the alleged perpetrators. The choice of these four newspapers which constitutes 1245 words was a result of their reporting the news and their wide readership nationwide. Different types of deletion, rearrangement, categorization of the social actors, and their actions were realized in the reports through passivation, activation, identification, classification as well as the transitivity composition of some clauses. The study concludes that the discourse construction around these social actors does not in any way mitigate the actions of the perpetrators or relegate the victim as there are templates in which news reports as a genre are expected to adhere to such as avoidance of the reflections of the reporter's biases and naturalness in language use.

Keywords: Gender-based crime, social actors, Critical Discourse Analysis, Nigerian newspaper reports, Discourse constructions

Introduction:

Public perception of crime is heavily influenced by media (Weitzer and Kubrin 2004: 498). Sex crimes are heavily gendered in nature and culturally understood as such since women are often seen as passive and men active in regard to sexual behavior (Shelby and Hatch, 2014: 404). Sex crimes also tend to evoke strong emotional responses and opinions from the general public. News reporting on sexual violence is not only a matter of crime reporting but a gender issue as well (Benedict 1992: 3).

Researchers have examined rape myths which can be defined as 'prejudicial, stereotyped or false beliefs, prejudices or stereotypes about rape, rapists, and rape victims' (Burt 1980: 217, cited in O'Hara 2012: 248). Benedict (1992) also introduces stereotypical images of sexual violence perpetrators and victims in news reporting, the so-called rape myths which include 'rape is sex', 'the assailant is perverted or crazy', 'only 'loose' women are victimized' and 'women cry

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for revenge'. Furthermore, the myths reinforce a phenomenon called 'rape culture' in which aggressive masculine sexuality is seen as legitimate, and sex and violence are tightly interwoven (Cobos 2014: 38).

Both the news-reading public as well as politicians and legislators are affected by the news media and its portrayal of crime (Best 1990, cited in Shelby and Hatch 2014: 404); therefore, the role of media is significant not only regarding people's perceptions but law-making as well. Previous studies have shown that news reports on sexual violence often focus on the particularly grievous yet rare incidents thus potentially distorting people's conceptions about crime (Shelby and Hatch 2014: 405). Such issues highlight the importance of further research on the influence of crime-related media discourses.

Moreover, language is one of the major tools employed by the mass media in information dissemination to various audiences. Discursive choices made in communication are likely consequential on the perception of the message by the audience especially when the news being reported is about crises or unpleasant events.

This study, therefore, examines the discursive forms and patterns that newspaper outfits employ when reporting gender-based crimes since prevailing social conditions considerably influence properties of discourse, that is, discourse is able to represent, produce and reproduce social reality (Fairclough, 1989; Richardson, 2007). Discourse is generally used to refer to any coherent form of language use. In the context of this study, discourse refers to newspaper reports.

Language and Ideology:

Language has a crucial role in ideological processes. It is the linking element between the individual's knowledge of the world and the social practices since it mediates an individual's thought and behavior. Kress and Hodges (1979) draw attention to the importance of language for the study of ideology: Ideologies are a set of ideas involved in the ordering of experience, making sense of the world. This order and sense are partial and particular. The system of ideas that constitute ideologies is expressed through language. Language supplies the models and categories of thought, and in part, people's experiences of the world are through language.

The ideological aspect of language does not lie in the linguistic system, which is autonomous, but in the use of language, which is not. As products of their relations with others and their comprehension of these relations, individuals interpret their experiences according to their position in the economic structure of the society in which they live. Thus, representing people's minds and consequently embodying different worldviews (Fowler et. al, 1979), language reflects the structure of the society in which it is used.

With words we influence and, to an enormous extent, control future events. It is for this reason that writers write; preachers preach; employers, parents, and teachers scold; propagandists send out new releases; statesmen give speeches. All of them, for various reasons, are trying to influence our conduct: sometimes for our good, sometimes for their own good. We show how linguistic structures are used to explore, systematize, transform, and often obscure analysis of reality to regulate the ideas and behavior of others, to classify and rank people, events, and objects, and to assert institutional or personal status.

Discourse as a Social Practice:

Discourse is a difficult concept, largely because there are so many conflicting and overlapping definitions formulated from various theoretical and disciplinary standpoints (van

Dijk 1985). CDA sees discourse, language use in speech and writing, as a form of ‘social practice’.

Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s), and social structure(s), which frame it. The discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. That is, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. Since discourse is so socially consequential, it gives rise to important issues of power. Discursive practices may have major ideological effects, that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997).

Following Fairclough’s (1989) and Kress’ (1985) views, discourse means contextualized language. People’s discourses are usually voices of institutions, since various institutions control existing groups, what they say, and consequently, what they do. Fairclough then refers to visual language as the richest part of speech in the production of meaning. Communication is in itself an activity; this means that it is an active process and action. Thus language use, as a form of communication, is a purposeful activity, a social action, a practice (Richardson, 2007). Therefore, when the news is written, there is an inherent motive to accomplish things (Gee and Green, 1998).

Evidently, communication is a two-way dimension as there is a(n) (un)spoken relationship between the speakers and hearers (news writers and readers in this context) in any communication process, and there is an expected receiver of any communicative message. In fact, both news writers and readers are not to be referred to as separate entities; one is usually implicated in the action of the other. Hence, writing does not exist in a vacuum. A writer writes with an expectation that the message passed across is actively understood and would influence the form of feedback received (Bakhtin 1986). Van Dijk (1993) also argues that mass media significantly contribute to the ideological construction of group attitudes through their discursive lexical choices and structural patterns. He adds that the mass media may sometimes attempt to re-orient readers to embrace the messages that the mass media propagate and also accept the validity of such messages.

Sex crimes are heavily gendered in nature and culturally understood as such since women are often seen as passive and men active in regard to sexual behavior (Shelby and Hatch, 2014). Sex crimes also tend to evoke strong emotional responses and opinions from the general public. News reporting on sexual violence is not only a matter of crime reporting but a gender issue as well (Benedict 1992: 3).

The Media and Discourse Analysis:

News articles often follow certain genre conventions although the conventions are not as strict as in, for example, legal texts. News articles consist of a heading and a description of the main events but might have information regarding the background of the event or address the possible consequences of it as well (van Dijk 1988: 178). Moreover, the whole production of news sets criteria for what is considered news; van Dijk (1988: 121) lists for example novelty, recency, proximity, and conformity with existing values as elements that increase the so-called news-worthiness of an event. Instances of violent crime usually fill the criteria and thus are generally written about.

News articles are a commodity, therefore, the task of a journalist is not only to transmit information but also to describe and illustrate it for the consumption of the public (Fairclough 1995: 91). Journalists are rarely present in the scene of the event such as a crime when it is taking place, instead, they have to rely on interviews, police statements, and other forms of mediated information and process it into the form of a news article (van Dijk 1988: 179). As a piece of news travels through several intermediates, it is bound to transform along the way, due to, for example, different viewpoints of the intermediates, ideological reasons, or misunderstandings of miscommunication along the way. Previous works on media discourse analysis offer tools to tackling these potential challenges and through methods of Critical Discourse Analysis, it is feasible to examine both explicit and implicit values in news articles.

The news media has an undeniable effect on society. According to van Dijk (1988: 182), the news accustoms the readers into forming certain “interpretation frameworks” that implicitly shape the way the public view and perceive different events. This highlights the importance of further studies on the news media taking into account its potential force in shaping society. Osisanwo (2016) avers that news as an important aspect of human life has been with man from inception; it has continued to take different forms and shapes. The print media serves to inform the public is a veritable tool in the propagation of views and ideas.

Theoretical Orientation:

Critical Discourse Analysis:

Emerging from critical linguistics and critical semiotics, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is one of the many approaches to the study of language. The emphasis is on the relationship between language and society. Language is a part of society and linguistic phenomena are determined socially and have social effects. The term discourse is preferred since language is seen as a form of social practice.

CDA is a form of critical social research. The aim of critical social research is to better understand how societies produce beneficial and detrimental effects and how the detrimental effects can be mitigated or eliminated. The focus is on contemporary social changes and their effects are crucial to improving human conditions. These changes are transforming language too. Discourse and social structures are linked by a ‘dialectical relationship’ (Fairclough 1989: 37). A dialectical relationship is a two-way relationship and it implies that the discursive event is shaped by situations, institutions, and social structures, but at the same time, the discursive event shapes them. In other words, ‘discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially shaped: it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people’ (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258). Since discourse is socially influential, it is inevitably related to issues of power. CDA focuses on the discursive strategies and consequences of power abuse by dominant groups and institutions and how forms of social inequality are represented, reproduced, or legitimated in discourse.

Amongst the prominent approaches to CDA are Norman Fairclough’s Marxist perspective, Teun van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach, Ruth Wodak’s discourse-historical approach, and Theo van Leeuwen’s socio-semantic approach. These are followed by a few minor contributions to CDA which cannot be regarded to be entirely new approaches but which emphasize particular elements when doing CDA.

Journalists transform texts they receive from news sources into a form 'in which news reports are memorized' and what long-term effects these news reports 'have on perception,

cognition and action' (Fairclough 1995: 30). Van Leeuwen (2009) posits that critical discourse analysts, despite the different methodologies and diverse theoretical orthodoxies, are united on the common goal of critiquing 'the hegemonic discourse and genres that effect inequalities, injustices, and oppression in contemporary society'. Since society is not free of political, economic, or social discourses, language responds to communicative situations in social life. CDA explores text to contribute to debates of national interests. Hence, it prospers as a tool that influences change on the macrostructure of the society. This study adopts van Leeuwen's CDA approach.

Van Leeuwen's Model of CDA:

Theo van Leeuwen broadens the boundaries of the presentation of social actors through a socio-semantic system. Van Leeuwen's socio-semantic approach is based on the notion 'that discourses are recontextualizations of social practices' (van Leeuwen, 2009: 148). This framework which holds three underlying metafunctions namely, ideational, interpersonal, and textual perspectives, equips the researchers with such a broad outlook towards the social actors that all the complicity of discourse in the social sciences can be met through 'a critical lens, sensitive to the dimensions and effects of ideology (Huckin, Andrus and Clary-lemon, 2012). What van Leeuwen presents in this network to depict the representation of social actors is to apply three types of transformation: deletion, rearrangement, and substitution.

Van Leeuwen's framework is so broad that it could be applied to a large corpus of data. To investigate the representation of offenders and victims in the selected news reports, only some categories are applied. Some close areas that are not used in the analysis are succinctly discussed along with the selected ones. The network and the examples are taken from what van Leeuwen (1996, 2008) explains and defines. The following are some of the formatives employed in this study:

- i. **Suppression:** The text does not make a reference to social actors while their actions are there.
- ii. **Backgrounding:** Social actors may not be related to the actions just in the same clause, but can be inferred through reasoning.
- iii. **Activation:** Social actors could be represented to have active, dynamic roles or be the receiver of an activity.
- iv. **Subjection:** It is shown when social actors are the objects in the representations and are subject to action.
- v. **Beneficialization:** It forms a third party that benefits from an action positively or negatively.
- vi. **Genericization:** It allows the representation of social actors as classes or individuals.
- vii. **Individualization:** Social actors are represented as individuals.
- viii. **Aggregation:** It deals with social actors as statistics.
- ix. **Collectivization:** The representation of social actors happens through classes.
- x. **Association:** It is a way of referring to social actors as groups that are formed by joining several social actors together, though their labelling is not used in the text. Social actors can be joined to serve a specific purpose and then vanish.
- xi. **Formalization:** It refers to the use of surname with or without honorifics.
- xii. **Semiformalization:** names and surnames are used.

- xiii. **Informalization:** Social actors are represented only through their first names.
- xiv. **Honorification:** Social actors are given standard ranks or titles such as ‘Dr.’
- xv. **Affiliation:** Social actors are identified with ‘titles’ which show personal relations are given to them.
- xvi. **Functionalization:** Social actors are referred to by what they do.
- xvii. **Classification:** It classifies social actors based on their age, race, gender, wealth and other cultural variables which are open to change through history.
- xviii. **Relational identification:** It allows social actors to ‘belong together’ in a personal, kinship or work relation.
- xix. **Physical identification:** It studies social actors in terms of unique characteristics that can be recognized.

Methodology:

The data for the study are four Nigerian newspaper reports on a singular gender-based crime involving three major social actors, two male perpetrators, and a female victim, retrieved from the website of the selected national dailies: The Punch, the Guardian, the Cable and Vanguard Newspapers. These newspapers are among the leading newspapers in Nigeria both in print and online versions and enjoy wide circulation and readership nationwide. None of the newspapers state and ideological standing on gender views on the “About Us” or its equivalent section on its website. The reports used as data were published on the 8th of April 2019 in all the selected newspapers. The data were purposively chosen because of its social context which is relevant to the focus of this research. The study adopts a content or qualitative approach using van Leeuwen’s socio-semantic model of CDA as the framework for the analysis of the data.

Data Analysis and Findings:

In the analysis, VANG, CABLE, PNCH, and GUARD represent the Vanguard, the Cable, the Punch, and Guardian newspapers respectively, while each number indicates the paragraph’s position in the data.

A. Deletion: Exclusion

Under this category, studying the social actors which are omitted or moved to the background is made possible. There are two terms that are taken into account as put by van Leeuwen (1996, 2008) as ‘radical exclusion’ and ‘innocent exclusion’. In radical exclusion, both the action and the social actors are omitted, leaving no trace of exclusion. There is no instance of this type of exclusion in the data as there is no instance of deletion or exclusion of any primary social actors and actions or activities that cannot be traced in the text. On the other hand, the innocent exclusion (less radical/partial exclusion), subsumes ‘suppression’ and ‘backgrounding’. In the selected reports, no instance of suppression is identified, however, there are instances where the social actors are deleted or excluded through *backgrounding*. They are excluded from certain situations but realized somewhere else in the text.

Both the Perpetrators and the Victim:

- i. Unable to withstand the defilement, the girl, it was gathered, fled to her mother’s place in Ogun State. (VANG 4).

- ii. According to the victim, the sexual assaults first started in October last year. (VANG 5)
- iii. The case was reported at the gender unit of the command by the mother of the victim. (CABLE 3)
- iv. It was also gathered that on March 27, 2019, the mother of the teenager (name withheld) reported the incident to the Gender Unit, Police Command. (VANG 3)

In (i), *backgrounding* is realized through nominalization, here, the process ‘defile’ has been nominalized and realized as an abstract thing (the headword) of a nominal group in the circumstantial clause of reason. It is explicitly made obvious to the reader as the cause of the victim’s fleeing which is her inability to withstand the defilement. However, those who inflict this pain on the defiled cannot be realized in the clause, the reader is only left with the action which has been construed into the noun ‘defilement’ and the receiver or goal of the action which is the victim. Similarly, in (ii), the original process is construed as a noun. *The sexual assaults first started...* it generates the thought: who sexually assaulted who? Here, both the performer of the assault and its receiver have been backgrounded. Also in (iii) and (iv), the nominal items ‘the case’ and ‘the incident’ are respectively used to background the participants involved in the serial raping.

Coesemans (2013) avers that the representation of social actors is not arbitrary or trivial. It contributes to the creation of a frame of interpretation and it leads to the search for patterns of unquestioned meaning and ideological aspects of news discourse as social actors may have ‘inclusion or exclusion’ patterns in any representation depending on the interests and purposes of such representation. No strong clues are available in the text to prove that the social actors are purposefully omitted for ideological reasons. Although the exclusion happens, one cannot absolutely conclude that the social actors are not mentioned for strategic reasons since the actors and receiver of the actions are fairly obvious to the reader in the text.

B. Rearrangement: Role Allocation

Activation of Perpetrators:

The victimizers are represented as participants engaged in the material processes such as ‘raping’ and ‘impregnating’. This happens when the fact is reported through the mother of the victim. This is sparingly seen in the data, however, there are other instances of activation but are less significant to the primary event.

The husband of her elder sister, Kabiru Oke, and his son, Oke Faruq, raped and impregnated her daughter who lived with them (VANG 4).

This is an instance of activation through participation. Van Leeuwen (2008: 33) states that ‘activation through *participation* is the clearest way of foregrounding agency and the role of the perpetrator in the event.’

Passivation of Perpetrators:

- i. The two suspects had been arrested and charged to a magistrate court. (CABLE 8)

- ii. The suspects were alleged to have taken advantage of the fact that the victim lived with them (PNCH 2).
- iii. The suspects were exposed after the victim's mother suspected some changes in her, which led to the discovery that she was pregnant (PNCH 3).
- iv. Both Kabiru and Faruq had been charged to court for molestation [sic] (PNCH 4).
- v. A 44-year-old man, Kabiru Oke, and his 19-year-old son, Oke Faruq, have been arraigned in court for allegedly raping and impregnating a teenager (VANG 1).
- vi. The two suspects in the case, who were arrested and charged to Magistrate Court 2, Ogba, for defilement, were remanded in Kirikiri prison [sic] (VANG 7).

Activation of Victim:

- i. The girl had reported Oke's sexual abuse on several occasions to his wife but she always shut her up (GUARD 3).
- ii. Unable to withstand the defilement, the girl, it was gathered, fled to her mother's place in Ogun State (GUARD 4).
- iii. The girl revealed her ordeals in her aunt's home in Lagos (GUARD 5).

While the perpetrators are activated and passivated copiously, the victim is rather not passivated but only activated. The category of passivation is studied through subjection and beneficialization. As seen in the data above, the instances of passivation are realized through subjection only; no instance of beneficialization is realized. Through passivation, the social actors who *alleged, exposed, charge to court, arraign and arrested, and remanded the perpetrators in prison* are not mentioned, while the suspects which are originally the traditional objects of the actions (verbs) have been reassigned the role of the sentential subjects. This overlaps with 'deletion' which is earlier discussed as the *by-agentive adjuncts* are deleted in all the six instances of passivation above. This is a shift of attention to the event of serial sexual assault. This shift is also realized in the construction of their headlines which is discussed later in this work.

C. Categorisation:

Perpetrators:

- i. **Age:** A 44-year-old man, Kabiru Oke, and his son, Farouq, aged 19 (GUARD 1)
- ii. A 44-year-old man and his 19-year-old son for allegedly raping and impregnating (CABLE 1)
- iii. **Kinship:** According to the victim, the sexual assaults first started in October last year, when her *aunt's husband* asked her to fetch water for him. (GUARD 5)
- iv. ...her *sister's husband* identified as Kabiru Oke [sic] (CABLE 4)
- v. ...one Kabiru Oke, and his *son*, Faruq (PUNCH 1)
- vi. ...caught *his father* raping the victim (GUARD 3)
- vii. According to the victim, my *uncle*... [sic] (GUARD 5)
- viii. **Gender:** *man, son* (as reflected under the kinship and age category)
- ix. **Formalization:** *Kabiru Oke, Oke Faruq* (as reflected under the kinship and age category)

- x. **Informalization:** Kabiru, *Faruq* (as reflected under the kinship and age category)

Victim:

- i. **Age:** ...the *13-year-old* victim (GUARD 2)
 ...a *14-year-old girl*. (CABLE 1)
 a *minor* was being defiled (CABLE 4)
 ... serial rape and impregnating a *teenager* (GUARD 1)
 allegedly raping and impregnating a *teenager* (VANG 1)
- ii. **Gender:** the *girl* (CABLE 5, 8)
- iii. **Kinship:** ...the *daughter of the sister to Kabiru’s wife* (PNCH 1)
 ...raped and impregnated her *daughter* (VANG 4)

The victim is categorized, more specifically *identified* in terms of age, gender, and kinship relation, however, her name is withheld, unlike the perpetrators whose names are mentioned – formalization and informalization. The reason for the informalization of the second perpetrator is not far to see as indicated through kinship that he is the son of the first perpetrator and this is obvious to the readers. Critically, it may not be right to judge that not mentioning the victim’s name is a means to downgrade her as a result of her gender or social status, it is rather to protect her identity against being stereotyped and it is a norm in newspaper reports to protect victims of sexual assault who are not killed in the event by not identifying them with their names or adopting for them pseudo names. Conversely, the news media genre encourages the mentioning of crime perpetrators in order to identify them which ideologically shows the news outfits’ or reporters’ negative dispositions and appraisal towards evil deeds and their perpetrators.

Transitivity in the Headlines:

The transitivity system construes the world of experience into a manageable set of processes and participant types, providing language users (the reporters – *emphasis ours*) with grammatical options for categorizing and evaluating propositions of the world (Fairclough, 1995). Through a focus on the transitivity system, the construal of participants and social actors in texts are analyzed and related to social practice. Transitivity enables the representation of a particular event or situation in different ways. For example:

- i. *Silas was slapped*. (One participant, ‘done-to’; one action, process)
- ii. *I saw Nike slap Silas*. (Same event: three participants, one ‘done-to’, one ‘do-er’, one ‘see-er’; one sensing process and one action process).

The clause, as representation of experience, comprises the process, participants and circumstances.

- 1. Father, son, allegedly impregnate 13-year-old girl (GUARD)

Participant (Actor)	Circumstance (Manner: Quality)	Process (Material)	Participant (Goal)
Father, son	Allegedly	Impregnate	13-year-old girl

2. Father, son arrested for ‘raping, impregnating’ teenager (CABLE)

Participant Goal	Process	Circumstance (Cause: Reason)
Father, son	Arrested	for ‘raping, impregnating’ teenager

3. Father, son remanded for raping, impregnating teenager (PUNCH)

Participant Goal	Process (Material)	Circumstance (Cause: Reason)
Father, son	Remanded	for raping, impregnating teenager

4. Father, son docked for allegedly raping, impregnating teenager (VANG)

Participant (Goal)	Process (Material)	Circumstance (Cause: Reason)
Father, son	Docked	for allegedly raping, impregnating teenager

In 2, 3, and 4, the reporter backgrounded the actors, that is those who docked ‘Father, son’ since the actors are relatively inconsequential to the primary event. Conversely in 1, the actor is present as the perpetrators of the crime. This shows there is an effort to push the acts of the perpetrators to the fore, unlike the other three headlines where the focus is on the aftermath of the acts. This is evident in the choice of processes, while the first headline has ‘impregnated’ as its process, 2-4 are filled with arrested, remanded and docked respectively. The reader can however construe the acts of the passivized subject (Father and son) through the circumstantial elements. They are arrested, reprimanded, and docked for the cause reason: raping and impregnating teenagers. Nevertheless, all the four newspapers employ the material type of process in construing the different experiences that form their headlines (impregnate, arrested, arraigned, docked).

Transitivity in the Lead Paragraphs of the Newspaper Reports:

1. A 44-year-old man, Kabiru Oke, and his son, Farouq, aged 19, have been arrested by the police in Lagos State for alleged serial rape and impregnating a teenager (names withheld). (GUARD)

Participant (Goal)	Process (Material)	Participant (Actor)	Circumstance (Cause: Reason)
A 44-year-old man, Kabiru Oke, and his son, Farouq, aged 19	have been arrested	by the police in Lagos State	for alleged serial rape and impregnating a teenager

2. The Lagos state police command has arrested a 44-year-old man and his 19-year-old son for allegedly raping and impregnating a 14-year-old girl. (CABLE)

Participant (Actor)	Process (Material)	Participant (Goal)	Circumstance (Cause: Reason)
The Lagos state police command	has arrested	a 44-year-old man and his 19-year-old son	for allegedly raping and impregnating a 14-year-old girl

3. Operatives of the Lagos State Police Command have arrested one Kabiru Oke, and his son, Faruq, for allegedly raping and impregnating the daughter of the sister to Kabiru’s wife in the Egbeda area of the state (PNCH).

Participant (Actor)	Process (Material)	Participant (Goal)	Circumstance	
			(Cause: Reason)	(Location: Place)
Operatives of the Lagos State Police Command	have arrested	one Kabiru Oke, and his son, Faruq	for allegedly raping and impregnating the daughter of the sister to Kabiru's wife	in the Egbeda area of the state

4. A 44-year-old man, KabiruOke, and his 19-year-old son, Oke Faruq, have been arraigned in court for allegedly raping and impregnating a teenager, who lived with them at 1, Olatikupo Street, Egbeda, Lagos. (VANG)

Participant (Goal)	Process (Material)	Circumstance	
		(Location: Place)	(Cause: Reason)
A 44-year-old man, Kabiru Oke, and his 19-year-old son, Oke Faruq	have been arraigned	in court	for allegedly raping and impregnating a teenager, who lived with them at 1, Olatikupo Street, Egbeda, Lagos

All the lead paragraphs are constructed with the material type of process (*arrested* (3) and *arraigned* (1)). The processes, in the façade, show the reports are focused on the aftermath of the sexual assault, however, the assault still appears in each clause through circumstantialisation. The cause-reason circumstance type is used to subsume the activities of the perpetrators:

- i. for alleged serial rape and impregnating a teenager [sic]
- ii. for allegedly raping and impregnating a 14-year-old girl
- iii. for allegedly raping and impregnating the daughter of the sister to Kabiru's wife
- iv. for allegedly raping and impregnating a teenager

Two processes (actions of the perpetrators) are nominalised and embedded in each circumstance.

Concluding remark:

This paper investigates discourse constructions around three main protagonists in a serial rape case which leads to unwanted pregnancy: how the female victim and the two male perpetrators and their actions are represented in the selected Nigerian newspaper reports. Various kinds of representations of these social actors are realized through linguistic choices adopted by the newspapers in reporting the event. While many studies have concluded that newspapers have the tendency of being insensitive to the plights of victims of gender-based crime which are usually females, this study, based on the analysis of the data, found that the discourse constructions in these newspapers are relatively fair to the victim, while the perpetrators and their actions are exposed with the perpetrators treated as outcasts by totally *devoicing* them (not given either direct or indirect voice) in their discursive strategies.

Discourses do not exist in a vacuum; they are affected by, and have an effect on, past and future discursive events in both social and cultural (genre) terms. Furthermore, language use cannot be seen as neutral, rather it implicitly or explicitly, consciously or unconsciously

represents values and ideologies. The discourse constructions are a rejection of the perpetrators and their acts.

Appendix

THE GUARDIAN NIGERIA

Father, son, allegedly impregnate 13-year-old girl

By Oditia Sunday

08 April 2019 | 3:50 am

1. A 44-year-old man, Kabiru Oke, and his son, Farouq, aged 19, have been arrested by the police in Lagos State for alleged serial rape and impregnating a teenager (names withheld).
2. The incident happened at their No. 1, Olatikupo Street, Egbeda residence for about four months while the 13-year-old victim lived with her aunt, the man's wife.
3. It was gathered that the girl had reported Oke's sexual abuse on several occasions to his wife but she always shut her up and their son joined in the act when he caught his father raping the victim.
4. Unable to withstand the defilement, the girl, it was gathered, fled to her mother's place in Ogun State in January where she was enrolled in a school. It was her teacher who later discovered she was pregnant.
5. At this point, the girl revealed her ordeals in her aunt's home in Lagos, which prompted her mother to file a report at the police station. According to the victim, the sexual assaults first started in October last year, when her aunt's husband asked her to fetch water for him.
6. "He asked me to watch water to bath and I did. When I brought the water, he pushed me inside the bathroom and raped me. From then, he was doing it regularly. I told my aunt but she did not do anything about it.
7. "The man continued doing it since his wife did not take any action. Then, in January, Farouq started his own. He saw his father sleeping with me and then, he started doing it," the child told Child Protection Network's (CPN) Precious Ndukwu.
8. Confirming the arrest of the suspects, police spokesman, Bala Elkana, said the case was reported at the Gender Unit by the child's mother on March 27, adding that the defilement by Oke commenced on October 20.
9. He said: "The second suspect, being the son of the first suspect, started having unlawful carnal knowledge of the same minor on January 10. The suspects have constantly threatened to kill the victim if she ever told anybody about the affairs. The survivor was taken to Mirabel Centre by Gender Unit for medical examination. The two suspects were arrested and charged to Magistrate Court two Ogba for defilement. The case was adjourned for May 13, while the suspects were remanded in Kirikiri prison."

THE CABLE

Father, son arrested for ‘raping, impregnating’ teenager

1. The Lagos state police command has arrested a 44-year-old man and his 19-year-old son for allegedly raping and impregnating a 14-year-old girl.
2. Bala Elkana, the command’s spokesperson, announced this in a statement.
3. He said the case was reported at the gender unit of the command by the mother of the victim.
4. Elkana said that the unit received a complaint that a minor was being defiled by her sister’s husband identified as Kabiru Oke of 1, Olatikupo street, Egbeda and his son, Oke Faruq, 19, living within the same premises with his father.
5. He said the girl had been living with the suspects for some time now, and that her sister’s husband started having carnal knowledge of her since last October.
6. “The second suspect, being the son of the first suspect, started having unlawful carnal knowledge of the same minor on January 10, 2019,” he said.
7. “The suspects have constantly threatened to kill the victim if she ever tells anybody about the affairs. The victim exposed them when her mother suspected some changes in her and discovered that she was pregnant.”
8. The PPRO said the girl had been taken to Mirabel Centre by the gender unit of the police command for medical examination, while the two suspects had been arrested and charged to a magistrate court .
9. “The case was, however adjourned till May 13, 2019 while the suspects were remanded in Kirikiri Prisons,” he said.

The PUNCH

Father, son remanded for raping, impregnating teenager

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1. Operatives of the Lagos State Police Command have arrested one Kabiru Oke , and his son , Faruq , for allegedly raping and impregnating the daughter of the sister to Kabiru 's wife in the Egbeda area of the state .
2. The suspects were alleged to have taken advantage of the fact that the victim lived with them by having carnal knowledge of her and threatened to kill her if she revealed the molestation to anyone .
3. The state ' s Police Public Relations Officer , DSP Bala Elkana , in a statement on Sunday, said the suspects were exposed after the victim 's mother suspected some changes in her, which led to the discovery that she was pregnant.
4. He stated that the personnel of the command arrested the suspects after receiving a complaint from the victim's mother, adding that both Kabiru and Faruq had been charged to court for molestation.
5. Elkana said , “ On Wednesday, March 27 , 2019, the command 's Gender Unit received a complaint of molestation of a minor reported by the mother of the minor against the husband of her elder sister, Kabiru Oke , 44, and his son , Faruq Oke, 19 , at No 1 Olatikupo Street, Egbeda.
6. “The victim has lived with the perpetrators for a couple of years. The unholy affair between the minor and the first suspect started on Saturday, October 20, 2018, with the suspect having constant sexual intercourse with the victim. The second suspect, being the son of the first suspect, started having unlawful carnal knowledge of the same minor on Thursday, January 10, 2019. The suspects had constantly threatened to kill the victim if she ever told anyone about the affairs.
7. “The victim exposed them when her mother noticed some changes in her and discovered that she was pregnant. The victim was taken to the Mirabel Centre by our Gender Unit for medical examination. The two suspects were arrested and charged to Magistrates' Court 2, Ogba, for molestation. The case was adjourned till Monday, May 13, 2019, while the suspects were remanded in the Kirikiri Prison. ”

VANGUARD

Father, son docked for allegedly raping, impregnating teenager

on April 8, 2019 6:43 AM / IN News / Comments By Esther Onyegbula

1. A 44-year-old man, Kabiru Oke, and his 19-year-old son, Oke Faruq, have been arraigned in court for allegedly raping and impregnating a teenager, who lived with them at 1, Olatikupo Street, Egbeda, Lagos.
2. It was gathered that victim (name withheld), lived with the suspects for a couple of years while the unholy affairs lasted.
3. It was also gathered that on March 27, 2019, the mother of the teenager (name withheld) reported the incident to the Gender Unit, Police Command.
4. According to her, the husband of her elder sister, Kabiru Oke, and his son, Oke Faruq, raped and impregnated her daughter who lived with them.

Victim's account

5. According to the victim, my uncle, Kabiru Oke, started having carnal knowledge of me from October 20, 2018, and since then he constantly had sexual intercourse with me, while his son, Faruq, started having sex with me January this year. I endured it all as both of them constantly threatened to kill me if I ever tell anybody about the affairs.
6. "It was when my mother noticed the changes in my body and discovered that I was pregnant that I had to open up to her."
7. Confirming the incident, DSP Bala Elkana, Police Public Relations Officer, Lagos State said the two suspects in the case, who were arrested and charged to Magistrate's Court 2, Ogba for defilement, were remanded in Kirikiri prison, while the victim was taken to Mirabel Centre by the Gender Unit for medical examination.

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