

Linguistic Violence on Women: Representation of Women in Ritual Killing Discourse on Nigerian Social Media Space

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Abstract: Language can be used to represent people in a humiliating and defaming way that violates their humanity. In the discourse of ritual killing on social media, Nigerian women are often blamed for their misfortunes of victimization through ritual killing and are further abused verbally. This study analyzes the representation of linguistic violence on women through evaluating the discourses on ritual killings on Nigerian social media space. It adopts Norman Fairclough's model of critical discourse analysis and qualitative research design. After observing the social media platforms in Nigeria for a period of three months, from January-March, 2022, the researcher purposively collected eight (8) data from Facebook and four (4) from Twitter totaling twelve (12) data analyzed. Findings indicated that women are blamed and defamed in the discursive representation of ritual killings in Nigeria. By implication, the perpetrators (mostly men) are excused and the patriarchal subjugation of women are sustained.

Keywords: linguistic violence, critical discourse analysis, gender-based violence, ritual killing discourse, social media

1. Introduction

According to the UN in Nigeria [34], manifestations of violence on women include sexual violence, physical violence, emotional and psychological violence, child marriage, femicide, trafficking, female genital mutilation (FGM) domestic violence and rape (sexual harassment). Scholars have critically evaluated the violence experienced by women, which impact on women, and society at large. World Bank Group [35] posits that violence against women and girls, in any form, reflects and reinforces existing gender inequality. Violence can take form through language. For [37], language is a commonsocial behavior and helps in the realization of meaning, "semantically and pragmatically" (p.83) For [16], language expresses violence as "violence has its meaning in its other: language" (p.33). Thus, one could say that violence and language has a bi-directional relationship. The dialectical nature of language and violence exists in the sense that language expresses violence through sentences or linguistic units while violence establishes its meaning through language. To [16] (p.34) "language as speech is such that it is the place where violence reaches expression...". Linguistic expressions give voice to violence the same way it also lends voice to non-violence; language manifests violence through hate speech, sexist speech/discourse (language), for instance, and also shows non-violence through peace talks for instance. Language can malign and also make. Malign language are expressions of violence whose effect could be covert or overt that wounds the

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person/group such words are used on. On the other hand, language that makes is peace-oriented linguistic expressions with the thrust of ensuring unity, humanity and progress of a person, group, or society.

Linguistic violence is an instance of covert violence. It refers to unhygienic, injurious or hurtful words that humiliate, shame and defame an individual or group by affecting their state of mind and social relations. Scholars who have worked on linguistic violence (see: Adetunji 2010; Obianika and Emeka-Nwobia, 2019; Ozo, 2018; Gorsevski 1998; Ryazanova-Clarke, 2016; Silva, 2014; Santaemilia & Maruenda, 2014), have shown that violence, on women, can be manifested linguistically when it takes expression in language with the intention to hurt, dehumanize, belittle or harm. However, [9] argues that linguistic violence is a “form of physical violence” because it “has impacts on its victims or targets in a physical way such as being: ‘depressed’, ‘physically lethargic’ or ‘physically ill’” (513). Linguistic violence therefore has a significant impact on its victims. Linguistic violence is a “form of physical violence” as it “has impacts on its victims or targets in a physical way such as being: ‘depressed’, ‘physically lethargic’ or ‘physically ill’” [9]. The use of linguistic violence causes considerable harm on the person or group that is linguistically harmed. Butler (1997:10 cited in [17] (p. 5-6) opines that linguistic violence “occurs when, as Austin explains, the physical conduct and the linguistic expression conflate, when the word becomes injury, creating a specific cultural form of a spectacular performances, an ‘enigmatic and problematic production of a speaking body. Languages are said to perform actions, thus linguistic violence are not mere linguistic expressions rather are such verbal expressions that perform acts of harm, damage or humiliation on someone. A scholar [20] asserts that “... violent utterance and event do not represent states of affairs but rather the performance of certain acts...” (p.5). To [18] “linguistic violence tends to accompany and reinforce physical, overt forms of violence”. They supported their claim while quoting Gay (2007, p.435) who asserts that “throughout history, linguistic violence has occurred alongside physical violence, often preceding, facilitating and rationalizing physical violence” (p.8)

Recently in Nigeria, there is an unprecedented increase in the social crime of ritual killing which has drawn attention of people from far and wide. Ritual killing, a form of (physical) violence that is predominant in Nigeria, involves the killing of humans to use certain parts of their bodies to prepare charms believed to make one rich. In Nigeria, this has become rampant with women constituting a majority of the victims [3]. The menace, which itself is physical violence, has generated a lot of discourses on social media in which indices of linguistic violence targeted on women are observed.

The objectives of study include:

- a. To investigate the indices of linguistic violence on women manifested in the selected texts
- b. To explore the implications of linguistic violence on women, society and perpetrators.

2.0 Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria

Across the globe, gender-based violence, GBV, is a cankerworm that has eaten (and will continue to eat) deep into the unity-fabrics of the globe. The social issue of GBV continues to foster inequality, marginalization, stigmatization and discrimination that exist in the world. The [35] sees (gender-based) violence as reflecting and reinforcing existing gender inequality. Gender-based violence is also described as a phenomenon that is deeply rooted in gender inequality, and continues to be the most notable violator of human rights within all societies and is violence directed against a person because of their gender (the European Institute of Gender Equality, EIGE, 2019 cited in Osah & Oyedamade, 2021).

In the African setting, the cultures that exist prioritizes males over females, thereby constructing the patriarchal dominant socio-cultural ideology that places main roles on the males while females play subordinating roles. Nigeria, a heterogeneous African country, is a place where this phenomenon of male dominance dwells and as such [14] record that (domestic) violence is not a new phenomenon to the Nigerian society. Manifestations of (gender-based) violence encompassing its types, to UN Nigeria (2020), include sexual violence, physical violence, emotional and psychological violence, child marriage, femicide, trafficking, female genital mutilation (FGM) domestic violence and rape (sexual harassment). The females are the mostly violated, regardless of the fact that males, in some but rare cases, are also victims of gender-based violence. Because of the superiority and patriarchal dominant ideology that exists in the socio-cultural settings that prioritize males over women, the females are placed as subordinators. Thus, [14] argue that the culture of both minority and majority groups in Nigeria only place subordinate roles on the female. In Nigerian families, the men are described as the head of the family and are said to wield mega-powers whereas the females are described as property of the man and the weaker vessel in terms of strength. All these exist in the Nigerian culture and religion, because of the male dominant or patriarchal dominant ideology that makes the cultural mythology on which gender-based violence thrives.

Based on the patriarchal dominant ideology, the females suffer gravely in the hands of males. They (females) may be victims of verbal (linguistic) violence or physical violence which has demeaning, dehumanizing and belittling impacts on the female who are victimized in the process of exercising male power.

Linguistic violence consists of covert forms of violence, because the impact of linguistic violence can occur in physical forms which may be in form of sickness, but has more of psychological implications on the person(s) injurious verbal expressions are used on in society. In this study, the researcher adopts the forms of linguistic violence propounded by Williams C. Gay (1998), which has a continuum that is based on two factors: degrees of violence and degrees of awareness. The forms are: subtle form, abusive form and grievous form. The subtle form of linguistic violence occupies the lower part of the continuum where the victims are “vaguely aware” [8] of the violence and is also “based on the unconscious use of language by persons or groups to subjugate other persons or groups... [and is seen in the] use of single term of address, ‘Mr.’ for the male folk, regardless of the addressee’s age or marital status unlike the bifurcation of ‘Miss’ and ‘Mrs.’ to differentiate the female folk along the same lines as for males” [1, 4]. Subtle linguistic violence also resides in jokes, e.g. children’s jokes with the intent to make jest of another person. Thus, this could simply be said to be a type of violence which superficially looks “plain” or “innocent” to the victims that are unaware of it.

On the aspect of the abusive form of linguistic violence, violence here refers to offensive; injurious or hurtful linguistic items that are often used with the aim or desire to hurt the individuals such terms are directed to or used on. According to [8], racist language, sexist language, classist language and heterosexist language are instances of abusive forms of language with violence undertone. Here, the victims are aware of the dehumanizing and shaming intention of speakers or users of linguistic items that are violent on them, and they are usually hurt or wounded by such unhygienic languages. At the level of sexist language is manifestations of such linguistic items as the “various neutral or ‘macho’ terms like ‘men’, ‘guy’, ‘dude’ and ‘blokes’ which are used to address the male folk, while the females are addressed as ‘gals’, ‘girls’, ‘base’, ‘bitches’, and ‘whores’ which are “derogatory and demeaning” [1, 4].

The grievous form of linguistic violence, occupying the other end (highest part) of the continuum, has “the scale of violence beyond mere verbal abuse” and has the intent to “silence or even eliminate an entire social group”, which the victim is aware of [8]. The instances of this form of linguistic violence are evident in “warist, totalitarian and genocidal languages” [8] and it silences people psychologically and socially.

3.0 Power, Ideology and Hegemony in Social Construct

Power, a force of dominance in the society, manifests in language use. Power relations are asymmetrical and unequal in our society which makes for the inequality, discrimination, victimization etc. in human social construct. Powerful participants in discourse control power in discourse as well as navigate the discourse trajectories. Power is exercised in two different ways which are: use of physical force/coercion by “the law, the police or the military to secure social control and dominance” and use of ideology according to [5] involves “the shaping [of] the consciousness of institutional subjects, through persuasion mediated by discourse, to accept the ideas, beliefs and values of those in control as ‘the truth’ that everyone should strive after” (p.158). According to Fairclough (1989, p.38-39 cited in [19], power in discourse is controlled by powerful participants. Fairclough believes that power relations are asymmetrical, unequal, and empowering that belongs to a special class or group [2]. For [38], uneven power distribution in a society results in the powerful class or persons controlling the less powerful ones and this is attained through the “strategic use of certain linguistic elements which underlies their power as well as ideologies, beliefs, or worldview shared by that set” (p.89). The exercise of power in discourse is highly achieved through ideology and such ideological knowledge helps a (powerful) person or group to do their will and control the discourse and also influence other speakers, even though they have their own opinion.

Ideology, expressed in language or discourse, is the representation of the social “reality” which is shared by persons in a group. According to [33], ideology refers to “a person’s beliefs, disposition, expression of feelings (non-verbal), and so on” which “helps people (or such persons) to behave in a certain way according to the situation they adapted to and perceived as ‘right’ or ‘common’ (p.13). A person’s ideology is how a phenomenon is perceived/viewed by such person which conditions or structures how things/events in the society are interpreted. For [12], ideology refers to “a system of ideas which constitute and pilots the large power blocks of our society (p.4). Ideology are social forms and practices that are structured cognitively in the minds of social group(s) and also guides their thought patterns and attitudes to things.

Hegemony, for [6], refers to “leadership as well as dominations across the economic, political, cultural and ideological domains of a society” (p.76). It refers to authority possessed by one person or group over the socio-cultural, political and economic in the society and is concerned about creating unity or forming alliance/affinity/union through the act of incorporating the subordinate classes rather than dominating them and this incorporation are achieved through the use of ideology to gain their (subordinate classes’) consent or approval.

4.0 Literature Review

So many researches have done research on linguistic violence over the years. Two researchers [13] researched on “The Influence of Time on Linguistic Violence in Marriage: The Igbo Language Perspective” to investigate the causes of linguistic violence in marriage and the influence time on the use of linguistic violence in marriage from the Igbo Language perspective. The researchers deployed structured interview to collect data and analyzed the data using descriptive and inferential methods of analysis. The data collected are three couples from rural areas and three couples from

urban areas. The study revealed that causes of linguistic violence include frustration, anger, child training, threat, finance matters and in-law related matters while it is manifested in forms of abusive words, accusations, expressions of infidelity suspicion in partner, nagging, partial or complete withdrawal of speech (censorship) and so on. They further discovered that time, western education, modernization and Christianity has improved women's status in the society as well as in relationships of marriage and these facts mentioned have reduced the occurrences of linguistic violence in marriage among the Igbo. Also discovered is the impact of time of marriage which showed that older marriage has less frequency of using hurtful or injurious languages on another person. Thus, the conclusion that time has reduced the use of abusive language in marriage among the Igbo people.

Another scholar [15] worked on the topic: "Linguistic Violence and the Status of Women in Igbo Society: The Case of Ehugbo" to investigate the use of injurious language and women's status in Ehugbo in Igbo Society. Data were gathered from eight (8) communities- Ozizza, Ugwuegu, Ohaisu, Nkpogho, Itim, Unwana, Akpoha and Amasiri, of Ehugbo through oral interview that involves verbal interaction and a total number of forty (40) respondent which has five respondents from each of the communities of Ehugbo. The researcher used purposive method of data sampling and qualitative analysis form to study the data. From the study, it was discovered that in Ehugbo socio-cultural context, linguistic violence is perpetrated both overtly and covertly. In the aspect of the former, physical harm is caused seen on the victim while in the latter perspective violence is concealed and emotional as well as psychological harm is done to the victim. The researcher further discovered that the covert form of linguistic violence is often found in some cultural practices which being dominated by the men and causes harm to the victim (women).

Furthermore, [1] worked on the topic: "Aspects of Linguistic Violence to Nigerian Women" to investigate some of the forms of linguistic violence inflicted or caused on women in Nigeria. Data were collected and sampled from diverse linguistic groups, the media and commercial bank- Union Bank and the study employed the frameworks of linguistic violence –of Gay Williams- and feminist linguistics. This research discovered that subtle and abusive forms of linguistic violence were used to silence and dominate women of Nigerian, which could be said to be effects of dictates of culture of patriarchal and androgynous culture. These researches basically focused on investigating linguistic violence on women from the aspect of: the provisions of the Igbo society, culture and tradition and also from commercial institutions as well as its causes. This therefore creates a lacuna in knowledge which this current study will fill. This study focuses on analyzing linguistic violence on women in ritual discourse in Nigerian social media space. Thus, the research questions guiding this study include: In order to achieve these objectives, the study developed the following research questions:

- a. What are the values of relation in the textual features?
- b. What are the values of textual features with regards to the subject position of the producers?
- c. What values do the texts have in terms of the subject position of the women spoken about?
- d. What is the role of language?
- e. What are the implications of the use of linguistic violence on women?
- f. What are the implications of linguistic violence on the perpetrators and society?

5.0 Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the critical discourse analysis, henceforth CDA, model of Norman Fairclough, which sees discourse as a social practice. CDA, an interdisciplinary approach to the study of language in its natural setting or context, is, according to [21] “a very important research tool which moves beyond a surface-level examination of discourse to show how discourse can produce and hide deep structure relations of power and inequality” (p.1). For Martin and Wodak (2003:6 in Wodak, 2001 cited in [11]. CDA is “fundamentally interested in analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language”. Critical discourse analysis, for Fairclough (1993), is:

“discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practice, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony” [10] (p. 45).

CDA critically analyzes oppressive, injurious and demeaning languages to locate and unveil the power structures and ideology (in a text). “Discourse,” to [6], has three aspects: social practice, discursive practice (text production, distribution and consumption) and text. These three aspects show the ideology and power structure that exist in a socio-cultural construct.

The focus is on his three dimensional aspects of doing critical discourse analysis according to [7]. The three dimensions of doing CDA are:

- a. description stage (textual analysis; involves the analysis of the formal features of a text (spoken/written);
- b. interpretation stage (process analysis; concerned with the interaction of the text and the identity as well as ideology of the text producer which is crucial in text interpretation; and
- c. explanation stage (social analysis; deals with the explanation of “the relationship between social events and social structures that affect these events and also are affected by them” [2] (p.85).

6.0 Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive and qualitative research design. This is considered appropriate because it is suitable for the purpose of this study which uses samples of language in their natural form. The researcher purposively selected twelve (12) data samples. Eight (8) were purposively selected on Facebook and four (4) on X (formerly called Twitter) within the 2022-year period. This is because they are on ritual discourse which trended within that time frame in Nigerian society.

7.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

7.1 The Data

Here, the discourse producers of these purposively selected data are anonymized to the use of speakers and differentiated them with figures.

Excerpt A: “... Girls can't you live without living that luxury life you can't afford so that you stop becoming victims??...Girls it's only you that can stop this with the help of God, stop lusting after flesh, be contented, be responsible, work, pray, hustle, don't be lazy and be free from longer throat that will lead you to your death...” (Speaker 1, 2022).

Excerpt A1: “Killing of young girls is motivated by young girls because they are always looking for guys that have made it not minding the source” (Speaker 2's comment to Speaker 1's Post, 2022).

Excerpt B: *“Boys are using girls for ritual every day, please young girls be careful out there, if you [a]re a girl and I know you then one day a guy used you for ritual I will be angry with you, just be careful don’t say I didn’t tell you, look for a good guy out there, if you see he’s”* (Speaker 3 @twitter, 2022).

Excerpt C: *“.... Letting go & starting over is leaving the past behind unless you’re ready & trust whoever you’re with but some girls can’t handle the truth, well, if you have money it won’t matter, THEY are shameless”* (Speaker 4 @twitter, 2022).

Excerpt D: *“Men, stop seeing women as dispensable items for rituals. Stop killing off our young women”* (Speaker 5, 2022)

Excerpt D1: *“...Women have a track record of dumping a growing man to a man who is camouflaging riches. Not all that glitters is gold”* (Speaker 5, 2022);

Excerpt E: *“I pity all this small small girls that don’t want to have sense or use their lives to do something important”* (Speaker 6, 2022).

Excerpt F: *“Killing of young girls is motivated by young girls because they are always looking for guys that have made it not minding the source”* (Speaker 7, 2022).

Excerpt G: *“...Stop following money and chilling with the pick boys”* (Speaker 8, 2022).

Excerpt H: *“Not surprised. 90% of my colleagues justified the ritual killing of young girls because they are materialistic.....social media is different from reality”* (Speaker 9 @Twitter, 2022)

Excerpt I: *“Girls of this days dear men with the way [the]y demand for too much money and material tins[things] that will be forgotten someday...”* (Speaker 10, 2022)

Excerpt J: *“You girls love money and material enjoyments more than their lives so stop complaining...”* (Speaker 11, 2022),

7.2 The Analysis

Description Stage (Textual Analysis) Here, the focus will be on the representations of the textual features on the subject position of women and the positions of the discourse producers:

Question 1: What are the values of relation in the textual features?

The values of relation provide insights into the social relationship existing between the text producers and text subjects which are represented in the discourse produced by text producer. The relationship between discourse producers and discourse subjects are expressed in the producers’ representation of “self” and “other” that is themselves and other people. words that express this relation are pronouns and some lexical items.

Pronouns: (personal) pronouns creates social distance in discourse either by inclusion or exclusion of “self” and/or “other”. Thus, (personal) pronouns are ways to express togetherness, disparity, friendliness or enmity. The use of such words that creates social distance have impact on text consumers. Evidenced in the text are the use of “they”, “you”, “I”, “our”.

You: is predominant in almost all the texts. “You” is an indefinite or impersonal pronoun that is used to refer to all and sundry regardless of their social standing, prestige or class. The text producers employed the use of “you” as an exclusivist strategy of distancing themselves from others, in this case the females/women. The second person pronoun is adopted by text producers as a relational means to show disparity in the class. In excerpt A and B, the text producers employed the use of YOU predominantly. The use of the second person pronoun is adopted by text producers as a

relational means to show disparity in the class. The discourse producers use this pronoun to show their social standing characterized by power and authority which are hidden in their texts.

They: “they” is sparingly used in the discourses on ritual killing, but instances evident in some texts they appeared in are deployed by text producers to create a social distance between themselves and the subject of their discourse, women. This places them in a position of authority and the other in a less powerful class. Instances of the use of the third person plural pronoun is in Excerpts A1, which is a comment to Nye Krukubo’s Facebook post (2022), and C. Here, the producers of these discourse excerpts show their authority over others via the use of “they” to differentiate their class from the less powerful one, in this case the females, who are the subject of their discourses.

Our: this pronoun is employed in the text on ritual killing to show the possessiveness powers, for instance control or judgement powers, the discourse producers wield over the other, in this case the women, which is shown to text consumers. An instantiation is in Excerpt D, where the text producer described the females as theirs, their property of ownership.

The text producers displayed power through their discourses which is capable of creating a distance between them and the subject of their discourse; females. This power marks them out as superior and wielder of authority over others.

Question 2: What are the values of textual features with regards to the subject position of the producers?

The concentration here is to investigate how the subject position of the discourse producers are represented in their texts which enact their ideology about themselves. For this investigation, the research looks at the use of first person pronoun “I”, modes (declarative, imperative and interrogative modes) and modalities in the texts.

I: the first person pronoun is used by discourse producers to express their power of authority since they are the speakers or in the position to producing texts. Instantiations of the use of the personal pronoun “I” that expresses authority and power of control are in Excerpts B and E.

The first person pronoun, “I”, is used by text producers to show the extent of power and authority they wield over the “other” as such exerts control to certain things the “other” does and this invariably widens the distance in the social relationships of social actors.

The declarative mode: is employed by text producers to give information through their statements or assertions whereas the role of the text consumer is to take in the information released. The excerpts D1 and F show where the discourse producers give information

Imperative mode: the imperative sentences are used by discourse producers to make request or command, that is to give instructions. The Excerpts D and G instantiate the text producers giving commands.

Through these texts, discourse producers express their authority over others by way of commanding and also manner of placing themselves in positions of control or superiority over others. The imperative, declaratives and first person pronoun illustrates this.

Question 3: What values do the texts have in terms of the subject position of the women spoken about?

Here, the focus is on how the subjects of the ritual killing discourse are presented in the texts on ritual killing. Word hints to the subject position of women in the texts are provided in the texts using vocabulary items as well as sentence structures that show detestable or dehumanizing qualities of (Nigerian) females. Such demeaning vocabulary items include:

- *“longer throat”* in excerpt A
- *“dispensable items”* in excerpt D
- *“Shameless”* as in excerpt C
- *“Materialistic”* as in excerpt H
- *“Demand for too much money”* as in excerpt I

Sentence structures that evidence the belittling and demeaning of females are seen in the Excerpts A, F and J, where females are represented: as longing for luxurious lifestyle and are described as those that can't afford to live such life as lovers as money and enjoyments than their lives, thus insinuating that the females prefer the former to the latter, and that women as the motivators of their own death/victims of ritual killing.

The producer of the text mentioned above describe females as being materialistic which for the quest to live their “expected luxury life”, show little or no concern about their lives. Through the discourse, the position of authority and power of the discourse producers are evidenced which they use to condemn, judge and dehumanize women.

Interpretation Stage (Process Analysis): Here, the focus will be on the discourse topic, discourse participants, positions of the discourse producers, and the role played by language on the subject position of women:

What is going on? A discussion of opinions on the issues about women in the ritual killing.

Who is involved? The people involved here are different social actors from different social categories representing their ideologies in their discourse. Women are the subject of the text producers' discourse.

In what relation? The discourse producers are identified in the positions of power and authority whereby they regard themselves as well-placed, non-victims. Thus, they use their position of power and authority to violate the women through their language.

What is the role of language? Language is used here instrumentally to injure, demean and dehumanize females. The text producers availing themselves of their positions of power and authority employs language to cause harm to the subjects of their discourse; women. The linguistic violence in the texts are indexed in three forms: subtle, abusive and grievous. In the Excerpts A and C show linguistic violation. In these discourses, the subject of the discourse, younger females, are identified as not being able to handle truths about the identities of their relationship or association partners, thus retains their relationship because of the existence of money. The females are indirectly referred to as being irrational for not dealing with truths told to them. Again, the text producers see the females from this perspective and describe them with a demeaning, dehumanizing and hurtful word “shameless” which abuses and has the intent to hurt the females.

Additionally, Excerpt H, further instantiates the use of linguistic violence on females. Here, the females are described as being “materialistic”, a demeaning, belittling and greedy word for the description of females, and in the producer's perspective this materialistic nature of females justifies their (females) being seen as well as used as objects for money-making ritual killing. The discourse producer specifically chose this adjective to abuse the younger females, thus the existence of abusive form of linguistic violence in the text.

In these examples, language is used as a resource tool to violate the subjects in these discourses samples. Through the hurtful languages employed by text producers to describe females, the societal

ideology that prioritizes male-dominant or patriarchal superiority manifests, thus showing the subjugation and marginalization of females.

Explanation Stage (Social Analysis)

Here, the focus will be on the implications of the textual features on the subject position of women and on society as well as perpetrators of linguistic violence:

What are the implications of the use of linguistic violence on women?

The idea here is on the ways linguistic violence made to females impacts them generally and specifically the females who are used for ritual killing. Violence of any form has ripple effects on persons or groups that are victimized/violated. The women get affected by the violence done on them linguistically in the light of the discourse on money ritualism.

In Excerpt A, the females are seen as wanting to live a luxury life that they cannot afford which in their bid to meet their quest eventuates to their victimization and use for money-making ritualism. Thus, the producer asserts that their “longer throat”, “lust after flesh” cost them their lives. From this discourse, the females’ description of in the negativity would impact them psychologically, in that they would dissociate with their male counterpart in order to save their “face” from being harmed.

Additionally, in Excerpt D, it could be implicated that women are seen as objects of sacrifices as in they are killed for ritual. Here, the speaker refers to them as “dispensable items” which could be liken to something that has value and loses its value once it is being put for use, thus women are used when the need arises and trashed after use. The objectification of women achieved through the verbal violence made on them consequently impacts them negatively via ways they see themselves in the society and the aura of insecurity surrounding their existence.

It could be inferred, also, that the females are described as deserving to be used for ritual sacrifice because of the tag placed on them as being in “[high] demand for money” and have love for materialism. Hence, for a lady to be inclined towards acquiring money and material thing from men, they will be, consequently, used for ritual and the money or materialism they are after “will be forgotten someday”. This is evidenced in Excerpt I.

The effect of the different forms of violence on the women manifests covertly (psychologically), though not in a large scale, so to say. Women generally and the female victims from such violent linguistic discourses, particularly, consequently dissociate from social relationships; turn to be asocial and skeptical about relating with others especially with the opposite sex because they unfortunate ends would always be manipulated to be their own (women’s) doing. This is seen in the Excerpt F. The impact of violence on women by means of language manifests overtly (physical ways) as well as in opaque or covertly as expressed in their psychological, social behaviors/attitudes, socialization and so on. These implications of linguistic violence on them further thicken the lines of the segregation in the society. The social practice is continually propagated and sustained.

What are the implications of linguistic violence on perpetrators and society?

On the aspect of the society and the perpetrators, the idea is on how the linguistic violence on women in the discourse of ritual killing/money-making ritualism is viewed by the society and consequently on the perpetrators of such crimes. The discourse on ritual killing has received little or no attention given the increment in the cases of females that are killed by ritualists in all the nooks and crannies of the Nigerian nation.

In excerpt A, the perpetrators are indirectly termed “guiltless” or served with little or no punishment that is deserving of their crime because, based on the assumption that they satisfied the females’

needs, therefore, theirs ought to be rewarded in the same coin; a sort of transactional relationship or association.

The discourse of ritual killing, for some, seems to be justified and the perpetrators of such crimes go un-sanctioned or not properly punished as the society constantly puts the blames of female's death as a result of being used for money ritualism on them (the victims) with the ideology that any woman, who wants to be in any relationship should, more importantly, check and investigate about the would-be partner inasmuch as there is wealth or not, because one who fetches an insect-infested firewood has called on the lizards to a festive occasion. This is illustrated in Excerpt F. Here, the discourse producer reckons that the unfortunate end of young girls is as a result of their quest for males who have attained high economic standing in the society and their inconsideration of the males' source of earnings. By the text producer's statement, it could be deduced that the light of guilt should not be on the perpetrators of acts of ritual killing rather on the victims, thereby not sanctioning the perpetrators, who are males.

Women in the society are blamed and shamed for their unfortunate ends by the society and consequently the perpetrators are not punished nor brought to book. Thus, the continuous occurrences of ritual killing in the society. This social practice increases the curve of inequality, marginalization and insecurity on women in the society. The hegemonic ideology that exists as expressed in this discourse is rooted in the societal practice towards the women, which places them at the line of marginalization and inequality, and promotes the patriarchal system of the society.

8.0 Discussion of Findings:

From the foregoing, this study has shown that the discourse producers of discourses on money-making ritualism employ textual features that strategically separate them from their text subject(s) as seen in their use of pronouns such as second person personal pronoun "you", possessive pronouns "our", and third person plural pronoun "they". These pronouns are exclusion approach used to isolate the subject of ritual killing discourses from the other class, that is the text producers' class. Again, the first person pronoun "I" was also used by the text producers as seen in answering the "question 2" of the "description stage". The first person pronoun shows the text producers wield power, control subjects and are superiors as seen in their use of hurtful linguistic items to judge, dehumanize and subjugate the subjects of their discourse. The languages of the text producers violate their discourse subjects by such use of de-facing and hurtful vocabularies as in excerpts: D, A, C, F, etc. Thus, the language as used by ritual killing discourse producers are said to be used instrumentally to harm, de-face and dehumanize the subjects of their discourses who are females. As seen in the literature reviewed, the discourse producers employed overt strategies of verbally or linguistically inflicting violence on their subjects, in [15]. It can also be said that these overt linguistic violence forms could be termed as subtle violence forms, as they clearly show exclusion and derogation of the discourse subjects.

The instrumental use of language to hurt has ripple effects it marks on the females while also indicating that the perpetrators are not blamed and the society do not sanction the perpetrators. The females who are the discourse subjects are blamed for their unfortunate ends, as seen in excerpt F and are termed wanting luxuries that they cannot afford, thereby mingling with financially established males in order to meet their demands, this is seen in excerpts A and I, for instance. Females are blamed, defamed and de-faced in the ritual killing discourses whereas the society see the perpetrators as blameless and guiltless, thus further enhancing the male dominant ideology and patriarchal superiority existence in the socio-cultural spheres of the economy.

9.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Linguistic violence, injurious or hurtful linguistic expressions that are used by “violators” on “victims” to hurt, wound or shame “others”, exists in different forms in our society and its effects are evident on the victims and creates ideology about the victimized in our social world. This article discussed the linguistic violence on Nigerian women as represented in social media in Nigeria. The forms of linguistic violence on Nigerian women appear mainly in subtle form but majorly in abusive form. The consequences of violence exerted on women linguistically widens the rope of female marginalization, impacts negatively in their psyche and hampers their socialization with others as they would resort to solitude given the demeaning state they are placed by society, which tolerates the social issue of ritual killing given its lackadaisical attitude to such discourse and blames the women for their misfortune. Thus, the perpetrators of such crimes of ritual killing, described go unpunished and consequently encouraged to continue with such abusive practice by the muteness of the society over money-making ritualism. This social practice of society continues to blame and objectify women and in the long run constitutes to the patriarchal system. It is recommended that the languages used by people in addressing or describing women should be checkmated to measure the level of injury or harm it would cause on the person such are used on. Thus, the use of more hygienic and offence-ridden words are encouraged. Again, the government and associated agencies in the society are called to action to trace and bring to book perpetrators of ritualism in the society, which will be promoting the safety of the females in society as well as engaging everyone on discourses on social equality to enhance the actualization of equality in the society. Furthermore, the women are advised to ensure their safety especially in their association with the opposite sex so as not to become victims of money-making ritualism.

Given the limited number of data used for this study, there is need to use more data samples to further investigate on the existence and impacts of use of linguistic violence by text producers.

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