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Transitivity System and Ideological Framing in News Headlines Reporting Gender-based Violence in Nigeria

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Keywords

Crime; ideology; media representation; Nigerian women; process types; participants; Systemic functional linguistics

Abstract

Gender-based violence, encompassing domestic abuse, sexual assault, and femicide, remains an enduring and widespread issue in Nigeria. This study aims to examine the transitivity system and ideology present in news headlines reporting gender-based violence in Nigeria. While adopting Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) Ideational Metafunction of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as the theoretical framework, the study uses content analysis method which includes both qualitative and quantitative approaches in the analysis of the data. 20 news headlines each published between May and August, 2022 on the official websites of two prominent mainstream media in Nigeria – The Punch and Nigerian Tribune – are purposively selected for this study, making a total of 40 news headlines. The analysis of transitivity system in The Punch online news revealed that thirty (30) processes are employed in the twenty (20) news headlines depicting crime committed against women in Nigeria selected from the newspaper. Twenty-nine (96.7%) of these processes are material process, while one (3.3%) is behavioural process. The prevailing occurrence of material process is also evident in the news headlines selected from Nigerian Tribune. In Nigerian Tribune, twenty-five (25) processes are deployed across the twenty (20) selected news headlines; material process appears twenty-four times (96%), while verbal process appears only once (4%). The dominant use of material process in the selected news headlines permits both media houses – The Punch and Nigerian Tribune – to identify and describe various physical and violent actions that were taken against Nigerian women, and also to identify actions taken by the law enforcement agencies to ensure justice for the victims of crime. The analysis further highlighted a representation of gender roles and power dynamics by revealing that all the material processes which are related to violence, such as 'rape', 'shot', 'abducts', 'kills', and 'punches', are linked with the male. Hence, men are portrayed as perpetrators of violent crimes while women are represented as the victims; women are portrayed as vulnerable, gang-raped, raped, shot, killed and stabbed. It was also discovered that women, along with related entities, are often used in news headlines to perform the participant role of goal, thereby implying an ideological representation that positions women as susceptible targets of violent crimes. This study therefore concludes that Nigerian media outlets primarily deploy material processes and goal participant roles of the transitivity system to present an amplified and sensational portrayal of various physical and aggressive actions inflicted upon women and young girls in Nigeria.

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Mots clés

Crime, femmes nigérianes, idéologie, linguistique systémique fonctionnelle, représentation médiatique

Résumé

Violence basée sur le genre, englobant les abus domestiques, les agressions sexuelles et les féminicides, reste un problème persistant et répandu au Nigeria. Cette étude vise à approfondir le système de transitivité et l'idéologie présente dans les gros titres des actualités signalant la violence basée sur le genre au Nigeria. En adoptant le Métafonction Idéationnelle de la Linguistique Systémique Fonctionnelle (LSF) de Halliday et Matthiessen (2014) comme cadre théorique, l'étude utilise une méthode d'analyse de contenu qui comprend à la fois des approches qualitatives et quantitatives dans l'analyse des données. Vingt gros titres d'actualités publiés entre mai et août 2022 sur les sites web officiels de deux grands médias grand public au Nigeria - The Punch et Nigerian Tribune - ont été sélectionnés à dessein pour cette étude, ce qui représente un total de 40 gros titres d'actualités. Les résultats révèlent la prédominance de processus matériels (96,7% dans The Punch ; 96% dans Nigerian Tribune) dans les gros titres sélectionnés, ce qui permet aux deux plates-formes médiatiques de dépeindre toute une série d'actions physiques et agressives dirigées contre les femmes nigérianes, ainsi que les actions entreprises par les organismes d'application de la loi pour assurer la justice aux victimes de crimes. On découvre également que les femmes, ainsi que des entités connexes, sont souvent utilisées dans les gros titres d'actualités pour jouer le rôle de bénéficiaire, impliquant ainsi une représentation idéologique qui positionne les femmes comme des cibles susceptibles d'être victimes de crimes violents. Cette étude conclut donc que les médias nigérians utilisent principalement des processus matériels et des rôles de participants bénéficiaires du système de transitivité pour présenter une représentation amplifiée et sensationnaliste des différentes actions physiques et agressives infligées aux femmes et aux jeunes filles au Nigeria

1. Introduction

Nigeria, among numerous other nations, confronts profound challenges in tackling crimes perpetrated against women. Gender-based violence, encompassing domestic abuse, sexual assault, and femicide, remains an enduring and widespread issue within the country. It is imperative not to underestimate the crucial role of the media in reporting and portraying these crimes, as it plays a pivotal role in raising public awareness, fostering meaningful discourse, and shaping policy discussions.

The media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing societal perceptions of various issues. Specifically, news headlines have the power to capture readers' attention and provide a condensed representation of the news story. The important objectives of headlines are to capture attention, present the main points of the news, convey the significance of the news, and reflect the identity of the publisher. The role of news headlines in reporting crimes committed against women, specifically gender-based violence, becomes even more crucial as they contribute to the construction of social reality surrounding these sensitive issues. Understanding the linguistic choices and ideological

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underpinnings of news headlines depicting crime against women is therefore essential in comprehending how these narratives are framed and conveyed to the public.

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that media framing and representation play a significant role in shaping public attitudes and responses towards gender-based violence. Hence, the language used in news headlines can shape public perception, reinforce stereotypes, and perpetuate societal biases. Analysing the linguistic choices and underlying ideologies embedded in news headlines is therefore crucial for understanding how crime against women is portrayed in the Nigerian media.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), developed by M.A.K. Halliday, provides a valuable framework for exploring the relationship between language and social context. This theory views language as a social semiotic, emphasising the functional aspects of language in conveying meaning and expressing interpersonal, textual, and ideational functions. By adopting SFL, this research focuses specifically on the ideational function of language in news headlines, examining how linguistic choices reflect the media houses' ideological representations of crime against women. The selected newspapers, *The Punch* and *Nigerian Tribune*, are chosen due to their wide readership and influence in Nigeria. Both media houses have a significant online presence and play a crucial role in shaping public opinion.

This research aims to delve into the transitivity system and ideology present in news headlines reporting crimes against women in Nigeria, focusing primarily on gender-based violence. The studyisguided by the following research questions:

- What are the process types and participant roles of the transitivity system employed in the selected news headlines?
- Which process types and participant roles of the transitivity system are most prevalent in the news headlines?
- How are ideological representations manifested in the transitivity system embedded in the news headlines?

Through this study, the researcher hopes to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on media representation of crimes against women in Nigeria. By employing an SFL-based analysis, this research can shed light on the linguistic patterns and ideological dimensions of news headlines, ultimately enhancing the readers' understanding of how these narratives shape public discourse and influence societal perceptions of gender-based violence.

2. Literature Review

Quite a number of academic research has been conducted to examine issues relating to transitivity and ideology in different forms of media discourse. These studies sought to deepen the understanding of the ways in which media representations and communication contribute to the shaping of public opinion and the perpetuation of dominant ideologies. Suparto's (2015) research on online news football match report, for

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instance, shows that transitivity analysis in SFL can be a tool to measure whether a text is biased by its writer's opinions or not. Suparto examines three match reports of the match between Manchester City FC and Chelsea FC on September 21st, 2014. The study relates the transitivity system to the purpose of the texts and reveals that two of three texts took sides while one was neutral.

Ong'onda (2016) conducts an analysis of newspaper headlines on terrorism attack in Kenya, and finds that material and relational processes are dominant. The results also demonstrate how the grammatical choices used by newspaper reporters contribute to subtly expressing the attitudes of the authors toward a certain Islamic community, which influences how readers form their opinions. Shi and Fan (2019) combines critical discourse analysis with Halliday's transitivity system approach to explore different ideologies in news reports on "the Belt and Road" (B&R) selected from both Chinese and American media. The analysis reveals that news report cannot be as impartial and transparent as it reflects objective facts because it serves the government interests and the mainstream social ideologies.

Similarly, Abbas and Talaat (2019), while adopting Halliday's transitivity system, studies word choices used in the headlines of Pakistani English newspapers' news depicting crime against women. Abbas and Talaat highlight the ideology underpinned in the discursive lexical choices and rhetorical devices used in them, and reveal how covertly the newspapers arouse the emotions of their readers to attract their attention and influence their opinion-making process. Liu and Jia (2020) investigate the language features and function of transitivity system in Chinese news media with the aim of revealing the cultural identity beyond the literal text. According to the study, Chinese journalists employ a variety of writing techniques to persuade readers to embrace the views they are trying to transmit. The news stories themselves also provide readers a favorable impression of China, and spread awareness of the country.

Khan (2020) focuses on semantic aspect of transitivity in the discourse of newspapers and their roles in showing what lies behind the lines of different ideologies imposed by their locutors. He investigates the ideologies and hidden interests between China and the USA over the drone captured in South China Sea by applying the transitivity system patterns. Qomariah, Saragih and Murni (2021) investigate transitivity system elements in news reportage about COVID-19 on CNN Online News. The analysis reveals that CNN Online News employs all the six process types in their news reporting, with the material process being the dominant type. Nwanko (2023) also deploys Halliday's transitivity system to analyse the news reporting of 2019 General Elections in *The Daily Sun* newspaper. Nwanko reveals that transitivity system can analyse clauses effectively, and also helps to solve the problem of personal reference in contexts of potential ambiguity.

These studies have provided evidence to support the idea that transitivity system plays a crucial role in comprehending a writer's intention when using language in specific discourses. Also, this system can unveil the ideologies, implicit or explicit biases, and

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power relations that are embedded within these discourses. This current study therefore represents a significant advancement in the field of critical discourse analysis as well as media representation of crimes, as it explores the application of Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to examine the process types and participant roles within the transitivity system present in *The Punch* and *Nigerian Tribune* news headlines. Furthermore, it delves into the ideological representations inherent in these news headlines, shedding light on crimes committed against women in Nigeria.

3. Theoretical Framework: Ideational Metafunction of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

Systemic Functional Linguistics (henceforth, SFL) is an approach to language developed largely by M.A.K. Halliday and his followers during the 1960s in the United Kingdom, and later in Australia. SFL is closely associated with sociology due to the fact that the theory is more interested in the manner at which language is utilised in social settings so as to attain a specific target (Almurashi, 2016). Because of the concern of SFL with the use of language, great emphasis is placed on the function of language, such as what language is used for, rather than what language structure is all about. Halliday (1994) in his work on SFL explains language as meanings rather than a combination of words and sentences.

The theory of SFL is of the view that all adult languages are organised around a small number of "functional components" which correspond to metafunctions (or the purposes which underlie all language use) and that these metafunctions have a systematic relationship with the lexico-grammar of the language (Bloor & Bloor, 2001, p. 9). The three metafunctions are ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. Each metafunction is concerned with a meaning, and each meaning "forms part of a different functional configuration, making up a separate stand in the overall meaning of the clause (Halliday, 2004, p. 34). The term 'metafunction' is adopted by Halliday (2004) to suggest that "function was an integral component within the overall theory" (p. 31). Ideational metafunction is used to construe man's experiences of the world and to represent reality; interpersonal metafunction provides resources for enacting the diverse and complex social relations of man; while textual metafunction provides resources for organising the experiential and interpersonal meanings into a linear and coherent whole (Butt, et al., 2013). In this present study, with emphasis on transitivity system, the ideational meanings embedded in news headlines depicting crime committed against women in Nigeria are analysed.

3.1 Ideational (or Experiential) Metafunction

The ideational meanings are the meanings about how humans represent experience in language. In other words, language performs a representative function of encoding people's experiences of the world. Eggins (2004) explains that in SFL, the ideational

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strand of meaning involves two components – experiential meaning in the clause, and logical meaning between clauses in clause complexes.

Halliday distinguishes between the two components: "experiential functions refer to the grammatical choices that enable speakers to make meanings about the world around us and inside us; the logical functions are those systems which set up logical-semantic relationships between one clausal unit and another" (2003, p. 17). This study, however, deals largely with the experiential function of language, since Halliday (2004) points out that the meanings we make in logical metafunctions are most closely related to the experiential function. Therefore, he puts the experiential and logical functions together into the ideational function. Experiential meaning is expressed through the system of transitivity (or process type), with the choice of process implicating associated participant roles and configurations (Halliday &Matthiessen, 2004).

3.2 Transitivity

Transitivity in SFL, as opposed to traditional grammar, is used to refer to a system for describing the whole clause, rather than just the verb and its object (Thompson, 2004). It shows how speakers deploy language to imagine their mental picture of reality and how they account for their experience of the world around them. Liping (2014) claims that "transitivity focuses on the transmission of ideas, so it has everything to do with the experiential function of language" (pp. 132-133).

A central insight of Halliday's model is that transitivity is the foundation of representation: it is the way the clause is used to analyse events and situations as being of certain types (Fowler, 1991, cited in Zhang, 2017, p. 67). Transitivity structures express representational meaning, that is, what the clause is about or in Halliday's term "clause as representation". SFL adopts the labels – process, participants and circumstances – to describe the happenings and states the entities and the conditions in which these events occur respectively. The process particularly is the means (the essential ingredient) by which transitivity carries out its experiential function. As observed by Gerot and Wignell (1994, p. 54), "processes are central to transitivity. Participant and circumstance are incumbent upon process. It indicates different processes suggest different participants in varying circumstances".

3.3 Types of Processes and Roles of Participants

Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p. 168) present six different process types which construe people's experience of the world: Material, Mental, Behavioural, Verbal, Relational, and Existential. The participant elements are different from one process to another. The table below presents a tabular representation of the process types and their respective participant roles.

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Table 1: Types of Processes and Roles of Participants (Marbun&Yanti, 2016, p. 14)

S/N	Process Types	Process Types Meanings	Roles of Participants
1.	MaterialProcess • Action • Event	Process of 'doing' • 'doing' • 'happening'	Actor, Goal
2.	Mental • Perception • Affection • Cognition	Process of 'sensing' • 'seeing' • 'feeling' • 'thinking'	Senser, Phenomenon
3.	Behavioural	Process of 'behaving'	Behaver
4.	Verbal	Process of 'saying'	Sayer, Target
5.	Relational • Attribution • Identification	Process of 'being' • 'attributing' • 'identifying'	Carrier, Attribute Token, Value
6.	Existential	Process of 'existing'	Existent

Material processes, according to Eggins (2004, p. 215), are processes of "doing" or about actions, usually concrete, tangible actions. They express the notion that some entity does something or undertake an action which may be done to some other entity. For instance:

The man	*washed*	*the car*
Actor	Process: Material	Goal

Butt et al. (2003, p. 56) aver that "mental processes encode the inner world of cognition, perception, inclination or liking/disliking." These processes do not focus on actions in a tangible, physical sense, but mental reactions about thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. For instance:

I	*do not understand*	*the book*
Senser	Process: Mental	Phenomenon

Behavioural processes are typically processes of physiological and psychological behaviour, and express form of doing that does not usually extend to another participant. For example:

The teacher	*snores*	*loudly*
Behaver	Process: Behavioural	Circumstance

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Halliday (1994) cited in Eggins (2004, p. 235) explains that a verbal process typically contains three participants: sayer, receiver and verbiage. Sayer is the doer or participant responsible for the verbal process; receiver is the participant to whom the verbal process is directed; while verbiage is a nominalised statement of the verbal process, that is, it sums up what is said in one nominal group or embedded clause. For instance:

She	*said*	*shewashungry*
Sayer	Process: Verbal	Verbiage

Butt et al. (2003, p. 58) identify the main feature of relational processes as relating a participant to its identity or description. There are two main types of relational processes: Relational Attributive, which relates a participant to its general feature or description; and Relational Identifying, which relates a participant to its identity, role or meaning. For example:

Plant cells	*Have*	*acellwall*
Carrier	Process: Relational Attributive	Attribute

Mr Timmy	*Is*	*a leader*
Token	Process: RelationalIdentifying	Value

Existential processes are easy to identify as the structure involves the use of the word 'there'. Eggins (2004, p. 238) explains that "'there' when used in existential processes, has no representational meaning: it does not refer to a location." The only obligatory participant in an existential process which receives a functional label is called "existent." This participant usually follows the "there is/are" sequence. For instance:

There	*are*	*several challenges*
	Process: Existential	Exisent

Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) SFL, a functional linguistic theory that emphasises the social function of language in communication, offers a suitable theoretical framework for this study as it recognises that language serves specific purposes and is shaped by social contexts. Studying news headlines through an SFL lens allows for an analysis of how language is used to construct meanings and convey particular ideologies or values related to violent crimes. This approach enables a comprehensive exploration of the potential discursive strategies, power relations and underlying ideologies associated with crime against women in Nigeria, providing valuable insights for a critical analysis of the subject matter.

4. Methodology

This research focuses specifically on the ideational function of language in news headlines, examining how linguistic choices reflect the media houses' ideological

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representations of crime against women. Twenty (20) news headlines each published on the official websites of two prominent mainstream media in Nigeria – *The Punch* and *Nigerian Tribune* – are purposively selected for this study, making a total of 40 news headlines. The selected news headlines were published between May and August, 2022. The choice of these two media houses is because of their wide readership and regularly updated websites. Both media houses have a significant online presence and play a crucial role in shaping public opinion. Content analysis method which includes both qualitative and quantitative approaches is adopted for this study (Elo&Kyngäs, 2008). By employing Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) SFL theory, this research seeks to critically analyse news headlines depicting crime committed against women as reported in *The Punch* and *Nigerian Tribune* in a bid to discover the process types and participant roles of transitivity system used in the selected news headlines and unearth how the headlines serve as a medium of the media houses' ideological representations.

5. Data Analysis

This research, which involves the application of Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) ideational metafunction of language, seeks to investigate the various process types of transitivity system present in the selected news headlines and analyse the ideological representations conveyed through the transitivity system within those headlines.

5.1 Analysis of The Punch's News Headlines Reporting Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria

1. Ebonyi lady tied, gang-raped to death, police recover 12 condoms

Ebonyi lady	**tied, gang-raped**	**to death**	**Police**	**Recover**	**12 condoms**
Goal	Process: Material	Circumstance: Extent	Actor	Process: Material	Goal

2. Delta gunman abducts mum, children, escapes in family car

Delta gunman	**Abducts**	**mum, children**	**Escapes**	**in family car**
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Process: Material	Circumstance: Manner

3. Jealous man kills ex-girlfriend for refusing to eject Abuja lover

Jealous man	**Kills**	**ex-girlfriend**	**for refusing to eject Abuja lover**
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Cause

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4. Anambra octogenarian arrested for defiling 10-year-old

Anambraoctogenarian	**Arrested**	**for defiling 10-year-old**
Goal	Process: Material	Circumstance: Cause

5. Lagos, Ekiti men bag life imprisonment for raping minors

Lagos, Ekiti men	*Bag*	*life imprisonment*	*for raping minors*
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Cause

6. Anambra man punches female neighbour over sanitation, victim dies

Anambra man	**punches**	**femaleneighbour**	**over sanitation**	**victim**	**Dies**
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Cause	Behaver	Process: Behavioural

7. Bandits abduct Zamfara NULGE chairman's pregnant wife

Bandits	**abduct**	**Zamfara NULGE chairman's pregnant wife**
Actor	Process: Material	Goal

8. Delta police bust baby factory, rescue pregnant women

Delta police	*bust*	*baby factory*	*Rescue*	*pregnantwomen*
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Process: Material	Goal

9. Man bags triple life sentences for defiling daughters

Man	*bags*	*triple life sentences*	*for defilingdaughters*
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Cause

10. Delta workers rape employer, kill victim, husband

Delta workers	*rape*	*Employer*	*Kill*	*victim, husband*
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Process: Material	Goal

11. Man kills Delta girlfriend for breaking iPhone screen

Man	*kills*	*Delta girlfriend*	*for breaking iPhone screen*
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Cause

12. Kidnappers free women leader abducted in church

Kidnappers	**free**	**women leader**	**abducted**	**in church**

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Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Process: Material	Circumstance: Location

13. Edo girl raped, stabbed to death, suspect arrested

Edo girl	*raped, stabbed*	*to death*	*suspect*	*Arrested*
Goal	Process: Material	Circumstance: Extent	Goal	Process: Material

14. Four men gang-rape Lagos schoolgirl for five days

Four men	**gang-rape**	**Lagos schoolgirl**	**for five days**
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Extent

15. Nasarawa cop allegedly rapes, impregnates 15-year-old niece

Nasarawa cop	**allegedly**	**rapes, impregnates**	**15-year-old niece**
Actor	Circumstance: Angle	Process: Material	Goal

16. Policeman's son absconds with lady's Benz, $700 Bitcoin

Policeman's son	**absconds with**	**lady's Benz, $700 Bitcoin**
Actor	Process: Material	Goal

17. Anambra man allegedly beats brother's wife to death

Anambra man	**allegedly**	**beats**	**brother'swife**	**to death**
Actor	Circumstance: Angle	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Extent

18. Ritualists kill woman, pluck eye, family rejects autopsy

Ritualists	**kill**	**woman**	**pluck**	**eye**	**family**	**rejects**	**autopsy**
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Process: Material	Goal	Actor	Process: Material	Goal

19. Man beats pregnant wife to death in Delta

Man	*beats*	*pregnantwife*	*to death*	*in Delta*
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Extent	Circumstance: Location

20. Gunmen kill Ogun security personnel, abduct woman

Gunmen	*kill*	*Ogunsecurity personnel*	*Abduct*	*woman*
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Process: Material	Goal

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Table 2: Frequency of Process Types and their Percentage in *The Punch*'s News Headlines

No.	Process Types	Frequency	Percentage
1	Material	29	96.7%
2	Mental	0	0%
3	Relational	0	0%
4	Behavioural	1	3.3%
5	Verbal	0	0%
6	Existential	0	0%
Total		30	100%

From the above table, there are only two process types – Material and Behavioural – in the twenty news headlines reporting gender-based violence in Nigeria selected from *The Punch* newspaper for this analysis, and altogether, 30 processes are employed in the news headlines. It is observed that material process is predominantly used, appearing 29 times (96.7%), while behavioural process appears just once (3.3%). Other process types such as mental, relational, verbal and existential are not employed in the data.

Table 3: Frequency of Participant Roles and their Percentage in *The Punch*'s News Headlines

No.	Participant Roles	Frequency	Percentage
1	Actor	19	40.4%
2	Goal	27	57.5%
3	Range	0	0%
4	Senser	0	0%
5	Sayer	0	0%
6	Verbiage	0	0%
7	Behaver	1	2.1%
8	Existent	0	0%
9	Token/Value	0	0%
10	Carrier (Attributive)	0	0%
Total		47	100%

The transitivity analysis of the data reveals the frequency of the participant roles used in the twenty news headlines reporting gender-based violence in Nigeria selected from *The Punch* newspaper. Goal role is predominantly used, taking up 57.5%; this is followed by Actor role (40.4%). Behaver role is used less frequently, with only 1 (2.1%) occurrence.

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Table 4: Frequency of Circumstance Types and their Percentage in *The Punch*'s News Headlines

No.	Circumstance Types	Frequency	Percentage
1	Extent	5	31.25%
2	Location	2	12.5%
3	Manner	1	6.25%
4	Cause	6	37.5%
5	Accompaniment	0	0%
6	Matter	0	0%
7	Role	0	0%
8	Contingency	0	0%
9	Angle	2	12.5%
Total		16	100%

The table above presents the frequency and percentage of circumstance types employed in the selected data from *The Punch* newspaper. The analysis reveals five circumstance types used in the data; cause (37.5%) and extent (31.25%) types make up the majority (68.75%) of the total percentage. Other circumstance types used in the selected news headlines are location (12.5%), angle (12.5%), and manner (6.25%).

5.2 Analysis of Nigerian Tribune's News Headlines Reporting Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria

1. Police arrest two men for defiling 13-year-old schoolgirl in Edo

Police	**Arrest**	**two men**	**for defiling…schoolgirl**	**in Edo**
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Cause	Circumstance: Location

2. Man bags life imprisonment for defiling friend's 12-year-old twin daughters

Man	**Bags**	**life imprisonment**	**for defiling friend's…twin daughters**
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Cause

3. NSCDC arrests two suspected kidnappers for killing 5-year-old girl in Bauchi

NSCDC	**Arrests**	**two…kidnappers**	**for killing…girl**	**in Bauchi**
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Cause	Circumstance: Loc.

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4. NSCDC arrests Kwarapoly student for allegedly stealing girlfriend's money, gold

NSCDC	Arrests	Kwarapoly student	for allegedly stealing… money, gold
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Cause

5. Police nab suspects over killing female college student in Sokoto

Police	Nab	suspects	over killing…student	in Sokoto
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Cause	Circumstance: Location

6. Kidnapped widow regains freedom in Kogi

Kidnappedwidow	regains	freedom	in Kogi
Actor	Process: Material	Range	Circumstance: Location

7. How we raped, shot our victims

How	we	raped, shot	ourvictims
Circumstance: Manner	Actor	Process: Material	Goal

8. Bandits kill husband, abduct pregnant wife, baby, relatives in Kaduna

Bandits	Kill	husband	Abduct	pregnantwife, relatives	baby,	in Kaduna
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Process: Material	Goal		Circumstance: Location

9. Man, 21, arrested for raping 13-year-old sister in Anambra

Man, 21	arrested	for raping 13-year-old sister	in Anambra
Goal	Process: Material	Circumstance: Cause	Circumstance: Location

10. Landlord's son stabs tenant to death in Ibadan

Landlord's son	stabs	tenant	to death	in Ibadan
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Extent	Circumstance: Location

11. Bandits demand N50m for Anglican bishop, wife, driver kidnapped on Oyo/Ogbomoso expressway

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Bandits	demands	N50m	for Anglican…driver	kidnapped	on Oyo…expressway
Sayer	Process: Verbal	Verbiage	Circumstance: Cause	Process: Material	Circumstance: Location

12. Suspected internet fraudster allegedly rapes girl to death in Imo

Suspected…fraudster	allegedly	Rapes	girl	to death	in Imo
Actor	Circumstance: Angle	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Extent	Circumstance: Location

13. Police rescue 35 girls in Anambra hotel, recover arms

Police	rescues	35 girls	in Anambrahotel	Recover	arms
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Location	Process: Material	Goal

14. Police find woman reportedly abducted along with 17 others in FCT

Police	find	woman	reportedly	abducted	alongwith 17 others	in FCT
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Angle	Process: Material	Circumstance: Accompaniment	Circumstance: Location

15. Prison escapee allegedly stabs pregnant woman to death in Imo

Prison escapee	allegedly	stabs	pregnantwoman	to death	in Imo
Actor	Circumstance: Angle	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Extent	Circumstance: Location

16. Woman's corpse, unconscious man found inside office in Aba after four days

Woman'scorpse…man	found	inside office in Aba	after four days
Goal	Process: Material	Circumstance: Location	Circumstance: Extent

17. Police rescue three women in baby factory, arrest 35 cultists in Delta

Police	rescue	threewomen	in baby factory	arrest	35 cultists	in Delta
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Location	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Location

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18. Man stabs policewoman to death in Edo

Man	**Stabs**	**policewoman**	**to death**	**in Edo**
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Extent	Circumstance: Location

19. Man allegedly kills brother's wife over ownership of property in Anambra

Man	**allegedly**	**kills**	**brother'swife**	**over…of property**	**in Anambra**
Actor	Circumstance: Angle	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Cause	Circumstance: Location

20. Suspected ritualists remove 65-year-old farmer's eyes in Osun

Suspectedritualists	**remove**	**65-year-old farmer'seyes**	**in Osun**
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance: Location

Table 5: Frequency of Process Types and their Percentage in *Nigerian Tribune*'s News Headlines

No.	Process Types	Frequency	Percentage
1	Material	24	96%
2	Mental	0	0%
3	Relational	0	0%
4	Behavioural	0	30%
5	Verbal	1	4%
6	Existential	0	0%
Total		25	100%

The analysis of experiential meanings in the twenty news headlines reporting gender-based violence in Nigeria selected from *Nigerian Tribune* newspaper reveals the presence of 25 instances of process types. The breakdown as presented in table above shows that material processes (96%) are mostly used in the news headlines. Other process type found in the data is verbal process (4%). Mental, relational, behaviour and existential processes do not appear in the data.

Table 6: Frequency of Participant Roles and their Percentage in *Nigerian Tribune*'s News Headlines

No.	Participant Roles	Frequency	Percentage
1	Actor	17	41.5%
2	Goal	21	51.2%
3	Range	1	2.4%

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4	Senser	0	0%
5	Sayer	1	2.4%
6	Verbiage	1	2.4%
7	Behaver	0	0%
8	Existent	0	0%
9	Token/Value	0	0%
10	Carrier	0	0%
	Total	41	100%

The table above reveals the frequency of participant roles employed in the twenty selected *Nigerian Tribune* news headlines reporting gender-based violence in Nigeria. The dominant participant role is the goal role, with 21 occurrences (51.2%); this is followed by actor role, with 17 occurrences (41.5%). Range, sayer and verbiage roles have only one occurrence each, making a total of 7.2%.

Table 7: Frequency of Circumstance Types and their Percentage in *Nigerian Tribune*'s News Headlines

No.	Circumstance Types	Frequency	Percentage
1	Extent	5	13.5%
2	Location	18	48.6%
3	Manner	1	2.7%
4	Cause	8	21.6%
5	Accompaniment	1	2.7%
6	Matter	0	0%
7	Role	0	0%
8	Contingency	0	0%
9	Angle	4	10.8%
	Total	37	100%

From the analysis of the selected news headlines from *Nigerian Tribune* newspaper, it is observed that location type of circumstance occupies almost half of the total instances (37) of circumstance types used in the data, with 18 occurrences (48.6%); this is followed by cause type (21.6%), extent type (13.5%), and angle type (10.8%). Manner and accompaniment types have the same number of occurrences (1) in selected data; each taking up 2.7%. Matter, role and contingency types of circumstance are not accounted for in the data.

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6. Results and Discussion

This study has analysed transitivity processes, participants and circumstances in *The Punch* and *Nigerian Tribune* news headlines depicting crime committed against women, specifically gender-based violence in Nigeria. The contents of these news headlines are analysed meticulously to identify the various linguistic choices employed by the selected mainstream media in reporting of crimes committed against women in Nigeria as well as to reveal the ideology behind such reportage.

The analysis of transitivity system in *The Punch* online news reveal that thirty (30) processes are employed in the twenty (20) news headlines depicting crime committed against women in Nigeria selected from the newspaper. Twenty-nine (96.7%) of these processes are material process, while one (3.3%) is behavioural process. The prevailing occurrence of material process is also evident in the news headlines selected from *Nigerian Tribune*. In *Nigerian Tribune*, twenty-five (25) processes are deployed across the twenty (20) selected news headlines; material process appears twenty-four times (96%), while verbal process appears only once (4%).

The dominant use of material process in the selected news headlines permits both media houses – *The Punch* and *Nigerian Tribune* – to identify and describe various physical and violent actions that were taken against Nigerian women, and also to identify actions taken by the law enforcement agencies to ensure justice for the victims of crime. For instance, in the news headline: *Ebonyi lady tied, gang-raped to death, police recover 12 condoms*, *The Punch* uses material processes to identify the criminal acts that were committed against the victim – tied, gang-raped, as well as to identify the action taken by the police to seek justice for the victim. Similarly, in the news headline from *Nigerian Tribune*: *Bandits kill husband, abduct pregnant wife, baby, relatives in Kaduna*, material processes are used to recognise the violent acts of "killing" and "abducting" carried out against the victims.

The analysis further highlights a representation of gender roles and power dynamics by revealing that all the material processes which are related to violence (such as rape, abducts, kills, punches, absconds (*The Punch*); raped, shot, kill, stabs (*Nigerian Tribune*)) are linked with the male. Hence, men are portrayed as perpetrators of violent crimes, such as rape, abduction, killing, and stabbing, while women are represented as the victims; women are portrayed as vulnerable, gang-raped, raped, shot, killed and stabbed. This portrayal reinforces the societal stereotype that men are more likely to engage in violent acts against women and exert power over women. This representation as well reinforces the perception that women are more prone to victimisation and hence, need protection.

As regards the frequency of participant roles in the selected news headlines, it is observed that the goal role is preponderant in the news headlines selected from both media. Out of forty-seven instances of participant roles discovered in the news headlines selected from *The Punch*, goal role appears twenty-seven times, taking up 57.5%; this is followed by actor role, with nineteen instances (40.4%). Similarly, in the news headlines selected

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from *Nigerian Tribune*, goal role is also the dominant participant role, with twenty-one occurrences (51.2%) out of forty-one instances found in the news outlet; this is as well followed by actor role, with 17 instances (41.5%).

The news media therefore give more attention and focus to the entities affected by the process (action), rather than the doer of the action. In the news headlines, women, along with related entities, are often used to perform the role of goal with the intent of portraying them as the victims of various violent crimes. Evidence of this assertion is seen in the news headline culled from *The Punch*: *Delta gunman abducts mum, children, escapes in family car*; also in the news headline from *Nigerian Tribune*: *Suspected internet fraudster allegedly rapes girl to death in Imo*. In these instances, "mum, children" and "girl" are used in goal role to portray them as victims of abduction and rape respectively. By giving more attention and focus to the entities (particularly women) affected by the process (action), this act suggests an ideological representation that positions women as susceptible targets of violent crimes. The emphasis on their victimhood reinforces societal narratives that perpetuate the subjugation and vulnerability of women.

Aside from female functioning in the goal role, it is also observed that other entities, such as perpetrators of crimes, exhibits recovered from crime scene, and jail term, can also be affected by the process (action) being carried out. This is evident in the instances: *...police recover 12 condoms* (*The Punch*) and *NSCDC arrests two suspected kidnappers for killing 5-year-old girl in Bauchi* (*Nigerian Tribune*). In these news headlines, "12 condoms" and "two suspected kidnappers" are used in goal role to reflect entities affected by the process of recovering and arresting respectively.

Actor role is also commonly deployed in news headlines reporting gender-based violence in Nigeria. Based on the analysis, it is discovered that "actors" of material processes are often foregrounded, occurring at the starting/initial position (theme) of the news headlines in both mainstream media selected for this research. Out of twenty news headlines culled from *The Punch*, actor role kick-starts eighteen news headlines. This is also noticeable in *Nigerian Tribune* in which actor role functions in the initial position in sixteen news headlines. Foregrounding the actor by making it function as the starting point of their news headlines reveals the frame which the news media have chosen to communicate their messages to the readers. It is further observed that women are not represented in the actor role; the role is mainly constituted by men who are portrayed as perpetrators of violent crimes committed against women ("Delta gunman", "jealous man", "four men" (*The Punch*); "landlord's son", "bandits", "suspected internet fraudster" (*Nigerian Tribune*)), and law enforcement agencies.

This gendered representation suggests a potential bias or stereotype that associates men with violent crimes committed against women, while women are excluded from this role. Such representation can perpetuate societal gender norms and reinforce the notion of men as the primary perpetrators of violence against women. Hence, the frequent use of the actor role in the news headlines indicates that reporting the perpetrator of a crime is considered as important as identifying the victim. By consistently highlighting the actor's

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role, the news media frame their messages to communicate the significance of identifying and holding individuals accountable for their actions.

At the level of the analysis of circumstance in the data, circumstantial types of extent, location and cause are predominant across the two media houses selected for analysis. Circumstance, under the framework of SFG, is the component associated with process in transitivity system in the experiential strand of meaning. The circumstantial types, as observed in the data, provide background information for processes within their respective clauses. The circumstantial type of extent is predominant in both *The Punch* and *Nigerian Tribune* news headlines, appearing five (5) times in each and having 31.25% and 13.5% respectively. Circumstance of extent aids in providing additional information regarding the degree or frequency of actions described in the processes. For instance, in the news headline: *Anambra man allegedly beats brother's wife to death*, *The Punch* stresses the grievousness of the material process of "beat" through the circumstance of extent "to death". *The Punch* therefore draws attention to the serious consequences of physical violence by highlighting the severity of a specific incident in which a woman was beaten to death.

A similar news headline with such circumstance is found in Nigeria Tribune: *Suspected internet fraudster allegedly rapes girl to death in Imo*. In this news headline, a young girl was not only raped by the perpetrator, but was raped till she died. *Nigerian Tribune*, deploying the circumstance of extent "to death", emphasises the severity of physical violence inflicted on someone through the fact that the rape resulted in the victim's death. The circumstances of extent are used by these media outlets to draw attention to the severity of the violence, establish the legitimacy of the events as violent crimes, and represent the perpetrators as engaging in extreme acts. These representations contribute to shaping the audience's understanding and perception of the incidents, emphasising their gravity and condemning the actions described.

Circumstantial type of location is also common in the news headlines analysed. From the analysis of *Nigerian Tribune* news headlines, location type of circumstance occupies almost half of the total instances of circumstance types used in the data, with 18 occurrences (48.6%). This type is however only used twice in *The Punch* news headlines, having 12.5%. It cannot be overemphasised that stating the location of an event or an action is a crucial aspect of news headlines.

As evident in *The Punch* and *Nigerian Tribune* news headlines, indicating the location of events helps readers to quickly understand the location, relevance, and background information of the story being reported. Instances of location type of circumstance deployed in *The Punch* include: "in church" where a women leader was abducted and later freed, and "in Delta" where a pregnant wife was beaten to death by a man. Similar instances in *Nigerian Tribune* are: "in Edo" where two men were arrested for defiling a schoolgirl; "in Anambra" where a man was arrested for raping his sister; "on Oyo/Ogbomoso expressway" where an Anglican Bishop, his wife and his driver were kidnapped by Bandits; among other instances. The analysis highlights the ideological

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representations associated with the use of location type of circumstance in news headlines, including its relevance by contributing to the overall understanding of news events, its descriptive function by identifying the specific setting or place where the events occurred, and its contextual role by serving as a marker that helps situate the processes within a particular context.

Circumstantial type of cause is another type of circumstance that is prevalent in the selected news headlines. As observed in the analysis of circumstance types employed in the selected data from *The Punch*, cause type makes up the majority of the total percentage with 6 occurrences (37.5%). It also has a relatively high frequency in *Nigerian Tribune* with 8 occurrences (21.6%). This type of circumstance expresses the reason associated with the process described by the clause.

The circumstance of cause can help readers understand why the event or action occurred and provide more context to the story. For instance, in the news headline: *Jealous man kills ex-girlfriend for refusing to eject Abuja lover*, *The Punch* includes additional details through the circumstance of cause "for refusing to eject Abuja lover" about the circumstances that led to the jealous man killing his ex-girlfriend. It reveals that the man was motivated by jealousy, insecurity and resentment, which provides a more nuanced understanding of why he committed the crime. Also, in the news headline from *Nigerian Tribune*: *Man, 21, arrested for raping 13-year-old sister in Anambra*, the circumstance of cause "for raping 13-year-old sister" provides further information about the context of the story by stating the reason the 21-year-old man was arrested by the security agencies. It depicts that the man was arrested for committing rape. Such information helps the readers to be kept abreast with the reasons behind the reported event that are rooted in the situation or context in which it occurred.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, a critical analysis has been conducted to examine news headlines of *The Punch* and *Nigerian Tribune* reporting gender-based violence in Nigeria, with a specific focus on the transitivity system and ideological framing. The research aimed to identify process types and participant roles of transitivity, explore ideological representations within the headlines, and uncover the methods and strategies employed by these media outlets in their reportage. The analysis revealed that both media platforms predominantly used material processes to depict physical and aggressive actions against Nigerian women, along with actions taken by law enforcement agencies for justice. Additionally, it highlighted power dynamics and gendered representations, portraying women as victims of violent crimes.

The headlines also reinforced societal stereotypes about men's propensity for violence and women's vulnerability. The emphasis on women's victimhood reinforces societal narratives that perpetuate the subordination and vulnerability of women. This research demonstrates the significance of critically analysing news headlines to understand how language constructs and perpetuates social realities and power dynamics.

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By examining the transitivity system, this study provides valuable insights into the ways in which gender-based violence are framed and represented in the Nigerian media. This study therefore concludes that Nigerian media outlets primarily deploy material processes and goal participant roles of the transitivity system to present an amplified and sensational portrayal of various physical and aggressive actions inflicted upon women and young girls in Nigeria. Further studies in this area can expand the scope by including a larger sample size of media outlets and incorporating longitudinal analyses to track changes in ideological representations over time. Moreover, a comparative analysis with media from other countries or regions may help identify cultural variations in framing and representation, contributing to a broader understanding of the issue.

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