

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Discursive Strategies in Rape Reportage by Nigerian Newspapers

Efosa Julius Legemah

Department of English and Literature, University of Benin,
Benin-City

&

S. T. Babatunde

Department of English, University of Ilorin. Ilorin

Abstract

Discursive strategies are indispensable phenomena in every discourse because discourse participants depend on them to achieve different goals. In newspapers' news reports, their use is informed by different reasons and readers' understanding of the messages of news reports is hinged on their understanding of the discursive strategies used. This paper carries out a critical discourse analysis of the discursive strategies in rape news reports of selected Nigerian newspapers. The newspapers are *Vanguard*, *The Nation*, and *Punch*. Fifty (30) rape news reports published between 2013 and 2017 were collected from each of the newspapers as data, making a total of 90 reportage collected. Adopting a combination of Norman Fairclough's and Teun van Dijk's approaches to critical discourse analysis (CDA) as theoretical framework, the paper identifies topicalisation, name mentioning and omission, phrasal modification, selective quotation pattern, and vagueness as discursive strategies common to rape news reports in the selected newspapers. The paper concludes that the discursive strategies are used by the newspapers to advance some

ideological positions on rape crime in the Nigerian society.

Keywords: Discursive strategy, discourse, rape reportage.

Introduction

News report is the centre of every newspaper because it provides the medium through which happenings in a society can be related to readers, regardless of what the news is about or the views of a newspaper on the news. Because of this, news writers usually try as much as they can to ensure that news reports are brought to their readers even when sometimes their own interests or ideology may be at variance with what is being reported. One of the ways in which news writers manage their news reporting enterprise is the employment of different discursive strategies when reporting news story. Different news stories may require different strategies depending on the nature of what is being reported on.

In Nigerian newspapers, rape crime is an issue that requires news writers to employ different discursive strategies in their reportage. This is because rape crime in Nigerian society attracts different stereotypic positions and ideology among members of the society (Udeze & Uzuegum, 2013). So, identifying and understanding the different discursive strategies used in rape news reports become necessary for better understanding and interpretation of the news reports. It has been established by language scholars that reporting a news story based on rape crime can be problematic because of the societal stereotypes that are usually associated with persons involved in rape crime and the ideological position of a newspaper towards a rape crime (Benedict,

1992). Discursive strategies inherent in rape reportage are major tools which a reporter employs in addressing the societal constructs, expectations and ideological issues surrounding rape. Identifying the discursive strategies employed in rape reportage becomes a necessity for better interpretation of the reportage.

Many works have been done from the perspective of CDA in order to show how discourse as a form of social practice constitutes the social world and is constituted by social practice (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). However, among available literature, none to the best of the researchers' knowledge has carried out a CDA of the discursive strategies used in reporting rape crime in Nigerian newspapers. This particular paper fills that gap by doing a critical discourse analysis of rape reportage in selected Nigerian newspapers in order to identify the discursive strategies used and show the communicative goals underlying such usage.

Theoretical Background

According to Van Dijk (2001, p. 352), "CDA is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context". What this means is that CDA as a discourse analysis approach aims to bring to the fore those ideologies and power relations of dominance, and resistance of different kinds which people usually take for granted in different discourses. Van Dijk (2001, p. 96) explains further that:

CDA is discourse analysis "with an attitude." It focuses on social problems, and especially on the role of discourse in the

production and reproduction of power abuse or domination. Wherever possible, it does so from a perspective that is consistent with the best interest of dominated groups. It takes the experiences and opinions of members of such groups seriously, and supports their struggle against inequality. That is, CDA research combines what perhaps pompously used to be called “solidarity with the oppressed” with an attitude of opposition and dissent against those who abuse text and talk in order to establish, confirm or legitimate their abuse of power.

The view expressed by Van Dijk above seems to make CDA research to be restricted to only linguistic data where issues of power abuse and dominance are only treated. Even though Widdowson (2004) tends to agree with Van Dijk’s view by writing that CDA approach is critical because it is quite explicitly directed at revealing how language is used for the exercise of socio-political control, this paper subscribes to Wodak and Meyer’s (2008, p. 2) view that “the objects under investigation [in CDA] do not have to be related to negative or exceptionally serious social or political experiences or event – this is a frequent misunderstanding of the aims and goals of CDA: any social phenomenon lends itself to critical investigation, to be challenged and not taken for granted”.

CDA originated from critical linguistics: a linguistic orientation whose basic claims are that all linguistic usage encodes ideological patterns or discursive

structures which mediate representations of the world in language, and that different usages encode different ideologies resulting from their different situation and purpose (Malmkjar, 1995). Wodak (2001: p. 4) writes about the origin of CDA thus:

CDA as a network of scholars emerged in the early 1990s, following a small symposium in Amsterdam, in January 1991. By chance and through the support of the University of Amsterdam, Teun Van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress, Theo Van Leeuwen and Ruth Wodak spent two days together, and had the wonderful opportunity to discuss theories and methods of discourse analysis and specially CDA. The meeting made it possible for everyone to confront each other with the very distinct and different approaches, which still mark the different approaches today. In this process of group formation, differences and sameness were exposed; differences towards other theories and methodologies in discourse analysis.

The different linguistic theoretical orientations of the authorities in the above quotation could be taken to account for the different views of what CDA is all about today. But regardless of the different views on CDA available in various literatures, CDA scholars like Norman Fairclough, Teun Van Dijk, Gunther Kress and Ruth Wodak seem to agree on the features of CDA which are:

1. CDA addresses social problems.

2. Power relations are discursive.
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture.
4. Discourse does ideological work.
5. Discourse is historical.
6. The link between text and society is mediated.
7. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory.
8. Discourse is a form of social action.

The theoretical framework of this paper is a combination of Norman Fairclough's and Teun van Dijk's approaches to CDA. The two theoretical approaches to CDA are employed as the theoretical framework of this work because their major preoccupation is to show how discourse does ideological work through the use of language. Fairclough's theoretical approach is known as Dialectical Relational approach. The approach submits that language and social practices as conditioned by social structures are in a dialectical relationship in that social practice can significantly determine the language used in any discourse just as language used in a given discourse can reinforce or change social practice (Fairclough, 1996).

Van Dijk's theoretical approach to CDA is known as social cognitive approach. This approach is based on a sound theory of context: that is, it introduces the concept of context models which are understood as mental representations of the structure of communicative situation that are discursively relevant for a participant and it is built around discourse, cognition, and society. According to Van Dijk (2001), three forms of social representations are relevant to the understanding of discourse, and they are: knowledge (which could be

personal, group, cultural, etc.), participant attitude, and ideology within the discourse.

Discursive strategies and Critical Discourse Analysis

Discursive strategies are strategies employed in a discourse to encode messages, drive home a point or project a particular stand on an issue. They are usually ideologically used because a discourse participant (news writer) chooses a strategy based on some factors like topic of the discourse, discourse type, channel of communication, relationship shared by discourse participants, aim and objectives of discourse participants, etc. In some texts, discursive strategies are referred to as communicative strategies (Olateju, Taiwo & Fakoya, 2007). In written discourse like news report, discursive strategies are one-sided because they are employed by a writer, leaving a reader with the duty of identifying and understanding them. This is unlike the spoken discourse where both participants (speaker and listener) will negotiate the use of any strategy.

News report as newspaper discourse has received attention from some linguistic scholars and other researchers in related disciplines. In this regard, the literature available to the writers of this paper include Taiwo (2007), Udeze & Uzueguam (2013), Meniku (2014), Jegede (2015) and Rafiu (2015). The literature also shows that some works have focused on rape as discourse in other communicative situations. Such works include Benedict (1992), Baker (1999), Ehrlich (2001), Matoesian (2001), Grant & Woodhams (2007), and Womersley & Anastasia (2009). While other works that generally employed critical discourse analysis as theoretical framework in analysing newspaper discourses include

Abdullahi-Idiagbon (2010), Adelakun (2013) and Ike-Nwafor (2015).

Taiwo (2007) examines language, ideology and power relations in Nigerian newspaper headlines. Employing a CDA approach, Taiwo examines three hundred Nigerian newspaper headlines for peculiarity in vocabulary and rhetorical devices used in order to identify the ideologies that lie behind their constructions. In his analysis, Taiwo reveals that the headlines in Nigerian newspapers have hidden ideological meanings and they reflect the views of those whose interests are being served and undermined. Udeze & Uzuegum (2013) examine sensationalism in the media by looking at it from an ethical dimension. Their conclusion, which this present paper agrees with, is that no matter the reasons for sensationalising news, media practitioners should always consider the ethics of their profession above any personal or institutional ideological belief.

Also, Meniku (2014), Jegede (2015) and Rafiu (2015) examine language and ideology in Albanian newspaper headlines; language and ideology in the media: a study of Nigerian newspaper editorials; language, ideology and reportage on mutuality in a pluralistic world, respectively. Although the researchers of this paper agree with Meniku's (2014) and Rafiu's (2015) conclusion that the vast majority of newspaper headlines project different ideological meanings and subject headlines to various linguistic manipulations, they disagree to some extent with Jegede's (2015) submission which says that systemic functional linguistic analytical framework makes it possible for the readers of newspaper editorials to bring out deeper nuances of

meanings in editorials. This is because the researchers believe that not all newspaper readers are knowledgeable in systemic functional linguistics and as such not all can apply it when reading a newspaper, except the readers referred to by Jegede (2015) are specialised readers like linguists.

On rape discourse generally, Benedict (1992), Baker (1999), and Ehrlich (2001), examine rape myth, language, and how women are portrayed in the media; what rape is and what it is not from a legal perspective; how institutional discourse structure can affect the language used during rape case proceeding, respectively. Closely related to the works reviewed above are the works of Matoesian (2001), Grant and Woodhams (2007), and Womersley and Anastasia (2009). Matoesian (2001) examines law and the language of identity in William Kennedy Smith's rape trial while Grant and Woodhams (2007) and Womersley and Anastasia (2009) look at how linguistic information can help improve rape case investigations, and a feminist discourse analysis of some rape victims' conversations, respectively.

Abdullahi-Idiagbon (2010), Adelakun (2013) and Ike-Nwafor (2015) are works in the literature available to the writer of this paper that employ CDA as a theoretical framework in analysing other discourses in newspapers. Abdullahi-Idiagbon (2010) looks at language used in selected Nigerian presidential election campaign speeches by investigating how feelings, emotions as well as how ideological beliefs of individuals or groups were conveyed through linguistic expressions to manipulate others. Adelakun (2013) examines election news in Nigerian newspapers from a CDA perspective, while Ike-Nwafor

(2015) carries out a CDA of selected political campaign speeches of gubernatorial candidates in southwestern Nigeria in 2007 and 2014.

Methodology

The data used in this work are 90 rape news reports collected from three Nigerian newspapers: *The Vanguard*, *The Nation*, and *The Punch* (30 from each newspaper). The reports were published between 2013 to 2017. These newspapers were selected for this work because of their national spread and quality reportage. The data collection is limited to 90 because the researchers adopt the purposive sampling method.

For data collection, much of the data were collected from the newspapers' online publications in their official websites while some were photocopied from hardcopies of newspapers available in University of Benin library. In analysing the data, qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches were adopted. The reports were numbered from 1 to 90 so that when reference is made to any of them during the analysis, it is the number that is mentioned. Three structural parts (which are headline, lead and body) were identified as common to the reports and examples in the analysis were drawn from the three parts. To aid proper presentation of analytic information, simple percentage, tables and column chart were employed, where necessary, to show frequency occurrence of some vital analytic items.

Data Analysis

In the data, the news newspapers made use of different discursive strategies in the different parts of the news reports in order to achieve different communicative purposes. The strategies are topicalization, name

mentioning and omission, phrasal modification, selective quotation pattern, and vagueness.

1. Topicalization

Topicalization as a discursive strategy has to do with what a given speaker/writer considers as the point of focus in a discourse and how such point is projected. Topicalization could influence the interpretative process of a given discourse. In our data, topicalisation is mainly achieved through foregrounding of social status and positions of rapists and their victims, and readiness of police and law court.

(i) Foregrounding of Social Status

Foregrounding of the social status of an accused rapist and his alleged victim as a discursive strategy is used mainly in the headlines and leads of the data. Two aspects of the social status of the accused rapist and his alleged victim are usually foregrounded and they are age and profession. Table 1 demonstrates this, with social status emboldened.

Table 1: Foregrounding as topicalization strategy

R.N	Headlines
14	School proprietor jailed 10 years for raping 10 -yr-old girl
15	52-year-old HIV positive teacher rapes 12-year-old student
16	Unemployed man rapes 13-year-old teenager in Lagos
17	Catholic priest faces fresh charge over 10-yr-old girl's rape
51	35-year-old man rapes minor
53	Commercial taxi driver rapes female passenger
56	Eight-year-old rape victim dies
73	75-year-old famer rapes minor with autism
85	60-year-old driver rapes mental patient

The foregrounding of social status in the headlines overtly has two main effects: it helps to create the sense of news worthiness which the newspapers need to get readers' attention and it could indirectly activate, reshape or confirm a reader's social cognition in relation to rape crime. For example, a reader whose belief is that rape victims are vulnerable people and rapists are opportunists will have his or her cognition confirmed by the foregrounding of the social positions of both the rapists and the victims. This will go a long way in influencing the way he or she interprets the messages of the reportage. But in a situation where that belief is not shared by a reader, the consistent foregrounding of the social positions and statuses of rapists and rape victims in news reportage could reshape his or her belief. The way the strategy is consistent in the data, shows that the news writers intend to lead the reader through a particular interpretative path. For example, in R. 14 and 58, the foregrounding of the positions of a proprietor and vice principal of a school makes it inevitable for a reader to first condemn the involvement of the rapists in the rape crime before sympathising with the victims who will obviously be considered as vulnerable.

(ii) Foregrounding of Police and Law Court Readiness

Foregrounding of police and law court readiness to stamp out rape crime is also a common strategy in the data under analysis. It seems the news writers deliberately employ this strategy in order to ideologically present the two institutions in a good light before the readers. A careful examination of the data shows that the strategy

could be used in any part of the reportage, as demonstrated in the examples below.

R. 9

Court jails 40-year-old man for raping his 17-year-old daughter (headline)

An Egor chief magistrate court in Benin, Edo, on Friday sentenced 40-year-old Lucky Idahosa to 14-years imprisonment for raping his 17-year-old daughter (lead)

The chief magistrate... jailed the accused after he pleaded guilty to the charge (body)

R. 18

A magistrate court sitting in Kano, yesterday, remanded a 55-year-old labourer, Muazu Abdullahi in prison custody for allegedly raping his 16-year-old daughter (lead)

R. 30

Niger state police command has arrested one Yusuf Sulieman...for allegedly raping a two-and-half year-old girl at Dutsen Kura Minna, the state capital (lead)

R. 57

Ekiti police arrest man for rape of woman, 75 (headline)

The strategy of foregrounding the readiness of the police and the law court in stamping out rape crime in the Nigerian society seems to be used by news writers to indirectly warn potential rapists to desist from rape crime and to encourage any rape victim to believe in the police institution by reporting rape crime to the police and seeking justice in the law court. The strategy is rooted in the active form of verbs attributed to the police and the law court. Verbs like *arrest*, *arraign* and *remand* as seen in the examples above demonstrated this.

2. Name mentioning and Omission

This is the discursive strategy used in the data whereby the news writers mention or omit names of the persons involved in rape crimes. The use of this strategy is ideologically oriented because the act of mentioning and omitting of names in a reported rape crime can serve ideological function of exposing an individual for condemnation or protecting an individual from condemnation or stereotype associated with rape crime. A careful examination of the data shows that only the names of rapists and some law enforcement personnel are mostly mentioned while those of the rape victims are always omitted. This discursive strategy is common in the lead and body of the news reports. The examples below demonstrate the use of this strategy in the data.

R. 76

A 32-year-old security guard, **Kenekukwu Okonkwo**, was on Friday sentenced to 14-year imprisonment for raping a 29-year-old virgin (lead)

R. 81

A 58-year-old tailor, **Kalu Mba**, was on Friday charged before a Yaba chief magistrate court, Lagos for allegedly raping a 15-year-old groundnut hawker and in the process got her impregnated.

Mba is facing a charge of defilement (Body)

R. 86

The Lagos state police command has arrested a deacon, **Obina Aneke**, for allegedly defiling a seven-year-old girl. (Lead)

Aneke, 44, was alleged to have slept with the victim six different times in his apartment... (Body)

R. 88

A native doctor, **Babatunde Ajisoloye**, was on Friday charged before an Ikeja High court for alleged sexual assault and rape. (Lead)

Ajisoloye whose age and residential address were not given, however denied the two-count charge. (Body)

In the above examples, the names of the rape victims are obviously missing while the names of the alleged rapists are given. The reason for this, as hinted earlier, may be the need to protect a rape victim from societal stigmatization and expose the rapists to shame and public condemnation. Out of the 90 rape news reports that make up the data, 93% have the names of the rapist mentioned while 7% gave pseudonyms for the rape victims. This particular strategy used in the data confirms Taiwo's (2007) view that no reportage is ideologically free. This is because objectivity and sense of news balancing demand that the names of both the rapist and his victim are mentioned. The strategy therefore indirectly reveals the attitude and disposition of news writers towards a rape crime.

3. Phrasal Modification

Phrasal modification in this analysis is used to mean the modification of the head word of a group or phrase. The modification can be a pre-modification or post-modification when the modifying items appear before or after the phrasal or group head respectively. This grammatical phenomenon is used as discursive strategy for deliberately giving additional information that may be capable of influencing a reader's interpretation of a rape crime. Abdullahi-Idiagbon (2010) calls this strategy over lexicalisation. The strategy finds relevance in the three parts of news reports. The examples below demonstrate

the use of phrasal modification as a discursive strategy in the data.

R. 7

22-yr-old-man standing trial for rape rearrested for another rape case

(Headline)

A 22-year old man Chibuzor Okechukwu who had earlier been detained at State Criminal Investigation Department, SCID and is now standing trial over a rape case has been arrested again for forcefully abducting and raping another girl... (Lead).

R. 5

A 17-year-old undergraduate of the University of Lagos, Ugochukwu Daniel, who allegedly gang-rape a 17-year-old girl with other still at large, was on Thursday released on N500,000 bail... (Lead)

The chief magistrate, Mrs. A. Ipaye Nwachukwu, who gave the ruling also granted the accused two sureties in like sum (Body)

R. 21

A 40-year-old security guard, Salisu Yakubu, who allegedly rape a teenager appeared before an Ikeja chief magistrate court on Friday. (Lead)

Yakubu who resides at No. 1 Chike street Ipaja, a suburb of Lagos is being tried for rape (Body)

R. 56

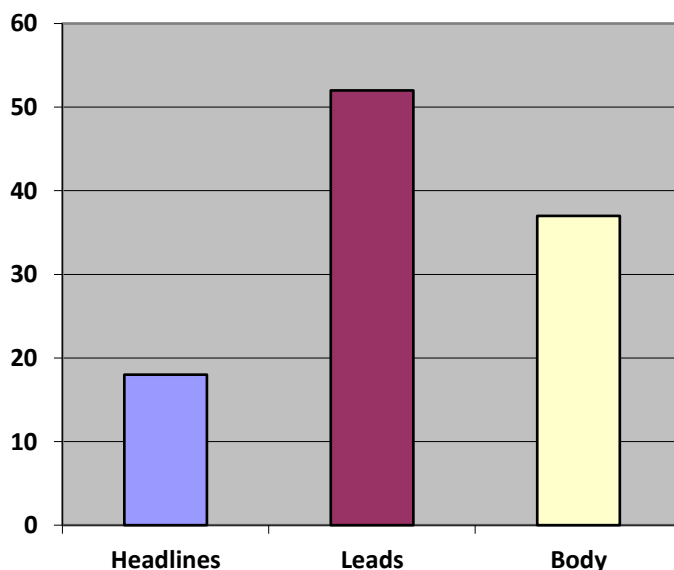
An eight-year-old victim of rape who suffered from rectovaginal fistula as well as a sexually transmitted disease is dead. (Lead)

R. 55

A 29-year-old bus driver, Folarin Olorunto, who threatened his sister-in-law with a knife to be able to rape her, on Monday appeared before an Ikeja chief magistrate court (Lead)

In the examples above, the head of the noun groups is excessively modified. Overtly, a reader may take it as a normal grammatical usage. But a closer examination of the entire data shows that phrasal modification is a deliberate strategy employed to give information that ordinarily will not be necessary, but capable of influencing readers' interpretation. For example, in R.7 above, regardless of the journalistic need to use few words in a headline, the news writer decides to post modify the group head *man* even after the pre-modification, in order to foreground the fact that the arrested rapist is in the habit of raping people having been standing trial for a previous rape crime. The intention of the news writer therefore, may be not just to report the rape crime alone but to stir readers' emotion against the rapist and tacitly calls for his condemnation. The same analysis goes for other examples above. In R. 56, phrasal modification is ideologically employed to garner sympathy for the rape victim. In the entire 90 news reports, this strategy is used 18 times in the headlines, 52 times in the leads and 37 times in the body of the reportage. This frequency distribution shows that the lead of the news reports is the dominant place where the strategy is used. The information is represented in figure 1.

Figure 1: Use of phrasal modification as discursive strategy



4. Selective Quotation Pattern as Strategy

Selective quotation pattern as a discursive strategy in the data has to do with the way evidence is presented to support rape news stories. This is done through quoting of individuals and authorities like police and persons involved in a rape crime, like the rape victims or relative of rape victims. A careful examination and analysis of the data shows that the quotation pattern in the data is done in such a way that only statements that directly or indirectly support and sympathise with an alleged rape victim and condemn an alleged rapist are quoted. In this way, the views or narration of what happened by an alleged rapist are hardly given and as such are shot out

of the reportage. In table 2, quotation from police/law court, rapist and other persons sympathetic to a rape victim demonstrate the use of selective quotation pattern as a discursive strategy.

Table 2: Selective Quotation in Rape News Reports in Nigerian Newspapers

R. N	Reportage Part	Selective Quotation
1	Body	“the accused covered the girl’s mouth so that she will not shout and took turns to rape her. The girl wept profusely and reported the incident to her mother who was praying inside the church...” Donny (the prosecutor) told the court.
2	Body	The prosecutor, Inspector Clifford Ogu, told the court that the offence was committed on March 26 at Mega Fund Hotel, Alagbado.
57	Body	Prosecuting police, Corporal Abosede Adegeshi, said the accused committed the offence at the victim’s residence. She said “on September 5, at about 2pm in Ikorodu, the accused had unlawful sexual intercourse with the victim who is 15 years old.
60	Headline	“my granddaughter bled for eight days after being raped.”
57	Body	Madam Asaolu said “Lawrence Adedapo is my neighbour. He invited me to his room to collect plantain but instead, he pushed me on his children’s bed and forcefully had carnal knowledge of me...”
73	Body	Bose [victim’s relative] said “she came from the farm with N1,050 and was crying. I asked her what happened. She said an old man forced her to lie on the

		floor and put his manhood in her private part... I told her to take me to the man's house and she brought me to Mr. Koleosho.
75	Body	According to the girl [rape victim] "there was a time madam was in the sitting. He came to where I was and carried me to his room. I tried to struggle but he held me down and said he would stab me if I made any noise..."

In the table above, the quotations given as a way of supporting reportage with authorial evidence shows that the views of rapists are hardly favoured. The discursive strategy could be ideologically motivated because beneath a rape reportage is the belief that rapists are already guilty of rape crime by being involved in the crime at all. So, by not presenting a rapist's view, the news writers/newspapers exercise their power of gate keeping on what a reader should see and also indirectly suggest that it is only views of persons with authority like the police and the victims that should be considered in interpreting a rape report. The use of this strategy is mainly seen in the body of a reportage because the functional nature of headlines and leads do not often favour its usage.

5. Vagueness as Discursive Strategy

Vagueness is, taken from van Dijk (2004) perspective to mean, the use of expression that does not have well defined reference in a discourse. It is a hedging strategy employed by discourse participants, especially text producers in order to be evasive or imprecise in giving information. Vagueness is a common discursive strategy in the data and it is used by news writers to shade some

of their sources of information and present their own personal opinions. The strategy manifests in the choice of words and expressions used mainly in the body of the news reports of the data. The examples below demonstrate the use of vagueness in the data, with the vague words and expressions highlighted.

R. 7

According to source, one Achumba Chima who claimed to have employed the victim... as his house girl reported to the police. (Body)

R. 53

The Nation gathered that all the entreaties made by the lady to the driver not to rape her as she claimed to be a virgin fell on deaf ears as he went on to force himself on the lady and defiled her. (Body)

R. 56

According to a source, Ababy was serially abused by unknown men. (Body)

R.62

It was also learnt that little Favour moved to her maternal house where her aunt Martha Enya lives after the death of her parents. (Body)

R. 82

Punch Metro learnt that the rapist broke the girl's lower jaw and blinded her right eye... (Body)

In the above examples, the highlighted parts contain the expressions that are vaguely used. Ordinarily, a news writer usually foregrounds the sources of his or her information for the sake of credibility. But the highlighted parts have no definite reference in the news stories. For example what the "source" in R. 7 and 56 is referring to cannot be inferred by a reader neither can a reader infer

who “gathered” or where information is “learnt” from in R. 53, 62 and 82 above. Analysis shows that this strategy is mainly used in the body of the news reports of the data. Table 3 shows summary of the strategies and their frequency distribution in the different parts of the news reports.

Table 3: Discursive strategies in rape news reports

S/N	Discursive strategies	Occurrence in Headlines	Occurrence in Leads	Occurrence in Body
1	Topicalization	72 times	14 times	15 times
2	Name mentioning and omission	Nil	93 times	54 times
3	Phrasal modification	18 times	52 times	37 times
4	Selective quotation pattern	Nil	Nil	223 times
5	Vagueness	Nil	Nil	67 times.

So far, the researchers have shown the different discursive strategies used in rape news reports in Nigerian newspapers and their discourse functions. Table 4 below shows the discursive strategies and their discourse functions in the news reports.

Table 4: Discursive strategies and their discourse functions

Parts of the reportage	Strategies used	Discourse functions
Headline	Topicalization/foregrounding	Foregrounding information that could influence

		reader's interpretation
	Phrasal modification	For giving additional information that could influence reader's interpretation
Lead	Topicalization	To expose rapists to public stigmatisation and protect rape victims from stigmatisation
	Phrasal modification	
	Name mentioning and omission	
Body	Phrasal modification	To stir readers' emotion against rapist and elicit sympathy for rape victims
	Name mentioning and omission	
	Topicalization	
	Selective quotation pattern	
	Vagueness	To keep away the identity of news source from readers

Conclusion

By and large, it has been shown that news writers employ different discursive strategies in their rape crime news reports and understanding of the discursive strategies can help readers to understand the news reports well. Five discursive strategies were discovered to be commonly used in rape news reports in Nigerian newspapers and they are topicalization, name mentioning and omission, phrasal modification, selective quotation and vagueness. The strategies are used in different parts of the news reports to achieve different discourse functions. For instance, topicalization is used in the

headlines and leads to foreground information that could influence readers' interpretation, while name mentioning and omission, selective quotation and vagueness are particularly used in the body of the news reports to stir readers' emotion against the rapists.

The researchers found out that the communicative goal of using the discursive strategies is mainly to speak against rape. The paper therefore concludes that the different discursive strategies are used by the newspapers to advance some ideological positions that condemn rape crime and its perpetrators, and solicit sympathy for rape victims in the Nigerian society.

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