A Critical Discourse Analysis of Nigerian Women's Suicide Notes as a Lens on Gender Ideology

Vivian Kaosisochukwu Ejiaso

Major Research Paper

Department of Languages, Literatures and Linguistics

York University

Supervisor: Philipp S. Angermeyer

1.0 Introduction

Suicide notes offer a window into the emotional, psychological and social worlds of suicide note writers. Initial linguistic studies on suicide notes have focused on analysing the genuineness of written suicide notes against fabricated or simulated ones (see e.g. Tan 2011, Harris et al. 2024). These studies on suicide notes approached their investigation from a forensic perspective where the findings could be used as evidence in court to make claims about authorship. However, more recent studies on suicide notes have transcended only studying for the authenticity to analysing intricacies about the lives of suicide note writers (e.g. Sanni 2021, 2022, 2024; Tanusy 2022). Some studies connect their findings to the general social practices that exist where the suicide decedents originated or lived (Sanni, 2021).

The study of suicide notes exists in Nigeria. Researchers including Ugwu and Nnamani (2022), Nnorom (2019), and Sanni (2021), for example, have contributed to the linguistic enquiries on suicide notes in Nigeria. Nigeria is a patriarchal society that enables male dominance and women's subjugation or relegation to the background (see for example Airaoje et al. 2023; Ejiaso 2024; Santaemilia and Maruenda 2014). The Nigerian society is a place where gender roles, ideologies and expectations are deeply rooted in cultural and political frameworks. Thus, suicide notes by women can reveal not only the personal despair but also the weight of gendered or social ideologies they bore.

This current study explores linguistic features in Nigerian women's suicide notes to investigate how Nigerian women who died by suicide (or even survived suicide[1].) represent themselves and others in their notes, as well as represent the gendered or social expectations including ideologies.

[1] In the notes I analysed, only one person is a suicide survivor.

By examining these final messages or notes, this current study seeks to unravel how ideologies of family duty, social and gender expectations are pronounced, projected or resisted.

This study employs the Social Actor Representation, SAR, Framework by Theo van Leeuwen (2008) to explore how female suicidees[2] position themselves within or against dominant social narratives. The aim is to understand if (gender) ideologies existing in Nigeria contributed to the suicide note writers' self-destruction decision, in addition to understanding the linguistic features they employed in achieving this and representing social actors (themselves and others) that played roles (remote or immediate) in their lives or final suicide act decision.

I hypothesize that the linguistic features or discourse strategies (as van Leeuwen 2008 calls it) employed by the Nigerian female suicide note writers in representing social actors in their notes will highlight the social actors' social identities as well as their roles in connection to their lived experiences. The outcome from this analysis could say something about (gender) ideologies in Nigeria.

This MRP is divided into seven chapters or sections. Section one "introduction" introduces the readers to the idea and general background on the research objective of this study. The second section examines existing studies and its discussion is divided into eight subheadings including: (1) the concept of suicide (2) suicide and the Nigerian context (3) suicide perceptions across different cultures (4) Studies on the discourse of suicide notes (5)suicide notes and social variables of gender and age (6) social actor representations in other discourses (7) gender construction in discourse and (8) gender expectations in the Nigerian context. The following section discusses the theoretical background of this study. I discuss in detail the Theo van Leeuwen's (2008) theoretical

[2] I used suicidees in this project to refer to individual social actors who conducted suicide acts.

framework on Social Actor Representation, SAR. This study follows the model proposed by van Leeuwen in analysing the suicide notes. In the fourth section on "The Data and Data Collection", I describe the data collection technique, data sources, total number of suicide notes sampled and method of data presentation, as well as explain that the analytic approach to this study includes descriptive and qualitative approaches given the nature of the data.

In the fifth section, I analyse and discuss the findings of the data following van Leeuwen's discourse strategies of *Inclusion* and *Exclusion* (van Leeuwen 2008: 29). In doing the discussion, I connect the findings of the study to the broader socio-cultural situation of Nigeria.

Finally, is the conclusion on the study, discussion of the limitations to this study as well as suggestions for further research.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Studies on the Discourse of Suicide Notes

Before delving into the suicide notes studies or discourse, for the purpose of this paper, I will provide definitions researchers have given on the concept of suicide as well as provide the context of suicide in Nigeria and suicide, its statistics and the socio-cultural and political perception of suicide in Nigeria. Following these sub-headings will be the discussion on existing research on the discourse of suicide notes.

2.1.1 The Concept of Suicide

Suicide has been given various definitions by researchers and organizations. According to Masanga (2008:25), suicide has different ways it manifests including the following: (i) as self-inflicted death with evidence that the person intended to die, (ii) suicide attempt involving a self-injurious behaviour with a non-fatal outcome, (iii) suicide ideation involving thought about killing oneself with its seriousness dependent on specific suicide act plans mapped and the level of suicide intentions, (iv) lethality of suicidal behaviour and (v) deliberate self-harm which only involves causing injury to self without intention to die. Durkheim (1951) in addition to defining suicide, also proposed the idea of four different classifications of suicide: egoistic, altruistic, anomic and fatalistic. According to Durkheim (1951) as cited in Synnott et al. (2018: 767-768) "egoistic suicide involves the individual having low degree of social integration seeing themselves as outsiders. Altruistic suicide is when a person's social integration is too high, prioritizing the group and their norms above their own, ending their life for a cause". Anomic suicide has been said to be a type of suicide for lack of meaning of life for the individual who unalive themselves. On the other hand, fatalistic suicide occurs when an individual is socially disadvantaged in that such a person is strictly regulated and expected to meet the demands laid. However, overwhelmed by the feeling of incapability to meet such high expectations set decides to die by themselves. The World Health Organization (henceforth WHO) (2001) defines suicide as the act of terminating one's lives, by the individual concerned and initiate the act (e.g. hanging, poisoning etc) having the full knowledge or expectation of its total outcome. A report by WHO (2009, 2025) says that almost a million people die yearly by suicide and that suicide is the third leading cause of death amongst young adults (male and female inclusive). The reason for suicide is multidimensional and can be influenced by social, cultural, biological and environmental factors present across the individual's life course (WHO, 2025). Nnorom (2019) asserts that suicide is a social anomaly that erupts from

the socio-economic and politico-cultural systems of a defined state that affects social conditions and affects society at large.

2.1.2 Suicide and the Nigerian Context

WHO reports that Nigeria has the highest rate of suicide in Africa and ranks sixth in the world. On studies on the rate of suicide in Nigeria, Buhari et al. (2022) and Oyetunji et al. (2020), for example, wrote that Nigeria's rate of suicide death is higher amongst Nigerian youths and married women than elderly or younger people. Between 2016 and 2019, about 22.6 percent of suicides reported in the Nigerian media were carried out by women. While suicide acts exist, in Africa generally, and in Nigeria particularly, suicide death is generally underreported (Sanni 2021, 2024; Nnorom 2019). While suicide deaths continue to occur, Nigerian cultural norms lead most people to condemn suicidal acts instead of investigating the remote or immediate causes that triggered suicidal ideation (suicidality) and the eventual suicide. Again, socio-religious condemnation, economic positionalities, politico-legal standings and cultural beliefs continue to discourage any possible expressions of suicidal feelings and suicidality investigation to trace the cause, thereby preventing interventions and remedial measures.

Legally and politically, suicide in Nigeria is criminalized. According to the 1999 Federal constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended, suicide is considered a criminal act, and its attempt receives the verdict of certain years imprisonment in addition to being criminalized (Nnorom 2019; Ekpendu 2020). Socio-culturally, suicide is stigmatized and condemned. Across

cultures in Nigeria, including my personal experience as an Igbo[3], and Professor Damilola Adebayo's personal communication as a Yoruba[4], for example, suicide is condemned and if it eventually happens, the suicide (dead or survived) as well as their families receive stigmatization from the other members of the society. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* portrays the Igbo condemnation of suicide, resulting in the deceased being denied burial rites and could be buried in strange lands including evil forests. Suicide is seen as "an abomination for a man to take his own life. It is an offence against Earth, and a man who commits it will not be buried by his clansmen. His body is evil, and only strangers may touch it" (Achebe 1994: 165). This is followed by cleansing to purify the land and prevent spiritual contamination. Traditionally, in the Igbo society, the family of the suicidee may be asked to remedy the abomination in their family through some ritual[5] in order to be re-accepted and participate like others (see Emedo 2022). This stigmatization may affect certain cultural practices including marriage (being married out or into) the family that has had a record of its member(s) die by suicide. Such stigmatization may result in such family not being recommended for marriage related matters[6]. The highly stigmatized level attached to suicide influences any form of interventionary behaviours or acts from the public and affects the reporting of suicide events. Nnorom (2019) asserts that suicide deaths are likely not reported or at most reported as accidents because families often do not disclose the true cause of death due to fear of harassment by law enforcing agents and also fear of stigmatization. According to Mars et

---

[3] From personal experiences, study of Igbo culture and literature, the Igbo community see suicide as socially condemnable.

[4] My personal interactions with a York University Professor, Professor Damilola Adebayo who explained that suicide is frowned upon and seen as an abomination in Yoruba culture.

[5] In traditional Igbo society, suicide is termed árụ or ńsọ́ álà, an abomination or a desecration of the land that requires certain cultural ritual to cleanse the family. Chinua Achebe portrays this in his *Things Fall Apart* when the protagonist Okonkwo killed himself. However, this strict practice is gradually fading out or not practiced in the contemporary Igbo society.

[6] Family recommendations is one of the channels for marriages in Igbo community. As such, if a family has incident of suicide, it may affect their being recommended for marriages.

al. (2014) in African countries, there still exist negative cultural and religious sanctions for suicide acts. Because of the under-reporting or absence of suicide, there is no judicial-legal provisions for the investigation into suicide in Nigeria. Politically, there is no functioning system that properly documents suicide deaths (and notes), and there is lack of financial resources or experts that are charged with the function of recording suicide events. Writing on the suicide reporting situation in Nigeria Makinde et al. (2020) as cited in Nnorom (2019:32), asserts that Nigeria "lacks systematic data collection due to lack of research infrastructure, poor funding, limited death register, lack of expert suicide research, inadequate multicentre collaborations, and lack of standardized research designs and instrument." In view of this, it is remarkable that the documented suicide rate is nonetheless the highest as I mentioned somewhere earlier in this paper. This suicide rate situation continues to contribute to human capital loss. Essentially suicide is a critical health problem (O'Rourke et al. 2023) that affects not only the immediate family of the suicidee but also the general society (e.g. Oyetunji et al. 2020).

2.1.3 Suicide Perceptions Across Different Cultures

What is considered suicide varies cross-culturally. A study by Canetto (2006) showed that different cultures have certain things which must be in occurrence to consider or determine a behaviour as suicidal. She lists choice, voluntariness, intent and self-inflicted death as some of the determiners of suicide across cultures. She illustrates that while in the USA voluntariness to die by oneself is described as suicide but in Punjabi, a wife for example who voluntarily decides to die with her husband being buried could not be said to have died by suicide, as that form of death is culturally accepted.

Cross-culturally, certain ideologies of femininity or masculinity are attached to suicide. Canetto (2006) argues that in the western culture, for example in the United States, suicide is associated with masculinity – it is a men's thing – as such women who commit suicide, which is a socially deviant behaviour. In China, there is a contrast; suicide is associated with weakness connecting it to femininity, as such men who kill themselves are considered weak. Inferably, in Nigeria, as well as in most African countries, suicide could be linked to weakness connecting it to femininity. Given the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society, and even other African societies, men are associated with strength while women are associated with weakness. Tying this femininity-masculinity connotation to suicide presents association of men's suicidees to weakness while women's are tied to strength; basically focused on the statistics I presented above, Nigerian suicidees are more men than women. Following Canetto's (2006) study associating gender to suicide, suicide in Nigeria is associated with femininity and men are not expected to take their own lives, rather they are socio-culturally demanded to "man-up".

Cross-culturally studies on suicide notes are important in understanding suicidal behaviour (Chavez-Hermandez, 2009). While people died by killing themselves without leaving notes behind, literacy facilitated the leaving of notes or messages behind by people who conduct suicide acts which could be addressing someone or something or society at large. Suicide notes studies have gained the attention of researchers.

2.1.4 Suicide Notes Discourse

Suicide notes have been described as written messages left by individuals who terminated or intend to take their own lives (Fata et al. 2021; Jasim and Jaafar, 2022a; Black and Lester, 2003). This

message or note left behind by suicidees or suicide decedents has been said to contain important information that highlights the lived experiences of the suicidees, including underscoring their states of minds, traumas, pains, challenges, helplessness (Ho et al. 1998; Atkinson 1978; Jasim and Jaafar 2022b; Osgood and Walker 1959; Shneidman and Farberow 1957). Credence have been given to suicide notes as being an essential linguistic artifact that sheds light on the motivations or intentions suicide decedents had (see e.g. Leenaars 1992; O'Connor et al. 1999, Buhari et al. 2019; Osgood and Walker 1959; Pestian et al. 2012 in Lazarides et al. 2019; Salib et al. 2002). Researchers from different fields including psychology, mental health, sociology, and linguistics, for example, have been drawn to explore suicide notes because of the potential that suicide notes hold in providing information about the lives of the deceased. In the area of linguistics, suicide notes studies have been an important area for forensic linguistics enquiry whereby linguists examine suicide notes to uncover the authenticity or genuineness of suicide notes (see Tan 2016; Zaśko-Zielińska, 2022; Sudjana and Fitri, 2013; Grundlingh, 2018; Piasecki et al., 2017; Osgood and Walker 1959; Pestian et al. 2010; Laia 2022; Harris et al. 2024). Forensic linguistic enquiry has contributed to distinguishing fabricated suicide notes from genuine ones, as well as helped in court for legal adjudications over suicide cases. While this is essential, the thrust of this paper does not utilize a forensic approach to suicide notes studies.

The linguistic inquiries into authenticity has also motivated scholars to characterize suicide notes as a genre (see Samraj and Gawron 2015; Tanusy 2022; Zaśko-Zielińska 2022; Abaalkhail 2021) and also to describe suicide notes linguistic features to uncover the lexical choices, style of writing, for example, (Fata et al. 2021; Smith, 2016; Pestian et al. 2012; Sanni 2021, 2022; Reon et al. 2008; Ugwu and Nnamani 2022; Nnorom 2019; Shneidman 2004; Maulida et al. 2023).

Studies into suicide notes have shown that different themes are found in the notes (Mayoh et al. 2024; O'Connor et al. 1999; Lazarides 2019) and could bear contents that reveal choices of lexemes highlighting the suicidees' apologies, expressions of affection, loss, hopelessness, or helplessness (Synnott et al. 2018; Lazarides 2019; Black and Lester 2003; Pittman 2021). Themes that characterize suicide notes have been highlighted to be related to economic failure, or financial bankruptcy, terminal and chronic diseases, unemployment, relationship breakdowns, loneliness, loss of a dear one, thoughts of a failure, aggression to society, decline in living standard, pains, hurts of traumas etc. (Loret et al. 1999; Sanni 2021; Nnorom 2019; Lazarides et al 2019; Foster 2003; Campos et al 2024).

Suicide notes are channels of communication and have been described as a one-way kind of dialogic conversation (Pittman 2021) because the writer writes to someone or addresses something, however, the recipients are not present to respond or react as the writers have killed themselves. Pittman (2021:2) writes that suicide notes are considered "a dialogue because of how they converse with the reader, but the finality of the act of suicide make it a one-way dialogue. The messages within a suicide note are necessarily one way because most people would protest or intervene when someone tells them they are going to commit suicide. Authors generally display an understanding that their loved ones do not want them to commit suicide, and the note carries with it an expectation to justify an act that is generally frowned upon." This message passed in this unresponsive dialogic communication style as a suicide note has been described as 'unsolicited' and 'unstructured' (Leenaars 1998).

2.1.5 Suicide Notes, and Social Variables of Gender and Age

Some inquiries into the linguistic features or strategies employed in suicide notes highlight the impact of social variables including age, sex, gender and economic status, for example, as influencing suicidal decisions (Tanusy 2022). However, Shah and Dee (1998) had argued that social variables such as status, social isolation, for instance, have no influence on suicide notes. In terms of gender and its influences in suicide notes writing, Tanusy's (2022) comparative study showed that the messages communicated in suicide notes across suicide notes sampled vary based on gender. Her study revealed that men's notes contain directives or instructions intended for their readers/audience or addressees, while that of the women are high in expressions of emotions. In another study by Shier, Scourfield, Finchman and Langer (2009) on gender and suicide notes, they sought to uncover themes in suicide notes of males and females. Their study demonstrated that social variable including relationship breakdowns trigger suicide in both genders. While the males' notes contain themes of sexual jealousy, punishment and revenge or disputes over children, themes found in females' suicide notes include overdependence and relationship pack-ups. Black's (1989) study focused on comparing which gender has more authentic suicide notes against fabricated ones. Again, Lester and Reeve's (1982) study found that women's suicide notes, in the United States of America, are more disorganized in comparison to men's as they are more expressive of negative emotions and feelings. Black (1989) illustrated through their study that women's suicide notes had more points to self-hatred, guilt, confusion, depression and despondency over the death of others, than that of men. Pittman (2021) whose study also highlighted difference in suicide notes by gender in Quebec, Canada, states that female's suicide notes bear remarks of anger and vengeance as a result of interpersonal factors, while males' notes present them as dejected and deserving their suicide fate.

O' Donnel et al. 1993 cited in McClelland et al. (2000) doubt the potential of using suicide notes to explore variables such as gender, age, marital status, and other socio-demographic factors in investigating 'at-risk' groups. To this, Range's (2006) study showed that men's suicide notes outweigh women's suicide notes, as such, this study concludes that men are more susceptible to killing themselves while women attempt suicide more than men do. Kolina (2013:8) asserts that "gender is a significant risk factor of completed suicide. Although suicide is a problem for both women and men, they are not at equal risk of dying by suicide." Shier et al. (2009) study also concluded that men are more at risk of suicide in comparison to women.

Cannetto's (2006) study challenges the assumption that women are immune from suicide in a subordinate world where males dominated. She argues that both genders have equal tendencies to die by suicide. Thus, her study also debunked the idea of associating suicide to socio-culturally association to genders of male and female. According to Canetto (1997) cited in Kolina (2013:15) language regarding suicide behaviour is gendered. For example: women are said to "gesture" and "attempt" suicide while men "successfully" complete suicide.

Some research on suicide notes have also illustrated the impact of age on suicide notes. Age is said to influence the content or messages communicated in the notes; different ages communicate their messages differently considering the socio-economic situations, experiences and the weight of social expectations. Leenaars (1989) and Pittman (2021) studies also demonstrated that young adults and teenagers express interpersonal relationship challenges, inability to adjust to life's turns, direct aggression and complaints about the meaninglessness of life characterize their notes. Sanni's (2021) study of suicide notes written in some African countries including Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya and Ivory Coast, showed that older adults' express feelings of failures and not meeting up to their social expectations.

Contextual factors have been described as influencing elements of suicide deaths. Such contextual factors include the cultural and social provisions for example. Reon et al.'s (2008) linguistic inquiry into suicide notes revealed that young people's choice of suicide is as a response to some life's challenges.

There is a plethora of research on suicide notes existing in Nigeria. Recurring themes in the linguistic enquiries in Nigeria include uncovering positions and positionalities of suicide note writers (Sanni 2021), understanding the rationale behind suicide events and subjects (Sanni 22021, 2022, 2024; Reon et al. 2008; Ugwu and Nnamani, 2022) as well as exploring the different linguistic features available in suicide notes (Ademola and Tolu 2021) and discourse strategies (Sanni 2021).

It is important to state that while studies on suicide notes written by Nigerian exist, there is a limited number of available suicide notes. Such suicide notes are available online given the advent of computer mediated communication that have made many social practices or discourses available online. Suicide events happening in Nigeria are underreported, which results in lack of proper investigation into suicide incidents. In addition to this, the absence of institutional rule regulating the publications of these suicide events and notes, if found, in Nigeria have made the publication only on the internet or social media, making the access easy. Such uncensored publications have continued to shed light on the incidents of suicides and continued increase in suicide notes lefts in the contemporary times.

2.2 Social Actor Representation in Other Discourses

Individuals are social actors who exist outside and inside of discourses or texts. The ways individuals represent themselves and/or others in discourse reflects broader ideological and social structures and highlight constructed identities and societal roles. Theo van Leeuwen's (1996, 2008, 2013) Socia Actor Representation, SAR, framework, which I discuss in more detail in Section 3 below, is a critical discourse analysis tool that provides an analytical approach to uncovering how people are linguistically included, that is social actors are represented as playing active roles in activities they are represented in, and excluded, that is the total or partial removal of a social actor in a representation. SAR also portrays ways individuals could be included including being activated – that is when an individual is an active force in an activity – or passivated – when an individual is at the receiving end of an activity – in text (I discus this in details in Section 3 of this paper). For instance, a social actor may highlight their own agency through the linguistic cue or feature of "I tried" or choose to reduce others' responsibility in a social action through impersonal (an inclusion) or backgrounding (an exclusion) discourse strategy (when social actors are not mentioned). I discussed these discourse strategies identified by van Leeuwen in details in the third section of this paper.

There is a plethora of research in many dimensions and cross-culturally to investigate SAR in discourses. Van Leeuwen's model has proven to reflect, through its analysis strategies, the general socio-political, and cultural structures existing in a particular domain or society. Some of the research areas that employed SAR model by van Leeuwen include uncovering social actors representations in educational or instructional materials (e.g. Karimaghaei and Kasmani 2013; Sadeghi and Maleki 2016; Roohani 2014-15; Huang and Gadavanij 2025), representation of social actors in the media spaces (e.g. Sahragaid and Daratgaizadeh 2010; Bezerra 2020; Prkson and Bahrani 2013; Asiru et al. 2018; Rashidi and Ghaedsharafi 2015; Ghajarieh and Salami 2016;

Abdullah 2018; Ahlstrand 2021; Surjowati 2020; Trisnawati 2023; Akinseye 2024), representations of people in immigration discourses (e.g. Simonsen 2023; Razzaq 2012), political domain (e.g. Dashiti and Mehrpour 2017; Faizin 2022; Hoa 2021) and representations of social actors in socio-economic matters (see Laabarta and Dolon 2005; Daric and Koller 2019; Almaghlouth 2022; Winkler 2011; Klaisingto and Aroonmanakun 2010; Allagbe and Amoussou 2020)

The van Leeuwen's model has been shown to uncover hidden and concealed practices in a society by highlighting socio-cultural structures, gender dichotomies, ideologies, and inequalities. Akinseye (2024) investigated the representation of males and females in domestic violence discourse in sub-Saharan Africa as represented in newspaper headlines and found that perpetrators, who are males, are represented as active or passive agents in the violent acts. Such either-or representations of perpetrator render the victims' narrative unimportant; thus, the violence experiences of the victims appear to be undermined. This study portrayed a male-dominant society where males are advantaged more than women. In another study, Klaisingto and Aroonmanakun (2010) explored male and female social actors' representation in crime news headlines or discourse to uncover gender identities, roles, power relations and patriarchal dominance. The study found that males are excluded in the narrative, representing the belief to conceal males' responsibilities in crime stories. However, females are also excluded but their exclusion bears reference to them in the headlines such that they are highlighted as responsible in the negative action. These male and female dichotomies are achieved through the study's analysis. Such analysis showed that the discourse strategies of functionalization, which is when social actors are represented by the roles, occupation or actions they play – or appraisement, which refers to positive or negative evaluation of an individual –, were used to represent male social actors. The employment of functionalization

strategies showcased the males' duties and praised them for their functions, while that of identification was used for females. Thus, the findings connect to the broader social situation in Thai where males dominate and women are subjugated. Almaghlouth's (2022) study examined gender representations in Covid-19 tweets about mourning deceased ones lost to covid. Their study revealed gender asymmetry, which reflects the broader societal situation. Men in the study are functionalized more – that is that men's role or activities in the society are valued and reputably referred –, while women are less functionalized, thus indicating that males' roles are more important than women's. This result generally shows the high and superior place that male social actors are placed in their society.

Prastika's (2021) research on political actors or government representation in general masses protest discourse over dissatisfaction with governance revealed that government and their actions were excluded from the news protest narratives, while the protesters were represented using different inclusion discourse strategies, showing their active involvement in the protest. The exclusion of the government in the protests reports portrays the government as innocent and also assuagers of the protests, while the protesters are portrayed as causers of mayhem and driving forces of violence.

Some research using the SAR framework in instructional materials, for example textbooks or instructional materials, for academic learning have provided such results as having male social actors playing key roles, and enjoying better positions which are highlighted through the discourse strategies of inclusion, activation and functionalization, however women are represented with strategies of passivization, and exclusion sometimes (Karimaghaei and Kasmani 2013; Rashidi and Ghaedsharafi 2015; Roohani 2014-15). Research has also represented women in instructional material as incapable of existing without men (Sadeghi and Maleki 2016). Such studies reveal a

broader socio-cultural or contextual situation where the ideologies of imbalance of social power, gender roles, identities existing in a society are reflected in educational texts.

Van Leeuwen's SAR model is useful in understanding the ways suicide note writers construct their identities and assign roles or blames through linguistic strategies or features within their narratives. In female suicide notes, social actors' representations could highlight the internalizations of ideology, gender ideology and roles or even unmet or unattained socio-cultural expectations. Using the SAR model for this study is essential in uncovering subtle linguistic choices that underscores how women position themselves and others in response to social power, ideologies and gender roles.

2.3 Gender Construction in Discourse

Growing discourse on gender roles has continued to see gender as performative or fluid (Coates and Pichler 2011; Cameron 1997, 2015; Schilling 2011), against the traditional orientation that gender is binary – male and female – and that its binary nature is dependent on biology. Schilling (2011:218) defines gender as "a complex sociocultural and sociopsychological construct that is not reducible simply to biological or physiological sex." Performativity or fluidity feature given to gender is based on the assumption that individuals could decide to put up masculinity or femininity or both robes in certain contexts depending on what they want to project or communicate (studies including Cameron 2003). Traditional orientation on genders sees femininity and masculinity as socio-culturally assigned and individuals or social actors in each society may be given some identities based on their provisions. Through this, certain things are viewed as indexing gender, for example, women talk calmly, men talk aggressively. Lakoff's

(1973) *Language and Women's Place* is one of the founding books that portrayed how language is used to keep women in a lower and subordinate position in societies, however most subsequent research has rejected her idea (Ochs 1992; Cameron 1997). Some of the rationales for not totally accepting Lakoff's claims is that her work overgeneralized on the linguistic features which women used, ignored the importance of contexts to linguistic choices and how factors including race, class, culture and even sexuality intersect with gender and language use. Gender relations also reflect power relations and discourses are platforms for constructing identities (see for example, Thetela 2002; Ehrlich 2002, 2006, Ejiaso 2024). Thetela's (2002) study showed how Southern Sotho women in South Africa[7] are restricted on the words they use or expressions around sex discourse. The women are restricted culturally by the culture's politeness through *hlonipha* – which gives alternative and "polite" ways of referring to sex and sexuality by other terms which distorts their narratives. However, men in this society can easily and freely engage in sex discourse without any form of cultural censorship on their expressions. Thus, women are culturally disempowered in seeking justice, thereby society encourages males' perpetration. Generally, the study portrays superior male ideology and subjugated female identities in the society. Ideologies about gender are also culture-specific. Kulick's (1992) study of language use in Gapun, Papua New Guinea showed that women in the village often employed rude and obscene languages in public, while men did not. This reflected local ideologies about gendered language use, in ways that are, contrary to Lakoff's generalization and also the opposite reality of the women in Thetela's (2002) study. Ejiaso's (2024) study on ritual killing discourse in Nigeria demonstrated gender inequalities as well as how women are perceived as, underscoring gender ideologies existing in Nigeria. While

[7] Thetela's (2002) investigates the cultural norm of *hlonipha* (a linguistic politeness code for women) that act as constraints for women in talk about human sexuality and sexual behaviour. *Hlonipha* prevents justice for women in sex assaults reportage. Women use euphemisms and "vague" (indirect) referents for sex subjects e.g. genitalia and sexual activities. 'cake' for vagina, 'blankets' for sex.

males are the perpetrators of ritual killing incidents and women are the victims, the study also showed that women are blamed, shamed and defamed in ritual killing discourse by males on online interactions. The findings of the study shed light on the male dominance and hegemonic patriarchy existing in the Nigerian society. The Nigerian society, like every other African society is characterized by male dominance and women's relegation to the background. However, researchers and feminists, since their inception, have continued to find ways to *de-patriarchalize* patriarchal societies that have continued to harm feminine humanity.

Through discourse, talk or language, gender is performed. Thus, gender is a social construction. Drawing on the social constructivists' perspective, Coates and Pichler (2011) asserts that using language is a construction of social reality. That is gender has to do with "matters such as social and economic roles and relationships (including, crucially, power relations), conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity, and often also with sexual orientation and sexual identity" (Coates and Pichler, 2011: 218), and even (gender) hierarchies (Och 1992: 336). Discourse reveals existing realities in a particular society including gender ideologies. Ochs (1992:336) opines that gender ideologies are "socialized, sustained and transformed through talk, particularly through verbal practices that recur innumerable times in the lives of members of social groups." Such existing ideologies influence how speakers perform genders in various contexts.

Gender manifestation through talk or discourse included ways language is employed to create, recreate, normalize, reinforce or even challenge and resist societal provisions of gender identities, roles and even hierarchies. In everyday conversations, for example, with other viable interactional platforms, both physical and online, speakers (social actors) draw on existing gender norms or ideologies, often unconsciously, to portrays what is considered appropriate for man and woman.

2.4. Gender Expectations in the Nigerian Context

In Nigeria, cultural, religious and social institutions play a significant role in defining gender roles, often placing women under intense pressure to conform to social expectations including marriage, motherhood, wifehood, submission and emotional restraints (being silent). Studies have shown that Nigerian women are frequently socialized to prioritize family honour and community perception over personal well-being (e.g. Nzegwu 2006; Okeke-Ihejirika 2004). Failure to meet these roles can result in stigma and shame as well as emotional and social isolation. Socio-cultural reluctance to openly discuss psychological distress, especially for women, who are expected to endure silently further complicates mental health. Socio-culturally, women are said to be the bedrock and stronghold of relationships both in their own nuclear family (with parents and siblings) and family with their husband (marriages) and in-laws, as such to achieve such, they are to activate and be ready to absorb shock or stress of all forms, violence etc. and even be quiet about it to prevent bring social-mockery upon the husband, for example. These layered socio-cultural expectations may surface in women's suicide notes which may offer insights into deeply rooted and ingrained ideologies around womanhood in Nigeria.

2.5 Summary of Literature Reviewed

This study draws on literature that views suicide notes as intentional and discursive acts that unravel both personal distress and broader social ideologies. Scholars have shown how suicide notes serve not only as emotional outlets but also as reflections of societal pressures. Central to this study is the role of gender ideology, which is constructed and reproduced through discourse or language (Fairclough 1995; Teun van Dijk 2009; Ehrlich 1998, 2001, 2002, 2006). Critical

discourse scholars argue that women's language often reflects deeply internalized norms about emotional sacrifice and silence. To analyse how Nigerian women's suicide note writers represent themselves and others, van Leeuwen's Social Actor Representation framework provides tools to examine agency, exclusion, inclusion, roles and identity in text. This study is situated within the Nigerian socio-cultural context, where strict gender roles and silence around mental health intensify the burdens placed on women.

3.0 Theoretical Approach

The suicide notes for this study are analysed based on the Social Actor Representation, SAR, approach by van Leeuwen (2008) which involves a socio-semantic process which not only presents the linguistic features but also their social implications or significance. van Leeuwen's model identifies discourse strategies used in uncovering social actors in discourse. The discourse strategies focused on in this study include discourse strategies of *exclusion* and *inclusion* of social actors in the suicide notes. *Exclusion* (van Leeuwen, 2008, 28) discourse strategy refers to means of linguistically excluding or not involving social actors in a representation. Social actors could be excluded from the representation of a social action to either suit the writer's interest or based on the assumption that the intended readers already know whom the excluded actors are. "Some of the exclusions may be 'innocent', details which readers are assumed to know already, or which are deemed irrelevant to them" (van Leeuwen 2008:8). *Exclusion* can either leave a trace or not. *Exclusion* without a trace is described as a "radical exclusion" of both social actors and their activities "which can play a role in a critical comparison of different representations of the same social practice" (van Leeuwen 2008:29). Exclusion with a trace refers to the inclusion of some social actors involved in an activity while some are excluded. This type of exclusion is subdivided

into two subtypes: *suppression* and *backgrounding* (van Leeuwen 2008:28-29). *Suppression* (van Leeuwen, 2008, 28) involves no linguistic reference to social actors in a representation. *Suppression* of social actors is realized through passive agent deletion, non-finite clauses functioning as grammatical participants, nominalizations and process nouns.

Backgrounding is a less radical exclusion type as it involves excluding a social actor connected to a social action, but they are mentioned somewhere else in the text. *Backgrounding* involves making inferences on who the social actors are even when they are not mentioned in relation to a given social action. *Backgrounding* de-emphasizes a social actor involved in a social action. Linguistically, backgrounding is realized through non-finite clauses with *-ing* and *-ed* participles, infinitival clauses with *to*, and paratactic clauses (van Leeuwen 2008:30).

The category of inclusion is also sub-divided into different types, based on various ways that social actors can be included in relation to a social action in a representation. (see Figure 1 for diagrammatic representation of discourse strategies for representing social actors).

Role allocation (van Leeuwen 2008:32) reallocates or assign roles or rearranges the social relations between social actors or participants in an activity. Roles are allocated through strategies of *activation* and *passivation* (van Leeuwen 2008:33). *Activation* refers to when social actors play active roles or are dynamic forces in an activity, while *passivation* refers to when social actors are undergoing or experiencing an activity, that is, they are at the receiving end of an action. *Activation* is realized by means of "grammatical participant roles, by transitivity structures in which activated social actors are coded as actor in material processes, behaver in behavioural processes, senser in mental processes, sayer in verbal processes or assigner in relational processes" (van Leeuwen 2008:33). Prepositional circumstantials or *circumstantialization*, (van Leeuwen 2008:33) that uses prepositions *by* and *from* to refer to social actors that are actively involved in an action.

Premodification (e.g. ‘public’ in ‘public support’) or postmodification (e.g. ‘of Asians’ in ‘the influx of Asians’) of nominalizations or process nouns as well as *possessivation* – the use of possessive pronouns such as “my teacher” are ways to activate a social actor (van Leeuwen 2008:33). Social actors can also be passivated through possessivation for instance “my teacher” (van Leeuwen 2008:33). Passivated social actors can be *subjected* or *beneficialized* (van Leeuwen 2008:33). Subjected social actors refer to treating social actors as objects in the representation while *beneficialized* social actors form a third party that benefits from an action. The benefits for such social actors could be positive or negative.

Another inclusion strategy is *genericization* and *specification* (van Leeuwen 2008:35). This category refers to the representation of social actors as either “classes” – for genericization – or as “specific, identifiable individuals” – for specification (van Leeuwen 2008:35). Such reference to specific individuals or generalized groups is a pointer to personal or societal focus, highlighting contextual structures in a society.

Again, social actors are also represented as individuals, that is *individualization* which is realized by singularity, and as a group described as *assimilation* which is realized by plurality. Assimilation is subdivided into *aggregation* – which involves treating social actors as quantity or statistics – and *collectivization*.

Social actors can be represented through discourse strategies of *association* and *dissociation* (van Leeuwen 2008:38). *Association* is realized through “parataxis, circumstances of accompaniment and possessive pronouns and attribute clauses with verbs such as ‘have’ and ‘belong’ have the capability to make an association explicit without naming the resulting social grouping” (van Leeuwen 2008:39). “Mark and Mandy” is an example of association as van Leeuwen illustrated.

Social actors can be included in a representation by *differentiation* or *indetermination* (van Leeuwen 2008:39). For van Leeuwen, indetermination happens when social actors are represented as unspecific, anonymous individuals or groups. This could show a social actor vaguely making it difficult to unravel their identities. Van Leeuwen (2008:40) asserts that "indetermination anonymizes a social actor. The writer treats his or her identity as irrelevant to the reader". They are realized by indefinite pronouns such as 'somebody', 'someone', 'some', 'some people' etc. which are used in nominal function, as well as realized through generalized exophoric reference, in which cases social actors are given impersonal authority, a sense of unseen yet powerfully felt coercive force (van Leeuwen 2008:40). Determination occurs when the identity of a social actor is specified. *Differentiation* strategy on the other hand differentiates an individual social actor or group of social actors from a similar actor or group, creating the difference between the "self" and the "other" or between "us" and "them".

Nomination and *categorization* are also inclusion discourse strategies (van Leeuwen 2008:40). Social actors are *nominated* when they are represented in terms of their unique identity, while representing social actors in terms of identities or functions they share with other social actors is described as *categorization*. *Nomination* is realized through proper nouns which can be in the form of formalizations (surname only, with or without honorifics), semiformal (given name and surname e.g. Vivian Vincent) or informal (given name only e.g. Vivian). *Name obscuration* (van Leeuwen 2008:41), a situation where letters or numbers replace names, is also a form of nomination. The second type includes titulation (using honorifics, ranks, titles e.g. "Dr. Ezeh" and personal or kinship relation terms to names showing affiliations e.g. "brother Mike", "Auntie Grace") and detitulation.

Categorization is subdivided into *functionalization* and *identification*. Van Leeuwen (2008: 42) speaks of functionalization as when social actors are referred to in terms of an activity or something they do. An example is an occupation or role, e.g. *-er*, *-ant*, *-ent*, in 'interviewer', 'celebrant', 'correspondent' etc. second is through a noun which signifies a place or tool closely associated with an activity, realized through suffixes such as *-ist* or *-eer* as in 'pianist', 'mountaineer' and by the compounding of certain nouns such as 'man', 'person' as in 'cameraman', 'chairperson'. *Possessivated functionalization* signifies the activation (as in 'his victim') or subjection (as in 'my teacher') of the possessing participant. On the other hand, *identification* occurs "when social actors are defined, not in terms of what they do, but in terms of what they, more or less, permanently, or unavoidably, are" (van Leeuwen 2008:42). *Identification* is subdivided into *classification*, *relational identification* and *physical identification*. *Classification* occurs when social actors are described following the categories existing in a given society or institution which acts as a stratification in a society. Examples of such classification include age, gender or sex, class, wealth, status, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, provenance etc. *Relational identification* refers to representing social actors in terms of their personal, kinship, or work relations to each other. It is realized through nouns that portray relations including "friend", "aunt", "colleague" etc. Relational identification are possessivated which shows "belonging together", for example, "my husband"; possessive pronouns e.g. "her friend" or genitive e.g. "the child's father" or postmodifying phrase e.g. "a mother of three" are different ways of realizing relational identification (van Leeuwen 2008:43). However, physical identification represents social actors by referring to their physical characteristics which identifies them uniquely in a context. They are realized by considering physical features such as *blonde*, *brunette* etc. or by adjectives for example

plump, *short*, *tall* etc., or "by prepositional phrases with *with* or *without* postmodifying highly generalized classifications such as 'man' or 'woman'" (van Leeuwen 2008:44).

Furthermore, van Leeuwen asserts that social actors are represented in terms of appraisement (van Leeuwen 2008:45), which is a form of good or bad evaluation given to a social actor in representing them. They are realized by a set of nouns and idioms that denote such appraisement, for instance: "the darling", "the bastard", "the wretch" or "the thing" (van Leeuwen 2008:45).

Personalization and *impersonalization* (van Leeuwen 2008:46) are also discourse strategies of representing social actors. *Impersonalization* represents social actors by means of abstract nouns or by concrete nouns whose meanings do not include the semantic feature "human". *Impersonalization* is divided into abstraction and objectivation. *Abstraction* "occurs when social actors are represented by means of a quality assigned to them by and in the representation" (van Leeuwen 2008:46). *Objectivation*, on the other hand, "occurs when social actors are represented by means of reference to a place or thing closely associated either with their person or with the action in which they are represented as being engaged" (van Leeuwen 2008:46). Objectivation is subdivided into: *spatialization*, *utterance autonomization*, which is when social actors are represented by means of reference to their utterances, *instrumentalization*, and *somatization* (van Leeuwen 2008:46).

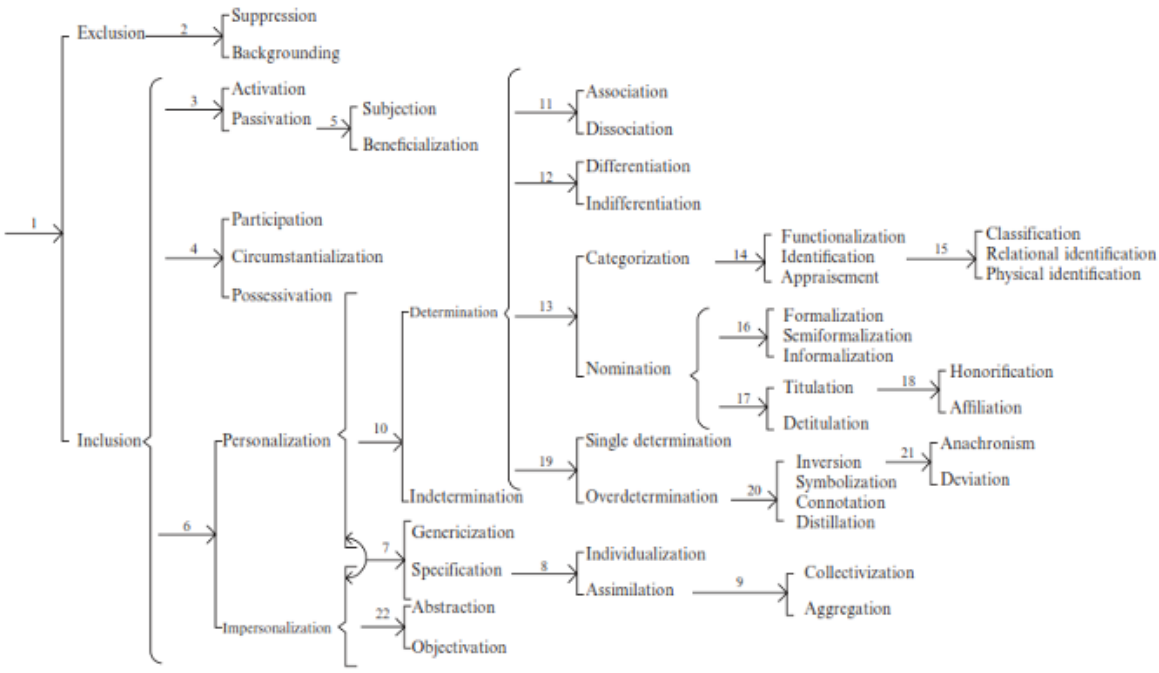

Figure 1.0 (adapted from van Leeuwen 2008: 52)

Figure (1.0) above summarizes the categories realized through linguistic means as proposed by van Leeuwen (2008). According to van Leeuwen (2008), "the linguistic choices are not rigid either-or" (53). "Boundaries can be blurred deliberately, for the purpose of achieving specific representational effects, and social actors can be, for instance, both classified and functionalized" (van Leeuwen, 2008, 53). On the importance of the network for the sociological categories, van Leeuwen argues that the network brings together "a number of distinct lexicogrammatical and discourse-level linguistic systems, transitivity, reference, the nominal group, rhetorical figures, and so on, because all of these systems are involved in the realization of representations of social actors" (van Leeuwen, 2008, 53).

Based on van Leeuwen's approach, I will analyse the notes by exploring the linguistic features used in representing social actors in the suicide notes written by Nigerian women. I will examine linguistic features such as the use of personal pronouns including "I", "you", "they", "us", "we",

"she", "he" etc; possessive pronouns including "my"," her", "his", "their" etc.; the use of nominals such as "mother", "father", "friend", "bestie", "brother", "family" etc. Through the linguistic features and following van Leeuwen's categorization, social actors represented in the notes are discussed as being included or excluded in the representation, which would provide insights into the circumstances surrounding the suicidal acts of the Nigerian women who conducted suicide acts. Following the discourse strategies identified by van Leeuwen (2008), the discourse features employed in sampled suicide notes are identified. While van Leeuwen's model mostly focused on media discourse in uncovering social actors' representation, using the model in this study sheds lights on the significant importance of the SAR model. However, the current study could also shine a spotlight on the limitations of the SAR model.

The next section incorporates the discourse strategies or linguistic features as recommended by van Leeuwen's model and their discussion or significance and limitations in usages.

4.0 The Data and Data Collection

The data for this study is collected from online sources. Suicide notes are probably, if not generally, often private and not accessible to researchers, but in my MRP, I drew on examples of suicide notes that have been made public. Such suicide notes were uploaded on the internet and social media spaces.

The suicide notes I focused on are ones written by Nigerian women which are accessible in Nigerian social media and internet spaces. I collected the notes randomly from Nigerian online

newspapers[8], X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook between 2018 and 2024. These suicide notes were posted by bloggers, online newspapers or private individuals who could be friends, family etc.

I sampled ten (10) suicide notes written in English by Nigerian women. These suicide notes were published between 2018 and 2024, and they were collected in 2024 and 2025 (during the academic year for the researcher's master's program). The sampled suicide notes were found online as either screenshots or snapshots (images) or as written messages enclosed in quotation marks.

These suicide notes were all written in English and not in any local languages spoken in Nigeria. The fact that the messages in the notes were all in the English Language reflects the status of English in Nigeria, whereby many people would, typically, choose English over their own native languages in their written communication. Again, it could also reflect the intentions of the suicide note writers to have a wider audiences or readers of their suicide notes. They may have written for a private or public audiences However, this intended readerships of the suicide notes are not known to the researcher. These sampled notes either addressed or mentioned social actors. It is important to mention that the suicide notes written in English made it easy for the researcher's analysis, as the researcher did not engage in any form of translation.

Some of the sampled suicide notes on the internet had some personal or biographical information, in addition to their personal names. While the names of the suicide note writers were published alongside their notes on the internet spaces, for the data analysis and ethical considerations, the original names of the females' suicide note writers will be concealed. Pseudonyms were used to anonymize their identities following what Tagliamonte (in press) suggested in dealing with human

[8] The online sources where the data were collated from are referenced in the 'Data Analysed' section of the 'References' at the end of the paper.

participants. She recommends that the initial letters of the names of research participants be retained, however every other letter of the name should be replaced with some other letters that are in line with the identity of the original names. In this way, the culture, language, and region, for example, should be put into consideration. Following this, the pseudonyms for the female suicide note writers were created to match their original names, highlighting their origin, ethnicity and tribe. However, some of the original names appeared in English only making it difficult to place the tribe or region of the suicide note writers. Such writers that fell in this category were represented as "unidentified". Again, the names (proper nouns) used in the content of the suicide notes also reflected the identity of the writer.

Female suicide note writers' origins were gleaned from their names. The researcher identified three regions: Eastern, Western and Southern Nigeria. Four notes were identified to be owned by females from the East (Igbo-speaking community), three from the West (Yoruba-speaking community), one from the South[9] whereas two were recorded as "unidentified". (see appendix A for the 10 datasets, as well as the pseudonymized names of the writers).

The suicide notes were descriptively, qualitative and discursively analysed given the discourse form the notes appeared in.

In terms of the data representation in this paper, the notes and the lines or sentences of the notes being referred to are placed side-by-side and enclosed in a parenthesis. For example, while the notes label comes first, followed by a comma, the sentence or line being referred to in the note follows it. For example: (Note 1, Line 3).

[9] The researcher assumes the female writers from the South is precisely from Delta. This is the only suicide note writer in this study that is a survivor.

5.0 Discussion of Findings

To start with, these sampled suicide notes exemplify multiple discourse strategies as outline in van Leeuwen's SAR model, particularly in how the writers construct identity, agency that highlight ideologies and social power.

Discourse strategies of inclusion and exclusion were identified in the notes studied in this paper. It could be said that the notes have highly inclusive discourse features as a wide range of social actors are represented, named, activated, passivated, (im)personalized, functionalized, categorized, nominated and sometimes abstracted. Importantly, the researcher encountered some methodological issue particularly in detecting elements of exclusion in the suicide notes. As it is a study on suicide notes collected from online sources, the researcher has no background stories about the suicide note writers that would have given the researcher enough information or knowledge to recognize examples of exclusion that did not leave traces. However, the exclusion strategy of backgrounding was identified in a suicide note. This will be discussed somewhere in the following subsections.

This section is divided into five subdivisions. The first three subdivisions discuss the social actors' representations identified in the notes are discussed, while the last two focused on social variables including gender that are found in the notes.

5.1. Representation of Suicide Note Writers Themselves

In terms of assigning roles to social actors in the suicide notes representations, the women suicide note writers activated themselves – that is, they represented themselves as "active, dynamic forces in an activity" (van Leeuwen 2008:33). Again, grammatical participant roles as grammatical subject and possessive pronouns, for example, "my life", "my friend" were also identified as discourse features the women suicide note writers employed in representing themselves in the notes.

The suicide notes studied clearly foregrounded suicide note writers themselves through the grammatical participant or subject position. Across the suicide notes sampled, the inclusion of the "self" through the use of the first person pronominal, "I", is enormous. The employment of the first-person pronoun, "I", or possessive pronoun in the subject position to represent themselves as "actor in material processes, behaver in behavioural processes, or assigner in relational processes" (van Leeuwen 2008: 33). The women suicide note writers activated themselves in the notes, highlighting their involvement as well as the roles they played during the period they lived and at the point of their suicides. As shown in (1), the following emboldened linguistic features in the notes' extracts are identified features of activation by grammatical participation:

(1)

"**I** know God won't help." (Note 1: Line 5)

"**I** need to believe in myself**."** (Note 1: Line 7)

"But **I** have to Go." (Note 1: Line 14)

"**I** will return as a Man" (Note 1: Line 18)

"**I** have tried to be the best **I** can be, stayed away from (them)) just because they blame me for their mistakes and ((they)) can't love, help and take care of me like their very own." (Note 2: Line 3)

"**I** have gone out of my way to take care of my mom by giving her food and money but **I** still end up being her problem." (Note 2: Line 7)

"**I**'m sorry mum, I'm sorry dad, I'm sorry Meme, Okwe, Toto, Nazor, Chuchu, Ifunanya." (Note 3: Line 8)

"I did this because I see nothing worth living for in this world." (Note 4: Line 1)

"… I feel more clarity than I have ever felt in my dull life." (Note 5: Line 1)

"I have been feeling depressed since my cancer started, but you make it better even when you told me my cancer was bad and I may not make it." (Note 7: Line 4)

"I have beautified myself with pain and glory in tears, but soon, I will only watch the world from a distance." (Note 8: Line 3)

"I was too young to have seen so much horror. I was too young to have seen so much horror. I couldn't sleep at night. I reached out a lot and no one could really stand me. I got tired and I really didn't ask for any of these." (Note 9: Line 3)

"But I am tired! / I tried!" (Note 10: Lines 2-3)

"I have therefore decided that there's no further point in continuing my life." (Note 10: Line 7)

"I'm going to kill myself and this isn't a cry for help. oops I already mixed it. LMFAO." (Note 10: Line 9)

From the dataset in (1) above, the suicide note writers represented themselves as active participants in the activities around their lives. This reflects the totality and weight of the pain, hurt, alienation, rejection and burden, for example, that they might have experienced that, inferably, given the weight of pain they bear led to their eventual suicide, which they perceivably found as their escape route, thus killing themselves was their final resort to terminating their cycle of pain.

Again, the notes highlight some actions of positive evaluations (positive appraisement). One of the suicide note writers represented herself as a previously engaged in positive actions for better improvement of her life experiences with her family prior to suicide. The following instance illustrates positive appraisement – "social actors are appraised when they are referred to in terms which evaluate them as good or bad, loved or hated, admired or pitied (van Leeuwen 2008: 45).

(2)

"I have tried to be the best I can be, stayed away from (them)) just because they blame me for their mistakes and ((they)) can't love, help and take care of me like their very own." (Note 2: Line 3)

The female note writer in (2) above appraised her actions of keeping away from her parents referred to as “they” and “them”, as a best approach, that is, positively evaluated, because she asserts that she is blamed for her parental mistakes. This extract (Note 2: Line 3) highlights the activated self’s work to fulfil their good daughter ideology or role to their family/parents, however their kind gesture was left unappreciated, which from her lamentation could be a pointer to part of the remote causes of burden that outweighed her and eventually led to her suicide. Somewhere in her suicide note, this particular suicide note writer described herself as “a broken child” and “a cursed child”. These negative self appraisements could be said to emanate from the experiences she received from her close family relations, which heightened her feelings of rejections and alienations.

The women suicide note writers activated themselves in expressing disbelief in God or religion. The following instances reflects the activation of the self:

(3)

“I know God won’t help.” (Note 1: Line 5) and

“I look happy but I’m nothing but a broken child. I don’t believe in God anymore cos I can’t see my purpose anymore. (Note 2: Line 13).

While these instances reveal direct and open expressions of disbelief, some women notes writers also indirectly maintained their faith and belief in God or religion. The belief expression comes to light through the notes writers’ use of illocutionary acts of praying, leading for divine or God’s forgiveness, or even acknowledging God’s presence.

(4)

"Dear Lord have mercy on me." (Note 3: Line 9)

"You are a good doctor and I pray for you everytime. God will bless your kind heart. You have made me not to be depressed anymore with my cancer." (Note 7: Line 3)

"I pray God will bless you in tour career, your health and your finance. And give you a good wife. Amen." (Note 7: Line 6)

One of the suicide notes sampled in this study did not only reflect on the writer's lived experiences but also asserts agency and control in a future event of her ideal return (see data (5)).

(5)

"I will return as a Man" (Note 1: Line 18).

"To fight for women and young girls" (Note 1: Line 19)

"I will not spare any Rapist" (Note 1: Line 20)

"I will be a judge with a difference" (Note 1: Line 21)

"I'll speak for the voiceless" (Note 1: Line 22)

She asserted her identity in her posthumous life as that of "a Man" as in (Note 1: Line 18). Such male identity would enable her do certain things including punishing social actor that is functionalized, personalized and nominated, "rapist", as in (Note 1: Line 20); fighting for a group of social actors that are categorized, determined, personalized and nominated, in (Note 1: Line 19), as well as lend her voice to a determined yet assimilated sect labelled as "the voiceless" in (Note 1: Line 22) and would be a judge, as in (Note 1: Line 21), that will pass final verdict on matters of gender based violence. These extracts from Note 1 portray that women suicide note writers also activated themselves by asserting agency, control and futuristic actions.

The suicide note writers activated themselves by the use of both grammatical participants roles and possessive pronouns to refer to themselves or their own lived experiences. The use of possessive pronouns in nominal functions are identified to be used in the notes by the women writers to express their feelings including internalized guilts, hurts, pain, trauma and burden. Instances include:

(6)

"I was a sad person, and I got tired of being lied to, of being ghosted. People would treat me badly and I didn't deserve that." (Note 9: Line 2),

"My figures are low/My brain is clogged up." (Data 3: Line 2-3) and

"My decisions are wrong." (Note 3: Line 5).

Feelings of isolation from family, society and community were also expressed, as in (7) below:

(7)

"I have gone out of my way to take care of my mom by giving her food and money, but I still end up being her problem." (Note 2: Line 7)

"I can't take the pressure and lies you are telling again." (Note 6: Line 2) and

"I thought I knew how to live but I didn't. Nobody listened Nobody cared. All I wanted was a family that loved me as I loved them but all I received was this." (Note 10: Line 4).

Being overpowered by economic hardship was also expressed by the suicide note writers such as in (8) below:

(8)

"The future doesn't seem bright at all, I see extreme hardship I can't bear the pain anymore." (Note 3: Line 7),

"The economy is getting harder." (Note 3: Line 4).

Again, failed health or ill-ness were also represented by suicide note writers as one of the feelings that overwhelmed them as in (9) below:

(9)

"If you're reading this, I'm either dead or dying. I don't know how long it takes for OD to work but I mostly hope that I'm dead. Why?? I got tired and I'm really sorry to those who would be hurt but I got tired. I got tired of the unending physical pain I had in my back, chest and legs." (Note 9: Line 6)

"I have been feeling depressed since my cancer started, but you make it better even when you told me my cancer was bad and I may not make it." (Note 7: Line 4)

Suicide note writers also expressed self-blame and guilt as in the examples in (10) below:

(10)

"My unfulfilled dreams haunt me incessantly." (Note 1: Line 11) and

"I did this because I see nothing worth living for in this world." (Note 4: Line 1).

Furthermore, the women suicide notes writers were also activated in their rendering of apologies and expressions of remorse for their rationalized suicide actions. Understanding that they are cutting off from people that are dear to them including family, friends, community and even God, they expressed their apologies by using the locutionary acts of "I'm sorry", and/or passivated self

– as one who receives forgiveness – as in "forgive me", which underscores their illocutionary force of pleading or requesting to be forgiven by their addressees. Instances include:

(11)

"**I'm so sorry** Collins I had to leave you this way." (Note 2: Line 10)

"**I am also sorry** to all my friends and well-wishers." (Note 2: Line 12)

"**I'm sorry** mum, **I'm sorry** dad, **I'm sorry** Meme, Okwe, Toto, Nazor, Chuchu, Ifunanya" (Note 3: Line 8)

"Please **forgive me**, **am sorry**." (Note 6: Line 5)

"Gerald please **forgive me**. Andre please **forgive me**. You guys are my life." (Note 6: Line 6)

"**I'm sorry**." (Note 9: Line 5)

"I'm just sad **I'm sorry**, soon you will understand why, soon you would know every suicide has a killer." (Note 10: Line 8)

"Fortune, Williams, Lord Okima, Chiemeka … You guys were really good to me and **I'm sorry** that I couldn't make you proud. I hope you can forgive me." (Note 9: Line 4).

"If you're reading this, I'm either dead or dying. I don't know how long it takes for OD to work but I mostly hope that I'm dead. Why?? I got tired and **I'm really sorry** to those who would be hurt but I got tired. I got tired of the unending physical pain I had in my back, chest and legs." (Note 9: Line 6).

In terms of expressions of affectionate feelings, only two suicide note writers activated themselves in showing their affection to their addressees, indicating that their feelings for the addressees live on even in their suicides. Extracts illustrating notes writers' expressions of feelings such as "I love you" include:

(12)

"**I love you** all so much. (Note 2: Line 14)

"Mummy **I love you**." (Note 4: Line 3)

"Daddy **I love you**. (Note 4: Line 4)

"**I love you** guys. (Note 4: Line 7)

The women suicide note writers passivated themselves, that is that they represented themselves as social actors that are at the receiving end of an activity. As receivers of actions or activities, suicide note writers represented themselves as benefitting from an activity – negatively or positively – described as *beneficialized* social actors. There are instances of explicit uniformities across the sampled notes as the notes writers passivated themselves through the grammatical object position as victims of ill-treatments from family, friends or society. Illustrations of negative beneficiaries include the following:

(13)

"I have tried to be the best I can be, stayed away from (them)) just because they blame **me** for their mistakes and ((they)) can't love, help and take care of **me** like their very own." (Note 2: Line 3)

"I have gone out of my way to take care of my mom by giving her food and money, but I still end up being her problem. (Note 2: Line 7)

"Accusing **me** of being a witch, trying to kill ((her)) and being a cursed child even though my brother is responsible for my education and upkeep. (Note 2: Line 5)

"I hope and believe that now that I am gone, it will bring them relieve and happiness. (Note 2: Line 9)

"You made everyone around **me** to hate me. (Note 6: Line 4)

"… The testimony you expected will be a tribute to **me** from the mouths of those who truly cared. (Note 8: Line 1)

"I was too young to have seen so much horror. I was too young to have seen so much horror. I couldn.t sleep at night, I reached out a lot and no one could really stand **me**. I got tired and I really didn't ask for any of these. (Note 9: Line 3)

"I was a sad person and I got tired of being lied to, of being ghosted. People would treat me badly and I didn't deserve that. (Note 9: Line 2)

In addition, the suicide note writers represented themselves as beneficiaries of positive actions from people they addressed. In representing themselves as passivated, they also nominated – that is the representation of social actors in terms of their unique identity – showing they are capable of receiving good things and determined and individualized social actors – that is they are specified. Their self-representations portrayed them as benefitting from friends, for example. Instances of positive beneficializations include:

(14)

"Maryann Olayemi Yusuf you have been more than a bestie to **me**. (Note 2: Line 11)

"I want to thank you for being there for **me**. Even when they put you in another unit, you still come to check up on **me**." (Note 7: Line 2)

"You are a good doctor and I pray for you everytime. God will bless your kind heart. You have made **me** not to be depressed anymore with my cancer. (Note 7: Line 3)

"Fortune, Williams, Lord Okima, Chiemeka… You guys were really good to **me** and I'm sorry that I couldn't make you proud. I hope that you can forgive me." (Note 9: Line 4)

In terms of exclusion discourse strategies, only one of the female suicide note writers excluded themselves at some point in their representation. For example, in this extract:

(15)

"I will return as a Man" (Note 1: Line 18).

"To fight for women and young girls" (Note 1: Line 19)

"I will not spare any Rapist" (Note 1: Line 20)

Here, the female note writer in her representation (in 15 above) excluded social actor in her reference to rapists, which does not make explicit who the victims of rape are or were, and also

what identities the perpetrators of rape are/were. Backgrounding, according to van Leeuwen (2008:24) occurs "when the excluded social actors may not be mentioned in relation to a given action, but they are mentioned elsewhere in the text, and we can infer with reasonable (though never total) certainty who they are." Inferably, the extract shows the exclusion of the female note writer herself in the representation. However, through the categorised, determined and specified group referred to as "women and young girls" the note writer could be inferred to fall under either of these classes. Van Leeuwen (2018) writes that writers' decision to exclude social actors (self or other) because they assume that the readers already have knowledge of whom they are talking about in the representation and more detailed reference could mean too much information being given.

5.2. Representation of People who are being Addressed in the Notes

The suicide notes have identifiable linguistic features that demonstrate or refer to people the women suicide note writers addressed in the notes. In representing their addresses, the notes writers employ inclusion discourse strategies including activation, determination, (im)personalization, specification, nomination and identification.

The second person pronoun "you" is identified as a linguistic feature by which suicide note writers represented their addressees. The second person pronominal was activated in representing indetermined or unspecific and determined and specific social actors. Only one of the sampled suicide notes employed "you" to represent death which it addressed by inquiring if it would pay her a visit. "Will **you** visit **me** tonight" (Note 1: Line 2); this extract written in a poetic style bears a rhetorical question in them. The non-human referent or addressee cannot respond.

In terms of human social actors being addressed, across the notes sampled, women suicide note writers employ "you" in referring to different identified social actors (see 16 below). The note writers used the second personal pronoun in addressing their friends as in (Note 2: Line 11) and (Note 4: Line 5), referring to their caregiver as in (Note 7: Lines 1 and 3), and referring to children of the deceased as in (Note 6: line 6).

(16)

"Maryann Olayemi Yusuf **you** have been more than a bestie to me. (Note 2: Line 11)

"Matthew and John, **You** guys should take care" (Note 4: Line 5),

"Dear Dr. Anaekwe,/ **You** are a good doctor and I pray for **you** everytime. God will bless your kind heart. **You** have made me not to be depressed anymore with my cancer." (Note 7: Lines 1 and 3) and

"Gerald please forgive me. Andre please forgive me. **You** guys are my life" (Note 6: line 6).

From the foregoing, the use of "you" in referring to addressees in the notes reflects the relationship, personal closeness or connections that the addressed social actors and the suicide note writers share. Again, the notes writers positively evaluated or appraised their addressees whom they represented, which further highlights the outcome of the texture of their shared social connections or bonds that the note writers share with the addressees.

Aside from people close to the suicide note writers being addressed, there is an instance where the general readers, public or audiences were addressed. Example: "I'm just sad I'm sorry, soon **you** will understand why, soon **you** would know every suicide has a killer." (Note 10: Line 8). This sample highlights a point that the note writers want the general audiences, who are addressed, to know about people who died by suicide has a killer. The functionalised, nominated and

indetermined social actor, “killer”, as used in the extract is the social actor whom the audiences are expected to get to know at an undefined futuristic time.

Again, some of the notes writers addressed social actors who are vaguely represented – that is the social actors cannot be identified as they are only referred to as using “you”. While the context of the statements signifies that there is a social actor being referred to, those referred social actors appeared to be only known to the writers of the suicide notes; such identities of those referred social actors are concealed, making it difficult to know who they are in the society. However, the suicide note writers portrayed the roles those blurry represented social actors were mentioned in the notes, which indicates that those indetermined social actors represented by “you” played a significant role in the pain or hurt the female suicidees experienced. Examples include:

(17)

“I can’t take the pressure and lies **you** are telling again.” (Note 6: Line 2)

“**You** made everyone around me to hate me.” (Note 6: Line 4)

In terms of passivation, addressed social actors were also represented as being at the receiving end of an activity. Examples include:

(18)

“…The testimony **you** expected will be a tribute to me from the mouths of those who truly cared.” (Note 8: Line 1)

Addressed social actors were also negatively evaluated in their representations. “**You** made everyone around me to hate me.” (Note 6: Line 4)

However, some were positively evaluated. Instances include:

(19)

"Maryann Olayemi Yusuf you have been **more than a bestie to me**." (Note 2: Line 11)

"You are **a good doctor** and I pray for you everytime. God will bless your kind heart. You have made me not to be depressed anymore with my cancer." (Note 7: Line 3)

"Fortune, Williams, Lord Okima, Chiemeka… **You guys were really good to me** and I'm sorry that I couldn't make you proud. I hope that you can forgive me." (Note 9: Line 4).

These appraisement of addressed social actors reveal the kind of feelings or perceptions that the suicide note writers have towards the addressed social actors they represented.

The inclusion discourse strategy of circumstantialization was employed in representing addressed social actors. For ease of understanding, circumstantializations involves the representations of social actors using prepositional circumstantials with *by* or *from*. An example is:

(20)

"In one moment, I will be free from the voices, from the pain and **from you**". (Note 5: Line 2).

Again, in one suicide note samples, the female note writer also addressed God and pleaded for His mercy on her.

(21)

"Dear Lord have mercy on me." (Note 4: Line 9)

5.3. Representation of Other Social Family Actors

Social actors including friends, family, relations and even non-human social actors are represented in the sampled suicide notes. These social actors were represented using inclusion discourse strategies of association (representation as a group), categorization (representation in terms of functions and identities social actors share with others), nomination (refers to representation of social actors using their unique identities), personalizations, determined (specified) and activated – that is social actors are represented as active force in an activity. Such social actors in these categories are represented using nominals such as "mother", "daddy". Pronouns such as 3rd person plural pronouns in the subject and objects as in "they" and "them". The pronoun "they" was used in one of the notes to refer to the parents of one of the female suicidees. Through her representation of her parents, she points to her parents or failure in parental or familiar responsibilities are expressed in the Nigerian society. The instance is:

(22)

"I have tried to be the best I can be, stayed away from (them)) just because they blame me for their mistakes and ((they)) can't love, help and take care of me like their very own. (Note 2: Line 3)

From the foregoing, the social actors referred to as "they" were represented as contributors to the feelings of isolation and alienation the female suicide experienced, which includes being abandoned by her parents, being blamed by her parents for their own mistakes and lacking parental care. This is in contrast to the instances in some suicide notes where parents are addressed as "you" when the suicide note writers addressed their parents. The addressing of their parents using the second personal pronoun, "you" suggests a cordial or friendly relationship existing between the suicidees and their parents. Instances portray that the suicidees express affection and love towards

their parents addressed as “you”. Thus, the suicide note not only reveal parts of parental responsibilities to a child within the Nigerian society including loving, helping or assisting and caring for their children especially from infancy to adulthood, but also highlight a consequence of the failure to fulfil such roles. In this case, the female child died by suicide. However, the suicide note writer mentions that she has even extended care to their parents especially to her mom, however her kind gesture of love was unreciprocated or was evaluated negatively. The daughters’ extension of care to her parents as well as her brother’s taken up responsibility to cater from her education reveals the good daughter or children ideology that exists in Nigeria (see Opara 1999, 2004). At certain ages, children are expected to give back to their parents which also highlight their social responsibility. One may infer that through this note, the suicide challenged and resisted the good daughter ideology and took her own life, thereby ending the cycle of negative experiences she received from her family.

Some social actors were represented as beneficiaries of the actions of the female suicide note writers. A suicide note represented some social actors as associated and categorized and would benefit positively from the suicide note writer’s proactive beneficial actions. For example, nominated, determined and categorized social actors “women and young girls” in “To fight for women and young girls” (Note 1: Line 19), and associated, indetermined and unspecific and nominated social actors represented as “the voiceless” as in “the voiceless” in “I’ll speak for the voiceless” (Note 1: Line 22) and “the poor” as in “And Bless the Poor.” (Note 1: Line 23) are represented as the beneficiaries of the justice the female suicide note writers would engage in in the future. While the female suicide note writer, as earlier stated, asserted that she would be a judge with a difference in her return (Note 1: Line 21) and be a “Man” identity in order to achieve the set goals. While the social actors “women and young girls”, “the voiceless” and “the poor” are

represented as positively beneficialized, the functionalized social actor "rapist" would benefit negatively in the set goals as the "rapist" would be punished and not spared for their ill act of rape.

Again, some notes passivated social actors as ones that they hope would benefit positively or negatively from their suicide deaths. An instance is in:

(23)

"I hope and believe that now that I am gone, it will bring **them** relieve and happiness." (Note 2: Line 9).

The excerpt in (23) highlights the female suicidee's family involvement in her eventual suicide act. Another instance of a note writer using "them" to refer to her family is in (24).

(24)

"I thought I knew how to live but I didn't, Nobody listened Nobody cared. All I wanted was a family that loved me as I loved **them** but all I received was this." (Note 10: Line 4).

Social actors were also represented using indetermined discourse strategy of inclusion (see (24) below). Activated or passivated indefinite pronouns including "someone" in (Note 9: Line 1) (Note 10: Line 10), "no one" in (Note 9: Line 3), "nobody" in (Note 10: Line 4), "every suicide" in (Note 10: Line 8), and "everyone" in (Note 6: Line 4), as well as the use of the nominal "people" as in (Note 9: Line 2), as used in the notes refer to either families, friends or the community. Such use of indefinite discourse strategy in the notes underscores the intentions of the suicide notes writers to conceal the social identities of the represented social actors. It could be inferred that the

use of indefinite pronouns that rubs as a pattern across the notes is a strategy of keeping away certain identities of social actors only known to the suicide notes writers.

(25)

"… I wanted **someone** to take a risk on me and invest in me. I genuine wanted to be happy." (Note 9: Line 1)

"I just need **someone** to come over and clean up this mess." (Note 10: Line 10)

"I was too young to have seen so much horror. I couldn't sleep at night, I reached out a lot and **no one** could really stand me. …" (Note 9: Line 3)

"I thought I knew how to live but I didn't, **Nobody** listened **Nobody** cared. All I wanted was a family that loved me as I loved them but all I received was this." (Note 10: Line 4)

"I'm just sad I'm sorry, soon you will understand why, soon you would know **every suicide** has a killer" (Note 10: Line 8),

"You made **everyone** around me to hate me." (Note 6: Line 4) and

"… People would treat me badly and I didn't deserve that." (Note 9: Line 2)

Social actors were appraised or evaluated in the notes. Some actors received positive evaluation, which points to the suicide notes writers' feelings or attitudes towards the mentioned social actors. Instances include:

(26)

"I know God won't help/ **He**'s **good**" (Note 1: Lines 5-6)

"Maryann Olayemi Yusuf you have been **more than a bestie to me**." (Note 2: Line 11)

"You are **a good doctor** and I pray for you everytime. God will bless your kind heart. You have made me not to be depressed anymore with my cancer." (Note 7: Line 3)

"Fortune, Williams, Lord Okima, Chiemeka… **You guys were really good to me** and I'm sorry that I couldn't make you proud. I hope that you can forgive me." (Note 9: Line 4).

In addition, social actors were also evaluated negatively. The following is an instance:

(27)

"My mom has made life a living hell for me only because she is bipolar and frustrated." (Note 2: Line 4)

It is important to note that the female suicide note writers choice of linguistic terms in talking about their family members negatively by blaming them, for example, is mostly in done in their use of the third person pronouns including "she", "he", "them" and "they" (see instances in (28) below). There was no instance where the use of the third or second personal pronoun was used in talking about or addressing family members of the suicidees in a positive light. However, friends social actors, other than family members, were addressed and/or represented in positive light by the use of the second personal pronoun "you" only, in some of the sampled suicide notes (see instances in (29) below). The comparison shows that suicide note writers would prefer to represent their family members whom they talked about or blames in the third person pronoun, which further reveals the kind of social relationship they share with their family members.

(28)

"I have tried to be the best I can be, stayed away from (**them**)) just because they blame me for their mistakes and ((**they**)) can't love, help and take care of me like their very own." (Note 2: Line 3)

"My mom has made life a living hell for me only because **she** is bipolar and frustrated." (Note 2: Line 4)

"My brother can't stick to his promise anymore cos **he** feels I am not his responsibility and I am have my own family." (Note 2: Line 8)

"I hope and believe that now that I am gone, it will bring **them** relieve and happiness." (Note 2: Line 9)

"I thought I knew how to live but I didn't, Nobody listened Nobody cared. All I wanted was a family that loved me as I loved them but all I received was this." (Note 10: Line 4)

(29)

"I'm so sorry Collins I had to leave you this way." (Note 2: Line 10)

"Maryann Olayemi Yusuf you have been more than a bestie to me." (Note 2: Line 11)

"I love you all so much." (Note 2: Line 14).

"Matthew and John, You guys should take care." (Note 4: Line 7)

"Gerald please forgive me. Andre please forgive me. You guys are my life." (Note 6: Line 6)

Some non-animate social actors were passivated through subjection. Van Leeuwen (2008: 330 writes that "subjected social actors are treated as objects in the representation" and "subjection can be realized … by 'participation' when the passivated social actor is goal in a material process, phenomenon in a mental process, or carrier in an effective attributive process" (van Leeuwen 2008:34). The non-human social actors are abstracted (impersonalized) or determined (personalized). The following are instances of passivation through subjection:

(30)

"Tired of All this headaches and Pains." (Note 1: Line 15)

"If you're reading this, I'm either dead or dying. I don't know how long it takes for OD to work but I mostly hope that I'm dead. Why?? I got tired and I'm really sorry to those who would be hurt but I got tired. I got tired of the unending physical pain I had in my back, chest and legs." (Note 9: Line 6)

"Accusing me of being a witch, trying to kill ((her)) and being a cursed child even though my brother is responsible for my education and upkeep." (Note 2: Line 5)

"I couldn't even afford treatment. I got tired of the unending emotional trauma, of being broken and tossed again and again and again." (Note 9: Line 7)

"I got tired of Hoping that things get better, it's been 10 years and it only got worse." (Note 9: Line 8)

Furthermore, social actors are represented in the notes by prepositional circumstantials by using *by* or *from*. The following excerpts highlighted showed non-animate social actors were addressed by female suicide notes writers. Instances include:

(31)

"In one moment, I will be free from the voices, from the pain and from you." (Note 5: Line 2)
"In one minute, I'll be free from the pains, the voices, the regrets." (Note 10: Line 12)

In these examples, as shown in (31), social actors are being activated by means of *circumstantials* such as "*from*". While all these impersonalized discourse strategies point to social actors, it is however a difficult task to pinpoint the true social identities of these represent as there are no preceding or succeeding contexts that would help in uncovering the true identities. One cannot say that the reference by the use of "you" is a male because the writer is a female. As such, the use of impersonalized discourse strategy is a hinderance to uncovering the social identity and roles of the social actors represented vaguely. However, the wonder for the reason of shrouding or concealing the true identities of these vaguely representation or impersonalized social actors still persists. It could be inferred that certain systemic or societal functions may have contributed to such impersonalization of social actors, or that the addressees already have the knowledge of the readers identity. While I have said somewhere at the beginning that my identity as a Nigerian and knowledge of Nigerian society would help in uncovering such hidden social actors' identities, many of the notes did not provide linguistic cues that would provide insight about the Nigerian society, but some did.

Again, only one suicide note writer activated an abstracted (impersonalized) element, for example:

(32)

"Dark forces pull me behind." (Data 1: 10)

"My unfulfilled dreams haunt me incessantly." (Data 1: 11)

The note reveals the existence of existential forces that could be a part of the causes to her decision on taking her own life.

From the foregoing, it could be inferred that the female suicide note writers either represented other social actors directly, clearly and explicitly or indirectly, vaguely and implicitly. Direct representations of social actors in suicide notes help in understanding the circumstances around the deaths as well as the social situations where they lived which could have also contributed to the intervening in suicide acts, while the indirect representations hamper such interventionary measures that could be put in place in checking suicides.

5.4 Gender Ideology in the Suicide Notes

As a social variable, gender is reflected in suicide notes discourse. While this phenomenon is a key objective of this research to uncover the represented ideologies that were projected in the suicide notes. The totality of the notes sampled did not reveal information about gender, however two of the suicide notes explicitly represented gender ideology, roles and identities that are existent in Nigeria. These notes highlight the profound impact of gender, gendered ideology and social roles on females in Nigeria. From a female suicide note writer's representation, in Note 1, it could be deduced that the female suicide note writer indirectly represented her experience as that of being sexually assaulted by a social actor that is represented as a "rapist". Thus, her experience

influenced her decision to return in a male's form in order to bring about justice to rape or sexual assault victims. The reference to "rapist" hints at rape experience, directly signalling exposure to or awareness of gender-based violence (GBV) as a lived or witnessed reality. One could inquire why the female suicide writer chose to return in a man's identity in order to bring about justice. This implicates the subtle existence of patriarchal system practiced within Nigeria where males dominate and women are subjugated, regarded as weak and voiceless. While feminists' and women are standing up to challenge the male patriarchal system practiced, this note, given its recency (written between 2018 and 2014) still highlights the presence of the practice and its continued negative impacts in the society.

The following is the extract of the data that bears gender information:

(33)

"I will return as a Man/ To fight for women and young girls/ I will not spare any RAPIST./ I'll be a judge with a difference./ I'll speak for the voiceless./ And Bless the Poor.(Note 1: Lines 18-23).

The above extract expresses a strong sense of gendered injustice, and the desire for empowerment and protection of vulnerable groups (women and girls). Thus, the speaker imagines or envisions a posthumous role as an agent of justice. The notes, notably, explicitly connect their personal pain to wider issues of gender-based violence (e.g. Airaoje et al. 2023; Ejiaso 2024) and systemic impunity still existing in Nigeria (Farotimi 2024).

5.5 Other Sociological Variables in the Suicide Notes

While this is not amongst the thrust of this study, the peek into sociological variables existing in the suicide notes studied are worthy to mention. The variables of religion and family or societal ideology were represented in the notes.

These suicide notes convey not only personal anguish but also point to the socio-cultural and legal-justice situation within the Nigerian society.

In terms of religion, the disbelief as well as belief in God or Providence reflects the existence of Christianity in the Nigerian society. However, not all notes mentioned their faith, those that expressed theirs portray that certain situations could lead to a social actors' disbelief or persistence in their faith. These are reflected in the notes where some suicide note writers explicitly denounced their belief or relationship with God. Instances include:

(34)

"I know God won't help./He's good." (Note 1: Lines 5-6)

"I look happy but I'm nothing but a broken child. I don't believe in God anymore cos I can't see my purpose anymore." (Note 2: Lines 13)

Again, instances of those extracts that reveal their belief in God include:

(35)

"Dear Lord have mercy on me." (Note 4: Line 9)

"I pray God will bless you in your career, your health and your finance. And give you a good wife. Amen." (Data 7: Line 6)

In terms of sociocultural expectations of family roles or responsibility, which I had briefly discussed or mentioned somewhere in an earlier section, these are also reflected in the note. The family expected responsibility which are to be fulfilled by parents of every child were resisted by

the social actors who are the parents of one of the suicidees. This is illustrated in the following example:

"I have tried to be the best I can be, stayed away from (them)) just because they blame me for their mistakes and ((they)) can't love, help and take care of me like their very own." (Note 2: Line 3)

"My mom has made life a living hell for me only because she is bipolar and frustrated." (Data 2: Line 4).

This reflects that the failure to meet socio-cultural expectations could impact negatively on an individual.

Again, the good daughter ideology was also highlighted in the same notes (Note 2, specifically, "I have gone out of my way to take care of my mom by giving her food and money, but I still end up being her problem." (Note 2: Line 7). The suicidee expressed that she met her own role as a responsible daughter to her parents, however, her gestures were returned with unreciprocated love. In Nigeria, it is socio-culturally expected that children, upon attaining adulthood, begin to share in their parents' responsibility, based on their own capacity, in order to contribute to the progress of the family. In a situation where a child begins to take up family responsibilities, such children are appreciated and praised by the parents. In the representation of the suicide note, the daughter is further rejected. Thus, the family alienation and isolation contributed as a main drive to her suicidal act. This failure to meet family responsibility, good daughter ideology further highlights what is in existence within the Nigerian community.

6.0 Limitations to the Study

This study was affected by several limitations that should be improved upon in future research. Firstly, the sample size is limited which affected getting a generously tangible sample size that could give a larger look into the Nigerian society. The limited sample size did not give room for quantitative analysis and analysing suicide by the geopolitical zones in Nigeria.

This study was also limited by the in availability of suicide notes to civilians from within Nigeria. it only used available suicide notes on the internet.

Finally, this study was also affected by the unclarity of some parts of the suicide notes which were published as pictures[10]. Again, the researcher's lack of background knowledge or information on the suicide cases limits the researcher's ability to identify examples of exclusion in the sampled suicide notes. This is a methodological issue that raises questions about the applicability of van Leeuwen's Social Actor Representation to genres other like suicide notes data sets than media representations. Van Leeuwen's model identified different representations of different kinds of third person, and so first and second person representations are rare.

7.0 Conclusion

In this paper, I have shown how suicide notes written by Nigerian women portrays their perception of themselves as well as that of other people that played a role in one way or the other in their lives. While these notes do not share exact same discourse strategies across them, they share similarities especially in the inclusion strategies they employ. Some notes excluded the suicide note writers as social actors in their own representation while some vaguely represented other

[10] In the data sample, the parts where I could not figure out clearly the words in the notes given some blurred parts, I enclose what I found in double parentheses.

social actors using second person pronoun “you”, and indefinite pronouns such as “someone” etc., for example. Due to inherent limitations in the data, the exclusion strategy of backgrounding could be identified in only one note. There could be other instances of backgrounding that I couldn’t recognize in the notes, due to lack of contextual knowledge and, perhaps, limitations in the van Leeuwen’s identified discourse strategies in his SAR model. All the notes, however, used inclusion strategies including activation, passivation, (im)personalization, determination, functionalization, appraisement, indetermination, categorization and nomination. The findings of this current study showed that some social actors were represented vaguely while others were directly and explicitly represented. In the direct situation it could be that the individuals were being addressed or just mentioned. However, the rationale behind the blurry or vague representations of certain social actors remains uncertain based on the inability to ascertain the suicide note writers’ minds or intentions, as well as lack of background information on the suicide cases.

These notes also reflected some sociological variables, which helped in highlighting certain social practices or socio-cultural provisions within the Nigerian society. A note reflected (dis)belief in religiosity, especially given certain situations that an individual maybe in. Societal ideologies of family or parental roles as well as good daughter ideology were also reflected. The suicide note writer, by their suicide, resisted or challenged the socio-cultural practices.

Lastly gender identity, ideology, roles, and practice were manifested across the suicide notes studied. The pattern of self-representation for the women in their notes presents a pattern about feminine gender in that the women are mostly victimized and represented as victims of gender-based violence. Again, the women represent themselves as people who cannot challenge other social actors, or community, but instead resort to terminating their own lives. Furthermore, the women represented their roles as one that involves caring for others including their own children,

parents and family. Failure in discharging such roles as expected would not be tolerated as they could be subjected to some forms of psychological or linguistic tortures.

The pattern of women's self-representation that underscores female gender ideology, identity and role in Nigeria highlighted that even in the contemporary time, the 21st century, the indices of male dominance and women subjugated still persists in Nigeria. On a broader outlook, this practice continues to keep women in a lower social position, while men occupy higher positions and could even intervene negatively in the absence of justice in discrimination or victimized situations.

References

Data Analyzed

Arewa Twitter [@Twitter] (2018, Dec. 26). She followed me yesterday and commit suicide today [Tweet]. Twitter. Accessed on 1st September 2024. Available at https://x.com/ArewaTwiter/status/1078068603268882437?t=pM6YAviReQVI4gl5LquuQ&s=08.

Bode (2020). 27-year old Nigerian woman drops suicide note on Facebook, available at https://www.nationalaccordnewspaper.com/27-year-old-nigerian-woman-drops-suicide note-on-facebook/

Thandiubani (2022). Young Lady commits Suicide, leaves a note revealing why she took her own life (photos). Accessed 16 November 2024. Available at https://www.tori.ng/news/199373/young-lady-commits-suicide-leaves-a-note revealing.html

Lindaikeji (2022). Death is peaceful. Accessed on 16 December 2024. Available at https://m.lindaikejiblog.com/2022/8/death-is-peaceful-panic-as-nigerian-lady-leaves suicide-notes-and-video-on-facebook.html.html.

NaijaNews (2020). If you are reading this I'm either dead or dying. Accessed on 16 December 2024. Available https://www.naijanews.com/2020/10/06/if-you-are-reading-this-im either-dead-or-dying-nigerians-woman-shares-suicide-note-gives-reasons/

Nigeria Stories [@Twitter] (2024 Jan 11). @NigeriaStories 11 Jan 2024 https://x.com/NigeriaStories/status/1745380232251502972?t=uMoy603d5W2IRSrkw4b 3w&s=08

Onuegbu C. (2020). Mother of two commits suicide, leaves note for husband, children. Accesssed on 1 September 2024. Available at https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/04/mother-of-two-commits-suicide-leaves-note-for husband-children/amp

Royalty _iRoyalty_ [@Twitter] (2020, Jan. 12). A Nigerian female youth corper of the 19C Batch committed suicide 2 days ago [Tweet]. Twitter. Accessed on 1st September 2024. https://x.com/_iRoyalty_/status/1216245511801491457?t=5L3rflm81eE18nnRAI0bmg s=08.

Ukpong, C. (2021). I'll return as a man says woman who attempted suicide on her birthday, Available at https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/450293-ill-return-as-a man-says-woman-who-attempted-suicide-on-her-birthday.html?tztc=1

Yabaleftonline [@Twitter] (2023, Dec. 26). Doctor shares a letter he received from his patient's sister after her passing [Tweet]. Twitter. Accessed on 1 September 2024. Available at

https://x.com/yabaleftonline/status/1739721610645430356?t=CUKXXNIJYnhCHGB8iclbA&s=08.

Literature

Abaalkhail, A. 2021. An Investigation of Suicide Notes: An ESP Genre analysis, *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 10(3): 29-37.

Abdullah, F. 2018. Social Actors in Intercultural Communication Classroom: A Discursive Lens of Intercultural Education, *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching* 13(1):31-51.

Achebe, C. 1994. *Things Fall Apart*. Anchor Books.

Ademola, O. W. & Tolu, O. O. (2021). A Pragmalinguistic Analysis of Selected Suicide Notes in Nigeria, *Gender & Behaviour*, 19 (3), 18600-18607

Ahlstrand, J. L. 2021. Strategies of Ideological Polarisation in the Online News Media: A Social Actor Analysis of Megawati Joekarnoputri, *Discourse & Society* 32(1): 64-80.

Airaoje, O.K., Obada, A. A. & Msughter, A. E. 2023. A Critical Review on Gender Based Violence in Nigeria: Media Dimension, *Middle East Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(2): 9-16.

Akinseye, T. 2024. Social Actors' Representations in Newspaper Headlines on Domestic Violence Against Men and Women in Sub-Saharan Africa, *Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communication* 10(4): 233-258.

Allagbe, A. A. & Amoussou, F. 2020. Patriarchial Ideologies and Female Unfeminities in a Contemporary Feminist Writing: A Gender-Oriented and Critical Discourse Analysis Perspective

Almaghlouth, S. 2022. Mourning the Lost: A Social Actor Analysis of Gender Representation in the @FaceofCovid's Tweets, *Front. Psychol*.13:1042621. Doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1042621.

Asiru, H. T., Ogutu, E. A. & Orwenjo, D. O. 2018. Event and Actors Representation in Selected Nigerian Daily Newspaper, *Ghana Journal of Linguistics* 7(1): 84-104, http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gjl.v7il.4

Bezerra, F. A. S. 2020. Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of the Cinematic Representation of Women as Social Actors, *D.E.L.T.A* 36 (4): 1-28. doi: 10.1590/1678-460X2020260403

Black, S.T. 1993. Comparing Genuine and Simulated Suicide Notes, *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychiatry* 61: 699-702.

Black, S. T. & Lester, D. 2002-2003. The Content of Suicide Notes: Does it Vary Method of Suicide, Sex, or Age? *Omega* 46(3): 241-249.

Buhari, O. I. N, Ogbolu, R. E, Ogunmodede A. J., Erubu, A. & Mohammed, A.T. (2022). A 2 Year (2019 2020) Analysis of Suicide Reports in the Nigerian Media, 5(1): 36-48

Cameron, D. 1997. 'Performing Gender Identity: Young Men's Talk and the Construction of Heterosexual Masculinity', in Susan Johnson and Ulrike Meinhof (eds.) *Language and Masculinity*. Oxford: Blackwell: 47– 64.

Cameron, D. 2003. 'Gender and Language Ideologies', in Janet Holmes and Miriam Meyerhoff (eds.) *The Handbook of Language and Gender*. Oxford: Blackwell: 447 467

Campos, R. C., Reixa, C., Cardoso, P. & Passos, B. 2024. An Exploratory Study in the Portuguese Population on Writing a Suicide Note: Correlates in the Suicide Spectrum and Qualitative Analysis, *Journal of Psychology* 27(e4):1-4.

Canetto, S. S. 2006. Women and Suicidal Behaviour: A Cultural Analysis, *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 78(2):259-268.

Coates, J. & Pichler. P. 2011. Gender and Discourse Analysis. In J. Coates and P. Pichler (Eds), *Language and Gender: A Reader*, Wiley-Blackwell, 187-202. DOI: 10.4324/9781003035244-16.

Chavez-Hernandez, A. M, Leenaars, A.A., Chavez-de Sanchez, I. & Leenaars, L. (2009) Suicide notes from Mexico and the United: A Thematic Analysis, *Salud Publica de Mexico*, 51(4): 314-320.

Cherry, C. Mohammad, S.M. & de Bruijn, B. 2012. Binary Classification and Latent Sequence Models for Emotion Detection in Suicide Notes, *Biomedical Informatics Insights* 5:147-154

Chynoweth, R. 1977. The Significance of Suicide Notes, *Australian and Newzealand Journal of Pyschiatry* 11:197-200.

Darics, E. & Koller, V. 2019. Social Actors “to Go”: An Analytical Toolkit to Explore Agency in Business Discourse and Communication, *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly* 82(2): 214-238.

Dashti, L. & Mehrpour, S. 2017. Representation of Social Actors in J. Krishnamurti and Alan Watts's Philosophical Speeches: A Critical Discourse Analysis, *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research* 4(4): 51-59.

Durkheim, E. 1951. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. London: Routledge.

Eckert, P. & McConnel-Ginet, S. 2003. *Language and gender*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ehrlich, S. 1998. *Representing Rape: Language and Sexual Consent*, London: Routledge

Ehrlich, S. 2002. Discourse, Gender and Sexual Violence, *Discourse & Society* 13(1): 5-7. Guest Editorial.

Ehrlich, Susan (2006) 'Trial Discourse and Judicial Decision- making: Constraining the Boundaries of Gendered Identities', in Judith Baxter (ed.) *Speaking Out: The Female Voice in Public Contexts. Basingstoke*: Palgrave Macmillan: 139– 158.

Ejiaso, V. K. 2024. Linguistic Violence on Women: Representation of Women in Ritual Killing Discourse on Nigerian Social Media Space, *Studies in Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis*, 5 (1): 32-45

Eklesia Laia, Y. 2022. Identifying suicide notes using forensic linguistics, *IJFL- International Journal of Forensic Lingusitics*, 13(2): 98-104

Ekpendu, C. M. 2020. The Nigerian Law on Suicide: A Tragic Response to a Cry for Help, *International Journal of Comparative Law and Legal Philosophy (IJOCLLEP)* 2(1):166 171. https://www.nigerianjournalsonline.ocm/index.php//JOCLLEP/Index.

Emedo, C. C. 2022. Ethical Implications of Sjuicide in Igbo-African Ontology. *Ama: Journal of African Studies*, 1(1): 65-78.

Fairclough, N. 1995. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, London: Longman Group Limited.

Faizin, B. 2022. The Representation of Social Actors in Political Editorial Reports of an On-line Indonesian National Newspapers, *Khazanah Hukum* 14 (2): 230-242.

Farotimi, D. 2024. *Nigeria and its Criminal Justice System*, Amazon Digital Services LLC-Kdp

Fata, I. A., Yusuf, Y. Q, Kamal, R. & Namaziandost, E. 2021. The Characteristics of Linguistic Features Enfolded in Suicide Notes, *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17 (2): 720-735.

Foster, T. 2003. Suicide Notes Themes and Suicide Prevention, Int'l. J. *Psychiatry in Medicine* 33(4): 323-331.

Ghajarieh, A. & Salami, A. 2016. Gendered Representation of Male and Female Social Actors in Iranian Educational Materials, *Gend. Issues* 33: 258-270. Doi: 10.1007/s/2147-016-9157 6

Grundlingh, L. (2018). Exploring the Possibility of Using Appraisal Theory to Determine the Legitimacy of Suicide Notes, *Elsevier Lingua* 214: 1-10.

Harris, M., Akram, S. & Bibi, A. 2024. A Forensic Linguistic Analysis of a Suicide Note: Examining Authenticity, Cultural Context and Institutional Influence, *Journal of Applied Linguistics and TESOL (JALT)* 17(4)

Ho, T.P., Yip, P.S.F, Chui, C.W.F, & Halliday, P. 1998. Suicide Notes: What do they Tell us?, *Acta Psychiatr Scand* 98: 467-473.

Hoa, N. 2021. Strategies for Representing Social actors: A Case Study, *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies* 37(6):1-17.

Huang, X. & Gadavanij, S. 2025. Power and Marginalization in Discourse on AI in Education (AIED): Social Actors' Representation in China Daily (2018-2023), *Humanities & Social Sciences Communication* 12:412: 1-13.

Jasim, H. A. & Jaafar, E. A. 2022a. The language of suicide notes: a corpus-based stylistic analysis, *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, 4(1): 19-32.

Jasim, H. A. & Jaafar, E. A. 2022b. Studies on Linguistic Stylistic Analysis of Suicide Notes and Suicidal Thought Posts, *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 12(1): 100-124.

Karimaghaei, Z. & Kasmani, M. B. 2013. The Representation of Social Actors in Top Notch 2A and 2B, *Asian Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities* 2(1):27-38.

Klasingto, P. & Aroonmanakun, W. 2020. Thai Gender Ideology: A View from Representations of Social actors in Crime news headlines, *MANUSYA: Journal of Humanities Regular* 13.2,2.00.

Kolina, J. D. 2013. *The Role of Relationship in Completed Suicide: A Gendered Analysis of Suicide Notes*, Doctoral Dissertation, The School of Professional Psychology, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio.

Kulick, D. 1992. Anger, Gender, Language Shift and The Politics of Revelation in a Papua New Guinean Village, *Pragmatics* 2(3): 281-296.

Labarta, M. & Dolon, R. 2005. The Discursive Construction of Identities: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Representation of Social Actors in Conflict, *Proceedings of the International Conference on Critical Discursive Analysis: Theory in Research*.

Lakoff, Robin. 1975. *Language and Woman's Place*. New York: Harper and Row.

Lazarides, A., Wassenaar, D. K. & Sekhesa, T. 2019. A Thematic Content Analysis of Suicide Notes from South Africa, *South African Journal of psychology* 49(1): 148-159.

Leenaars, A. A. 1989. Suicide across the life span. Crisis. 10: 132-151.

Leenaars, A. A. 1988. Suicide notes. New York, NY: Human Sciences Press.

Lester, D. & Reeve C. 1982. The Suicide Notes of Young and Old People, *Psychological Reports* 50:334.

Mars, B., Burrows, S. Hjelmeland, H. & Gunnell, D. 2014. Suicidal Behaviour Across African Continent: A Review of the Literature, BMC Public Health, 14(606): 318-325.

Massanga (2008). Perceived Burdensomeness as an Indicator of Suicidal Symptoms, *Cognitive Therapy and Research* 2006(30):457-467.

Maulida, D. E., Andira, M. A., Onggatta, R., Balgis, S., Hazah, S. F. & Rangkuti, R. 2023. Forensic Stylistic Analysis of UNNES Student's Suicide Notes, *IJRETAL: International Journal of Research on English Teaching and Applied Linguistics* 14 (2):26-33.

Mayoh, J., McDonald, K. & Luce, A. 2024. Listening to Women's Personal Stories about Suicide: An Online Thematic Analysis of the Discourse on UK Parenting Forum Mumsnet, *Feminists Media Studies*, doi: 10.1080/14680777.2024. 2375390.

McClelland, L., Reicher, S. & Booth, N. 2000. A Last Defence: The Negotiation of Blame within Suicide Notes, *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 10: 225-240

Nzegwu, N. 2006. Family Matters: Feminist Concepts in African Philosophy of Culture, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Nnorom, K. (2019). Social Anomie and Suicide Phenomenon in Nigeria: Lending Credence to the Voiceless Phenomenon, *RAIS Journal for Social Science*, 3 (2).

Ochs, E. 1992. Indexing Gender. I A. Duranti and C. Goodwin (Eds.), *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*, Cambridge University Press, 335-358

O'Connor, R. C. & Sheehy, N.P. & O'Connor, D. B. 1999. A Thematic Analysis of Suicide Notes, *Crisis: The Journal of Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention*, 106-114

O'Connor, R.C. & Sheeshy, N.P 1997. Suicide and Gender Mortality 2(3):239-254.

Okeke-Ihejirika, P. E. 2004. *Negotiating Power and Privilege: Igbo Career Women in Contemporary Nigeria*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.

Opara, C. 2004. *Her Mother's Daughter: The African Writer as Women*. Port Harcourt: Belpot, Nigerian Publisher.

Opara, C. 1999. Making Hay on Sunny Grounds: Women and the Transformation of the African Novel. In E. Emenyonu (Ed.), *Beyond the Marginal Land: Gender Perspectives in African Writing*, Trenton, NJ: African World Press: 1-13.

O'Rourke, H. P., Hilley, C.D., Lowell, E & Sheehan, C. M. 2023. Sexual and Gender Identity and Note Leaving Among Adult Suicide Decedents in the USA, *BJPsych Open* 9(e6):1-6. Doi: 10.1192/bjo.2022.610.

Osgood, C.E. & Walker, E. G. 1959. Motivation and Language Behaviour: A Content Analysis of Suicide Notes, *Institute of Communications Research*, University of Illionois.

Osmond, M. W. & Thorne, B. 1993. Feminist theories: the social construction of gender in families and society; in Pauline Boss, William J. Doherty, Ralph LaRossa, Walter R. Schumm and Suzanne K. S. (eds.), *Sourcebook of Family Theories and Methods*. New York: Plenum: 591-622.

Pestian, J.P., Matykiewicz, P., Linn-gust, M., South, B., Uzuner, O., Wiebe, J., Cohen, K. B., Hurdle, J.& Brew, C. 2012. Sentiment Analysis of Suicide Notes: A shared Task, *Biomedical Informatics Insights* 5(1), 3–16.

Pestian, J., Nasrallah, H., Bennet, A. & Leenaars, A. 2010. *Suicide Note Classification Using Natural Language Processing: A Content Analysis*, 3:19-28

Piasecki, M., Mlynarczyk, K. & Kocon, J. 2017. Recognition of Genuine Polish Suicide Notes, *Proceedings of Recent Advances in Natural Language Processing*, 583-591.

Pittman, W. 2021. A Qualitative Content Analysis of Quebec Suicide Notes, Master's Thesis, Department of Sociology and Anthropology Concordia university.

Range, L. M. 2006. Women and Suicide. In J. Worell and C.D. Goodhear (Eds), *Handbook of Girls'and Women's Health*, New York: NY: Oxford University Press.

Razzaq, S. K. A. 2012. Discourse Analysis of the representation of migrant workers in the Star Online Newspaper, *Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (AJHSS)* 1(3):114 131.

Roohani, A. 2014-2015. Male and Female Social Actor Representation in Four Corners: A Critical Discourse Perspective, *IJRELT* 2(2): 23-35.

Rashidi, N. & Ghaedsharafi, S. 2015. An Investigation into the Culture and Social Actors Representation in Summit Series ELT Textbooks Within van Leeuw'n's 1996 Framework, *SAGE Open*: 1-10, Doi: 10.1177/2158244015576054.

Sadeghi, B. & Maleki, G. 2016. The Representation of Male and Female Social Actors in the ILI English Series, *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* 7(2):307-317. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0702.09.

Sahragard, R. & Davatgarzadeh, G. 2010. The Representation of Social Actor in Interchange Third Edition Series: A Critical Discourse Analysis, *The Journal of Teaching Language Skills (JTLS)* 2(1):67-89.

Salib, E., Cawley, S. & Healy, R. 2002. *The Significance of Suicide Notes in the Elderly*, 6(2):186 190

Samraj, B. & Gawron, J. M. 2015. The Suicide Notes as a Genre: Implications for Genre Theory, *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 19, pp. 88-101.

Sanni, O. 2021. Discourse Strategies in Selected African Suicide Notes, *master's Thesis, the American University in Cairo,* AUC Knowledge Fountain

Sanni, O.O. 2022. Linguistic Patterns in African Suicide Notes. In Ralarala, M. K., Kaschula, R.H & Heydon, G. (Eds) *Language and the Law: Global Perspectives in Forensic Linguistics from Africa and Beyond,* Studies in Forensic and Legal Linguistics in Africa and Beyond, 319-444

Sanni, O. 2024. *Exploring the Testamentary Capacity of Some South African Suicide Notes: A (Forensic) Linguistic Approach*, Int J Semiot Law, Springer,

Santaemilia, J. & Maruenda, S. 2014. The Linguistic Representation of Gender Violence in (written) Media Discourse: The Term Femicide/Feminicide. *Discourse & Society*, 23(5): 513-532.

Schilling, N. 2011. *Language, gender and sexuality*, Cambridge University Press.

Shiner, M., Scourfield, J., Finchman, B., & Langer, S. 2009. When Things Fall Apart: Gender and Suicide Across the Life-course, *Social Science and Medicine*, 69: 738-746.

Schneidman, E. 1980. *Voices of Death*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Shah, A. & De, T. 1998. Suicide and the Elderly, *International Journal of Psychiatry in Clinical Practice* 2(1):3-18

Shirvani, J. 2013. Critical Discourse Analysis: The Representation of Social Actors in SUMMIT Series, *The International Journal of Language learning and Applied Linguistics World (IJLLAW)* 2(3)

Shneidman, E. S. (2004). *Autopsy of a Suicidal Mind*, Oxford University Press

Shneidman, E.S. 1993. Suicide as Psychache: A Clinical Approach to Self-destructive Behaviour, Lanham, *MD: Jason Aronson*.

Simonsen, S. 2023. Social Actor Representation in Media Discourse: How Neutral Linguistic Cues get Endowed with Meaning that Signifies Ethnicity, Language, *Discourse & Society* 11(1):21

Smith, C. H. (2016). *The Linguistics of Terror: A Content Analysis of Suicide Notes and Martyr Manifestos*, a master's thesis, Department of Criminal Justice, The University of Alabama.

Stockhard. J. 1999. Gender Socialization. In J.s Chafetz (Eds) *Handbook of the Sociology of Gender*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum publishers,

Sujana, E.T.S. & Fitri, N. 2013. Kurt Cobain's Suicide Note Case: Forensic Linguistic Profiling Analysis, *International Journal of Criminology and Sociological Theory*, 16 (4), pp. 217 227.

Surjowati, R. 2020. Disclosing Australian Newspapers Ideologies in Reporting Political News Through Social Actor Representation Strategy: CDA Perspective, *NOBEL: Journal of Literature and Language Teaching* 11(1): 38-54.

Synnott, J., Ioannou, M., Coyne, A. & Hemingway, S. 2018. A Content Analysis of Online Suicide Notes: Attempted Suicide Versus Attempt Resulting in Suicide, *Suicide and Life Threatening Behaviour* 48(6):767-778.

Tan, M, N. L. N. V. 2016. Forensic Linguistics Analysis of Virginia Wolf's Suicide Notes, *International Journal of Education*, 9 (1), 52-57

Tanusy, J. 2022. A Rhetorical Move Analysis of Men's and Women's Suicide Notes*, Journal of Language and Literature*, 22 (1), 64-74

Thetela, P. H. 2002. Sex discourses and gender constructions in Southern Sotho: a case study of police interviews of rape/sexual assault victims, *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, 20:3, 177-189, DOI: 10.2989/16073610209486309

Trisnawati, D. 2023. Social Actors' Representation at Chaka Zulu's Press Conference: Critical Discourse Analysis, *LILIC: Journal of Literature, Linguistics and Cultural Studies* 2(2): 215-232.

Ugwu, J. C. and Nnamani, O. C. 2022. Culpability Denial and Admissibility in Suicide Notes in Nigeria: A Linguistic Interrogation, *AKSU Journal of English*, 58-70.

Van Dijk, T. 2009 Critical Discourse Studies: A Sociocognitive Approach. In R. Wodak and M. Meyer, 2nd ed. *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 62-86.

Van Leeuwen, T. 1996. The Representation of Social Actors. *Text & Talk*, 18(1): 120-140.

Van Leeuwen, T. 2008. Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Analysis, Oxford University Press.

Van Leeuwen, T. 2013. Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Analysis, In J. P. Gee & M. Handford (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*: 137-150.

WHO.2025. Suicide. (March). https://www.who.int/news-rrom/fact-sheets/detail/suicide.

WHO. 2023. WHO Data. https://data. Who.int/countries/566

WHO. 2019. Gender-Based Violence: An Analysis of the Implications for the Nigerian Women Project, *International Bank for Reconstruction and Development*.

Winkler, I. 2011. The Representation of Social Actors in Corporate Codes of Ethics. How Code Language Positions Internal Actors, *Journal of Business Ethic* 101: 653-665. Doi: 10.1007/s10551-011-0762-8.

Zaśko-Zielińska, M. 2022. The Linguistic Analysis of Suicide Notes, *Language As Evidence: Doing Forensic Linguistics*: 373-417.

Appendix

Note1: Pseudonym: Divine Evelyn (Southsouth, Delta/Calabar; a suicide survivor)

1 "ITS **MY** BIRTHDAY!!!. Sweet, sweet, suicide.
2 Will **you** visit **me** tonight/
3 Tired of feeling suicidal when **my** aspirations are stifled
4 Fighting back tears while smiling from ear to ear
5 **I** know **God** won't help
6 **He**'s good
7 **I** need to believe in **myself**
8 **I** would
9 But every time **I** try
10 Dark forces pull **me** behind
11 **My** unfulfilled dreams haunt **me** incessantly
12 **They** depend on **me** to thrive.
13 **Its** My BIRTHDAY Anyways.
14 But **I** have to Go.
15 Tired of All this headaches and Pains.
16 Smiling outside while bleeding inside.
17 Saying **I**'m Okay when **I**'m Not.
18 **I** will return as **a Man**
19 To fight for **women and young girls**
20 **I** will not spare **any RAPIST**
21 **I**'ll be **a judge** with a difference.
22 **I**'ll speak for **the voiceless**.
23 And Bless **the Poor**.

24 **My** second coming will be Amazing.

25 LET **ME** REST!!!"

Note 2: Pseudonym: Amina Omorinsola (Yoruba)

1 Just like I said, if I am no more

2 Please hold my family especially my mom and dad responsible.

3 I have tried to be the best I can be, stayed away from (them)) just because they blame me for their mistakes and ((they)) can't love, help and take care of me like their very own.

4 My mom has made life a living hell for me only because she is bipolar and frustrated.

5 Accusing me of being a witch, trying to kill ((her)) and being a cursed child even though my brother is responsible for my education and upkeep.

6 The only thing she helps me with is my feeding money.

7 I have gone out of my way to take care of my mom by giving her food and money by I still end up being her problem.

8 My brother can't stick to his promise anymore cos he feels I am not his responsibility and I am have my own family.

9 I hope and believe that now that I am gone, it will bring them relieve and happiness.

10 I'm so sorry Collins I had to leave you this way.

11 Maryann Olayemi Yusuf you have been more than a bestie to me.

12 I am also sorry to all my friends and well-wishers,

13 I look happy but I'm nothing but a broken child. I don't believe in God anymore cos I can't see my purpose anymore.

14 I love you all so much.

15 = phone password = ((3456))

16 ATM pin=((1997)) = Amount 12k

17 Please bury me immediately I am found dead.

18 Love you!

***Note**: I used double parentheses at some point where I could not clearly read what was handwritten on the snapshots of the suicide notes available on the internet.*

Note 3: Pseudonym: Amaka Uzochukwu (Igbo)

1 Nothing is working in my life

2 My figures are low

3 My brain is clogged up

4 The economy is getting harder

5 My decisions are wrong

6 My mind is messed up

7 The future doesn't seem bright at all, I see extreme hardship I can't bear the pain anymore.

8 I'm sorry mum, I'm sorry dad, I'm sorry Meme, Okwe, Toto, Nazor, Chuchu, Ifunanya

9 Dear Lord have mercy on me.

Note 4: Pseudonym: Bimpe Precious Moyesola (Yoruba)

1 I did this because I see nothing worth living for in this world.

2 Bolufemi

3 Motunrayo

4 Yetunde

5 Mummy I love you.

6 Daddy I love you.

7 Matthew and John, You guys should take care

8 We will meet, where we will depart no more,

9 I love you guys.

Note 5: Pseudonym: Ifeyinwa Blessed Obi (Igbo)

1 In these moments before my departure, I feel more clarity than I have ever felt in my dull life.

2 In one moment, I will be free from the voices, from the pain and from you".

Note 6: Pseudonym: Evangel Freds (Igbo, news source says origine is Anambra)

1 Please take care of my children please.

2 I can't take the pressure and lies you are telling again.

3 I can't take it, please it's too much.

4 You made everyone around me to hate me.

5 Please forgive me, am sorry.

6 Gerald please forgive me. Andre please forgive me. You guys are my life.

Note 7: Pseudonym: Sister Goodness (unidentified tribe/origin)

1 Dear Dr. Anaekwe,

2 I want to thank you for being there for me. Even when they put you in another unit, you still come to check up on me.

3 You are a good doctor and I pray for you everytime. God will bless your kind heart. You have made me not to be depressed anymore with my cancer.

4 I have been feeling depressed since my cancer started, but you make it better even when you told me my cancer was bad and I may not make it.

5 I still felt better the way you told me.

6 I pray God will bless you in tour career, your health and your finance. And give you a good wife. Amen.

7 Sister Goodness (madam teacher)

Note 8: Pseudonym: Princess Pauls (unidentified)

1 Very very soon. The testimony you expected will be a tribute to me from the mouths of those who truly cared.

2 I came to this world, I sojourned but this world is actually not my place.

3 I have beautified myself with pain and glory in tears, but soon, I will only watch the world from a distance.

4 I will only read from shadows… the tributes you will write to me.

5 Death is peaceful, don't be deceived.

Note 9: Pseudonym: Annife Urhedi (Yoruba)

1 I wanted to be able to afford anything I wanted without asking for help. I wanted someone to take a risk on me and invest in me. I genuine wanted to be happy.

2 I was a sad person and I got tired of being lied to, of being ghosted. People would treat me badly and I didn't deserve that.

3 I was too young to have seen so much horror. I was too young to have seen so much horror. I couldn.t sleep at night, I reached out a lot and no one could really stand me. I got tired and I really didn't ask for any of these.

4 Fortune, Williams, Lord Okima, Chiemeka… You guys were really to me and I'm sorry that I couldn't make you proud. I hope that you can forgive me.

5 I'm sorry

6 If you're reading this, I'm either dead or dying. I don't know how long it takes for OD to work but I mostly hope that I'm dead. Why?? I got tired and I'm really sorry to those who would be hurt but I got tired. I got tired of the unending physical pain I had in my back, chest and legs.

7 I couldn't even afford treatment. I got tired of the unending emotional trauma, of being broken and tossed again and again and again.

8 I got tired of Hoping that things get better, it's been 10 years and it only got worse.

9 I wanted to be happy, to be able to move to a new city and chase career. I wanted to have a circle of wholesome friendships where I wasn't the one who always needed help.

10 I wanted to go on a plane and travel, I wanted to experience love, to know what it feels like.

11 I wanted to wake up in the mornings and dress up for work, to have colleagues, to go for trainings, to meet targets and deadlines. I wanted the thrill and competitions of workspace.

Note 10: Pseudonym: Adaobi Rejoice Okoro (Igbo)

1 I am not sure why I'm writing this.

2 But I am tired!!

3 I tired!!

4 I thought I knew how to live but I didn't, Nobody listened Nobody cared. All I wanted was a family that loved me as I loved them but all I received was this.

5 I have never known true happiness all my life,

6 How did I go from that little girl with dreams to this?

7 I have therefore decided that there's no further point in continuing my life.

8 I'm just sad I'm sorry, soon you will understand why, soon you would no every suicide has a killer,

9 I’m going to kill myself and this isn’t a cry for help.. oops I already mixed it. LMFAO

10 I just need someone to come over and clean up this mess.

11 In these last moment I feel more relaxed and relief than I ever felt in my entire life, so calm and free.

12 In one minute I’ll be free from the pains, the voices, the regrets. Free!!!!