

Critical Discourse Analysis of Trauma in Kidnapped Victims' Media Narratives

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Abstract

Cases of abductions for ransom have been on the rise in Nigeria for more than a decade now. The challenge of insecurity has made the country a precarious environment to live in. Efforts have been made by the government to curb, if not totally eliminate kidnapping in the country. However, it appears adequate attention has not been given to the effects of kidnapping on victims' ideological use of language. Therefore, this study adopted a critical discourse analysis approach to the investigation of expressions of trauma in the narratives of victims of kidnapping in Nigeria. In particular, the study examined the discursive forms and strategies deployed by victims in constructing Self and Others. This was intended to help understand the link between discourse and trauma in abduction experiences in Nigeria. For the purpose of this study, attention was given to victims' accounts circulated in the media. Data for the study comprised purposively selected seven (7) kidnapped victims' narratives circulated on Nigeria's print and electronic websites between 2011 and 2022. This period covers the administrations of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari as presidents of Nigeria. In addition, the period witnessed a consistent rise in kidnapping for ransom in the country. The paper drew on notions from critical discourse analysis in its investigation of the discursive patterns and strategies deployed in traumatized victims' discourse of kidnapping. The study revealed that the narratives represented the Self/in-group as powerless and Others/outgroup as powerful. Social actors' construction of Self and Others was achieved through the strategies of categorization, metaphorisation, internalized oppression and silence. In light of the findings, the study underscored contextual influence on kidnap victims' shaping of the media narratives. The paper therefore recommended that the Nigerian government explore the resource of language in its efforts to provide post-traumatic care for victims of insecurity. This is expected to help the nation in its efforts to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal of promoting a peaceful society by 2030.

Keywords: Critical Discourse, Trauma, Media, Kidnap and Victims



Introduction

Globally, kidnapping is a major societal challenge in the 21st Century. However, the menace is not new to human society. Indeed, countries such as Colombia, the United States of America and parts of the Middle East, have long histories of kidnapping. In Nigeria, kidnapping could be traced to 2006 when militants in the Niger Delta region of the country abducted oil expatriates as a way of protesting what they termed as the marginalization, alienation and underdevelopment of the area (Akpan, 2010). Later, Nigerian citizens were also kidnapped in the region, and ransom had to be paid to secure their release. Abduction of citizens in the country however took a significant turn in 2014, when two hundred and seventy-six (276) teenage girls from a secondary school in Chibok, Borno State were kidnapped by members of the jihadist terror group known as Boko Haram. Other abductions of citizens by the group and other splinter jihadist groups have since been recorded in the country. The initial abductions by these groups were intended to further their Islamic agenda, recruit more members, instil fear and gain international popularity. However, today some of the abductions are means through which money is obtained to buy more arms for terrorist activities. For instance, on March 28, 2022, sixty-three (63) persons were officially declared captured while fourteen (14) were reported to have lost their lives in the Abuja-Kaduna train attack. It is alleged that over N6 billion was paid as ransom to secure the release of the kidnapped passengers (Ojiego, 2022).

These and other similar happenings have earned Nigeria the reputation of an insecure nation. Indeed, some countries of the world such as Britain, the United States of America and Ghana, to mention just a few, have at one point or the other cautioned their citizens against living or travelling to Nigeria (Olufemi, 2021). Apart from the fact that kidnapping is making the country unattractive to foreigners, its effect on the victims is devastating. There are reports of victims who have died from post-traumatic stress and sickness after being released from kidnappers' captivity (Odinye, 2022).

In light of the foregoing discussion, this study adopts a critical approach to the investigation of expressions of trauma in the media discourse of kidnapped victims in the country. This is first necessitated by the fact that it is not certain that the Nigerian government has explored language therapy in the systematic detection and management of trauma in victims of kidnapping in the country. In addition, previous studies (e.g. Chinwonku & Michael, 2019; Ibrahim & Mukhtar, 2017) have paid substantial attention to the causes of kidnapping in Nigeria. However, it does appear that significant focus has been paid to the study of underlying ideologies of experience in Nigeria's traumatized kidnapped victims' narrations. This study intends to bridge this gap by adopting a critical discourse analysis approach to the study of victims' narratives of kidnapping in order to make clearer the discursive

patterns and strategies adopted in their construction of Self/in-group and Others/outgroup. It is also anticipated that the recommendations that could aid the detection and management of traumatised victims of kidnapping in the country will be provided.

Trauma and Discourse

The term trauma generally refers to a state of disordered psychic that results from severe physical, mental or emotional stress caused by an external agent on a person or society (Gerber & Gerber, 2019). Erikson (1976), cited in Fredrikson (2005: 517), describes trauma as, a blow to the psyche that breaks one's defences so suddenly with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively. These descriptions emphasise the idea that traumatic situations have an overwhelming impact on people and usually make them feel powerless (Centre for Nonviolence & Social Justice, 2017). Spiegel (2008) notes that victims of trauma experience a sense of loss of control over their memory, identity and consciousness. Factors such as rape, discrimination, poverty, and intentional violence, among others, have been identified as causes of trauma (Frans, et al, 2005). However, for the purpose of this study, traumatizing experience is limited to abductions of victims in Nigeria and how the experience is ideologically expressed in the victims' media narratives.

It has been observed that there is a link between the brain/mind and language (Yule, 2003). Studies on impaired language (e.g. Saffran, 2000; Wepman & Lyle, 1996) which arises as a result of injuries to different parts of the brain, support the claim that the human mind influences not just the acquisition of language but also its use. Other studies (e.g. Atkinson, 2000, Harris et al, 2012, Sakai, 2005) are also in consensus of the fact that the mind plays a major role in the acquisition and use of language. Harris et al particularly note that the memory is constructive in nature. Thus, people do not store and retrieve information literally but rather when a language user is engaged in the process of inferencing, s/he could retain an altered and distorted form of the information received. Following this viewpoint, it could then be argued that adverse impacts on the mind as a result of traumatic experience could influence victims' representation of realities based on the inferences, they construct from the discourses produced during the experience. This observation agrees with Larrabee et al (2003) which is a study of the narrations of traumatized persons which drew insights from Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the sociality of language usage. The authors observed that victims of trauma had difficulty expressing their inner turmoil. Conversely, Eyerman (2013), studied authors' personal trauma and their writings and concluded that expressing grief and other strong emotions through writing could provide temporary relief for the victim.

Busch and McNamara (2020) view language as an effective resource for analyzing traumatic impacts on people, particularly in cases where shocking events resulted



from human actions rather than natural disasters. The scholars note that trauma is a discursive phenomenon which on the one hand is experienced through language, and on the other hand could impact negatively on the victims' linguistic repertoire. This paper shares a similar preoccupation with Busch and McNamara with regard to the link between trauma and discourse. However, while the previous study uses an applied linguistic approach, this paper critically investigates the influence of underlying ideologies on kidnapped victims' discourse.

Depending on the affiliation of the analyst, the term discourse could refer to the concept of language in use; language above and beyond the sentence; language in situational and cultural context; language as meaning in interaction, etc. (Trappes-Lomax, 2008). Discourse, in its ideational capacity, helps to reflect a user's worldview or her/his experience (Eggins, 2004). Socio-constructionists (e.g. Blommaert, 2005; Lassen, 2009) have however argued that language use is not neutral but rather, is a product of construction and negotiation enacted through social interactions. Proponents of social constructionism note that the historical process of interaction and negotiation between groups of people influences the way they understand the world. Thus, people's construction of self, the mind, emotion, and other people, is not intrinsic to them as individuals but, rather, produced by social discourse and interactions (Galbin, 2014). Interactions among people in society lead to the formation of mental representations of actors' actions and discourse events. Interestingly, these representations become institutionalized over time mainly through the use of language. According to Fairclough (2000), representations in discourse are prototypes for different collections of things in the form of words, sentences, typical narrative structure, etc. He refers to these prototypes as Memory Resources (MR), which he says, language users unconsciously recourse to in order to sustain underlying ideologies and relations of power. Following this perspective, this study critically examines the representation of Self and Others in Nigeria's media discourse of kidnapping. This was intended to help unravel the opaque structures of power and ideology that underlie victims' discourses of kidnapping in the country.

Critical Discourse Analysis and Ideology

Ideology generally refers to an individual's or social group's shared cognition of the world. In a way then, it could be said to refer to people's shared interpretation of events or issues. Van Dijk (2000), views ideology as a group's or members' fundamental beliefs which could be used by the powerful for self-serving purposes. In this paper, ideology is conceived as disordered belief systems borne out of the traumatic experiences of victims of kidnapping in Nigeria. This is in view of the fact that people's relations with others are an important social factor that could influence their beliefs or cognition of realities. Bowker (2017) describes these as 'ideologies of experience' that impede people's capacity to think creatively know themselves and their experience.

Discourse or language in use is central to human interactions and by extension, their cognition of social realities. Existing literature on social constructionism (e.g. Galbin, 2014; Bloomaert, 2005) is in agreement with the idea that realities are socially constructed through the use of language. The meaning that people draw from objects and events is therefore the social construct of reality that is communicated through language. Following this line of argument, one could argue that kidnapped victims' narratives could reflect underlying influences of the impact of traumatic experiences on their worldview of power relations. A critical discourse analysis approach to the study of the narratives would therefore help to make clear the opaque ideological influences of the narratives.

CDA is one of the social constructionist approaches to discourse analysis – an approach that views discourse as a communicative tool that plays an active role in creating and changing the language users' world, social relations and identities (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Following this view, scholars (e.g. Wodak, 2001; Fairclough, 1995) note that language, in use in most instances, is not neutral but significantly influenced by social relations and conventions. However, this ideological character of discourse is sometimes presented in a naturalized form so that people are not aware of their influences on the choice and structuring of language in communicative situations. CDA's fundamental interest is thus, to analyse opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifest in the ideological use of language. Van Dijk's (2000) socio-cognitive approach to discourse analysis is adopted in this study. This approach views the control of power as linked to a group's effective and sometimes manipulative use of discourse to influence the minds of people. A group's access to power is therefore closely tied to how much it can control the shared beliefs and knowledge of its members and others in specific social representations. It could therefore be argued that the shared beliefs that are located in members' episodic memory or MR in the form of implicit, albeit disrupted assumptions about social behaviour, relationships, etc. could be drawn upon by victims of kidnapping to represent Self/in-group and Others/outgroup as powerless or powerful social actors within Nigeria's socio-cultural domain. These overall discursive strategies (van Dijk, 2000; David & Derthick, 2014) could be realized through diverse ways which include *categorization* (this is the distinguishing of Self and Others based on the characteristics of social actors), *metaphorisation* (this is the mapping of a source domain unto a more schematic one for positive/negative representations of social actors); *victimisation* (representation of Self/in-group as the real victims of threat/attack from Others/assailants), *internalised oppression* (the discursive expression of acceptance of the views and methods of the oppressor by the oppressed) and avoidance (the mitigation of negative opinions and negative impression formation about Others).



The CDA approach adopted in the study is therefore seen as useful as it will help to make clear the ideological underpinnings of the narratives of victims of kidnapping in Nigeria. The specific objectives of this paper are to: (a) identify discursive patterns employed in traumatized kidnapped victims' media narratives; (b) critically discuss the deployment of discursive strategies in the expression of power in the narratives of the victims, and (c) relate the texts to the social conditioning of their production.

Review of Related Studies

Trauma as a result of kidnapping is a societal challenge that has attracted scholarly research interest. Scholars (e.g. Chilaka & Idika, 2019; Ekechukwu & Osaat, 2021) investigated trauma among the staff and students of Nigeria's educational institutions. They observed that incessant threats of kidnapping were a source of trauma to these groups of Nigerians. Other scholars (e.g. Ngwama, 2014) linked cases of trauma among foreigners in Nigeria to threats of kidnapping in the country. They noted that some foreigners have been forced to leave the country, taking their businesses and investments with them due to the fear of being kidnapped. These studies which are sociological in nature, agree on the adverse effect of kidnapping on the mental health of Nigerian citizens. Other studies have made systematic attempts to study the effects of trauma on victims of kidnapping. For example, Akhigbe and Kolaosho (2013) and Oloku and Atafo (2023) studied post-traumatic disorder (PTD) in kidnapped victims in Nigeria. The former adopted the case study design in its investigation of PTD in a kidnapped victim in one of the towns in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria while the latter used the survey research design in its study of PTD among victims of kidnapping in Kaduna state. The two studies revealed that victims of kidnapping and their families manifested significant symptoms of PTD and needed psychological and psychiatric intervention. These studies which adopted a clinical perspective to the investigation, identified symptoms of anxiety, phobia, dejection, and disordered perspective on life among others, as manifestations of PTD in the victims. Alexander and Klein (2009) and Bhatiya (2018) also applied the clinical approach to the study of trauma globally. They investigated the coping strategies that traumatized victims of kidnapping adopt when they regain their freedom. The two research identified the Stockholm syndrome as a condition that the victims developed in order to cope with trauma. The Stockholm syndrome is a survival strategy that involves a traumatised captive developing a sense of affinity for her/his captors due to prolonged periods of interaction. Conversely, the studies identified other coping strategies such as attempts to escape from the captors or non-compliance, particularly when it involves converting to the captors' religion. Although, the studies (Akhigbe & Kolaosho, 2013; Oloku & Atafo, 2023; Alexander & Klein, 2009; Bhatiya et al., 2018) attest to the fact that kidnapping impacts the victim's mental health, none of them investigated the underlying influence of traumatic ideologies on the victims' use of language in relations of power.

Nonetheless, some studies have examined the impact of traumatic experiences on language. Medley (2012) studied the role of English language teachers in facilitating the healing process of traumatized young immigrants while Pyscher (2012) critically analysed the (re)production of the identities of people with traumatic histories. Medley underscored the importance of including healing content in the form of conflict transformation and movement towards forgiveness in the English language programme to aid the mental health of migrant students and ensure effective learning among them. Pyscher's critical ethnographic study of traumatized school children showed that authoritative discourse of the traumatized 'Other' shaped and (re)produced the pedagogy and discourse practice of social workers. The author therefore recommended that research that provides an 'insider' view of those who have experienced trauma be conducted in order to be able to challenge the discursive formation of the traumatized 'Other' among migrants. There is however a dearth of research on the critical investigation of discursive expression of power relations between traumatized kidnapped victims and their captors, particularly in Nigeria. This study intends to bridge this gap in research on kidnapping in the country.

Methodology

The analysis of data was carried out following van Dijk's (2000) socio-cognitive approach to critical discourse analysis of texts. The data were drawn from the websites of some Nigerian print and electronic media. The focus was on the victims' narratives of their kidnap experiences. These narratives were circulated between 2011 and 2022. Data for the study comprised purposively selected seven (7) kidnapped victims' narratives circulated between 2011 and 2022. This period covers the administrations of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari as presidents of Nigeria. In addition, the period witnessed a consistent rise in kidnapping for ransom in the country. The purposive sampling strategy adopted helped to limit data to only those that reflected kidnapped victims' discursive demonstration of power relations between Self and kidnapers. The data were downloaded from four (4) media websites. They include *Premium Times*, *Punch*, *Sahara Reporters* and *Channels Television*. The data therefore consisted of written texts and audio-visual recordings. Verbatim transcription of the data drawn from *Channels Television* was carried out. The transcription was however limited only to the verbal information of the recordings. A qualitative analysis which includes description, interpretation and explanation of the discursive components of the samples was done. For ease of analysis, the samples were labelled as VDT to represent the Victim Discourse of Trauma. The samples were subsequently labelled 1, 2, 3, etc.



Discussion and Findings

Analysis of data displays what could be described as systems of beliefs and cognition that underlie kidnapped victims' media narratives. The victims' discourse reflects the impact of trauma on their linguistic repertoire with regard to their choice of language and sometimes their refusal to use language. The samples express features of 'ideologies of experience' (Bowker, 2016) and in some cases, 'discourses of the unsayable' (Busch & McNamara, 2020). These ideologies and discourses sustain the victims' sense of mental domination and the perception of kidnappers as powerful social actors in Nigeria. The analysis involved the identification of linguistic choices and discourse features that construct kidnapped victims as powerless social actors and conversely project kidnappers as powerful social actors. Elements of discursive forms and strategies that are characteristic of trauma discourse are identified and analysed against Nigeria's social and political contexts. Due to space constraints, only a few relevant extracts from the selected narratives are analysed.

Categorization of Social Actors

Categorization as a discursive strategy deployed in some of the data demonstrates social actors' projection of certain characteristics shared by members of the in-group and out-group. This was achieved through the use of evaluative words in the form of labelling, nouns, adjectives, verbs of material, mental and verbal processes. Categorisation is therefore one way in which powerless/powerful unequal relations were constructed for victims and assailants involved in kidnapping in the media discourse. Polarization which was achieved through the use of pronominal and other linguistic elements aided the depiction of circles of negative treatment of victims at the hands of their captors, hence projecting them as powerless social actors in the country. This observation agrees with the social constructionist position that social encounters influence the discursive construction of identities (Lassen, 2009). For instance, in **DVT1**, **DVT2** and **DVT3**, the narrators used the typical US versus THEM ideological discourse to project unequal power relations of victims/powerless in-group and aggressors /powerful outgroup.

DVT 1

God bless my driver; He said, 'Oga, e bi like sey na armed robbers o'. Then **I** said, 'Then **turn** the car, **reverse**, **reverse**'. As he put it on reverse, a gun was on my head, an automatic weapon and **they** said, 'don't move, if you move an inch, **we blast** you. **I told** Chinedu, 'don't move'. **They dragged** me out of the car, **dragged** Chinedu out of the car, **shot** the tire of the vehicle, **put** Chinedu in the booth of the car and **put** me inside the car. **They said**, if **we dare** look up, **they would kill us**. **We closed** our eyes and we were **pressed** to the ground inside the car. (*Channels TV*, September 16, 2013)

DVT2

It was terrible. **I can't imagine** any reasonable person doing that to a fellow human. Even the **threats** were enough to give one **heartache**. **They kept shouting and insulting us. They kept beating us, saying our families are poor.**

In the beginning, **they were giving us** food but **they later stopped** giving us. When **they** learnt how hard it was for us, **they decided** to continue giving us food. **They decided** to start **providing** us with guinea corn. **We would grind** it and **prepare** the meal. **We** ate only once daily for many months.

(Premium Times, September 28, 2021)

DVT3

In this month of Ramadan, **they** did not **allow me** to fast. On the first day of **our capture** which was Friday, **they allowed** me to pray and conclude the fast. On Saturday however, **they** did not **allow** me to fast or pray. Until **we** were rescued on Monday, there was no fasting or praying. **They** said **they** would **kill me** if **I** fasted or prayed. According to them, if **I prayed**, it would distort and alter their own things.

(Premium Times, June 23, 2019)

In **DVT 1, 2 and 3**, the polarised notion of control and subjugation are demonstrated through the narrators' use of pronominal distinction and material and verbal processes to describe participants' actions in kidnapping activities. Thus, in the extracts, the victims' use of the material process of 'doing' fifteen (15) times when describing the actions of their captors and three (3) times when referring to the actions of Self/in-group project the victims as the affected participants and also reveal an unconscious foregrounding of the influence that kidnappers wield in the Nigerian social space. The repetitive use of verbs that depict violence such as 'dragged'; 'put'; 'pressed'; 'kill'; 'shout'; 'insult'; 'beat' demonstrates victims' shared social cognition of kidnappers as malevolent and a threat to society. In addition, the choice of the verbs 'put', 'dragged' and 'pressed' demonstrates the narrator's affective perception of the kidnapping experience as a dehumanizing one. Specifically, the verbs 'put' and 'pressed' suggest the idea of incarceration/confinement. Conversely, the use of verbs of material process: 'closed', 'grind', 'prepare', 'allow', 'allowed' in **DVT2** and **DVT3**, to describe the activities of the in-group, demonstrates the brutal denial of victims' rights and their perception of Self as powerless, subservient social actors in kidnaping situations. In all, the linguistic choices demonstrate the underlying ideological thrust that the illegal weaponisation of citizens (re)produces unequal power relations in society.

Polarisation of social actors' control is also enacted discursively through the use of the verbal process of 'saying': (1) 'Then **I said**, 'then **turn** the car, **reverse, reverse**'.



(2) ‘and **they said**, ‘don’t move, if you move an inch, **we blast** you.’ (3) ‘I **told** Chinedu, ‘don’t move’. The perlocutionary effect of compliance demonstrated in the third utterance reveals a typical kidnapped victim’s recognition of the superiority of her/his assailants’ illocution of ordering in a life-threatening situation. The verb ‘told’ in utterance three could be regarded as a conflation of the narrator’s and kidnappers’ voices which amounts to a silencing of the victim’s voice and his submission to his attackers in the violent abduction situation.

Metaphorisation

The principle of the metaphorical use of language in the narratives follows the overall goal of negative other-presentation. Thus, the victims employ metaphors to express negative and intensifying emotions which categorise Self as sufferers and Others as bestial. This observation agrees with Oju et al’s argument that metaphor has the potential to help its user symbolize and interpret difficult emotions. From the analysis of some of the data, it is shown that the narrators deployed metaphors of food, health, war and bestiality to describe their mental cognition of kidnapping and kidnappers/assailants. In this way, the metaphor also serves as a discursive strategy that ideologically polarizes the social actors into ‘we’ the oppressed victims and ‘they’ the oppressors /attackers. Instances of metaphorisation of the experiences of kidnap victims which reflect ideologies of subjugation of Self/victim on one hand and control of Others/kidnappers on the other hand are cited in DVT 4, 5 and 6 below.

DTV4

We were locked up in a room in solitary confinement. Very hot. The days the windows were open, on two occasions, **the colony of mosquitoes, descended on us and feasted on us like barbecue, like in a buffet dinner**. So we preferred the heat to the colony of mosquitoes.

(Channels TV, September 16, 2013)

DVT5

There was no humanity left in our kidnappers. One of them on sighting the Fulani herdsmen went and invoked his charm, apparently to prepare for **a battle**. When **the battle** did not take place, he started behaving strangely. **He began to convulse, with his whole body trembling and shaking. He said he needed to kill someone to calm down**. It took more than three hours for the entire team to calm him down. In the end, they brought **a monkey to him, which he killed, drank the blood and used the remaining blood to bathe himself**. Honestly, they are not human beings.

(*Premium Times*, June 23, 2019)

DVT6

I am going to make certain recommendations to the federal government of Nigeria and all the state governments to bring out, to bring all of us out of this national

calamity, **this Golgotha** in this world, **this imminent bloodbath**, because they are threatening that 2015, is when they will show their true colour.

(Channels TV, September 16, 2013)

In **DVT4**, the metaphor of food strategically presents the kidnapped victims as powerless prey in the hands of nature and by extension, in the hands of their captors. The nominal group ‘the colony of mosquitoes’ is metaphorically compared to a political group controlling an area. This seems to suggest that victims of kidnapping are at the mercy of two powerful actors – the kidnapers and the ferocious wildlife of Nigeria. This discursive move therefore reflects the victim’s mental recollection of suffering. In **DVT5**, the metaphors of health, war and food are employed to project victims’ cognition of kidnapers as bestial and inhuman. The altercation between the kidnapers and Fulani herders is described using the nominal: ‘a battle’, ‘the battle’. This therefore presents the victim’s further categorization of the outgroup into two herders’ groups contending for the hegemonic dominance of Nigeria’s forests. The imagery of bestiality is invoked with the use of the use of verbal, mental and material verbs, ‘said’, ‘needed’, ‘kill’ and the nominal: ‘blood’, ‘the blood’. These linguistic elements all represent the outgroup as hunters in search of prey. In addition, health imageries are deployed through the verbs: ‘convulse’, ‘trembling’, ‘shaking’ to project the narrator’s perception of kidnapers as violent and malevolent. In this way, the narrator expresses his cognition of kidnapers as bestial and deviant members of society. In **DVT6**, the narrator metaphorically invokes a similarity between kidnapping and a war situation. The nominal expressions: ‘**this Golgotha**’; ‘**this imminent bloodbath**’ ideologically projects kidnapping and its perpetrators as a threat to organized society. The metaphorical association of kidnapping with the biblical imagery of Jesus’ painful death creates the affective of fear and insecurity for the country and projects the out-group as a threat to the cohesion of the country. In all, metaphor serves as a coping resource that the victims deploy to describe extremely distressing kidnap experiences.

Victimisation

Some of the samples analysed constructed kidnapped citizens as the real victims of abduction while the kidnapers are portrayed as the advantaged assailants. Thus, the narrators employed the resources of naming, pronominal and code switching to categorize Self and Others in ways that foreground the oppressive and dehumanizing actions of kidnapers in Nigeria. **DVT 7** and **DVT 8** below demonstrate how negative other representation was ideologically achieved in the narratives.

DVT7

I saw horror, "wallahi tallahi idan abu yana kama da da da da da yomal kiya ma Allah inaganin na gani". when **I** was in captivity, **I saw** that, **I saw** horror, **I** still have



nightmares, bad nightmares, "da sai an rike ni har yau har gobe akan horrors da na gani". That is why **I** left Nigeria, that's why **I** am here. And that's what is happening right now to **our children**, that's what is happening right now to **our children**. They have been killed. Nobody believes that. Nobody is saying anything. **I** am **angry**, "Kuma ba su da kudin da zasu bar kasan". **I** was **raped**, **I** was **raped**. **I** was **raped** by **terrorists**, **I** was **raped**, **I** was **beaten**, **I** still have the marks on my arms, **I** **know** what is going on, **I** **know** the pain, **I** **know** the pain.
(SAHARA REPORTERS, December 13, 2021)

VDT8

I feel bad. **I** daily **live** with what **they** did to me. Whenever **I** **think** of my **travails** in the hands of **the kidnappers**, my eyes are filled with tears and my mood is always sober and bad because it changed **my** life for the worse totally. "Now, it is difficult for me to move or walk around because one leg is already gone and **I** can't hold anything with the affected hand. It's only one hand that is working, the second is already gone. Whenever **I** **think** of it, **I** **shed** tears.
(Punch, January 16, 2021)

The repeated use of the first-person singular pronoun *I* in the extracts above categorizes Self as an individual versus Others as a group. This categorizing ideologically constructs the notion of unequal power relations between the victim and her/his assailants when viewed from the perspective of the game of numbers. The adjectives 'sad' and 'angry' portray the narrators' emotional reactions to kidnap attacks. The choice of words also reveals victims' depressive thoughts about their experiences. The repeated use of the nominal expression: 'I was raped' in **DVT 8** reinforces the narrator's inner turmoil and sense of deprivation. The fragmented nature of the narrative structure of **DVT8** due to the use of code switching: "**I** still have nightmares, bad nightmares, "da sai an rike ni har yau har gobe akan horrors da na gani": repetition of words: "da da da da da da yomal kiya ma", depicts the effect of the victim's emotional state on her use of linguistic repertoire. This agrees with Ledegaard's (2018) observation that traumatized bilinguals' sometimes show a preference for their Mother Tongue when they need to express emotions in distressing narratives. The use of verbs of mental process: know, think, feel also ideologically positions the narrators as the abused, cheated and oppressed members of society in the kidnap situation. The use of nominal labels: 'terrorists', 'kidnappers' also ideologically constructs negative Other representations for the kidnappers and depicts them as criminals.

Avoidance

Some of the data analysed revealed the limitations that the implicit ideology of the pervasive nature of the media places on kidnapped victims' narratives in Nigeria. The use of discursive tactics of avoidance by the victims to negotiate and limit negative impression formation and negative opinions of the Others in their narratives reveals the belief that the unlimited reach of the media may expose them to more attacks. In other words, the discursive strategy tacitly expresses victims' perception of the media as a precarious space for discussing matters related to criminal groups in the country. The use of linguistic mechanisms of fragmentation, hedging, hesitation and naming particularly demonstrate Nigerian victims' fear of Others/kidnappers even after they have regained their freedom. In all, the discourse of avoidance represented the traumatized victims as mentally confined and dominated social actors.

VDT 9

I personally did not experience any molestation, but there were **some women** on camp who **claimed** there were **attempts** at molestation but I personally did not experience any molestation.

(Channels TV August 2, 2022)

VDT 10

I was literarily made the camp doctor, so I had to treat em, **sick, people**, I mean the **captives** that were sick including em, including the **guards**, or I'll think including the **bandits**, em, em, even people high up in the, I mean in the organization were actually coming to me for, em for consultation and at a point in time.

(Channels TV, August 3, 2022)

VTD11

Well, em, I, we, I want to say that because I have been, we have been in detention, **I do not know**, I know they were talking to my family, **I do not know**. All I will say is that **a hunter does not narrate details of his encounters during his odyssey in the forest**.

(Channels TV, September 16, 2013)

In **DVT9**, the narrator uses the first person pronoun *I*, verbal and material processes; 'claimed', 'attempts and determiner 'some' to mitigate negative in-group representation in a discourse on female victims' sexual abuse by kidnappers. This discursive move is best appreciated against the Nigerian socio-cultural background where rape victims are usually stigmatized. In **DVT10**, the fragmentation of linguistic elements and choice of nouns, demonstrate the narrator's mental state of fear. His hesitation at labelling his attackers as terrorists: 'em, including the **guards**,



or I'll think including the **bandits**, em, em, even people high up in the,' demonstrates the lingering fear that freed victims have for their captors. This is also shown in the narrator's euphemistic reference to the terrorist group as 'the organization'. **DVT11** is a victim's response to a journalist's question on whether any ransom was released. His avoidance of a direct answer was made through repeated negation of experiential knowledge of the payment of ransom: 'I do not know'. However, his use of a proverb: 'a hunter does not narrate details of his encounters during his odyssey in the forest' discursively demonstrates his constraint to limit the information about his captors and indirectly negates his claim of lack of knowledge of ransom payment for his release.

Internalized Oppression

Some of the data analysed constructed kidnapped victims as internally oppressed social actors. In some of the samples examined, victims categorise Self and Others in a devaluing manner and indirectly affirm the power and superiority of their captors. In **DVT12** below, the narrative demonstrates the likelihood of the tendency of a victim to accommodate oppression over time due to sustained interaction with kidnappers. In this way, the oppressive kidnapper and subjugated victim relationship is produced and discursively reified. This observation agrees with David & Derthick's (2014) argument that when oppressed social actors constantly interact with their oppressors, they will likely assimilate the oppressive views of the controlling group and discursively affirm these views.

DVT 12

I therefore **call** on the **federal government of Nigeria**, to institute an amnesty programme for this very **volatile**, very **angry**, very, very **desperate youth of Nigeria** who believe rightly, or wrongly that they have been shortchanged by the nation, which is why they said they have taken up arms. One of them analysed his situation and **I** was **shocked** at **his analytical prowess**. He must be either a graduate of philosophy or political science, or history. He said 'listen, SAN'. **I** said, 'Sir'. **He** said 'don't call us, Sir. We are **your son; we are your children**. He said, listen SAN, the reason we are so soft on you is we discovered you have been fighting for the masses. (Channels TV, September 16, 2013)

The excerpt above shows the narrator's split of the characteristics of the Others/kidnappers into – the 'bad past' who committed the wrong and the 'good present' who is acknowledging the wrong and willing to change. This idea is ideologically constructed through the use of nominal, pronominal and adjectives. The repeated use of the first person singular *I* by the narrator helps to project his status (Senior Advocate of Nigeria) and lends credence to his assertions and demands for government pardon of kidnappers in general and his captors in particular. This

observation agrees with Beard (2000) who notes that the use of the first person pronoun demonstrates a clear sense of personal involvement of the speaker in the subject of discourse. The use of the adjectives ‘angry’, ‘desperate’ deployed to represent the characteristics of kidnappers indirectly mitigates the crime of abduction and projects the Others as victims of a badly governed country. The use of the nominal and verbal expressions: ‘**youth of Nigeria**’, ‘**shortchanged** by the nation’ are also deployed to mitigate the crime of kidnapping. Similarly, kidnappers’ use of family discourse realized by pronoun ‘your’ and the nouns: son, children in the clauses: ‘We are **your son**; we are **your children**’ demonstrates the outgroup’s strategic exploitation of the extended Nigerian socio-cultural meaning of the word ‘children’ to influence the victims’ minds by projecting Self/in-group as fellow sufferers in Nigeria’s socio-political space. This discursive move is best appreciated against Nigeria’s traditional communal environment where words such as ‘son’ and ‘children’ do not necessarily infer biological relationships but are used to create an inclusive sense of belonging. It could therefore be argued that the call for amnesty for kidnappers made by the victim could be indicative of the Stockholm syndrome. The Stockholm syndrome is a coping or survival strategy in which a traumatised captive, who for a prolonged period of time is exposed to her/his captors’ inclusive discourse of affinity, could develop. One of the manifestations of the syndrome is that the victim forges a positive relationship with her/his captors and ironically begins to seek ways of helping them.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study focused on the critical analysis of kidnapped victims’ ideological construction of Self/in-group and Others/outgroup as powerless and powerful social actors. This was intended to help make clear in-group and outgroup expressions of power in media narratives of traumatic kidnap experiences in Nigeria. The analysis of the discursive patterns and strategies deployed in the narratives revealed that the victims’ polarized representation of Self/in-group and Others/kidnappers projected the narrators as powerless and their assailants as powerful. In some instances, the victims’ trauma discourse revealed a reversal of the narrator’s perception of criminality such that kidnappers were tacitly represented as ‘fellow sufferers’ in Nigeria’s socio-political domain. This thus attests to the argument that victims of trauma may over time develop a sense of sympathy for their oppressors due to prolonged interactions. In all, the narratives demonstrate the influence of the underlying ideology of citizens’ bottom-top relations of unequal power in terrorism-related matters in the country. In light of the findings, it is recommended that the federal government explore the resource of language in its efforts to provide post-traumatic care for victims of insecurity. This is expected to minimise the (re)production of collective trauma among the citizens and facilitate the nation’s efforts to achieve a peaceful Nigerian society by 2030.



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