

A STYLO-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF SELECTED E-NEWSPAPER HEADLINES ON PARRICIDAL VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT:

Scholarly research is awash with the examination of violence-related reports in newspapers to determine different psychological and sociological factors responsible for these crimes. However, violence relating to parricide from e-newspaper headlines remains one area which has scarcely been explored by scholars, especially from linguistic orientations. This study examined a stylo-linguistic analysis of selected e-newspaper headlines on parricide to unravel the linguistic choices employed by the writers to convey in-depth and subtle meanings. The theoretical framework adopted for the study is Halliday's functional stylistics, which highlights the meeting point between language use and social meaning of texts, and also sees language as a coding method of constructing what is implied in a given text. Thirty-six e-news headlines on parricide between November 2022 and January 2023 were sampled from different online sources and were closely read to identify, classify and analyse, through a qualitative approach, the stylo-linguistic resources used by the news writers to communicate their intended messages. It was found from the corpus that the writers preponderantly made use of catchy hypotactic nominalization, prominent paratactic lexicalization, accusative and incriminating verbal elements, copious complex complementation and adversative adverbials to synthetically and systematically portray the 'who' (offenders/accomplices), the 'whom' (victims/casualties), the 'how' (weapons used), the 'why' (reason for/purpose of the crime) and the 'what next' (consequences/results of the heinous crimes).

KEY WORDS: E-newspaper, headlines, parricide, stylo-linguistic analysis, violence.

1. INTRODUCTION

News reports on violence are growing daily with the increasing rates of its reality. Ayodabo (2024:33) confirms that "violence is as much part of our human condition as peaceful cooperative action is. Yet, regardless of it being basic in human condition, violence is a disconcerting concept". Krug et al (2002) describe violence as the deliberate use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation. Violence has been declared by the World Health Organisation (WHO) (1996), in its Forty-ninth World Health Assembly, as a major and growing global public health problem. There are various forms of violence. The WHO (2002) gives the typology of violence as self-directed when it is committed against oneself, collective when it happens between two or more groups, and interpersonal when it is done against another person. This research explores an aspect of interpersonal violence, which is parricide. Parricide has dominated both the newspaper and online spaces, and has opened up an avenue for scholarly attention in recent times.

According to Lee et al (2017:14), "parricide consists of the act of killing one's own father (patricide), mother (matricide), foster parents, or adoptive parents". However, Holt (2017) argues that parricide did not always have such a specific definition: the term initially referred to the killing of any close relative, and this broader definition is still used in many parts of the world. Thus, parricide can be either way, parents killing children or children killing parents. The meaning can even be extended to a situation of a family member killing a co-family member, such as a grandma killing their grandchildren and vice versa. Several studies have examined the psychological and sociological angles of crimes generally by looking at the causes, effects and solutions. For example, Nawaz et al, (2021) have examined a forensic linguistic analysis of language of news crime reports in Pakistan to decode the crime news reporters' intention or motive behind the language they use in their reports. It was found that reporters' language in news reports has a more negative impact on the audience than positive language. Shuy (2014) has also explored the language of murder cases, looking at intentionality, predisposition, and voluntariness. It was discovered that speech events, conversational strategies, schemas, agendas and smaller language units

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like syntax, lexicon, and phonology can play a major role in deciding murder cases. Likewise, Ayodabo (2024) has studied the pragmatics of violence by examining how violence is constructed or co-constructed in communicative events. The study identified three typologies of violence, which are physical, emotional and socio-ideological violence.

2. AIM OF THE STUDY

Parricidal-related cases and reports are still lacking in the literature. Meanwhile, this domestic violence calls for a linguistic investigation not only to fully understand the message being put across, but to determine the style of reportage employed by the writers in order to captivate their audience. It is therefore the aim of this study to examine a stylo-linguistic analysis of selected online news headlines on parricidal-related violence, using the theoretical framework of Halliday's functional stylistics.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research is set to achieve the following objectives:

1. To find out the prominent linguistic choices that characterize headlines on parricidal violence in Nigerian online newspapers.
2. To investigate how the writers of the headlines utilised these linguistic resources to communicate different stylistic meanings.
3. To determine how different participants are presented in the e-news headlines in Nigeria.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guide this study:

1. What are the prominent linguistic choices that characterize headlines on parricidal violence in Nigerian online newspapers?
2. How do the writers of the headlines utilise these linguistic resources to communicate different stylistic meanings?
3. How are the different participants presented in the e-news headlines on parricidal violence in Nigeria?

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

Stylo-linguistics was actually coined by Enkvist (1973) as an alternative nomenclature to the term, linguistic stylistics. Obviously, the term is essentially a combination of two interconnected language tools; stylistics and linguistics. But as intertwined as the two may be, one can still delineate each of them on the basis of its main preoccupation. To start with, linguistics is generally defined as the scientific study of human language (Dai & He 2013). This means that a study of linguistics involves gaining insight into one of the most fundamental aspects of humans, the ability to communicate through language. As such, linguistics enables the understanding of how language works and how it is used. And this, according to Crystal (1980), entails an inclusive, methodical, critical and specific analysis of all features of language.

In the same vein, the Center for Linguistic Research of the University of Sheffield (2023) clarifies that the work of a linguist falls into two main areas; language structure and language use. Linguists interested in language patterns

consider the formal properties of language, such as word structure (morphology), sentence structure (syntax), speech sounds and the rules and patterns between them (phonetics and phonology), and meaning in language (semantics and pragmatics). On the other hand, according to Yule (2020), linguistics, as a study of how language functions covers a very wide range of subjects, such as psycholinguistics (the psychology of language acquisition and use), historical linguistics and the history of languages, applied linguistics (using linguistic knowledge to help in real-world situations like language teaching), sociolinguistics, varieties of English, discourse analysis and conversation analysis (language use in social contexts) and stylistics (the use of different styles in language). This means that stylistics, which is the focus of this research, is a branch of linguistics.

In the words of Crystal (1992), stylistics is a subdivision of linguistics which studies the features of situational, distinctive uses or varieties of language made by individual and social groups. This opinion aligns with Leech and Short's (2007) idea, when they claim that stylistics is the way in which a language is used by a person in a given situation and for a purpose. That is to say, language is the substance of stylistics because it is only interested in the style of language. Leech (1969: 60) agrees that stylistics "is an attempt to find the artistic principle underlying a writer's choice of language as all writers and texts have individual qualities". However, the definitions cited above fail to capture the function of styles, which is equally important. The deficiency is covered by Wales' (2011: 453) attempt which notes that "the goal of most stylisticians is not simply to describe the formal features of texts for their own sake, but to show their functional significance for the interpretation of the text; or in order to relate literary effects to linguistic 'causes' where they are felt to be relevant". This definition is superior to the previously cited ones in that it combines both the features and functions of language in its description.

To further explain the importance of social function of language, Widdowson (1996) confirms that stylistics studies the social function of language and the characterization of texts as a process of communication. He goes further to say that it is not part of the purpose of linguistics to provide a means of discovering the different social functions of language. This means that linguistics is more of a technological than a scientific orientation, as it works on data provided by others. This assertion corroborates that of Davy and Crystal (1996), who clarify that the aim of stylistics is to analyse language habits. To achieve this purpose, they therefore proposed four objectives of stylistics, which are: (1) to identify from the general mass of linguistic features common to English as used on every considerable occasion, (2) to identify those features which are restricted to certain kinds of social contexts; (3) to explain where possible why such have been used as opposed to other alternative, and (4) to classify these features into categories based on the view of the function in the social context.

Lawal (2003:25) expresses a closely related idea to the above idea when he affirms that "stylistics is concerned with the analysis and description of the linguistic features of texts in relation to their meaning". It is evident from these definitions that stylistics deals with expressive and

formal styles of language use. As a discipline, stylistics studies the interpretation of texts with regard to their linguistic and tonal style by linking literary criticism to linguistics. Leech & Short (1995) believe that every stylistic analysis involves selecting some features and ignoring others.

From the review so far done, one thing becomes clear; the word linguistics is a general concept in language study while stylistics is a branch that is subsumed under it. Thus, doing a stylo-linguistic analysis of a text entails making an enquiry into the language choice made in any work to underpin its meaning, characteristics and peculiarity. The basic concern of this work is to examine a stylo-linguistic analysis of selected e-newspaper headlines on parricide-related violence.

Vaes, et al. (2019) has examined subjective language use in crime news and found that news reports about criminals utilized more aggravating adjectives and frequently mentioned the perpetrator's nationality, often as a noun. Likewise, findings on sensationalism in crime reporting have demonstrated that language choices can heighten emotion, inform bias, elicit moral evaluation, and sway public opinion (Kwasi, Faustina, and Gifty 2015). Study by Sabri and Ismail (2024) highlight the use of pragmatic elements to engage readers and convey specific messages, when they compare British and Malaysian online newspaper headlines. Ogunrinde et al's. (2021) stylistic study of COVID-19 reports headlines in selected Nigerian newspapers also observes that journalists predominantly used declarative sentences and omitted full stops at the end of headlines, employing specific stylistic choices to convey information effectively and influence readers' understanding. Khalifa (2018) also found that certain linguistic devices in headlines can lead to readers' confusion rather than engagement.

The current research is clearly different because its main import is to show in analytic terms the various aspects of the online news headlines on parricide that are used not only to communicate discreet and subtle messages through cleverly woven linguistic means, but also how the linguistic choices help to shape audience perceptions and signal recurrent patterns typical of news headlines on parricide. This suggests that not all stylistic choices effectively influence audience perception, and some may even deter readers from engaging with the news content. This research is concerned with how news writers have deployed linguistic means to reinforce meaning in online news headlines on parricidal crimes.

6. METHOD

The research method adopted for this study is the judgmental /purposive sampling method, where the researcher selects participants based on their own judgment, expertise, or knowledge of the population and the research purpose. The samples comprise 36 news headlines sourced from 20 online news spaces at:

www.nairaland.com; www.nairaland.com ;
pmnewsnigeria.com; www.vanguardngr.com;
dailytrust.com; www.lindaikejisblog.com;
www.watchtowermedia.com; punchng.com;
thenicheng.com; dailynigerian.com;
www.theherald.co.za; www.thecable.ng;
www.westernpost.ng; 9jaflaver.com;

www.mynigeria.com; www.gistmania.com;
leadership.ng; guardian.ng; www.mystateline.com; and
thenationonline.ng.net.

downloaded between 2022 and 2023. The judgmental approach becomes relevant because the analysis focuses exclusively on news related to parricide. The data were subjected to qualitative analyses using descriptive methods because the contents of the data were described based on context. The study was carried out within the framework of Halliday's (1994) Functional Stylistics.

6.1 Research Design

A qualitative stylistic analysis was utilised to investigate the language patterns in the e-news headlines selected for this study. This design became useful in identifying patterns, frequencies, cross-referencing/tabulation for the purpose of formulating a hypothesis.

6.2 Sampling Procedure

Thirty-six news headlines on parricide were randomly sampled from 20 online news platforms. The period covered spanned 2022 to 2023. Headlines sampled covered different in-family killings reported in the news .

6.3 Tools

Halliday's Functional Stylistics was used in this research. The main thrust of this theoretical framework is explained briefly in the succeeding sections.

6.3.1 Functional Stylistics

As earlier indicated, the theoretical framework which underlines this research is the Functional Stylistics pioneered by Halliday (1994). The framework is an adaptation of the Systemic Functional Linguistics, which means language does not function in a vacuum. It is concerned with the relationship between the forms of language as a system and the context of situation of its production, as well as the social, cultural and political factors that impact upon its construction and reception. Halliday (1996) claims that this approach became valuable because of the insight it offered on the nature and use of language, especially regarding the stylistic study. He further explains that the theory revolves around two concepts: foregrounding and prominence. Accordingly, Halliday (1986) avers that foregrounding is motivated prominence. That is the patterns of prominence in texts are regularities in the sounds or words, or structures that stand out in some ways, or may be brought out by careful reading. By doing this, it is possible to gain new insight from discoveries that such foregrounded features may contribute to the writer's total meaning. It is therefore essential that foregrounding relates to the meaning of the text as a whole. The theory is therefore essential in explicating meaning through three intersecting functions of language. To illustrate the interrelated functions of language, Halliday (1994) suggests an example of a sentence thus "while waiting for the bus, David kicked an old tin can". In the sentence, there is the 'message', that is, the information about David and his action. Secondly, there is the 'exchange', that is a transaction between a speaker and a listener or writer or reader. And lastly, there is the 'representation', which is a construal of some process in ongoing human experience. These three functions are called 'metafunctions' of language, which are ideational, interpersonal and textual. The ideational expresses ideas and experiences, the interpersonal

functions to mediate in the establishment of social relationships and the textual provides the formal properties of language. Thus, the clause is seen systematically as a representation, an exchange and a message.

6.4 Research Locale and Data Collection

Nigeria is the research locale for this study. The e-news headlines selected were those published between 2022 and 2023. All headlines selected reflected the theme of parricide. The headlines were first selected, and then censoriously interrogated by bringing out foregrounded clause elements as data, which were analysed qualitatively using the theoretical framework of Halliday's (1994) Functional Stylistics.

7. DATA ANALYSIS

This section contains the findings and discussion of the linguistic peculiarities in the selected e-news headlines on parricide. However, only the clause structure and its elements shall constitute the focus of the current study in order to avoid unwieldiness in the descriptions. Consequently, copious examples of the clause structure/element which suffice for the elucidation of the style being espoused are cited. And as earlier suggested, the process will be carried out within the purview of Halliday's Functional Stylistics. Against that background, four prominent stylo-linguistic features have been identified in the e-news headlines on parricide. These are the use of hypotactic nominalization/complex complementation, paratactic lexicalizations, accusative verbal elements, and adversative adverbials.

7.1 The use of Hypotactic Nominalization/complex complementation

The term "hypotactic" is an adjective which comes from "hypotaxis". According to Halliday and Mathiessen (2004), "hypotaxis" is the relationship between a dependent element and its dominant, the element on which it is dependent. Hypotaxis can be a feature of a class, group, clause, or even sentence. In the same vein, a complement is a lexical item or a group of words which follows a verb and usually completes the meaning of the subject. Onadeko (2000: 71) agrees that "adjectives and noun/pronouns are the only two classes of words that can function as complements in a clause". He went further to differentiate between an extensive complement and intensive complement. An extensive complement is realized by a nominal group which is the object of the verb it follows, while an intensive complement is realized by an adjectival group or a nominal group functioning as an adjective. However, if the complement is a single lexical item, it is simple but when it comprises of two or more lexical items, it is complex. It is also called "hypotaxis" when a complex structure is used at the level of subject or complement. It has been discovered that online news headlines on parricides are replete with this linguistic feature. This finding becomes more vivid in the examples represented in Table 1. The hypotactic structures are italicised.

Table 1: Hypotactic Nominalization/Complex Complementation in the sampled online news headlines on parricide:

#	Subject	Predicator	Complement	Adjunct
1	<i>25-year-old man</i>	Kills	Father	over farmland in Delta.
2	<i>64-year-old Nigerian woman</i>	stabbed to death	-	by her son in London.
3	<i>Trigger-happy policeman</i>	Kills	<i>5-year-old niece</i>	on New Year's Eve in Imo.
4	<i>20-Year-old man</i>	Murders	<i>pregnant stepmother, stepsister</i>	in Kano.
5	Couple	kill dump	<i>their newborn baby, body</i>	- in a trench.
6	<i>Bauchi man</i>	burns to death buries	<i>his 80-years-old uncle body</i>	over witchcraft allegation, in shallow grave.

The first finding centres on the use of hypotactic nominalization/complex complementation. Looking at Table 1, there are six online news headlines on parricidal issues. The headlines have been grouped according to their different elements of sentence structures, subject (S), predicator (P), complement (C), and adjunct (A). It is observed that each of the six headlines contains at least an instance of hypotactic nominal structure either as subject or complement. This is in line with the findings of Dykstra (2019), which agrees that noun choice and modification are key in constructing a headline. He argues further that headlines make use of nominal phrases, where a definite article usually nominalizes the phrase. However, hypotactic structures in headlines, particularly those on parricidal issues, are achieved not only by articles, but by other nominalization elements, such as word compounding and serial adjectivization, as can be established in the sampled parricidal headlines. For instance, at the level of subject, the hypotactic nominalizations are; '25-year-old man', '65-year-old Nigerian woman', 'trigger-happy policeman', '20-year-old man' and 'Bauchi man'. In these examples, number one to six, none of the headlines contains an article; they are all comprised of word compounding elements or adjective of source to describe the actor. This is because in parricidal crime headlines, the emphasis is not on the description of a known figure, but on the personality of the actual person involved, while different nominal groups are thematised for attention. All the example given above, for instance, except number two thematised the agents/actors, while number two thematised the patient/victim. The dominant/headword is 'man', 'policeman', and 'woman' All other words in the hypotactic nominal groups are dependent or modifiers. Instead of the news headline to simply read 'man kills father ...', it reads '25-year-old man kills father ...'. Also, the complement of the headlines follows a similar pattern. They are; '5-year-old niece', 'pregnant mother, stepsister', 'their newborn baby', 'his 80-year-old'. Majority of these hypotactic nominalizations were realized by word compounding through hyphenation and word

modification. The linguistic implication of this style of nominalization is to give a detailed description or information about the subject or object of the sentence which acts either as the agent or patience.

Prominent in the hypotactic description or word compounding is the 'age' usually written in figures to deliberately create the awe/sympathy about the age-difference between the agent and the patience. Another reason for the inclusion of age in the hypotactic structure is to draw attention to the strength or weakness of the assailants over their victims. In most cases, the agents/attackers are stylishly presented as stronger, more vibrant and youthful than their victims. Their age range between 20-years to 25-years; therefore, their marauding strength to overpower their victims may not be in doubt. In the same vein, at the level of complements, the age of the victims also constitutes the hypotactic elements. This time, the age is included to draw the sympathy and emotion of the reading audience to the vulnerability, powerlessness and defenselessness of the victims, who, in most cases are the frail/weak aged people or helpless and innocent under-age. For example, 'Bauchi man burns his 80-years-old uncle...'. An eighty-year-old person, definitely, may be too weak to fight back or defend himself. The same explanation goes for the children who suffer attacks. Examples can be noticed in 'Trigger-happy policeman Kills 5-year-old niece', 'couple kill their newborn baby', 'woman arrested for allegedly beating her 10-year-old stepson to death over piece of meat'. A look at the hypotactic nominalization at the extensive complements of the sentence structures reveals that the victims/patients are usually the powerless, defenseless, helpless and innocent children. From the examples cited above, it is obvious that the power of a '5-year-old' cannot match that of a 'trigger-happy policeman' who is not only a policeman but also toting a gun and always anxious/'happy' to pull the trigger at any slightest provocation. In addition, a 'newborn baby' is expectedly helpless and powerless to be able to fight back the devilish collaborative machination of both parents, just as a '10-year-old stepson' is not capable of outwitting the power of his stepmother.

Apart from the age-grade description which constitutes a significant aspect of the hypotactic nominalization, there is also the use of different and illustrative adjectives to draw attention to genders, qualities, source and advantages/disadvantages of the actors and sufferers. For example, "Trigger-Happy Policeman Kills 5-yr-old Niece on New Year's Eve in Imo". The element italicized in the excerpt 'trigger-happy' is a compound adjective qualifying the noun 'policeman'. The adjective functions to show the kind of person the actor is. The agent is not only a police officer, he is carrying a gun and he is usually reckless in the use of firearms, which is against the rules of his engagement.

The adjective used ostensibly indicates that the crime committed is not accidental but deliberate; it is to condemn his action outright and to practically incriminate and hold him to his senseless action. In some other instances, the hypotactic structure may contain a kind of nominal group having preposition and a participial verb for an inclusive information about the agent/victim. An example is:

"I want Justice for my Daughter, Mother of Woman Slain by Husband Appeals to Anambra Govt".

Looking at the italicized structure, 'mother of woman slain by husband' is not only hypotactic but meaning inclusive through a passive construction. The subject is deliberately thematised. The 'mother' who is a third party is the one filling an appeal on behalf of the victim 'woman' who happens to be her daughter. However, the actor/agent is stylishly interpolated into the passive position to give emphasis to the aggrieved/affected. The structure of the hypotactic structure follows the structure 'headword+qualifier+predicator+qualifier (hqPq)' where h is 'mother', q is 'of woman', P is 'slain' and q is 'by husband.'

Then, there are also gender-based adjectives in the complex nominal structures employed in the e-news headlines on parricides. The gender references, apart from indicating the fact that parricidal crimes are not restricted to a particular gender, are also to show the strength or otherwise of the actor/victim in the headlines. Usually, reference to male gender indicates strength, especially when he is the agent while reference to female gender indicates weakness when she is the victim. These references to genders appear in different ways. One of the ways is the use of person deixes such as he/she or other nouns that are variants of gender identities such as man, woman, father, mother, son, daughter, boy or girl, etc. Examples:

"20-year-old Housewife Arrested for Allegedly Killing Co-wife with Pestle"

"25-year-old man kills father over farmland in Delta"

The examples of headlines above show that crimes are not one-gender restrictive; either males or females are capable of committing parricidal crimes. In the first headline, a female (housewife) is involved, while in the second headline, a male (man) is involved. However, the reference to gender also indicates the strength of the actor on the victim. In addition, the second headline above shows the vivacity of a youthful assailant (25-year-old man) over the frail victim (father).

In addition, the hypotactic nominal/complement structures in the headlines of parricides are replete with possessive person deictic elements either to show level of relationship between the actor and victim or to invoke a sense of emotional feelings in the readers towards the victim. As a result, pronominal such as 'his', 'her', 'their' are features of the complex nominal groups. Examples, in "20-Year-Old Man Murders Pregnant Step-mother", '20-year-old man' as a hypotactic nominalization is the offender/criminal while 'pregnant mother' is the complex complement which is the victim/casualty.

"Youth allegedly hacks his 78-year-old father to death over crop harvest."

"Mother arrested for killing her four children with a sledgehammer."

The possessive pronouns 'his' and 'her' in the above headlines address the intimacy/the close ties between both the actor and the victim on one hand, and on the other, the emotional attachment the readers are expected to express towards the unfortunate development. It raises a serious moral question of a decadent social system where humans behave as beasts.

Another feature of the hypotactic nominal groups at the level of subject and complement is the source-pointer adjectives. Thus, some of the complex nominal structures

include lexical items that actually point attention to the origins of either the assailants or the victims. This attempt is part of what the parricides headline writers use to succinctly describe the personalities involved in the crime. Examples:

“64-year-old Nigerian woman stabbed to death by her son in London.”

“Bauchi man burns his 80-year-old uncle to death over witchcraft allegations, buries body in shallow grave.”

The examples illustrated above by the foregrounded structures describe adjectives of source/origin of the victim and the actor respectively. In the first example, it is understood from the context that the woman and her son lived in London where the crime was committed but the woman who was killed happened to be a Nigerian. In the second example, the origin of the actor was given as ‘Bauchi’. Both ‘Nigeria’ and ‘Bauchi’ are adjectives describing origin either of the perpetrator or the casualty. While ‘Nigerian’ modifies ‘woman’, ‘Bauchi’ modifies ‘man’ in the structures.

Previous studies, such as Paglinawan's (2021) linguistic analysis of Philippine crime news broadcasts, reveal that journalists frequently employ lexical devices such as epithets, metonymy, and personification, as well as syntactical devices like enumeration and rhetorical questions. Edem and Effiong's (2024) also explore linguistic devices such as slang, metaphors, sensational headlines, and predisposed language in the portrayal of criminal activities. They concluded that these linguistic elements play a crucial role in constructing and perceiving criminal activities on social media platforms, influencing public opinion and potentially perpetuating stereotypes about crime and criminals. Likewise, Ifantidou (2023) highlights that headlines can evoke emotions and their reduced explicitness can sometimes increase curiosity but may also lead to misunderstandings, suggesting that the impact of linguistic choices on audience perception is complex and context-dependent. However, this study adds to the field by specifically analyzing parricidal-related violence, research forte and impactful subject area that has not been extensively explored in headline analysis. The emphasis on hypotactic nominalization and complex complementation as tools for identifying actors and victims offers a fresh perspective on how syntax encodes agency and responsibility in crime reporting. These devices serve to contextualize and imply meanings, thereby influencing audience perception of crime news. This current research has also taken a step further in its analysis of hypotactic use of nominalization or complementation to stylishly present a detailed description of the various actors in the online news headlines on parricidal issues. While the hypotactic nominalization is deployed to indicate offender/accomplices of/in the crime, complex complementation is utilized to capture the victims/causalities of the crimes. Thus, the two complex structures address the questions of ‘who’ and ‘to whom’ of the crime committed. And the meaning has a far-reaching subtle implication for drawing the sympathy of the readers of the news headlines to the unfortunate incidents.

7.2 The use of Paratactic Lexicalizations

Another prominent feature discovered in e-news headlines on parricidal violence is the use of paratactic structures. Paratactic structure, according to an American Heritage

free online Dictionary of the English Language (Fifth Edition), has to do with the juxtaposition of clauses or phrases without the use of coordinating or subordinating conjunctions. Parataxis is made up of two Greek words, the prefix ‘para’ and the suffix ‘taxis’. According to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2005: 897), ‘para’ means “beside, alongside of, beyond, aside from”. ‘Taxis’, on the other hand, means “arrangement or ordering” (900). However, Matthews (2007: 286 - 7) sees parataxis as “the ancient term for coordination, applied especially to that of clauses or sentences”. From the above, it can be gleaned that parataxis is like asyndetic use of coordination with the use of commas, colons and other graphological/punctuation designs that can be deployed in joining clauses, phrases and words. The samples in the following table illustrate this finding:

Table 2: Showing examples of paratactic lexicalisations

#	Headline	Parataxis
1.	Horror: Man beats his 6-year-old daughter, buried her alive	Colon
2.	She thought the kids were devils – Family reacts as woman Stabs her 11-month-old and 3-year-old sons to death	Hyphen
3.	Couple kill their newborn baby, dump body in a trench	Comma

The use of paratactic elements is illustrated in Table 2. Three major devices for achieving paratactic constructions have been identified and these are colon, hyphen and comma. The first headline in the table deployed the use of colon to join two independent clauses together. The headline is arranged in an anticlimax order to focus attention more on the consequences rather than on the cause. Thus, the minor clause represented by a single fear gripping lexical item ‘horror’, which is an adverbial is also an independent clause being joined to the second clause by a colon. Likewise, the second clause is coordinated with a third clause by a comma at the same time. What this means is that there are three clauses in the first headline, (Horror/Man beats his 6-year-old daughter/buried her alive), with each expressing a separate idea, but the three clauses are semantically related. The same is true of the second headline where there are two clauses as in “‘She thought the kids were Devils’ – Family reacts as woman stabs her 11-month-old and 3-year-old sons to death”.

The first clause (She Thought the kids were Devils) is a reported clause stating the cause of action, while the second (Family Reacts as Woman Stabs Her 11-month-old and 3-year-old Sons to Death) is a declarative sentence stating the effect. The two clauses are separated by a hyphen. In the third example, there is also the use of a comma to separate two clauses (Couple kill their newborn baby/dump body in a trench). The parataxis functions to suppress/delete certain coordinating/subordinating conjunctions in form of ellipsis. For example, looking at the first headline, instead of saying “Horror as man beats his 6-year-old daughter and buried her alive” (emphasis mine). In the actual headline, ‘as’ and ‘and’ were deliberately omitted from the structure to achieve word-economy, which is one of the general features of headlines. But apart from achieving word-economy, parataxis is often used to arrange events of a story either in a chronological or random order, to show the relationship between cause

and effect as it has been demonstrated above. In this way, the headline will show which event precedes or follows another in order to create a straight-forward and concise plot structure within itself. Generally, paratactic elements are employed in online news headlines on parricides to foreground salient aspects of the news in order to touch on delicate sensations of the readers.

7.3 The use of accusative verbal elements to suggest weapon used in parricides

Another linguistic feature found in e-news headlines on parricidal-related violence is the use of strong accusative and incriminating verbal elements. The writers of the online news have been found to deliberately select vivid and undeniably crime-lazed lexical verbs to show the culpability of the offenders and the weapons used in carrying out the dastardly crime. This discovery is clearly shown in the following table.

Table 3: Showing the relationship between the verb and the weapon used by the accused

Headlines	Instruments Likely Used
Vigilante <i>shot</i> dead by his son while testing the efficacy of his charm in Adamawa”.	Gun
Bauchi man <i>burns</i> his 80-year-old uncle to death over witchcraft allegations, buries body in shallow grave”.	Fire
Woman <i>stabs</i> husband to death, <i>cuts off</i> manhood	Knife/sharp instrument
Man <i>beats</i> mother to death	Fists/fist
Mother <i>beheads</i> her 11-month-old baby in Cross River	Machete/cutlass
Man <i>flogs</i> his-3-year-old daughter to death for allegedly entering their neighbour’s house in Delta	Whip
Youth allegedly <i>hacks</i> His 78-year-old father to death over crop harvest	Machete/axe
Court remands 35-year-old woman for allegedly <i>strangling</i> son to death.	Fist
Man in court for <i>burning</i> wife, brother-in-law to death	Fire

Table 3 illustrates the incriminating verbal elements that news writers deploy to rope the accused and the probable weapon used in the crime. In the first instance, most of these verbs are deployed transitively. A transitive verb is the one that goes with its object. Examples:

“Man sets five stepchildren ablaze after wife denies him sex.”

“Teenager kills mother for refusing to buy him headset.”

In the above samples, both the verbs and their objects have been highlighted to illustrate the connection between the criminal action and the fellow at the receiving end of the unfortunate incident. The verbs in the foregrounded elements are ‘sets ablaze’ and ‘kills’, while their objects are ‘five stepchildren’ and ‘mother’. Apart from the verbs being used transitively, they are also used in different forms. Both verbs are simple forms to reflect journalistic reportage style but the first is a phrasal verb as in ‘sets ablaze’. The verbs are not only vivid; they are obviously

indicting. Secondly, the verbs are deployed to express powerful visual and auditory imageries to effectively capture the how of action and to stylishly reflect weapons used in the crime. By examining the lexical choice of verbs, it becomes clear what weapons the assailants used on their victims. ‘Shot’, for example, gives an idea of the use of gun, ‘sets ablaze’ suggests the use of fire, ‘stabs’ suggests the use of knife or any other sharp instrument, ‘cuts off’ indicates the use of knife or cutlass, while ‘beats’ shows the use of fists. From the samples, it is obvious that the criminals use different implements/instruments in carrying out their dastardly acts, and these range from gun, machete, fist, whip, fire to knife, majority of which are ubiquitous in homes, apart from gun which is strictly owned by license.

The verbs displayed in the above structures stimulate in the readers profound empathetic feeling for the victims. The mental pictures drawn by the use of those verbs make the actions poignant and nightmarish. In the first headline, the scary imagery of a vigilante toting a gun and shooting his own son is horrendous. In the second headline, the mental picture of an aged man roasted in fire set by his own son can be so weird. Likewise, in the third example, the barbaric idea of a man receiving cavernous laceration/penetration of knife while his manhood is being cut off can be so horrifying and wicked. And the impression of a son beating his own mother to death, with fists, is not only sacrilegious, unimaginable, but dastardly worrisome as well.

In all, the verbs deployed by the e-newspaper headline writers of parricidal news carry substantial and convincing premises for convicting the accused. The verbs are definitive about the crime committed and sound a knell of guilt on the perpetrators. The verbs leave no one in doubt of the gravity of the crime committed. They have been deployed to determinedly prosecute the offenders prior the possibility of any legal action being taken against them or before they are cross-examined. They are verbs that subtly question the heinous and the beastly nature of the criminals. Thus, verbs like ‘sets ablaze’, ‘kills’, ‘shot’, ‘burns’, ‘stabs’ ‘cut off’, ‘beats’ and other horrid actions not only condemn but pre-convict the offenders of their crimes.

7.4 The use of Adversative Adverbials

An adverbial is a group of words that modifies a verb in a sentence. Onadeko (2000: 65) opines that an adverbial group can be divided into two; “adverbial headed adverbial group”, and “preposition introduced adverbial group”. The adverb headed adverbial usually has the structure t + a + l, where ‘t’ is Temperal (i.e., adverb before the main adverb), ‘a’ Apex (i. e. main adverb) and ‘l’ Limiter (i.e., adverb after the main adverb). For example, in the sentence “they cried very bitterly indeed”, the structure highlighted is the adverbial group. ‘Very’ is temperal, ‘bitterly’ is apex and ‘indeed’ is limiter (Onadeko, 2000). However, the preposition introduced adverbial group is a P + C type, where ‘P’ is called prepend and ‘C’ is named completive. The combination of the prepend and the completive will give the preposition introduced adverbial group as in this sentence; “he is in the market”. The group ‘in the market’ is the adverbial introduced by a preposition. As a result, ‘in’ is prepend while ‘the market’ is completive .

It is noticed that online news headlines on parricides are chockfull with the use of adverbial groups. Adverbials generally function to point to cause, place, time, and manner of an action (verb). These functions have also been used to determine the types of adverbials such as adverbial of time, place, manner, cause, and concession. The adverbials in the selected corpus function in similar ways, and in adversative dimensions. Table 4 illustrates copious examples of these adverbials:

Table 4: Examples of Adverbials in the e-news headlines on parricides

Action	Adverbial of reason	Adverbial of time	Adverbial of place
25-year-old man kills father	over farmland	-	in Delta
Youth allegedly hacks his 78-year-old father to death.	over crop harvest	-	-
Man kills Daughter	for holding his manhood		
Mother arrested	for killing her four children with a sledgehammer		
Man sets five stepchildren ablaze	-	after wife denies him sex	-
Woman sentenced to 22-years Imprisonment	for stabbing her newborn baby to death		
Vigilante shot dead by his son		while testing the efficacy of his charm	in Adamawa
Doctors arraigned in Court	for allegedly hiring hitmen to kill wife and secret lover		
Man beats wife to death	over school ownership		in Ogun
Wife stabs husband to death.		after he tried to sleep with her	in Oyo.
20-year-old housewife arrested	for allegedly killing co-wife with pestle		
Mother Beheads Her 11-month-old	-	-	baby in Cross River
Man flogs his-3-year-old daughter to Death	for allegedly entering their neighbour's house		in Delta.
Bauchi man burns his 80-year-old uncle to death	over witchcraft allegations	-	-
How man killed brother		during fight over ₦1,000	

Man shot dead by his brother-in-kaw	over alleged infidelity	-	-
Woman Arrested For Allegedly Beating Her 10-year-old Stepson To Death	Over Piece of Meat		-
Man Succeeds in Killing His Wife		After First Attempt To Poison Her Failed	
Woman murders stepfather		after she found her nude photos in his computer	
Man beats daughter To death	For using his phone To call boyfriend		
Trigger-happy policeman kills 5-yr-old niece		on New Year's Eve	in Imo
How man allegedly kills wife	for returning home late		
Woman set ablaze by her co-wife dies			in Owerri hospital
Man stabs his wife To death	over Water	during an argument	in Lagos

In Table 4, there are three major types of adverbials which are prominent for discussion in the e-news headlines on parricides; these are the adverbials of cause, time, and place. Adverbials of cause adduce the reason for the crime performed in the headlines, adverbials of time suggest the time of action while those of place describe the location of the crime. Looking at the table above, it becomes obvious that there is a preponderant display of adverbials. This underscores the significance of adverbials in the e-news headlines on parricides. Adverbials of cause are also found to be more prominently used than those of time and place. The adverb of cause explains the reason for an action as contained in the first segment of the table. There are several reasons for the different parricidal crimes as reportedly committed in the headlines. Some of these reasons are majorly domestic and they range from serious to trivial issues like scuffle over ownership of farmland/school, witchcraft allegations, child's disobedience and others. Mostly, the adverbial groups are the types introduced by prepositions. And two main prepositions have been deployed to introduce these adverbials, which are 'for' and 'over'. Examples:

"Police arrest housewife for killing husband with poison."

"Man shot dead by his brother-in-law over alleged infidelity".

The utilisation of the preposition 'for' or 'over' in the above highlighted structures is a concise way of replacing

the subordinating conjunction ‘because of’, which can also be used to adduce reason for an action. However, the preposition governed adverbials do not only suggest the causes of the actions, they are adversative in nature. They are deliberately used to negate/oppose the cause or otherwise of the action so as to incriminate the offender. Thus ‘for killing husband with poison’ is antithetical to correct moral behaviour between spouses and therefore a strong reason why ‘police arrest housewife’ in the above headline. ‘For allegedly hiring hitmen to kill wife and secret lover’ is also anti-moral behaviour which should necessarily warrant the ‘Doctors being arraigned in court’ (emphasis added). Likewise, the preposition ‘over’ is suggestive of crime committed in the course of an argument. What this means is that the cause of some parricides can be traced to inability to manage arguments ensuing between family members. Arguments not well managed often gradually degenerate into hatred, breeding bad blood and resulting in vengeful determination to kill. The online news headlines writers on parricides stylishly condemn such implacable reasons for the crime and subtly trivialize the basis for such senseless action.

Contrary to Vaes, et al’s. (2019) study which discovered that perpetrators’ nationalities are frequently mentioned, the adverbials of place are rarely part of the headlines on parricides because the emphasis is usually more on the crime committed and the reason for it rather than the location of the crime. This style is deliberate to universalize parricide crime and to situate it in the ‘any-place’ space. Even when the location of crime is mentioned, the online headline writer still maintains a level of discreteness by only mentioning the region or state of the crime incidence. For examples:

“64-year-old Nigerian Woman stabbed to Death by her son in London.”

“Woman Set Ablaze By Her Co-wife Dies in Owerri Hospital”

The elements in italics are examples of adverbial groups pointing to places of the crimes being characteristically introduced throughout by the preposition ‘in’. The places mentioned are not definite locations but general, as they were. For example, one may want to know which part of London or, which hospital in Owerri. Although these places formed part of the elements of the e-news headlines on parricides, the emphasis is not to locate the crime in a specific place but to conceptualize a universal idea of crimes.

However, where writers harp on specificity of locations, they probably do so to deliberately indict the host and demonstrate hostility towards their actions. By this, a subtle but strong message is sent to the reader to form their opinion on the location of the crimes.

8. CONCLUSION

It was discovered that the headlines are characterized by hypotactic nominalizations, complex complementation, paratactic lexicalization, accusative and incriminating verbal elements and adversative adverbials. The linguistic elements have also been stylishly deployed to achieve different purposes in the headlines. Hypotactic nominalizations reveal the ‘who’ of the violence (offender/accomplish) while complex complementation indicate the ‘whom’ of the crime (victim/casualty).

Accusative verbal elements achieve two things; one is to actually foreground the action of the violence, and secondly, to state the weapon used in performing the dastardly act. Likewise, adversative adverbials have been deployed to systematically portray the ‘why’ (reason), ‘when’ (time) and ‘where’ (location) of the crime. In all, these linguistic constructions become stylistically significant to rouse in the readers a sympathetic disposition, and to leave them in the awe of the dastardly acts.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that online news writers should develop ethically stable stance in constructing news headlines. They should balance newsworthiness with empathy, avoiding sensationalist lexical choices that may re-victimise affected families. There is also the need to prioritise clarity over sensationalism. Media practitioners should imbibe scripting style that can guide and encourage unambiguous, non-complexed structural elements in headlines in order to reduce misinterpretation, and make the headlines accessible to readers.

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