A FEMINIST-STYLISTIC PERSPECTIVE OF SELECT-NIGERIAN NEWSPAPER REPORTS ON BOKO HARAM TERRORIST ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

The archetypal deviance-marked representations of suicide bombers who are females on the news, generally suggests and magnifies already existing gender inequalities in a patriarchal society like Nigeria. Previous studies have examined the framing of female actors of terrorism in the media by using different data and theoretical sets. This study, through a radical feminist framework, examines the representation of suicide bombers who are females in news reports of select-Nigerian newspapers. The focus of this study is on the biased framing of female terror participants as terrorists. This makes the study significant. The study is qualitative and derived data from seven randomly selected Nigerian national newspapers: *The Nation*, *Daily Trust, Daily Sun, Weekly Trust, This Day, Vanguard,* and *The Guardian*; marked as Appendices 1, 2, 3, 4, 5(a & b) and 6 respectively. These newspapers are among the top ranked in Nigeria, and are hereby presented as a case study. The study reveals that newspaper-frames of the female suicide bomber tend to be gender biased; such that the newspapers, in an attempt to be sensational, specify gender in the reports when it is a female perpetrator. This kind of representation of the female actor is a rhetorical approach to *member* her in a negative active space; and this debunks society's ascription of her ideals. The study also shows that her involvement in terrorism may not have been deliberate, as in the cases of the Chibok and Dapchi school girls-abductees who are used by their abductors to perpetrate terror. The study concludes that the inclusion of the female on the news reports assigns her a bad image; as opposed the idyllic labels: simple, calm and beautiful. Whatever the motive for the habitual mention of the female actors of terrorism on the pages of the newspapers sampled, this study recommends that female suicide bombers should not be regarded as terrorists, misfits or viewed as out-of-touch-with-reality humans. This is because the more the media discriminates against the female as a suicide bomber, the more leveraged she becomes to terrorists as they deploy her services to the detriment of the society she should nurture.

Keywords: Female suicide bomber, Gender frames. Language and myth, Media narratives.

Introduction

Feminist stylistics is a sub-branch of applied linguistics that accounts for ways in which gender issues are linguistically encoded in texts (Mills, 1996, 2006 and Montoro, 2014). A feminist stylistic study, like this present study, is concerned not only to describe discourses that depict some form of gender-typing and/or sexism, but also explains how readers of a text process meaning vis-à-vis the role linguistic choices play in the creation of gendered meanings in a text (Montoro, 2014). It is by this definition that this study takes this position in the analysis of newspaper reports that represent female terror actors as deviants.

The representation of the female actors of terrorism by the media has taken the same frame as women in politics (Nacos, 2005), women drivers, women mechanics, among others. Modern terrorism, unlike the hegemonic tendencies of patriarchy, has exploited the female by engaging her as an active participant in the perpetration of terror. Before now, in Nigeria, checking for IEDs (improvised explosive devices) was done only for males, especially men before they are granted entrance into the Churches, Mosques, motor parks, market places, banks and so on. This was based on the long-timed myth that women are a weaker sex, caring, non-destructive, kind and should be adorned for beauty. On this, the Nigerian Boko Haram terrorist group has leveraged, using female abductees as scapegoats for operations. The abduction of the girls in north-Nigeria attests to the fact that modern terrorism recognizes the place of the female in terror perpetration. So, even the male terrorists, now, disguise themselves as women to carry out some odious acts of bombing, abduction, shooting and maiming of innocents. As in Appendix 5 below:

> Troops nab terrorist disguised as woman (*This Day*, Tuesday,
> 24 February, 2015)

The attention of gender scholars, particularly feminist scholars, have been drawn towards this angle of scholarship where the media becomes specific in mentioning the female gender when it is a female perpetrator. The implication of the emphasis on female terror actors may be based on the media's prejudices that see her as an interloper in a man's space; or it is to debunk the weaker-sex-myth which usually grants the female access into public events without adequate checks. Today, the story is changing, as more media reports have shown acts of suicide bombers who are females. Thus, as a means of shaping attitudes, media reporters are twisting the

perception of media consumers to view suicide bombers who are females as FEMALE terrorists. This is the reason for the consistent addition of the ascription FEMALE as opposed the labelling of MALE to the phrase suicide bomber. This describes her as a "terrorist". However, it is pertinent to note that, not all female perpetrators, especially the girls, are terrorists. This is because some of their involvements are not deliberate, and their actions are sometimes involuntary. This places them at a disadvantaged position as victims of terrorism, as in the case of using abductee school girls of Chibok and Dapchi as scapegoats. From this labelling, FEMALE SUICIDE BOMBER, the society, gradually views the females from a different lens: as agent of destruction, as she has been incorporated in life-taking activities the males were originally known for.

On the other hand, this study presents two perspectives to the argument: the academic (scholarship) and social viewpoints, respectively. The academic standpoint adds to the growing literature on the feminist debates on equality among the genders, supporting that women like men can be anything; hence the society should not double-victimize her *womanbeingness* and femaleness, and personhood: as a female and as a terrorist, since this is not the case with their male counterparts. The social perspective presents a perception that argues that female participation in terrorism may not be as a result of leveling up with their male counterparts, that is the equality principle, but may be involuntary, forceful and could be as a result of ignorance. This point is important to note so that girls can be reoriented on the ills of running errands for people they barely know.

The female terror actor-frames

Gender debates have been over-flogged in recent scholarships. Different perspectives, on the study and development in the fields that relate to gender, have emerged. Some scholars argue on the marginalization of the female while others debunk the notion of marginalization and rather view the place of the female gender as the center. Today, there are also debates on the female's engagement in terror acts, and the conversation on their depiction by the media is also on-going. Nacos (2005) posits that the media's portrayal of the female terrorist has taken the same gender frames as women in politics. She believes that although women have been among the leaders and

followers of terrorist groups throughout the history of modern terrorism, the mass media typically depict(s) the woman-terrorist as an intruder (interlopers) in a male dominated sphere.

Nacos also asserts that the frames given to the female terrorists by the media are those that describe them as being out-of-touch-with-reality, aberrant, deviant, anomalous and so on. She adds that most women engage in terrorism out of boredom (p.130). While this may be Nacos' position on women's engagement, this paper tends to take a divergent stance, as the paper contends that female suicide bombers in the Nigerian context are usually either forced into the acts, or coerced into believing there is a reward for their action. Therefore, Nacos' contestation may not be absolute in the Nigerian context.

Auer, Sutcliffe and Lee (2018) examine the white widow frames; using intersectionality as the approach to uncover complex representations of female terrorists in the news media. They assert that what the news media considered particularly captivating in the aftermath of the 21 September, 2013 Westgate Mall massacre in Nairobi, Kenya, was not the devastation of the attack, but the suspected involvement of Samantha Lewthwaite in the attack. The news media created a position for Samantha Lewthwaite at the center of media discourse in Britain for a long time and dubbed her the "White Widow". Auer, Sutcliffe and Lee (2018) argue that the news media both malign and normalize Lewthwaite, representing her participation in terrorism through complex constellations of identity.

La and Pickett (2019), following the same line of argument as Nacos (2005) and Auer, Sutcliffe and Lee (2018), show the different media frames of the female terrorists as they claim that due to their sensational nature, suicide bombings attract attention and are often covered with different lenses. In their study, La and Pickett identified two frames: the liable agent frame – which is the frame given to the female terrorists by the local media, and the vulnerable and helpless girls frame – which is a portrayal or representation of the female terrorist by the international media. These scholars hold similar opinions that the female terrorists have not been well positioned or represented in the media.

Thus, this study corroborates most of the positions held by these scholars, especially La and Pickett's (2019) position, and adds that female gender frames on the media are acts of gender inequality; as these representations depict the female terrorists as intruders in terrorism. La and

Pickett's classifications: the liable agent and the vulnerable and helpless girls' frames capture the attention of this study. As earlier argued, female terror actors in the Nigerian context, have these frames; where the immediate society views them as collaborators and deliberate participants, others may consider their involvement as involuntary, as in the vulnerable and helpless girls' frame – the Chibok and Dapchi girls, for instance. La and Pickett's gender framing of the female suicide bombers in the media is one of the catalysts to this present study.

The media in synergy with terrorists

The recent upsurge in terrorist activities in Nigeria has given the media some impetus to engage and inundate the public space with reports of terror incidents. Terrorists, in a bid to implement their agenda, utilize media's operations for aggrandizement and propaganda. Some debates among media and terrorism experts hold that media items on terror re-enact terrorism. Palmerton (1985), Milburn, Bowley, Fay-Dumaine and Kennedy (1987) and Dowling (1988), for example, believe that terrorist organizations and the media are "partners in crime". By this, they argue, the media, like the terrorists, are actors of terrorism. This means that the kind of reportage deployed by news reporters serve to magnify the activities of terrorists; and this suits news operators' record sales. For these scholars, this makes the media collaborators of terrorism.

Again, scholars: Nacos (2002; 2006), Rohner and Frey (2006) and Bilgen (2012) have also revealed the synergy that exists between the media generally and terrorist groups. Nacos (2002), for example, calls this relationship a dangerous symbiosis. Bilgen (2012) and Idiong (2012) in their studies on the role of the media for [in] terrorist activities, hypothesize that, the media generally plays a significant role in the publicity of terrorist activities. Specifically, Bilgen (2012, p.1) interrogates the synergy between terrorist groups and the media, and claims that "the architects of terrorism take advantage of the media for the benefit of their operational efficiency". He also corroborates Nacos' position that the relationship between the media and terrorist groups is a dangerous one.

For Umuerri and Galadima (2012, p.3), as powerful tools for creating awareness, "the media are capable of setting the agenda on issues, thus raising them to the plane of national discourse". From the arguments above, what is seen as one of the aims of the media today is more or less that of "selling gossips"; what the society wants to hear, read and buy. It is no longer the

"truthfulness" or credibility of news stories but the rush for gossip in the media market that guides news writing.

Contrary to most opinions, Mbazie and Nnah (2012, p.26) posit that, "the effectiveness of reports on terrorist activities by the media provides the general public with the right to know what is of threat to them…". It is obvious, from this caveat, that with the passing of the right of information bill in Nigeria (RIB, 2014), the public has the right to know events and happenings in the society. However, what Mbazie and Nnah (2012) forget to note is that reporting terrorism is not the matter for debate, and is not outrightly out of place to do so, but the manner in which the media reports terrorism is the argument for scholars. It is against this backdrop that this paper lends a voice to the on-going conversation and asserts that terrorism reportage can be as dangerous as the act itself; as it does not just end at the public knowing about these terror acts, but also the psychological implications these news reports may have on the news consumers. This is the reason, sometimes, that security agents will want to protect the public from the psychological racket by not allowing reports on terror on the news media.

For Umuerri and Galadima (2012), since the media wields so much power in society as to determining people's attitudes and reshaping same, it is thus expected that the media demonstrates some form of fair coverage on national security and terrorism in Nigeria. A fair coverage for this study may be understood to mean, reports with a balanced gender tone, reports that do not point accusing fingers to unwilling victims such as the suicide bombers who are females in the Nigerian context. Those females who are not deliberate actors in the act; especially as we can easily allude to the girl-child, as in the cases of the Chibok and Dapchi school-girls-abductees.

Theoretical orientation

Radical feminism is a branch of feminist philosophy, founded on Marxist principles. Radical feminist thoughts oppose oppression of any kind. So that, everything that oppresses femaleness is contestable. The contestations within the feminist ideological underpinnings move towards equalizing the position of the female-beingness to male-beingness. Most patriarchal societies withhold some female rights to existence. They usually define her roles; limiting her capabilities to just a few roles and functions in society. Patriarchy never bends to female aspirations. Thus,

feminist radicalisms hold a different view from the patriarchists, and by no means identify the female as inferior to the man, as such must be treated equally. It is appropriate for this study because it best analyzes texts on power play and relations between the genders; and shows how the female gender wants to be addressed and understood.

Vukoičić (2013) opines that radical feminist postulations are based on the notion that most societies are patriarchal; and tend to marginalize and discriminate against the woman. It is a conflict theory that views the society as consisting of opposed fractions between the genders in relation to male's hegemony. The fact that the Nigerian society privileges the male over the female is the cause for this conflict, and this study lends a voice in that regard to say, female suicide bombers in Nigeria are not terrorists, on the one hand, and on the other, they should not be marginalized and unjustly treated and viewed with gender lenses that place them at a tripartite victimhood: as females, as threat to society and as outcasts, even in death.

As a call for the elimination of male supremacy in socio-political and economic contexts, radical feminism considers patriarchy as what bedevils the society and what encourages inequalities and differences in society. Male's continuous oppression of the female brings about the constant challenge and contestation from the feminist to abolish existing social norms and institutions that oppose female's liberation such as cultural gender clichés, sexual objectification, rape, gender ascriptions and roles, representation of genital differences, violence against women, female gender inclusion on news reports, among others.

The second wave feminist ideologues in the 1960s examined patriarchy as a transhistorical phenomenon that is more daunting than other sources of oppression: racism, political, class, religious, and so on. Radical feminists, Atkinson (1969/2000), Willis (1984) among others have posited that the tendency of upholding patriarchy in a society is meant to view the male as the norm and the female as the other. In our gathering of data for this study, it is observed that, male suicide bombers are regarded as the norm, as the reports do not identify with the gender type of the bomber but do so with the female suicide bomber. It is against this background that this study adopts for a framework for analyzing texts, this theory of conflict, with a view to determining reports that tilt and relegate the females who are involved in suicide bombings vis-à-vis those reports that foreground their negatives in seven Nigerian newspapers.

Research methodology

The purposively sampled data, derived from seven randomly selected Nigerian national newspaper reports of *The Nation*, *Daily Trust, Daily Sun, Weekly Trust, This Day, Vanguard and The Guardian* are examined and analyzed, based on a feminist-stylistic standpoint. This study adopts a qualitative and not quantitative method; and the sampling technique is realized by the selection of news-texts that incorporate gender discourse patterns. Even though the newspapers selected are top ranked Nigerian national dailies, data selected do not cover a large corpus that should represent the view of all newspapers in Nigeria. However, this study can be viewed as a reference point for analyzing other newspaper texts that may appear to portray such proclivities in their reportage. Seven Nigerian newspapers are not quite adequate to categorize all newspapers in Nigeria as doing gender in their news report on terrorism. Although, since these seven newspapers are top ranked, and have a wide range of readership in Nigeria, it is, thus, appropriate to hold that "most" Nigerian newspaper reporters mark gender in reports on terrorism with evidence from the reports sampled and analyzed in this paper.

Data analysis

Discursivity and contextualities of gender in newspaper reports

The mass media's portrayal of the females as interlopers, misfits or deviants in the acts of terrorism is obvious in the newspaper reports examined in this paper. This can be seen as a motivation from some cultural gender clichés and labels about the female who is usually described as a weaker sex, second fiddle or sidekick; perpetually at a disadvantage in society. These kinds of ascriptions have further underestimated the levels at which terror can be perpetrated in Nigeria.

Age long societal gender stereotypes have undermined the power of the female for which modern terrorist ideologues have leveraged. Cultural gender representations have their implication on the way the media, the newspapers in this case, handle information on female suicide bombers. Some authors of American news magazine have associated acts of terrorism with male hormones, thus, any female who happens to play the part of a terrorist is classified as a

deviant (Ottoh, 2019). Most times, when a female perpetrates the act of bombing as a suicide bomber, reporters specify by adding the gender type as in the examples in Appendices 1 and 2 below:

<u>Woman suicide</u> bomber kills 30 in Bauchi town strike

(Appendix 1: *The Nation*, Monday, November 17, 2014).

The portrayal of the female terror actor in the newspaper media depicted in the example in Appendix 1 here reveals some inequality indices as reflected in the inclusion of the gender type, *woman*.

Analysis of Appendix 1 on the chart shows the act of *gendering,* thus:
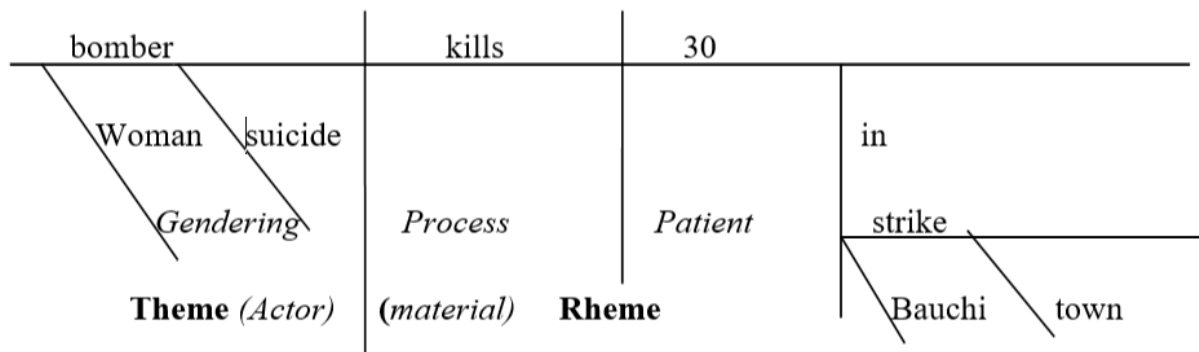
The reporter's use of the modifiers *woman suicide* to describe the *bomber* in Appendix 1 shows or creates a different rhetorical version about what the society thinks of the woman. The Theme *woman suicide bomber* is conflated into all three roles of the Subject: psychological, grammatical and logical. This makes the phrase important in the headline-sentence structure. The Rheme, in the chart above, has the Predicator (kill), the Complement (30) and an Adjunct, a prepositional headed adverbial (in Bauchi town strike). The predicator is a Goal-directed material Process, which represents the outer manifestations of the inner workings of the perpetrator (woman); it shows the acting out of processes of consciousness and psychological state of the Actor (woman) who performs the action, *kills*. See also the following example in Appendix 2:

Female suicide bomber kills 13 in Damaturu

(Appendix 2: *Daily Trust*, Monday, February 16, 2015)

The reports above are discussed under the heading, *doing gender* in terrorism discourse since the reports are gender inclined. The inclusion of a specific gender-type, on the leads of the reports vis-à-vis the headlines, shows an act of doing gender. The implication is that of gender inequality. For instance, in comparing our data to other reports on suicide bombing where the perpetrators are males (Appendices 3 and 4) which read: *Suicide bomber kills 47 in boys' school massacre* (*The Nation*, Tuesday, November 11, 2014); *Suicide bomber kills 15, injures 47 in Yobe* (*Daily Trust*, Monday, July 27, 2015), there is no mention or specifying of the gender type, it is just stated: suicide bomber, without gender details, hence, the macro-rule of deletion on the headline. Going by the inductive reasoning, if A then B, one would say the deletion implies that the suicide bomber is a male (the norm); otherwise it should have been specific on the gender type, if female (the other – who is viewed as the deviant).

Contrary to Appendices 3 and 4, Appendices 1 and 2 above, and 5a&b, 6 and 7 below indicate a specific gender type *woman suicide bomber*; *female suicide bomber,* respectively. The news stories in this study specify the gender type when it is female who perpetrates the act. This is assumed to be that since the act is non-feminine, female who are involved in terrorism and suicide bombing are seen as callous or inhumane, hence deviants. In most societies, especially, traditional societies like Nigeria, femininity is often associated with feminine attributes such as being motherly, comely, compassionate, merciful, life-giving and caring; howbeit, the gender specificity on the reports. Another assumption could be that it is a way the media ensnares the readers' emotional appeal to questioning the reason women/girls are involved in the acts of terrorism which are supposedly masculine and alien to the African society. Again, it could be a way that the media wants to expose the fact that females are now participants of terror. See examples in Appendices 5a&b, 6 and 7 below:

> There was pandemonium in Gombe and Rivers States yesterday when both states were hit by a series of bomb blasts, one of which was masterminded by a **female suicide bomber** that led to the death of at least two persons….
>
> Spokesperson for the Gombe State Police Command, Fwaje Atajiri confirmed this to reporters shortly after the incident.
>
> He said two persons lost their lives, including the **female suicide bomber**, while 18 others were injured. "Two people lost their lives: the **female suicide bomber** and one other woman, 18 others sustained injuries and are being treated at the Gombe Specialists'

Hospital", he said (Appendix 5: *This Day*, Tuesday, 3 February, 2015). All bold fonts are researcher's emphasis.

The repeated use of female specifics on the news reports above accentuates oppressive gender norms and presents terrorism as symbolic of masculinity. From the reports, two bombs were detonated by two different suicide bombers in two different states, but one gender, the female who is portrayed as the deviant, catches the glare of the newspapers for specificity. The report in Appendix 6 below also illustrates this:

> **7-yr-old female suicide bomber** kills 5, injures 19 in Yobe (headline)
>
> Abuja − A **seven-year-old girl**, yesterday, killed herself and five others in a suicide bombing in Potiskum, Yobe State (Appendix 6: *Vanguard*, Monday February 23, 2015).

This report corroborates the earlier claim that these female suicide bombers are not deliberate participants, as it is made obvious in the age of the suicide bomber in Appendix 6. In contrast to this report in Appendix 6, a similar report on *This Day* (Monday, February 23, 2015) avoided to identify the gender of the suicide bomber on the headline but did not fail to indicate it in-text as in:

> Suicide bomber hits Potiskum market, kills 5, injures 46 (headline)
>
> Suicide Bomber Strikes Potiskum Market (sub-headline)
>
> But despite the valiance of the Nigerian troops, the terrorists are yet striking, this time resorting to more of suicide bombings as Potiskum, for the second time in a month, witnessed another suicide bombing when a **female suicide bomber** attacked the Global System Communication (GSM) (sic) market in the State's biggest commercial town.
>
> In Potiskum and the state capital Damaturu, suicide bombers especially **females**, have continued to hit motor parks, GSM market, restaurants and several public places in recent times leaving several lives lost, many persons injured and property also destroyed.
>
> A major phone accessories seller at the market, Yusuf Jubril told ThisDay on phone that a **female suicide bomber** hit the entrance of the GSM market located in the heart of Potiskum town around 1:15pm.

He said. "We saw the **girl** and we became suspicious of her movement and when one of us tried to confront her, the bomb on her went off, killing both of them and three others, while several others sustained injuries and have been taken to the General Hospital in Potiskum" (Appendix 5b: *This Day,* Monday February 23, 2015).

In both reports in Appendices 6 and 5b (as in the ordering above), there is an age factor; indicating that these bombers are children, and this makes our assumption of the girls' unintentional participation in terror acts accurate. The reports analyzed represent the female suicide bombers as terror actors which makes some readers react in some ways either in fear or shock. These children who may not have known the implications of their actions are dubbed terrorists by members of the society (local media framing); thereby victimizing them in three ways: as females, terrorists (outcasts), and dead.

The consistency in the mention of the female suicide bombers on the news becomes persuasive to label these girls as terrorists. This kind of labelling is consistent in the media and demonstrates societal gender stereotypes. Gender clichés influence the way the mass media constructs news and represents the participants of the news event. The archetypal representation of the female suicide bombers by reporters as deviants or aberrant also suggests that media reports on terrorism magnify already existing gender inequalities such as female subordination and marginalization in the Nigerian patriarchal society. This is also a rhetorical strategy to show the inclusion of the female in a negative active space. Thus, debunking the idea that females are not naturally destructive − a gender label that helps incorporate her in an inactive space. Gender activities and attitudes of this kind usually emerge from membership in a sex category.

Gender typing has both psychological and behavioral tendencies. Gender-display on news reports is a product of social doings and the analysis of the representation of terror on media discourses in this study suggests that terrorism is already gender marked, such that special modifiers as "*female* suicide bomber", "*woman* suicide bomber" are added to show exceptions to the norm. The news media sees the female terrorist through prism gender stereotypes. Thus, the conceptualization of gender as a role on reports on terror, displays male hegemonic tendencies with these social practices: power, intimidation, dominance/prominence and inequality in the Nigerian patriarchal context. The report in *The Guardian* below corroborates this view:

28 fear killed in Kano, Yobe blasts (headline)

> …. In Yobe State, a suspected **female terrorist** with an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) hidden yet in her flowing veil detonated the substance yesterday, killing 16 people at the crowded motor park in Yobe State.
>
> The incident occurred barely 48 hours after a **female suicide bomber** killed herself and five other people with Improvised Explosive Device hidden in her veil at the Potiskum Global System of Mobil Communication (GSM) market in the same state (Appendix 7: *The Guardian*, Wednesday, February 25, 2015).

From the reports in Appendix 7, the newspaper engages in some form of stereotyping, framing the female terrorist as an intruder in a man's space and a liable agent of destruction. This is the reason for identifying the terrorist as a **female** in the report.

On the other hand, Nacos (2005) claims that the woman engages in acts of terrorism because she is bored; "sometimes a woman turns to terrorism out of boredom…, what does a middle-class woman do who doesn't happen to be interested in a career or college?" (p. 130). This assertion can only be true in other contexts but the Nigerian, of which female's engagement tends to differ (forced or coerced). So, this study does not substantiate Nacos' position as this may not be obtainable in the Nigerian situation of the abduction of girls and women. Therefore, the inclusion of the adjective, female to the bomber is persuasive and tends to reinforce that females are liable or vulnerable agents of modern terrorism.

The feminist suicide bombers as the other

Gender stereotypes have continued to blossom in the mass media. Since terrorism reemerged in Nigeria in 2009. The entrenched gender clichés of the media have endured in the portrayal of the female terrorist. Nacos (2005) asserts that although the female has featured prominently in the history of terrorism, the female terrorist continues to be perceived as a deviation from already stated norms or status quo. Some news media in Nigeria have joined their counter-parts world over to frame their reports based on the lines of traditional stereotypes that describe the female suicide bomber as a paradoxical human being. See the example from the news text:

> Azare, Bauchi State's second largest town, was bombed again yesterday by *a woman* suspected to be Boko Haram agent.
>
> Sources said no fewer than 30 people were killed in the explosion which took place at about 5:20pm at Kasuwar Jagwal, a popular area in the town…. The

female suicide bomber blew herself, witness said…. Sources said the dismembered body of the terrorist believed to have detonated the bomb was picked up at the explosion site. (all italics, researcher's emphasis) (Appendix 1: *The Nation*, Monday, November 17, 2014).

From the excerpt above, the reporter portrays the woman as the other. The reason for the addition of the gender-type is to foreground the deviation from the stated norms in society. While societal clichés about woman limit and confine her to a passive world, the terrorists have deployed the female to avoid being detected on different occasions. This is based on the belief that the feminine nature of the woman poses a non-threat to the society. This becomes the reason readers of reports that are centered on the female terror perpetrators, express some form of shock and disappointment. Already envisaging the reaction of their reading audiences, the newspapers deem it fit to spell out the terror perpetrator when they are female agents. This article, thus, suggests that if women are less or not discriminated against based on their gender, the deception of female terror actors would be revealed; especially when everyone is perceived and seen as human beings who are capable of any evil.

The feminine paradox: language and myth in the reports

The paradox in the representation of the female in the reports is that women are generally known for their caring disposition. The female nature is believed to be harmless, and this connotes that they are life givers, nurturers, and are usually non-destructive and fragile. However, the deception of the terrorists heightens when the female is co-opted into acts of terrorism as recourse for dealing mercilessly with the opponent (those on the other side). It also heightens the social drama on the terror scene as this lift of material from society contradicts the 'general' belief (myth) of the people. See the following headline report from Appendix 2:

Female suicide bomber kills 13 in Damaturu

(*Daily Trust*; Monday February 16, 2015).

Analysis of Appendix 2 shows this act of *gendering* as the report could have read: suicide bomber kills 13 in Damaturu, but to point to the contradiction of the female self in acts of terrorism, there is an inclusion of the type of gender. See the excerpt from Appendix 3, where there are mixed genders as terror actors. The reporters say:

Two suicide bombers yesterday hit the gates of the Borno State General Hospital, Molai, Maiduguri, killing themselves and injuring two people (para.1).

One of them, a **female bomber** was said to have blown herself up at the first gate of the hospital at about 11:30am while the second *suspected to be a male bomber* on a bicycle ran into the hospital's second gate, where a bomb explosion had killed five and injured 16 people last Saturday, witnesses said (para.2). Italics, researcher's emphasis.

<div align="center">(Appendix 3: Daily Sun; Thursday, July 2, 2015).</div>

The line of argument here is that these two bombers; whether identified as females or males is inconsequential as both are terror perpetrators. That is, whether:

<div align="center">A < or > B = terror perpetrators</div>

The first paragraph in the excerpt from Appendix 3 above, introduces the two terror events at the hospital by suicide bombers without gender inclusion: "Two suicide bombers yesterday hit the gates...". There is no sign of gender here. But paragraph 2 distinguishes between the gender types through the results achieved. There are two different fallacies playing out here: hasty generalization and genetic fallacy. The reason given for the first bomber being a female or the other suspected to be a male is insufficient as depicted in the provided pieces of linguistic evidence in: "One of them, a female bomber was said to have blown herself up…", "while the second *suspected* to be a male bomber on a bicycle ran into the hospital's second gate, where a bomb explosion had killed five and injured 16 people…". The term that shows uncertainty here is *suspected*. So, what are those pointers or markers that the reporter/eyewitnesses use(s) to buttress their suspicion?

To answer this, in comparing the levels of damage, the first suicide bomber did not achieve much as it is said "she blew herself up". There are no other innocent victims recorded except for the suicide bomber "herself". But in the second act, the witnesses say, they *suspect*, not that they are certain, that the second bomber was a male. How did they arrive at this conclusion?

a. From the premise that "he" was riding a bicycle, and
b. The result of the act which is 21 victims (5 killed and 16 injured).

If the enthymematic reasoning or deductions are based on the premises in (a) and (b) above, then the argument is fallacious; as the witnesses to the report have committed a *hasty generalization*

with the assumption that "the suspect was riding a bicycle" hence, a male, and that the suspect recorded a higher level of damage, hence a male; and a *genetic fallacy* that draws the conclusion from the premises that if the suspect were a woman she may not have been seen riding a bicycle or the level of damage may not have been this high. These premises may be derived from the assumptions based on the origins of the woman and the cultural theories that describe her as weak and fragile.

Another implication of the gender inclusion could be based on the media's objectives about the female terrorist. Identifying the gender type, in this study, may also be to debunk what the society thinks of the woman, more so, to expose the deception of the terrorists in the exploitation of the female by *membering* her into terror spaces. See another excerpt that does not specify gender:

Suicide bomber kills 47 in school boys' massacre:
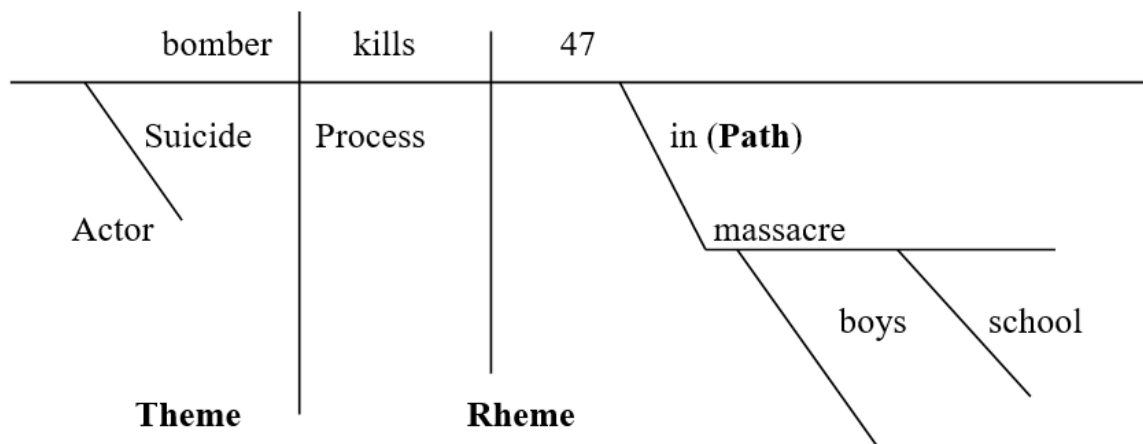
(Appendix 4: *Weekly Trust*, Saturday, January 10, 2015).

The above chart is an example of a male terror actor, as the gender is not mentioned. From the caveat, this study posits that mentioning gender on news text is an act of showing inequality and the examples examined have shed light on this position.

Conclusion

The reports sampled for analysis in this study show some penchant for the sensational – "what bleeds lead". The ideological struggle for what is selling on the newspapers has paved the way for the

sensationalism of news items. Every media outfit is at the frontline of breaking news to their consumers. The inclusion of the female gender-type on terrorism news reports depict a certain sign of gender inequalities. This is part of sensationalism; as gender is appealed to in the reports in some special ways. In conclusion, all the news sources discussed in this study have the proclivity to represent the female terrorist with an out-of-touch-with-reality frame.

Recommendations

From the analyses of newspaper reports, it is revealed that female's participation in acts of terrorism may not be deliberate and voluntary. Thus, as part of the recommendations of this study, the female irrespective of the roles she plays should be viewed first from the perspective of a human being with rights, and second from the position that she is liable and vulnerable to becoming anything. Hence, she should be identified as a human and not excluded from certain roles that define her as a female; by having her gender-type specified on the reports on terror acts. This paper, therefore, further recommends that as much lies within the production power of the newspapers, gender marking on headlines should be avoided and/or reduced as much as possible, as this may signify some acts of discrimination against the female. Even so, the female involvement in these acts may as well not be a deliberate attempt as most of them are abductees of the terrorists like in the case of the Chibok and Dapchi girls. Identifying her on the headlines may also be an act of doubly-victimizing her. Although, this study is not an advocacy for female participation in terrorism, it recommends that there is need for the newspapers to regulate their reports on female involvement; more so, to prevent their representation as martyrs of a terrorism.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: *The Nation*, Monday, November 17, 2014

Appendix 2: *Daily Trust*, Monday, February 16, 2015

Appendix 3: *Daily Sun*; Thursday, July 2, 2015

Appendix 4: *Weekly Trust*, Saturday, January 10, 2015

Appendix 5a: *This Day*, Tuesday, 24 February, 2015

Appendix 5b: *This Day,* Monday February 23, 2015

Appendix 6: *Vanguard*, Monday February 23, 2015

Appendix 7: *The Guardian*, Wednesday, February 25, 2015