

Review of: "“We Only Came Home to Find His Body Dangling”: Voices and Practs in Selected Nigerian Newspapers Reportage on Suicide"

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The article ““We Only Came Home to Find His Body Dangling’: Voices and Practs in Selected Nigerian Newspapers Reportage on Suicide” is an interesting analysis of Nigerian news stories on suicide through a pragmatic lens, which takes advantage of two analytical tools: the Bakhtinian concept of voice and the “pract” in Mey’s pragmatic acts theory. The topic is contextualized within World Health Organization statistics and other relevant studies on suicide, with particular regard to the situation in Nigeria.

I have greatly appreciated this paper because it tackles a disconcerting trend in a sensitive manner and clarifies the salient points by providing many examples. For example, the different practs (*backgrounding, informing, describing, condemning, confirming, invalidating, blaming*) are clarified in the analysis of the articles thanks to quotations from the news stories. I think it would be helpful, though, to give definitions/explanations before the analysis itself, especially since some practs may seem to overlap to some extent (e.g., backgrounding and informing).

As for the corpus of the 15 articles, I think that they need to be referenced in detail: the exact date, author(s), and Internet link if available. It seems important to clarify whether the 5 articles from each Nigerian newspaper deal with different suicides. If this is so, the authors should then explain why they have decided not to examine the same suicide told from a different perspective in another newspaper. Moreover, it seems odd to me that each suicide gets only one article and there are no follow-up articles. I think the criteria for collecting the articles analyzed should be explained in more detail. Probably, the authors also need to acknowledge in a footnote that all references to the people involved have been removed.

The abstract and some sections of the article (for example, “Section 6. Discussion”) should be rewritten with regard to the conclusion. In particular, the claim that “The findings of the study further elucidated that no significant linguistic correlation exists between gender and suicide as reported by Nigerian newspapers” seems unrelated to the linguistic/pragmatic analysis carried out on the basis of voices and practs.

I am not sure I understand the connection established between backgrounding and the “metaphysical” view of suicide: can the authors clarify what they mean in the following paragraph in the Discussion: “Furthermore, given the avalanche of backgrounding practised in Nigerian newspapers’ reportage on suicide, it is apparent that the occurrence of suicide is still deemed metaphysical by people in society. A shared socio-cultural knowledge of the priceless value of human life clearly

indicates that suicide begs for a metaphysical inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the man's life because no reason is persuasive enough to justify a man taking his life."

While the recommendation to involve religious organizations and civil society to prevent suicide is valuable, it seems unrelated to the pragmatic analysis carried out by the authors and so potentially confusing. In fact, the authors show a deep concern with this social issue plaguing Nigeria (and other countries as well), and for this reason, they include additional sociodemographic information, which should be placed in the introduction as a sociological overview of the problem, rather than in the discussion and the conclusion.

In sum, I hope these comments and suggestions can be found helpful by the authors in further elaborating their very interesting study.