

A MULTIMODAL STUDY OF SELECTED TRADE UNION ANTI-RAPE CAMPAIGN IMAGES

Josephine Olushola Oyinbo

Abstract

The scourge of rape and gender-based violence in the last two decades and most especially during the Covid-19 lockdown crisis was a major concern for various interest groups in Nigeria with a myriad of consequences. Many studies have been carried out on rape from various perspectives. These range from sociological, psychological, and political. However, it is obvious that not many studies have looked at the fight against rape from a Multimodal Discourse angle. The study complements few existing studies on the campaign against rape from the multimodal discourse perspective. Kress and van Leeuwen's Multimodal Grammar of Visual Design Theory which was hinged on Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Linguistic was employed for the analysis. The data were derived from the WhatsApp platform of Trade Union Women Commission when a major campaign against rape in Nigeria was flagged in virtually all the thirty-six states of the federation in August 2020. Ten of these images which comprised the campaign posters and the visual pictures of the campaign were purposively selected for the analysis. The result of the study revealed the potency in the use of both linguistic and visual images in conveying the cogent information to the society while surreptitiously exposing the ideological leanings of the group. The relevance of this study lies in its being a useful tool to mitigate the menace of rape in Nigeria.

Key Words: Rape, Multimodal, Campaign, Nigeria, TUC Women Commission.

Introduction

One predominant social vice that has eaten deeply into the

fabrics of the Nigerian society in recent times is rape. It may not be out of place to discover that at least two out of every five Nigerian girls and women have at one time or the other been victims of rape and gender violence. This nefarious act is most of the time being perpetrated by close relations, peer groups, or even colleagues at workplaces. The recent sporadic hike in rape occurrences in Nigeria could be attributed to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic. The forceful lockdown, which was consequential to the advent of the Covid-19 has played a major role in escalating the crime of rape in Nigeria. The confinement of both relatives, and non-relatives coupled with the imposed restriction from social engagements must have played a major role in escalating incidence of rape and Gender based violence. Tamuno (1991) defines violence as an unlawful use or threat of force which could be a manifestation of despair and desperation. This implies that rape and other forms of violence could be a result of psychological disorder. The adage that ‘an idle hand is the devil’s workshop’ was a reality in the context of the lockdown phenomenon. Most young girls and women became victims of rape and violence as a result of being confined with strange neighbours or co-habiting with male relations. It is even more devastating to observe that most of these cases were not reported for fear of stigma or threat. This upsurge of rape at this crucial time became a subject of concern for many Nigerians of which the Women Commission of the Trade Union Congress was a part of those that lent their voices to condemn the act. A campaign tagged “Say No to Rape” was organised in respect of this negation. The campaign against rape and its perpetrators was a form of social protest which Idiagbon (2001) described as a political expression resorted to bring about social or political change. This campaign that was carried out simultaneously in the thirty-six states of the federation signals a total objection and condemnation to the menace. The issue of rape has been viewed largely from the sociological, psychological, and medical perspectives. However, there has not been many studies on the linguistic perspective

to the curb of rape using visual resources. Therefore, the focus of this study is to examine the use of visual instruments and linguistic resources by the TUC Women Commission to campaign against rape. The objectives are to:

- Identify the visual resources that are employed in TUC Women Commission anti-rape campaign images.
- Examine how these multimodal resources are employed for meaning creation in the images.

Multimodal Discourse

Ibibleye, (2017) opined that any piece of language that is meaningful to both the encoder (speaker or writer) and the decoder (hearer or reader) could be considered as a piece of discourse. This implies that meaning making is an integral part of discourse. Multimodal discourse is an aspect of discourse analysis that involves the use of different modes of communication to convey meaning. Many scholars have viewed Multimodal discourse from different perspectives. Kress (2011) states that “Multimodality names the field in which semiotic works take place, a domain for enquiry, a description of the space and of the resources that enter into the meaning in some way or another”. O’Halloran, Smith, Tan & Podlasov (2011) assert that “multimodal discourse involves the interaction of multiple semiotic resources such as language, gesture, dress, architecture, proximity lighting, gaze, camera, angle, etc. Jewitt (2009) posits that “multimodality describes approaches that understand communication and representation to be more than about language and which attends to the full range of communication forms which people use (gesture, image, posture, gaze) and relationships between them”. From the various definitions, it is evident that the term ‘mode’ is not negligible. It involves the channels by which meaning is created and

communicated. The mode of communication of any group of people is culturally sensitive. The interactants must understand and recognise their modes of communication before any meaningful message could be conveyed.

Rape

Rape is derived from the Latin word 'rapere' which means to seize or take by force. It refers to a forced, unwanted sexual intercourse which can happen to both men and women of any age (Akinwole & Omoera, 2008). Rape is also described as a felony in which a person is forced to have sexual intercourse without giving consent (Bourke, 2001) In other words; the act of rape is a sexual activity that lacks mutual agreement between the parties involved. It is a forceful venture that leaves the victim in deep psychological and physical pain. Kunuji and Eshiet in Adegoke et al. (2022) posit that rape is often perpetuated against the female folks of all age group with younger girls and even minors being the main victims of the crime. The crime of rape could take different forms. Some of these forms of rape include among others forcible date rape (acquaintance rape), Drug facilitated date rape, Blitz rape (strangers' rape), spousal rape (marital rape), Group rape (gang or pack rape), incest rape, prison rape (mostly homosexuals), Bottle rape (coerced sexual penetration with a foreign object) war rape etc. (Akinwole & Omoera, 2008).

One predominant factor that is common among these types of rape is the fact that the act is usually without the consent of their victims. Thus, consent seems to play a major role in determining the difference between the act of rape and normal sexual intimacy. Consequently, the overall effect of rape on its victims is always huge and deep. These negative effects range from physical assaults, emotional disorders, unwanted pregnancies, social and psychological imbalance.

TUC Women Commission

The TUC women commission consists of women from the unions affiliated to the trade union congress of Nigeria (TUC). The commission is saddled with the goal to coordinate and encourage women's participation in the activities of the congress and trade unionism in general. One of the mission statements of the group is to inspire, equip and mobilise women to take action that positively affect the society. This is achieved by putting in place certain strategies such as monitoring the progress within the TUC organogram towards establishing gender equality. It is also obvious that the TUC women commission has been a strong advocate of the protection and the provision of the girl child education. The promotion of gender equality and women empowerment is also a part of their mission. The ceaseless incidents of rape and gender-based violence against women, especially during the pandemic was therefore a serious concern for the group. This has necessitated the urge to create the needed awareness through a nationwide campaign that could help to mitigate the scourge.

Related Studies

Many scholars have employed the multimodal approach to discourse analysis owing to its suitability in the analysis of visual text. One of such a scholar is Okoroh, (2017) who employed the use of Kress and van Leeuwen multimodal approach in selected political posters to advertise political aspirants. The study identified posters as one of the cheapest and most accessible means of reaching the masses. And much more than that, the study reveals that political posters are not mere pictorial drawings but instruments that are used to project a person's or groups' ideology and intention. She further explored the use of colours, gaze, postures, and social distance to aptly convey the ideological representation of the producer of the text. This study is

closely related to the current one as they both focused on the use of visual images on posters to convey meaning to the audience using Kress and van Leeuwen theory of Visual images. The point of divergence lies in the subject matter of the two studies.

A related study that employs the same theory is Ugoala & Yakubu (2019) who investigate the visual and linguistic elements in Hash Tagged - messages in the placards of killings in Benue State. Using Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodality and Roger's Diffusion of innovation theory, the study examined the intention of the placards producer which is to put an end to the destruction of lives and property that was prevalent in the state. The study is related to the current one as both studies revealed how visual and linguistic resources could be deployed to negate certain forms of social ills.

The attention of many researchers has currently been drawn to the issue of rape and its attending effects and consequences. For instance, Agbegbedua (2022) examined the effect of Gender Based violence on women in Ikorodu, Local Government Area of Lagos State. Using both primary and secondary information gathering technique, the study found out that most women in Ikorodu are victims of gender-based violence because most of them depend solely on their husbands for sustenance. The study recommends that women should be adequately empowered to be self-reliant and financially independent to avoid being victims of rape and violence. In a related view, Adegoke, et al. (2022) points out the effect of rape on young girls in Ikorodu using the social disorganisation theory. The study revealed the myriads causes of rape among which include cultism, ritual purposes, pride, poverty/unemployment, and disappointment in relationships. Adequate security measures in the community and proper counselling for the victims of rape were some of the recommendations the study gave to curb rape incidence among young girls. Drawing from the interests of the two studies, it is obvious that rape incidence tends to be very high in Ikorodu area of Lagos. The

diversity in the two studies is that while one is centred on women of Ikorodu, the other is focused on young girls. The results from these studies show that the female gender is the most vulnerable to rape incidence.

Ozoya (2016) in a related study examined some of the situations that lead to rape and some of the effects of such incidence on the victims. Among the many causes identified are exposure to modernity, improper handling of rape cases, peer group pressure, indecent dressing and poor parental upbringing, poverty etc. They further noted that effects of rape could be devastating. And this could manifest in diverse forms such as depression, self-blame, drug or alcohol dependency, physical injuries, sexually transmitted diseases, poor self-image, etc. The study suggested some measures that could be taken to curb rape incidence. Among such are a strong parental love and relationship, eradication of hawking, severe punishment for perpetrators, reduction of the cost of bride price and restoration of the positive self-image of victims, elaborate campaigns against rape and rapists. An overview of these literatures shows that the concept of rape has been examined mainly from the sociological perspective. Therefore, this study will be contributing to these existing studies by examining the visual resources that are employed to create the needed awareness that could mitigate the crime in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Kress and Van Leeuwen's Grammar of Visual Design which is hinged on Halliday's theory of Systemic Functional Linguistic. This theory views language as a semiotic mode that represents the three basic communicative metafunctions. These are the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. This implies that any semiotic system should be able to represent objects and their relation in the world outside the representational system. It must have the capacity to form

text (compositional) and must be able to project relation between producer of a sign and the receiver (interactive meaning). They employ the representational in place of the ideational function, the interactive for the interpersonal function and the compositional in place of the textual function of language. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) further identified two types of participants for analysing visual texts: the represented participant and the interactive participants. The represented participants are the people, the places and things depicted in images while the interactive participants involve the people who communicate with each other through images, the producers, and viewers of images.

This according to them has given rise to three kinds of inseparable relations: first is the relation between the represented participants; second, the relations between interactive and represented participants (the interactive participants' attitudes towards the represented participants) and the relations between interactive participants (the things interactive participants do to or for each other through images) (Kress and van Leeuwen (1996).

Methodology

The data for this study comprise thirty campaign posters/pictures of anti-rape campaign rally of August 2020. Ten out of these posters and pictures were purposively selected for the analysis. The data were derived from the WhatsApp platform of the TUC Women commission, Kogi State. Six of these data consist of posters that were used during the campaign while the remaining four were pictures of the campaign rally against rape. Although the campaign rally was staged in all the thirty-six States of Nigeria, the data for the study was derived from the rally held by the Kogi State chapter of the TUC Women Commission. These images were selected for analysis based on their succinct projection of both the visual and textual messages to create awareness against rape. The posters and the pictures were

subjected to analysis using Kress and van Leeuwen's Grammar of Visual design (1996). A close attention is given to the three metafunctions of language as portrayed in both the visual and the discourse resources of the selected samples. A measure of consideration is given to the gaze, colour, and the social distance of participants in the selected anti-rape campaign images.

Data Analysis

This section focuses on analysing the selected data on the selected anti-rape campaign images. The first section comprises posters that were projected by the women during the campaign while the second segment of the analysis is centered on the pictures of the moving protesters. Each of these texts are analysed based on the set-out objectives of identifying the semiotic resources that were deployed in the posters and examining the meaning potentials that are embedded in them.

Text 1



The ideational mode of this image is to negate the incidence of rape that has become prevalent in the country. The image is urging and requesting the masses not to be silent about any form of rape and gender-based violence (GBV). The interpersonal relation in the image

is portrayed in the threat inscribed across the sealed lips of the girl “If you tell anyone” And imperative clause “Don’t keep silent”. This shows the conflicting interpersonal relation between the perpetrators and those negating the act. The threat “if you tell anyone” Is backgrounded over the sealed lips of the girl to portray the quiet voice which also beams on the context in which the instruction was given. The nouns RAPE and GBV (Gender based violence) are foregrounded in red colour to connote danger and to also attract the attention of the masses to the theme of the campaign. The gaze of the girl portrays a distressed and defenceless victim that is making a demand from the society for rescue. Apart from sensitising the masses to speak out, this image is a representation of the psychological torture that most rape victims undergo. The social distance of the image is a close shot which connotes intimacy.

Text 2



The ideational mode indicates the essence of the image, which was to discourage the act of treating women like toys. The interpersonal mode depicts an existing relationship between the producer and the receiver. This implies that this image was made to inform the public and most especially the perpetrators to desist from viewing and using women as toys. Looking at the image from top to bottom, it is obvious that “SEX TOYS” is foregrounded in red colour to connote emphasis and danger.

The image in the poster reveals a woman that is half-naked, timid, and dejected as she covers her face with her hands. It shows an overwhelmed personality that has been captured by rape perpetrators. The posture of the girl seated on the bare floor coupled with the rough background of the wall connotes an indecent environment that is associated with rape incidence. The two hands coming from both sides of the girl is in black colour to convey the meaning of evil and mischief. And finally, the hash tagged inscription "say NO TO RAPE" is to draw the attention of the masses to negate the social ill.

Text 3



The representation of this image to the world shows that rape is not a welcomed act. Interpersonally, the text is requesting the audience to desist or put an end to the act of rape. The gaze of the image is directly towards the viewers, giving room for establishing a direct relationship with them. The gaze is such that is equally making a demand for an action from the viewers. The social distance is a close shot that depict intimacy. RAPE is given salience by virtue of its red colour and the bold graphology. This is carefully projected to draw the attention of the viewers to the crux of the campaign. The background of the image which is coloured blue depicts a solitary and lonely setting which could be an insight to a depressive state of mind. The sad, withdrawn, and prolonged look tends to beg the audience to put an end to rape.

Text 4



The ideational content of this image portrays a woman that is withdrawn, lonely and sobbing quietly. The hand is holding the chin to show abject dejection and sorrow. This informs the masses of the untold silent pain and sorrow that rape victim often undergoes throughout their lifetime. The declarative statement in this placard is pointing the masses to the lifelong effect of rape. 'RAPE' is foregrounded again in red colour to depict danger. A lifetime injury is an injury that does not heal easily. The public is again urged to resist and say no to rape. The relationship between the producer and the receiver should have been one that portrays some level of intimacy and mutual relationship. However, the textual content portrays a personality that has been denied of what she deserves. The image reveals a battered and half naked lady that appears to have been subjected to some form of violence from the opposite sex. The social distance of the image is close to reveal the personality of the image. Salience is given to the noun protection and mother through the colour differentiation. Finally, the statement, "please don't rape them" is a sum of the intent of the producer of the text.

Text 5



The image in text 5 represents the pains and agony that is associated with a rape experience. The interpersonal relation reveals only the relationship between the producer and the viewers. The image is a withdrawn pose that does not want to relate with anyone. The gaze is withdrawn and intense which connotes a deep reflection of a previous unpleasant experience. The large drops of tears are reflections of the depth of the injury that has been inflicted on the victim. The hand that is placed on the chin portrays the depth of the depression. The noun RAPE is massively foregrounded in red colour to emphasise the magnitude of the crime. Say NO to Rape that is stated at the bottom of the poster is a declarative statement that blends with the overall message of the text.

Text 6



The ideational mode of this poster is showing the image of two distinct hands that indicate the perpetuation of the act of rape. The producer is in a mutual relationship with the viewer as he or she tries to proffer some solution to the impasse of rape that is ravaging the country. Textually, the image of a forceful masculine hand on a feeble feminine hand is projected in the poster to imply that most rape perpetrators are usually stronger than their victims. The linguistic resources of this post are urging the government to expedite actions to curb the act of rape by imposing stringent punishments on the perpetrators. The image is projected at a close distance to reveal the level of brutality that is exerted on the victim. The red colour employed to foreground the noun RAPIST connotes danger. The colour and the graphology of the linguistic resources of the text integrate to convey the seriousness of the campaign against rape.

Text 7



This picture depicts a sample of the physical campaign against rape holding on a street. There is a direct interaction between the people in the pictures and the viewers. The involvement of a man in the campaign rally integrates with the linguistic inscription (No to Rape is a collective responsibility) on the poster that was displayed by the woman in the picture. The pose of the man holding a microphone reveals a high level of seriousness placard. The gaze of the two persons shows the existence of an audience that is being addressed. Both genders appear serious and

focused to indicate that the fight against rape and gender violence is a collective one. The noun 'RAPE' is again foregrounded in red colour to connote danger. The image on the poster that is being raised by the woman in the picture shows a young lady that is vehemently resisting the approach of a man in black. Black is again used symbolically to paint the image of the rapist which conveys the message of an unwelcomed personality. The vehicles that were parked coupled with the buildings and trees at the background of the picture denote that the rally was physically staged by the TUC Women Commission.

Text 8



The image in this picture shows a woman with a microphone that is frantically campaigning against rape and gender violence. Interpersonally, there appear to be some element of cooperation between her and the audience. She appears to have something to offer to the listening audience. Her gaze is focused and in harmony with the linguistic inscription of the displayed poster by her partner "DON'T KEEP SILENT!". The woman seems to be determined not to be quiet about the issue of rape.

Text 9



This is another picture of the campaign against rape and gender-based violence. Interpersonally, the people in the picture tend to be closely related as they all got engaged frantically in creating awareness against rape. The image of the man, woman and the little girl are brought to fore to indicate that the campaign against rape is a collective one. The little girl carrying a placard with the inscription “future mothers deserve protection” moving in the middle of a man and woman is ideologically positioned to foreground the fact that the young girl (representing the future mothers) demands protection from the society. The background of this picture showing tricycles, vehicles, buildings and trees and the highway gives credence to the seriousness of the campaign. The moving train led by the girl that is carrying the poster is physically demanding protection from the society. The masks worn by the protesters attest to the fact that the campaign was conducted during the time of Covid-19 virus.

Text 10



This picture is a moving train of TUC women displaying various posters with different linguistic inscriptions that discourage rape. The buildings and tree at the background of this picture explain the physical setting of this campaign. The women looked determined and completely focused to create the needed awareness against rape. The uniformity in their hairdressers (black cap) regardless of their diverse backgrounds which could be deduced from their different attires connotes that the group has a uniform aim. The face masks that were worn by the women indicate that the campaign was carried out when the Corona virus was still ravaging the country.

Findings

The above analysis revealed how various semiotic resources have been employed by the TUC women commission to make meaning in their campaign posters. The objection to the act of rape is portrayed both through the linguistic inscriptions and the visual images in the posters. Kress and van Leuween's Grammar of Visual Design which is hinged on Halliday's Metafunctions of language (Ideational, Interpersonal, and textual) forms the basis for the analysis. The analysis of the campaign images depicts the representation of human experiences of the world (ideational), the interpersonal function: emphasised the relationships between the represented participants: images in the texts and the interactive participants: the producers and

viewers of the text. It is also obvious from the analysis that some of these victims tend to demand for societal intervention through their gaze, social distance, and colour. The study also found that salience was given to the use of colour (red) to emphasise and to warn the audience of the danger that is embedded in the act of rape. The concept of rape was also foregrounded to draw the attention of the audience to the theme of the campaign. Findings from the study reveal a blend of the pose of the people in the pictures and the linguistic inscriptions of the posters. The campaign against rape and gender violence is all encompassing as both men and children are represented in the images. This implies that the fight against the scourge of rape is a serious and collective one. The black colour is equally employed to depict the perpetrators of rape. The use of these colours (red and black) to indicate danger and evil is not without some cultural relevance in the Nigerian context. It is also discovered that most of the pose and gaze of victims of rape are depressed, sad, withdrawn, or lonely. This is a pointer to the fact that rape and any form of gender violence has a devastating effect on not just the victims but also the society, hence, the need to create the anti-rape awareness using both linguistic and visual resources.

Conclusion

The scourge of rape and gender violence is prevalent in most modern societies. The rate of its occurrence has been a major concern to all well-meaning individuals and organisations in Nigeria. The TUC Women Commission is one of such groups that have lent their voices to condemn the act of rape. This was done through the organised campaign rallies that were staged to create relevant awareness for Nigerians. This awareness through succinctly projected images and linguistic inscriptions are viable instruments to educate the public and curb this social ill. Using Kress and Leuween (1996) Multimodal theory, the study reveals how text combines other modes of communication such as pictures, gaze, colour, social distance with

words to make meaning. This study submits that the use of visual images alongside linguistic inscriptions is a viable instrument for a desired change in the society.

References

- Adedoyin, A., Faleti, S. A and Durowaiye O. B. (2011) *Urban Violence and Security*. Lagos
- Adegoke N, Oyedolapo B. &Odedokun E. (2022) *The effects of Rape on the young girls in Ikorodu*, in *Gender &Behaviour* vol. 20 No 4. Ife Psychological Studies.
- Agbegbedia, A. (2022) Effects of gender-based violence on women in Ikorodu Local Government Area of Lagos State. *Gender &Behaviour* Vol 20 No 4 Ife Psychological Studies.
- Akinwole, O.T.&Omoera, O. S. (2008) A Review of Literature: Rape and Communication Media Strategies in Nigeria. *EJOTMAS: Ekpoma Journal of Theatre and Media Arts* 4 (1-2), 2013
- Idiagbon, A. (2014) A Multimodal Approach to the Study of Discourse of Protest: An Example of the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Nigeria Labour Congress Face Off. *Zango* vol. 31 (2014/2015).
- Ibiley, G. (2017) *Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics: Issues in Theory and Practice*. Malthouse com.
- Jewitt, C. (2009) *The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis*, Routledge.
- Kress, G. & van Leeuwen, T. (1996). Reading images: The grammar of visual design. Routledge.
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2006). Reading Images. Routledge.
- Kress, G. & van Leeuwen, T. (1996). Reading images: The grammar of visual design. Routledge.
- Machin, D. 007. Introduction to Multimodal Analysis. London: Hodder.

- Ozoya M., et al (2016) Taming the Rape Scourge in Nigeria: Issues and Actions. *Gender & Behaviour*, 14(3), pp 7764-7785.
- O'Halloran, K.L., Tan, S., Smith, B. A. & Podlasov, A. (2011). Multimodal Analysis within an Interactive Software Environment: Critical Discourse Perspectives. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 2, 109-125.
- Tamuno, T.N (1991) *Peace and violence in Nigeria: The panel on Nigeria since independence* History Project, Lagos. Federal Government Printer.
- Uguala, B. & Yakubu, A. (2019). A Socio-Semiotic Study of the Meaning Potentials in Hash Tagged-Messages in Placards of Killings in Benue State, Nigeria. *Journal of the English Scholars' Association of Nigeria*. (JESAN) Vol. 21. (1) pp.79-102.