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## Pragmatic acts in domestic violence narratives on selected social media platforms

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### Abstract

*Existing linguistic studies on domestic violence have largely overlooked how victims' emotional states are conveyed through language in their narratives. They paid attention to utilising other theories such as the relevance theoretic notion, evaluation or appraisal theory and critical discourse analysis to discuss the linguistic and stylistic aspects of literary texts, print media and social media platforms, some of which are different from the current one. This study analyses domestic violence narratives from selected social media groups with a view to identifying the discourse issues, investigating the pragmatic acts, and comparing male and female victims' narratives. The study adopts Jacob Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts theory as its framework. Data were drawn from Stella Dimoko Korkus' Domestic Violence Diary (Parts 1–4) and the DomesticShelters.org Victims and Survivors' Community, with the administrators' consent obtained. Fifteen relevant excerpts were purposively selected and subjected to pragmatic analysis. The findings reveal three central discourse issues: emotional traumatising, conscientisation, and trauma-induced responses. Emotional traumatising was conveyed through acts such as lamenting, panicking, and grieving; conscientisation through warning, advising, and condemning; and trauma-induced responses through regretting, protesting, supporting, blaming, unburdening, and insulting. While both male and female narratives shared most acts as listed above, differences emerged, particularly in lamenting and unburdening, with panicking and grieving absent from male narratives. The study concludes that domestic violence narratives reveal victims' psycho-emotional states, highlighting the role of pragmatic acts in understanding domestic violence narratives.*

*Keywords: Domestic Violence, Pragmatic Acts, Stella Dimoko Korkus Domestic Violence Diary, DomesticShelters.org Victims and Survivors Community*

### Introduction

Domestic violence (DV) continues to be a pervasive issue worldwide, affecting millions of individuals regardless of gender, age, or socio-eco-

conomic status. In recent years, social media platforms have become crucial spaces for victims of domestic violence to share their experiences, seek support, and access resources. Krallman (2016) claims that Facebook remains one of the largest and most widely used social media platforms. It has played a significant role in connecting domestic violence victims with relevant support groups and organisations. This research draws inspiration from the discussion and exchanges on domestic violence Facebook groups and blogs, both created for individuals affected by domestic violence. The groups have been established to allow victims of DV relate with one another, share their experiences and give opportunities for participation in continuous educating and enlightening conversations with other members of the fora. Within the selected media space, victims and survivors utilise language as a main tool to express their thoughts, recount their struggles, and offer guidance to one another.

Domestic violence has been viewed as one of the three types of violence identified by Rutherford et.al. (2007). It is a chronic syndrome characterised not only by episodes of physical violence but also by the emotional and psychological abuse the perpetrators use to maintain control over their abusers. Abogado (2022) termed domestic violence as behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours. Elías & Abogados (2022), note that domestic violence takes place within the family. Therefore, 'it can be carried out by any member of the family regardless of whether it is a man or a woman, parent or child. The only requirement is that it is an action or omission that undermines the psychological, physical, economic or sexual integrity of another member of the family unit.' This is in line with Aragbuwa (2021) that Victims of DV could be men, women, boys, and girls.

Domestic violence (DV) has attracted extensive scholarly attention across disciplines such as psychology, sociology, health, law, history, and linguistics. Within linguistics, scholars have examined DV from diverse perspectives (Adetunji, 2010; Santaemilia & Maruenda, 2014; Naughton et al., 2015; Osunbade, 2017; Aragbuwa, 2021; Ibrahim, 2021; Aragbuwa & Ojo, 2022; Nwafor, 2022; Diani & Yunita, 2022), employing a variety of theoretical frameworks and drawing from disparate data sources. However, despite this growing interest, there remains a notable gap in linguistic research that specifically applies **Pragmatic Act Theory** to the analysis of domestic violence narratives. This gap is particularly evident in the limited attention to how victims pragmatically construct, negotiate, and express their experiences through language. There is also a need for more **diverse and robust data**

**sources** that capture a wider range of victim and survivor voices. This study addresses these gaps by analysing narratives drawn from *DomesticShelters.org Victims and Survivors Community* and the *Stella Domestic Violence Diary (Volumes 1–4)*, offering a more nuanced linguistic exploration of domestic violence through the lens of pragmatic acts.

By studying the pragmatic acts in victims' narratives, this research investigates domestic violence narratives on selected social media with a view to identifying how the emotional states and stances of victims are reflected through language. The specific objectives are to:

1. identify the discourse issues underpinning narratives of domestic violence
2. investigate the pragmatic acts in the narratives;
3. differentiate between male and female victims' narratives

## **Extant Linguistic Perspectives on Pragmatic Acts and Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence, as earlier is a source of major social concern and there have been studies on it from the Pragmatics and Discourse perspective, just as there are from other perspectives. Some works found in literature about domestic violence from these perspectives are examined below.

Diani & Yunita (2022) did a pragmatic study of DV in Bengkulu, Indonesia. Their paper discusses the pragmatic development model in minimising verbal abuse against women and children in social media, families, and schools in the coastal area of Bengkulu province. Using the qualitative descriptive method through documentation, open questionnaires, observation, and unstructured interviews as data collection techniques. The subjects were spread on social media, families, schools, mass media, as well as 24 women and children service institutions in Bengkulu Province based on cases found from 2018 to 2020. The study analyses the use of language of abuse against women and children with the aim of creating a pragmatic model for society in the Bengkulu province in terms of language functions, presuppositions, implicatures, politeness in language, as well as public reactions in every case of violence. They identified some forms of verbal abuse found which were in the form of disrespectful words, bullying, use of demeaning words, insulting, intimidating, blasphemy, homophobic words, sarcasm, yelling, cursing, ridiculing, shouting, slandering, using harsh words, scolding and public humiliation. This study, though like the present one is pragmatics inclined, it however does not analyse the study through the lens of Pragmatic acts and pays attention to verbal abuse among the different types of abuse that exists. Beyond that, his emphasis was also focused on women and

children. There was no consideration for men in his study.

Osunbade (2017) explores disambiguation and explicatural meaning in conversations: insights from Adichie's *purple hibiscus*. He discusses the linguistic and stylistic aspects of the novel "Purple Hibiscus" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, with a focus on the pragmatic angles which applies insights from Sperber and Wilson's relevance-theoretic notion of explicature to pragmatically investigate how characters in the novel explicitly discuss particular issues such as resistance against domestic violence, love, and rejection of religious imposition through disambiguation. This paper analyses how ambiguity is used in the context of domestic issues in the novel to explicate Adichie's thematic focus on resistance against domestic violence. The interpretative significance of this paper is to shed light on Adichie's thematic concerns regarding domestic violence. This study is similar to the present one in the deployment of a pragmatic theory, a relevance-theoretic approach but it is different in the choice of data, where he employed a literary text. His choice of theoretical framework also differs from the one utilised in this study.

Santaemilia & Maruenda (2014) investigated the linguistic representation of gender violence, sexuality and power implicit in public discourses about violence against women in Spanish contemporary newspapers. The sources of data are the Spanish quality dailies *El País* and *El Mundo* covering the period 2005-2010, with a corpus of approximately 5 million words on VAW newspaper articles. The theoretical framework used is the evaluation or appraisal theory, which is concerned with how writers communicate attitudinal meanings with varying degrees of explicitness and how they negotiate their subjective position with other similar or divergent ideological stances. Their findings suggest that the identification between woman and violence has become almost inseparable, and that there are significant differences between the two newspaper data sets analysed that may point to ideological considerations. Their findings also reveal that the awareness of men's guilt is less seen and this contributes to the maintenance of the male supremacy and female subordination ideas. This study, though linguistic in perspective views domestic violence as a basically violence against women. This study is insightful but it focuses on Spanish Press only, thus offering a limited perspective to the study of domestic violence.

From the ideological angle, Aragbuwa (2021) employs Van Dijk's (2000,

2006) ideological square approach to critical discourse analysis as theoretical framework to investigating the discursive strategies and resistance ideologies in domestic violence victims' narratives in Stella Dimoko Korkus' domestic violence diary. The study analysed narratives using eighteen ideological discursive strategies to analyse victims' experiences. This selection was based on those victims that anonymously relayed their experiences themselves. The study reveals that the victims, by means of diverse discursive strategies, advertently create polarisation structures and cognitions that represent themselves (the victims) as the dominated group, and their abusers as the dominant group. The study foregrounds the role of Stella Dimoko Korkus' Domestic Violence Diary weblog in the instantiation of victims' resistance against DV. Inasmuch as this work is similar to the present study looking at it from the linguistic perspective and a similar source of data, the researcher considered domestic violence absolutely from the critical discourse angle and pays no attention to the pragmatic acts in these narratives. It also considers domestic violence purely as a gender-based violence.

Similar to above is Aragbuwa & Ojo (2022) who explore women's discursive resistance to domestic violence against women. This is done through an analysis of readers' comments on victims' narratives in Stella Dimoko Korkus' Domestic Violence Diary - Part One. The study sheds light on the ideological stances of commenters and highlights the importance of resistance discourses in addressing power abuse in the domestic sphere. The study's findings suggest that resistance discourses can be a powerful tool in challenging domestic violence against women. By analysing the diverse discourse structures used by commenters, the study highlights the importance of foregrounding the sub-ideology of negativity against abusers and promoting positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. The study also emphasises the need to create safe spaces for women to share their experiences and engage in discursive resistance to power abuse in the domestic sphere. This study is similar to the present one in the deployment of the same source of data, but is different in the choice of theoretical framework as well as the breadth of investigation as this thesis shall be discussing the pragmatic acts for both male and female narratives.

These scholarly submissions establish the recurring theme of domestic violence. However, none of the studies reviewed devoted attention to the manifestation of domestic violence using the Pragmatic Acts theory as well as Domestic Shelters.org Victims Survivor's community as a source of data.

## **Synopsis of Stella Dimoko Korkus *Domestic Violence Diary* and *DomesticShelters.org* Victims and Survivors community**

Stella Dimoko Korkus' *Domestic Violence Diary* is a blog launched in 2013 as an interactive platform where domestic violence victims, particularly Nigerian women, share their experiences and contribute anonymously or with pseudonyms to discussions. The blog features a four-part series titled *Domestic Violence Diary*, providing a space for victims' narratives, while the comments section allows readers to express their views on domestic violence (DV). This platform was selected for its focus on amplifying the voices and perspectives of Nigerian female victims. DomesticShelters.org Victims and Survivors Community is an online support group offering a safe space for victims, survivors, advocates, and others impacted by domestic abuse. Open to people of all genders, cultures, and backgrounds, the group facilitates daily discussions through personal stories, questions, articles, and shared resources. With over 4,000 members worldwide, its diverse participation provides a broad range of insights on DV. This platform was chosen for its inclusive, multicultural context, enriching the research with perspectives beyond Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Mey (2001) defines Pragmatic Acts Theory (PAT) as a framework that prioritises the interactional context of communication over isolated utterances. Rather than beginning with what is said and inferring meaning from words alone, PAT considers the situation in which communication occurs as central to understanding meaning. In this view, context is fundamental, as "the situation where the words fit is invoked to explain what can be (and is actually being) said" (Mey, 2001). As Adeoti (2022) affirms, context lies at the heart of Pragmatic Acts Theory, with the situational environment taking precedence over the specific words used.

Nodoushan (2017) further argues that PAT advances an "outside-in" approach, whereby meaning is derived from actual situational contexts rather than merely the encoded content of an utterance. This represents an advancement over Speech Acts Theory, addressing its limitations by embedding speech within the social and cultural environments of speakers. Pragmatic Acts are therefore both situation-derived and situation-constrained, shaped by extralinguistic factors such as gestures, intonation, laughter, facial expressions, and body posture.

A key component of PAT is the concept of the pragmeme, which Mey (2001) defines as a generalised pragmatic act rooted in cultural and social

practices. Capone (2003) describes pragmemes as speech acts contextualized within a broader socio-cultural framework, emphasizing that they involve both established norms and the negotiation of new meanings. Adeniji and Osunbade (2014)) highlight how language users adapt their communication based on shared background knowledge and cultural expectations, reinforcing the adaptable and context-sensitive nature of pragmatic acts.

Pragmemes are realised through specific instances called practs or allopracts, which are concrete performances of a pragmeme in context (Mey, 2001). Practing, as Odeunmi (2006) explains, is shaped by participants' understanding of the interactional situation and the intended effects of their communication. Salmani (2017) adds that practs derive meaning from the situational context in which they are used, allowing PAT to address the distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary force.

In essence, PAT emphasises that the effectiveness of communication depends more on the social context and the shared understanding between participants than on the form of the utterance itself. Mey's model accounts for both verbal and non-verbal elements of communication, offering a flexible framework that accommodates silence, gestures, and other extralinguistic features as part of meaning. Pragmatic act involves 'setting up' in which the "context of the acting carries more weight than the spoken act itself". Its mechanics must include: the right circumstance and speech act need not be involved since the context determines the nature of the pragmatic act. However, the 'pragmatic act might be combined with certain speech acts'.

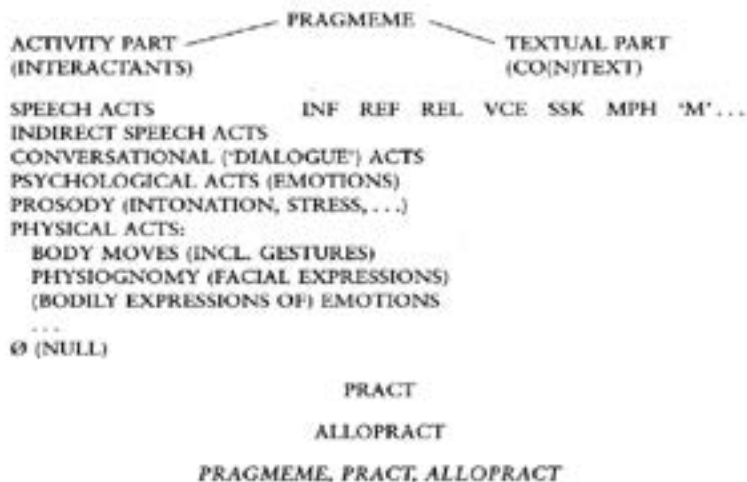


Figure 1: A Model of Pragmatic Acts (Mey, 2001)

## Methodology

Using the qualitative analytical approach, the study subjected two domestic violence-based social media groups to Pragmatic acts appraisal. These two groups, *Stella Dimoko Korkus (SDK) Domestic Violence Diary, Prts 1-4* and *DomesticShelters.org Victims and Survivors community* were studied. The original posts were made in 2013 and there was a repost of them in 2017. This work particularly made use of the repost made by Stella Dimoko Korkus in 2017 as those are the available ones on her website. In all, there are over a hundred posts from the blog across board and several comments. The narratives were therefore purposively selected based on their ability to provide rich, detailed, and relevant information about each gender's experiences with domestic violence. *Domestic shelters. Org victims and survivors's community* has over 4,000 members and narratives are constantly shared by group members on daily basis. The choice of DomesticShelters. Org Victims and Survivors Community was for a more robust coverage of victims' narratives as the group not restricted to a particular setting, a total 15 in all were purposively selected to cover domestic violence as it affects both males and females.

## Analysis and discussion

The analysis began with the identification and classification of the data into three main discourse issues: Emotional traumatising, Conscientisation and Trauma-induced variables. The issues were then broken down to reveal the pragmatic acts, using Jacob Mey's model of pragmatic acts within the narratives.

## Pragmatic Acts in The Narratives

The analysis in this part is structured along three major issues. The issues are: Emotional traumatising, Conscientisation and Trauma-Inducing Responses. Each of these topics within the analysis is foregrounded by more than one pragmatic act (pract) which are used to reveal the manifestation of the topics in the narratives being analysed.

## EMOTIONAL TRAUMATISATION

Given the enormity of the menace caused by the pervasiveness of domestic violence, victims in the three sources of data under study revealed emotional traumatising while narrating their experiences. This is revealed in the analysis.



## The Pract of Lamenting

Lamenting is the practice of expressing profound sorrow, grief, and often a sense of injustice arising from deeply painful experiences. It refers to a way of giving voice to enduring suffering and highlighting the lasting emotional wounds inflicted by the traumatic event of domestic violence.

### Excerpt 1

*After 3children, she was asked to leave the house. She refused. My father packed us & sent to his friend's house in warri. He was rich & they didn tell him d truth, they took us in. I remember in pain how a few weeks after my mum found out our location and on day she came to the house, we were upstairs & i remember the picture in my head how she was weeping downstairs & we were locked behind balcony gate. They refused her seeing us coz my dad wouldn't approve. The message got to my dad, he then moved us to his house in lagos with some other of his siblings who then became our parents. We got registered in school there. To tell u how bad it was, my brother the third who was still a child in this matter didn't walk till he was over 2years. After many medical checks showing nothing is wrong, my dad was told its because of the emotional trauma, movements & lack of proper care. SDK*

This excerpt portrays the trauma of a child witnessing domestic violence. The phrase *My father packed us & sent to his friend's house in Warri* pragmatically reveals the children's dehumanisation, as *packed* is a metaphor that implies they were treated as objects. The narrator's vivid memory of *the picture in my head how she was weeping downstairs & we were locked behind d balcony gate* foregrounds the emotional devastation of separating mother and children, as it is a shared situational knowledge(SSK) that mothers are emotionally bonded with their children and separating both could create a traumatic experience for either or both of them. Further trauma is evident in her brother's delayed walking, highlighting the severe impact of these events on the siblings. The pract of lamenting pervades the narrative, as the narrator emphasises the lasting pain inflicted by domestic violence.

## Excerpt 2

*There will never be literature about male survivors that anyone will truly concern himself with. I'll live my life a forgotten statistics DSH (Male)*

The victim's narrative in the sample text begins with an assertive speech, drawing attention to the societal neglect of male victims and survivors of abuse. By acknowledging his position as a male victim within a predominantly female-dominated discourse, he highlights the unique challenges faced by male survivors. From the victim's second statement, *I'll live my life a forgotten statistic*, there is an inference (INF) of hopelessness and despair. This statement implies that male victims are often overlooked and dismissed, a metaphor to explain that their experiences are relegated to mere numbers on a page. The deictic term *I* serves as a metonymic reference (REF) to all male victims, inviting empathy and solidarity from the audience.

## The Pract of Panicking

**The pract of panicking** in this study refers to the discursive and often socially mediated performance of acute fear or distress in response to a perceived or imminent threat.

## Excerpt 3

*He is here, my crazy criminal mind husband is here, I ran away from him since one year after being in abusive relationship for 22years I can't remember any day passed without being beaten, spit on, or humiliated . When I came to US I was so weak and fragile, I went to a therapist whom she helped me to move on and get stronger everyone here told me to stop remembering him as he is in another continent, my life started getting better I became stronger I'm starting more than one business and life stated to be good again. And now this happened he's here I didn't see him yet but I am sure he's coming to kill meas he has no business here to do. So please ladies tell me what can I do I can't hide in my house forever. Shall I call the police report him you think they'll take action . God I'm so scared 🙏 I thought I am done with him -DSH*

In this excerpt, the speaker recalls her traumatic 22-year marriage,

triggering a cataphoric reference. The deictic expressions “he” and “here” in “he’s here,” alongside the modifiers “my crazy, criminal mind husband,” evoke deep insecurity. Repetition of “here” (four times), the adjectives “crazy” and “criminal mind,” and the phrase “ran away” signal intense fear and anxiety, consistent with hyperarousal trauma, defined as “the physiological changes that occur in the brains and bodies of trauma survivors, which prepare them to respond to perceived danger” (Ohio Domestic Violence Network, 2013). The speaker’s fear resurfaces upon learning her ex-husband is in the same country, reinforcing her sense of threat, aligning with research showing that “the greatest time for harm or revitalisation is once a woman decides to leave Bybee & Sullivan (2005). The *pract* of panicking is evident through interrogatives like “Shall I call the police to report him?” and “Do you think they’ll take action?” culminating in the assertive “God, I am so scared.” These, along with the screaming face emoji ‘😱’ are, invite the group’s empathy.

#### **Excerpt 4**

*I had lost my job a year earlier and had trouble finding another one. We were living in a seedy hotel and he was constantly threatening to kill me, my two daughters, my son-in-law and my grandsons, if I ever left him. He would ask me where I wanted to be buried all the time. I was not sure of what he was capable of. (He claimed to have connections.) DSH*

The victim’s reference to a *seedy hotel*, which refers to dirty looking or in a bad condition, suggests the narrator’s poor living conditions. This may be attributed to the narrator’s unemployment, underscoring the link between economic status and housing quality. Such conditions can negatively affect mental well-being and contribute to emotional trauma. Additionally, the husband’s repeated threats to kill the victim and other family members, along with his persistent inquiries about her preferred burial location, constitute both a psychological act and an indirect speech act of threat. These acts are caused significant fear and emotional distress in the victim. The adverbial phrase *all the time* pragmatically implies the repetitive nature of these threats, intensifying their psychological impact and *pract* of panicking.

### **The Pract of Grieving**

Grieving is understood as a discursive performance that reflects internal emotional states where individuals articulate emotional distress, process loss, and seek communal validation while engaging with shared social knowledge.

### Excerpt 5

*So fed up and no idea where to turn to. Ranting to youqn ladies as opposed to messaging him. It's coming up to a year since leeaving, in therapy and yet it doesn't feel easier for me. More like I've just got better at hiding the heart break. I still miss him, still think about him constantly and still so convinced I've lost my best friend. Finding it difficult to imagine I'll ever feel differently, and scared I'll move on from him 🙄.*

The narrator in Excerpt 5 candidly expresses her emotional turmoil, revealing the psychological impact of her experiences with domestic abuse. Her initial statement, “so fed up and no idea of where to turn to,” pragmatically implies the overwhelming sense of despair and confusion that often accompanies traumatic bonding. Recognising the shared situation knowledge with other victims, she openly discusses her struggles with mental health, specifically alluding to symptoms consistent with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This shared situational knowledge fosters a sense of solidarity among group members, validating her feelings and experiences. The victim's deep emotional attachment to her ex-husband is evident in her repeated references and idealised portrayals. Her use of anaphoric references and the metaphor of him as her “best friend” highlights the complex nature of her feelings. Despite acknowledging the harm inflicted upon her, she continues to grapple with feelings of loss and longing. The juxtaposition of her desire to move on and her persistent emotional attachment creates a sense of internal conflict. The pensive face emoji, physiognomy, further emphasizes her emotional state and visually representing her ongoing struggle with grief and uncertainty.

## CONSCIENTISATION

**To conscientise someone about domestic violence is to educate and inform them about the nature, causes, and consequences of domestic abuse.** In the case of victims' narratives, practs that show one form of conscientisation or the other are examined. This involves the practs of warning, advising, challenging, hence, helping individuals understand that these behaviours are harmful and unacceptable.

### The Pract of Warning

Warning is an urgent and threat-oriented action, focusing on negative

consequences that are likely to occur if the hearer does not alter their current course of action. It carries a predictive and preventative force, often rooted in concern, but framed in a more cautionary or even confrontational tone.

### Excerpt 6

*When I started fixing me, I began to heal and found a better life. It's not my responsibility to fix him, but my responsibility not to allow myself to ever be broken again like I was. I've found a much healthier lifestyle and don't regret leaving. I encourage each of you to look inwards, make a healthy you a priority, none of us deserve to feel broken by another. -DSH*

The victim's narrative reflects a deep awareness of the effects of domestic violence. The opening statement, "*When I started fixing me*," signals a period of personal recovery following trauma from abuse. This reflects shared situation knowledge among survivors about the lasting psychological impact, such as PTSD. The metaphor of never allowing herself to *be broken* again underscores the severity of the abuse and serves as a pragmatic warning to others. Her declaration, "*It's not my responsibility to fix him, but my responsibility to fix me*," highlights a commitment to self-care over attempting to change the abuser, reinforcing the priority of healing. The imperative, "*Make a healthy you a priority, none of us deserves to be broken again*," further emphasises self-preservation and serves as an implicit warning to those in similar situations. Overall, the narrative's dominant pragmatic act of warning both empowers survivors and cautions against the dangers of remaining in abusive relationships.

### Excerpt 7

*I just left my psychologically, emotionally and physically abusive husband about 2 months ago! After 13 years of trying to endure!! Better to be alive to tke care of your kids. People say its bad for children to come from a broken home. Is it good for them to live in a broken home I ask them?... But you know what? I had had enough! You will find people who try to discourage you from leaving but you wear the shoes and know where it hurts! Make a wise choice o, while you are still alive and able bodied!!! A word is enough for the wise. Violence is a deal breaker any day! DO NOT ACCEPT IT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES -SDK*

In Excerpt 7, the narrator's mention of her divorce after a 13-year marriage foregrounds her warning to readers. Challenging the belief that divorce harms children, she responds with the indirect speech act, *"Is it good for them to live in a broken home?"* Drawing on shared experiences of domestic violence, she acknowledges that outsiders may struggle to empathise with victims. To reinforce this, she adapts the idiom, *"you wear the shoes and know where it hurts!"* The metapragmatic joker "o" in *"make a wise choice o"* stresses the importance of her advice, while the clause *"while you are still alive and able-bodied"* highlights the urgency. The use of three exclamation marks adds emphasis as it serves as a prosodic feature (stress) for emphasis. *"DO NOT ACCEPT IT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES"* delivered in all capital letters powerfully conveys her warning to other victims.

## The Pract of Advising

Advising, in this analysis presents recommendations or suggestions that are meant to be helpful or beneficial to the hearer. It often implies choice and agency, inviting the recipient to reflect and make a positive change. Advising can range from gentle nudges to more assertive guidance, but its core intention is to support or improve the hearer's situation. While warning and advising frequently overlap, advising invites improvement; warning urges avoidance.

### Excerpt 8

*Once is one time too many...trust me!! Let's look at this another way...what are you needing that you feel you need to get high?? What need is that filling? You are a new mother...your behavior should evolve around what's best for baby...if you continue on this path, you and your baby will suffer the consequences...is getting high worth an accident or having your child taken from you? Put your hands together and PRAY for what you need...you're not going to get it from getting high my friend. There are thousands of responsible parents wanting a child to shower with love and family memories. When, not if something bad happens...you will have to live with it for the rest of your life. Your child deserves a mom who is present. Think about healthy changes you can make to make your life better...better diet and exercise, supportive relationships with family...hobbies, counseling. YOU are the painter to your future DSH*

Excerpt 8 presents a pragmatic act of advising directed at a woman who identifies as a drug addict, with implicit relevance to others in similar situations. The woman's statement, *I have a medical marijuana license*, provides the context for the advisor's assertive and disapproving response. The warning *Once is one time too many...trust me!!* is intensified by the use of two exclamation marks, highlighting the seriousness of the message. Through rhetorical questions like "*What are you needing that you feel you need to get high?*" and "*What need is that filling?*" the advisor encourages introspection. Practical advice follows, urging the woman to *PRAY* and warning of inevitable consequences, signalled by the use of *when* rather than *if*. Although the tone is initially confrontational, the advisor ends on an empowering note with the declaration, *YOU are the painter of your future*, stressing personal agency and the ability to change one's life, both for the woman and others reading the message.

### Excerpt 9

*Keep those emotions, work them to heal, and become an even better version of yourself. You can heal and will heal. Put yourself first. Learn to love yourself so you can accept healthy love and intimacy in return as well as give it back* DSH  
(Male)

In Excerpt 9, the narrator leverages shared situational knowledge regarding the underreported impact of domestic violence on male victims. By acknowledging the victim's despair, the author offers supportive advice, emphasising self-love and self-care as crucial steps toward emotional healing. This advice is conveyed through direct directives, where the speaker explicitly instructs the victim to prioritise his well-being. There is an inference from these directives the narrator's genuine concern for the victim's emotional recovery. Furthermore, the author engages the victim through multiple cognitive directives, such as *Keep those emotions*, *'work them to heal'*, and *'become an even better version of yourself'*. These directives, coupled with affirmation like *You can heal and will heal* is designed to empower the victim and guide him towards a path of self-love and recovery. These serve as a form of psychological act. With another directive, *learn to love yourself so you can accept healthy love and intimacy in return as well as give it back*, the speaker foregrounds the importance of self-worth and healthy relationships in the healing process. He also gives him some sense of hope and possibility.

## TRAUMA-INDUCED RESPONSES

### The Pract of Protesting

The pract of protesting involves actively challenging perceived injustices or breaches of expectation through deliberate acts of resistance and vocalised grievances.

#### *Excerpt 10*

*Now I'm going to be at the hospital by myself when my sweet little girl comes into this world. She's going to have my last name only. She may never get to meet her father. I can't forgive him for what he did to me. I'm going to take the shortest maternity leave possible so I can continue to pay my bills. DSH*

The narrator in Excerpt 10 initiates her narrative with a tone of regret, employing the metapragmatic joker *now* as a device to indicate that her expectations have not unfolded as anticipated. As a form of protest against her husband's actions, the narrator challenges the shared cultural knowledge of children inheriting their father's surnames by insisting that her daughter bears only her own last name. This act constitutes a form of resistance and practs protesting against her husband's behaviour. The deliberate use of the metapragmatic marker *only* serves to emphasize the complete disassociation of her daughter from her father. The declarative statement, *I can't forgive him for what he did to me*, further elucidates her grievances against her husband and constitutes another act of protest.

#### *Excerpt 11*

*Oh bullshit ! enough of the stereotypes. Men are human too, and have emotions, insecurities, self-esteem issues, etc.*  
-DSH(Male)

The first two statements by this speaker are exclamatory remarks, they are expressive speech acts that expresses the speaker's psychological act towards the group members. This statement is a reaction to excerpt to buttress the point that men also get abused. The exclamatory sentence, also an expressive speech act, *Oh bullshit!* enough of this stereotype conveys his protest against the popular notion that men don't get abused. He was able



to highlight and make reference (REF) to the typical psychological trauma victims go through when abused; *emotions, insecurities, self-esteem issues*. The author employs a range of linguistic devices to convey their stance on gender-based violence, particularly focusing on male victims. Notably, the use of exclamatory language, boosters, and directives highlights their strong emotional engagement with the topic. The exclamatory phrase, *Oh bullshit* serves as an emphatic attitude marker, expressing frustration and disbelief regarding societal perceptions of male victimhood.

## The Pract of Unburdening

The **pract of unburdening** refers to the release of psychological or emotional weight, often articulated in spaces perceived as empathetic or non-judgmental. In domestic violence narratives, particularly within online support groups, unburdening functions as both a self-oriented therapeutic act and a socially situated speech event.

### Excerpt 12

*And I like to be beaten .sex afterwards is sweeter.am I normal?  
Help.*

-SDK

The narrator's reference to the word 'like' in Excerpt 12 has a pragmatic implication that she has been suffering domestic violence for a while and by reading post where people condemn the act, she came to the realisation that she is probably not thinking right, hence, the interrogative statement, '*am I normal?*' This narrator unburdens what is going on in her mind psychologically through the speech act of declaration. The shared situation knowledge (SSK) of the group as a space where she can bear her mind makes it easy for her to unburden what might appear ironical to others since issues discussed on the group are those of domestic violence.

### Excerpt 13

*I grew a substantial beard, largely as something to hide behind  
because I feel unlovable after the domestic violence and sexual  
assault. A lot of my personality is something I've developed  
to hide behind. I feel embarrassed about that, but it's the*

*only way I know to cope. I feel very jealous of people who feel comfortable displaying their genuine selves. It's even harder because I'm a man and men are not supposed to feel like this*  
-DSH (Male)

The narrator in Excerpt 13 speaks from the context of a female dominated group. He is a male victim of domestic violence, the first sentence is significant given the shared situation knowledge (SSK) about the assumption about men being mostly perpetrators of domestic violence rather than victims (Wilson and Daly 1992; Straus 1995). This excerpt addresses the kind of emotional torture, trauma and embarrassment victims go through, especially male victims of domestic violence. This is particularly more so because the report from various studies is that domestic violence is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men against women as pointed out in the literature review. Despite the unpopularity of having men owning up as victims; the speaker was able to voice out as a victim in need of support given the embarrassment he passes through. The reference (REF) to his beards under which he hides, *I grew a **substantial** beard, largely* convey a physical and psychological act that shows he is overwhelmed, emotionally, mentally and physically. His narrative practs lamenting and that men also get abused and they also go through emotional torture. This is achieved through unburdening in the context (a Facebook group) which is a female dominated group.

## The Pract of Veiling

The pract of veiling serves as a mechanism with which individuals navigate complex intersections of identity, power, and vulnerability. In this context, veiling manifests as a rhetorical strategy to obscure personal truths beneath layers of public performance.

### Excerpt 14

*Outside ... I'm the entrepreneur fearless, daring bold owner of a big privately owned company. It's even laughable that outside some men say they r (they're) intimidated by me.... As in ME... EMI.... WHO...??? Is that person* -SDK

In Excerpt 14, the narrator employs a series of hyperbolic adjectives *fearless, daring, and bold* to establish a stark contrast between her public persona and her private reality. This juxtaposition is emphasized by the ironic undertone of the clause, *It's even laughable*. From this, there is an inference

that the narrator's intimidating public image, as perceived by others, is directly contrasted with her diminished self-worth, a consequence of the domestic violence she endures within her family. The repeated interrogative sequence "ME...EMI(ME)...WHO...???" represents a subtle yet powerful rhetorical device. The capitalisation of the objective form of the personal pronoun, coupled with its repetition in Yoruba, serves to highlight the narrator's fractured sense of self. This linguistic strategy, combined with the strategic placement of question marks, functions as a prosodic feature, emphasizing the narrator's internal conflict and the dissonance between her public and private identities. The pragmatic implication of this linguistic choice is to expose the facade and pretence of strength and fearlessness, revealing the underlying vulnerability and self-doubt that characterise the narrator's true self.

## Conclusion

The analysis identified three key discourse issues in the data: emotional traumatisation, conscientisation, and trauma-induced variables. Emotional traumatisation was marked by the *pract* of lamenting, with victims expressing insecurity, fear, and despair following persistent harassment and threats. Other notable *practs* included panicking, particularly over the threat of retaliation, and grieving the loss of abusive relationships despite their harm. Conscientisation emerged through *practs* of warning, advising, and condemning, as victims highlighted the dangers of remaining in abusive relationships. These *practs* were reinforced through linguistic strategies such as exclamation marks, capitalisation, metaphors, shared situational knowledge, and inference. Condemnation was directed both at abusers and at those who tolerate abuse. Trauma-induced responses revealed *practs* such as insulting (through degrading language and blame), protesting, admitting to abusive behaviours, and acknowledging vulnerability rooted in exposure to violence. The *pract* of unburdening was evident as victims shared personal experiences and sought support, particularly in safe online spaces. Supporting roles from family, friends, and community were also foregrounded. A notable finding was the *pract* of veiling, where victims concealed abuse behind public displays of strength, reinforcing a culture of silence around domestic violence. All identified *practs* manifested through the textual and activity parts identified by Jacob Mey, precisely, emotional acts, speech acts, conversational acts, prosody, physiognomy, metaphors, references, and shared situational knowledge (Mey, 2005). *Practs* of lamenting and supporting appeared across both male and female narratives, though with differences. Notably, women displayed greater freedom to unburden themselves, suggesting online platforms offer

more supportive spaces for female victims, while male victims received comparatively limited support. Beyond lamenting, both genders engaged in *practs* such as advising, protesting, admitting, and regretting, reflecting a shared need for self-expression and the reclaiming of agency. However, panicking and grieving were absent from male narratives, indicating possible gendered differences in the discourse of domestic violence survivors.

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