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The American University in Cairo  
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

**Discourse Strategies in Selected African Suicide Notes**

A Thesis Submitted By

**SANNI, OLUWOLE OLUWATOBI**

Submitted to the Department of Applied Linguistics

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree of Master of Arts

in Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages Program  
(Applied Linguistics)

Under the supervision of **Professor Reem Bassiouney**

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This work is dedicated to people who lost someone to suicide and it is hinged on my invented aphorism that: 'Even the dead has a story to tell, and it is the role of living linguists to explore these meanings.'

## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	1
1.1 Background Information	1
1.1.1 Brief Overview of Suicide	2
1.2 Statement of Problem	2
1.3 Delimitation of the Study	3
1.4 Definitions of Key Terms	4
<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review</b>	6
2.1 Understanding Positioning Theory	6
2.2 Suicide Notes from a Linguistic Approach	7
2.3 Suicide Notes and Computer Mediated Communication	12
2.4 Empirical and Theoretical Positions in Suicide Notes Studies	13
2.5 Studies that Use Positioning Theory	17
<b>Chapter 3: Methodology</b>	20
3.1 Data Description	20
3.2 Research Design	20
3.3 Data Analysis and Procedure	21
3.4 Method of Analysis	22
3.5 Sample of Analysis	24
3.6 Sample of a Study that Uses Positioning Theory	29
3.7 Context of Suicide Notes	30
<b>Chapter 4: Discussion (Discourse and Structural Patterns)</b>	39
<b>Chapter 5: Discussion (Positioning Moves and Social Variables)</b>	67

<b>Chapter 6: Conclusion</b>	88
6.1 Summary of Findings	87
6.2 Limitations	90
6.3 Recommendations	90
<b>References</b>	94
<b>Appendices</b>	100

### **Abstract**

The present study aims to investigate the discourse strategies, positioning moves, and sociological variables that characterized the selected African suicide notes. Twenty suicide notes from different African countries constituted the data for the study. The data was deductively analysed using Davis & Harre (1999) positioning theory aside being inductively analysed. The results concluded that the discourse and structural patterns of metaphor, intertextuality, pronouns, presupposition, repetition, if conditionals, and intensifiers were deployed by the African suicide completers to demonstrate agency or/and victimhood. Also, first-order, second-order, third-order, expert and moral positioning were used in the suicide notes for self and other portrayer of the suicide completers and specific audience(s). More so, the social variables or religion, sexuality, and family influences African suicide constructions and unearth how the African context provide insights in the understanding of suicidal behaviour. This study has ultimately contributed to the dearth of studies on African suicide notes and proven that suicide texts are viable instances of language use with linguistic meanings and metalinguistic significance. Furthermore, the study has demonstrated that the African context has added rich perspectives to suicide notes studies with illuminating understanding of the inherent messages of suicide completers.

**Keywords: African, Computer Mediated Communication, Discourse Strategies, Positioning, Sociological Variables, Suicide, Suicide Texts, and Suicide Notes.**

**List of Tables**

3.1	Suicide completers' demographics	31
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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

This chapter gives an overview of the study under investigation- suicide notes in Africa. It provides background information to the study of suicide notes, a brief overview of suicide in Africa, statement of problem, delimitation of the study, and definition of key terms.

#### **1.1 Background information**

Suicide notes have been primarily investigated for criminological reasons in order to identify striking linguistic patterns that differentiate fakes from genuine suicide notes (e.g. Shapero, 2011). Recent trends in suicide studies have shifted their scholarly attention from this aim towards examining suicide notes from different linguistic angles such as suicide and poetry, the comparative study of suicide notes of suicide attempters and completers, the lexical analysis of suicide notes, and their pragmatics, among other linguistic inquiries'. However, all this linguistic research in suicide notes have relied on data from developed countries like the UK, US etc. with the omission of data from developing countries like those of Africa. These non-African studies have demonstrated that suicide notes are “windows” to understand the rationale why humans engage in self-violence/destruction. The non-inclusion of African data makes findings about suicide notes non-generalizable to the African context. Africans are usually regarded as happy and resilient beings and suicide is widely believed to be essentially non-existent in Africa (Vaughan, 2012; BBC, 2019). Unfortunately, this narrative is false and reflects instead the absence of a coroner system, the absence of record keeping of deaths, and the shrouding of suicide as death by natural causes due to stigma. Recently, suicide attempters and completers in Africa have resorted to the use of computer mediated communication to express and actualize their suicidal intentions



which parallels recent developments in the purview of suicide studies –an increased focus on the relationship between suicide dissemination and computer mediated communication (Westerlund, 2013). This proposed study seeks to investigate the discourse strategies deployed by African suicide completers in their respective suicide notes.

### **1.1.1 Brief overview of suicide**

Suicide has been a reoccurring phenomenon in the current years although still clandestine in Africa as most African countries do not report data on suicide to WHO. African authorities usually record suicide in Africa as ‘death by natural causes’ (BBC, 2019). However, Kootbodien, Naicker, Wilson, Ramesar, & London (2020) notes that Southern sub-Saharan Africa had the ‘third-highest suicide mortality rate’ in the globe in 2016. Recently, social media has become one of the novel platforms African suicide completers and attempters use to express their suicidal thoughts and ideations. It is against this backdrop that the stances and positioning mechanisms deployed by African suicide completers need to be investigated specifically within the discourse analytic framework of positioning theory.

### **1.2 Statement of problem**

Suicide notes have an ancient history of being first written on a papyrus in Egypt (Thomas, 1980). Since then, suicide notes have attracted the attention of psychologists and psychiatrists who seek to understand the reason for suicide with data drawn from non-African countries. Linguistic studies on suicide notes (Desmet&Hoste, 2013; Schoene&Dethlefs, 2016; Shapero, 2011; etc) have relied only on data from developed countries with the exemption/exclusion of data from developing countries especially in Africa.

In Africa, Vaughan (2012) argued that suicide is believed to be non-existent because Africans are believed to be happy-go-lucky-beings. However, Vaughan (2010) opined that suicide has been in existence in Africa since the colonial days which have either be suppressed or undocumented. Also, Vaughan (2012) posits that there is an increase in suicide especially in Eastern and Southern Africa, (especially among victims of HIV/AIDS) although most of the African suicide completers do not leave suicide notes behind. Computer mediated communication has helped give some visibility to suicide notes in Africa as a result of the anonymity that the internet space offers which have made African suicide completers share their suicidal intentions on the internet which would proffer data for this study. The cyber space has thus become a tool used by suicide completers to convey their suicidal intentions (Burke, 2017; Desmet&Hoste, 2013; Schoene&Dethlefs, 2016; Silverman, 2006, and Westerlund, 2013) especially by younger suicide completers who sees the virtual space as a viable platform to articulate their suicidal desires and suicide act. This introduces the concept of suicide posts (non-handwritten suicide notes) as another form of suicide notes which further reinforces the correlation between computer mediated discourse and suicide texts.

This present study differs from the above studies in that it has its source from the internet, hence emphasizing the relationship between computer mediated communication and suicide studies. The guiding research questions for this study are the below:

1. What are the recurring and specific discourse patterns in the select African suicide notes?
2. What are the positioning strategies in the select African suicide notes? and
3. What are some of the social variables influencing the identified positioning strategies.

### 1.3 Delimitation of the study

Africa is a continent with over 53 autonomous countries. As a result of the inaccessibility of suicide notes in most of the African countries, this proposed study with limits its scope to purposively selected suicide notes from suicide completers from Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa. The internet is relied upon as the source of data collection because Africa does not have a coroner system which keeps record of suicide, hence death notes are difficult to obtain and mostly inaccessible. Purposive sampling will be used for data gathering and collection because of the limited African suicide notes on the internet hence, the study would analyse the few available African suicide notes accessible on the internet.

Furthermore, the study will limit its data base to only suicide notes with the exclusion of audio and video texts which are currently unavailable in Africa. Cases of audio and video suicide texts exist in developed countries but in Africa there has not been any reported case of audio or video suicide texts as most of the reported suicide cases seldomly have suicide notes (to the best of the researcher's knowledge). In terms of analysis, the study would focus on the lexical, syntactic, and pragmatic force of the linguistic constructions in the suicide texts so as to understand the use of lexis, syntactic constructions, and the pragmatic undertones of African suicide notes. These linguistic components are essential in comprehending the linguistic and metalinguistic meanings (in addition to connotative and denotative messages) conveyed in suicidal texts in addition to its discursive strategies, positioning, and ideology.

### 1.4 Definitions of key terms

**African:** In this study, African is used exclusively to refer to the country of origin of the suicide completers who are people from Nigeria, Kenya, South African, and Ivory Coast which constitute

the data set for the proposed study. Hence the proposed study is not representative of the 54 African countries but purposively selected suicide African suicide notes based on the reach of the researcher.

**Discourse strategies:** This means the different types of repetitions (lexical, phrasal and clausal), different forms of interrogatives (information, rhetorical, examination, and indirect request), discourse markers, pronouns, metaphors, presuppositions, and prevalent intertextual features in the African suicide notes.

**Lexical items:** They are single meaningful grammatical constituents. For this proposed study, it means the individual words used by suicide writers to convey their emotions. Attention would be paid to content words like nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives.

**Positioning theory:** A theory developed by Davis & Harre (1999) used to analyse identity constructions, roles in text/instance of language use. It has the triadic discourse analytic triangle of positions, story lines, and illocutionary force. Deppermann (2015) describe positions as “semiotically structured ascriptions tied to social actions and accomplished by social practice; they are locally occasioned and designed situated achievements that represent multiple identities.” Slocum & Van Langenhove (2003: 225) define storylines as ““the contexts of acts and positions” Illocutionary forces are the metalinguistic acts underlying constructions as influenced by context (pragmatics) which include instruction, command, apologies etc. These illocutionary forces are defined within the ‘rights and duties’ of participants in certain social contexts.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature review**

The scope of the review includes understanding positioning theory, suicide notes from the linguistic lens, suicide and computer mediated discourse, empirical and theoretical foundations in suicide and review of studies that used the positioning theory.

#### **2.1 Understanding positioning theory**

According to Davis & Harre (1999) positioning theory studies “the rights, duties and obligations distributed among interlocutors or characters in and through conversations and narratives.” It also examines how social structures relate to rights, duties, and obligations. This perhaps spurred Harre (2012) theorizing that positioning theory is a discourse analytic framework used to understand the “complex interaction between psychological processes and social encounters within a moral landscape.”

Positioning theory is multidisciplinary in its approach as it draws insights from different fields such as cultural/discursive psychology, feminism, and post-structuralism. This is to have a holistic insight of how individuals negotiate access to rights and duties within meaning oriented instances of language use. (Harré, 2012). Positioning theory could be viewed as an extension of Austin’s (1962) speech act. However, the positioning theory has three components: positions, story lines and actions. The action component is Austin’s illocutionary force which Harré (2012) defines as “a meaningful, intended performance.” In a concise manner, the positioning theory is triadic as it consists of positions, story lines, and act interpretations.

Position is referred to as representation of self in certain communicative events while positioning refers “to situating oneself or others with particular rights and duties through conversations” (Rex & Schiller, 2009). Through positioning moves, different illocutionary acts are performed such as claiming, denying, and giving rights and demanding or accepting certain duties. There are different forms of positioning and positioning moves. In intentional positioning, the Individuals exercise agency so that they can accomplish specific goals within certain interpersonal spaces. There is also first, second, and third-order positioning. First order positioning resulting in performative positioning. Second order positioning is when there is a challenge of the initial or first-order positioning. It is also called repositioning. Third order positioning is to describe past interactions. This proposed study would use the positioning theory to account for the (unexpected) shifts in roles in the suicide notes and the construction and reconstruction of roles, rights, duties and identities in the suicide texts.

## **2.2 Suicide notes from a linguistic approach**

Suicide notes were primarily studied from the linguistic purview with the intention of identifying linguistic features and patterns to differentiate authentic suicide notes from its fakecounterparts. This is done in reaction to the escalating scourge of murder cases concealed as suicide by perpetrators’ writing suicide notes on behalf of the deceased. Linguists such as Shapero (2011) among others studied suicide notes with the sole intent of reporting linguistic features for authenticating original suicide notes. In the quest of this “legitimatizing adventures” resulted in different postulations or conceptions about suicide notes. The pioneering work on suicide notes started with Shneidman and Farberow (1957) who initiated the discourse on comparing original suicide notes with fabricated suicide notes. They claim that original suicide text expresses negative emotions within the wide spectrum of blame, hostility, aggression, and guilt. Leenaars et al. (1992)

related to this finding by adding to this spectrum to include of hopelessness, hate, loss, and love as markers of authentic suicide texts. Similarly, Schoene and Dethlefs (2016) use the coinage “emotional endearments” to refer to the attitudes and emotions expressed in the suicide texts which ranged from negativity, positivity, to neutrality, thus revealing the different states of mind of the suicide completers. These attitudes or emotions are conveyed by adjectives, specific lexical items and syntactic strings. The appraisal theory has proved to be a viable theoretical framework to account for the range and degree of attitudes conveyed in suicide notes which are also legitimatising means to prove the authenticity of suicide texts (Grundlingh, 2018).

Also, Shneidman and Farberow (1957) note that nominal items such as the names of the addressed are always included in original suicide texts. This finding initiated the grammatical properties of suicide notes and the sentence types used by suicide completers such as the use of declarative sentences. Similarly, Schoene and Dethlefs (2016) note that content words such as adjectives, nominals, cognitive verbs are the legitimatizing markers of original suicide notes. Shapero (2011) broadens these linguistic descriptors of Schoene and Dethlefs (2016) in authenticating original suicide texts to include pronominals, proper nouns, and intensifiers.

In the field of pragmatics, Osgood and Walker (1959) identified the communicative functions embedded in original suicide notes. The study arrived at this conclusion after examining genuine and fake suicide notes. The data for this study is Shneidman (1957) suicidal corpora. They note that demands, criticism, request, and conflicts are implicitly or explicitly conveyed in original suicide notes. Wertheimer (2001) affirms their findings when he claims that apologies and directives are authenticating markers of original suicide texts.

Recent studies have examined suicide notes from different linguistic purviews such as critical discourse analysis, semantics among other linguistic lenses. Roubidoux (2012) avers that the use of exclusive pronominals such as I, me etc. are also viable indicator of original suicide notes as authentic suicide completers tend to project in their suicide notes that the choice to end their lives is their own volitional and deliberate decision which they display through the use of the active first person pronouns. This is in contrast with fake suicide notes which use inclusive pronominals such as “we” and “us” which suggests shared decision in suicidal actions. Furthermore, Sudjana and Fitri (2013) conducted a lexical analysis on Kurt Cobain’s suicide notes and came to the conclusion that original suicide texts are usually marked with negative lexical items used to convey the thematic concerns of regret, melancholy, frustration, and depression. This finding collaborates with earlier findings like Leenaars et al. (1992); and Shneidman and Farberow (1957).

Aside from using fake and original texts to identify the linguistic features of authentic suicide notes, different suicidal contexts have been explored in the process of understanding the phenomenon of suicide. Stirman and Pennebaker (2001) analysed the poems of poets who committed suicide to investigate linguistic patterns that convey suicidal intentions in their respective poems. Their findings confirm earlier linguistic indictators’ of original suicide notes that personal pronominals (such as I, me), negative emotions, frequent reference to death and limited positive emotions are the signposts of original suicide notes.

All these identified linguistic patterns are some of the discourse patterns this proposed study would investigate in the select African suicide notes. However, its exploration of the positioning strategies and the social variables that determine these suicidal constructions is the gap this proposed study intends to fill in addition to exploring the understudied African suicide data/samples. With regards to the correlation between positioning and linguistic resources used in



suicide notes, Grundlingh (2018) study explores the linguistic markers in differentiating between fake and original suicide notes through the use of Martins and Ross (2003) Appraisal Theory. She notes that the appraisal categories of trust, propriety, and negative appreciation are the “legitimacy markers’ for authentic suicide notes. The study also claimed that authentic suicide notes use more force, and are monoglossic in nature. Grundlingh’s study espouses the different positioning strategies conveyed in suicide notes through the roles taken by suicide completers and the varieties of emotions, illocutionary forces, and story lines conveyed in suicide texts which are also relevant to the proposed study. Most of the suicide notes in the study have a moral story line which explains the different judgmental appraisal stances they exhibit by either praising or condemning themselves or others. This position of a judge represents a performative positioning move as they assume different roles, rights, and duties which in this case is to pass verdicts on other people’s behavior. Hence, the suicide completers pass sanctions on behaviors they consider unethical and expresses admiration to moral dispositions and actions.

Significantly, different social variables influence suicidal constructions in terms of its positioning and manifestation of discourse strategies. Hence, suicide texts rehash the different ideologies of suicide completers and their constructions of different roles and identities to the wider audience. Thus, investigating the sociolinguistic variables of gender, social class, religion, and sexuality in suicidal compositions would illuminate the rationale for different positioning and the reoccurrence of certain discursive strategies. One of the few studies that examined how sociolinguistic variable affect suicide texts constructions is Handelman&Lester (2007) who note that the discourse strategies of few words, more negations, and present tense verbs are used by female suicide completers to convey their positioning. They arrived at this conclusion by applying textual analysis on 20 completed suicide and 20 attempted suicide notes from mixed genders. Furthermore, they

note that the notes of suicide completers use the second person pronoun, future tense, and addresses metaphysical issues like heaven and God when compared to its attempted counterparts. The present study differs from the above study as it uses only suicide notes from African suicide completers. Furthermore, this proposed study relies on positioning theory for its analytical framework because positioning in suicide notes especially in computer mediated communication is a vital area that needs to be explored. This is because the anonymity that computer mediated communication provides make suicide completers be specific and deliberate in their positioning strategies.

Other suicidal context is the cyber space which has been used by suicide completers to convey their suicidal intentions although these suicidal contexts have attracted little studies such as the works of Burke, 2017; Desmet and Hoste, 2013; Schoene and Dethlefs, 2016; Silverman, 2006, and Westerlund (2013) who all note that that suicide attempters especially the younger suicide completers use the virtual space to articulate their suicidal desires and suicide act. Schoene & Dethlefs (2016) used a wide range of data from existing corpora (such as Etkind, 1997; Leenaars, 1988 and Shneidman& Farberow 1957). These suicide corpora were analysed using sentimental analysis and Python's Natural Language Toolkit. Their result was pragmatically inclined as they note that suicide completers always leave instructions for their survivors in their suicide notes. Furthermore, Desmet & Hoste (2013) corpus contains suicide notes written by 1319 people, collected between 1950 and 2011 with the view of detecting the emotions in suicide notes. They built an automatic emotion detection system using binary support vector machine classifiers. They identified fifteen different emotions but note that love, thankfulness, instruction, hopelessness and guilt are the five most prevalent emotions in these notes. This proposed study differs from the

above study as it relies only on African suicide notes and use the discourse analytic framework of positioning theory to analyse the notes.

### **2.3 Suicide notes and computer mediated discourse**

Computer Mediated Discourse (CMC) is concerned basically with language and the language use on virtual spaces through the use of network computers or electronic gadgets that have a network connection. The language of computer mediated communication is different from formal writing as a lot of grammatical rules are relaxed. Furthermore, CMC allows for easy expression of users' thoughts and desires due to the anonymity the cyberspaces offer.

The internet space has become an outlet where people share their happiness, sadness and ultimately their death. The anonymity that the internet provides has been leveraged upon by internet users to discuss intimate, sensitive topics and taboo issues like suicide. For example, Westerlund (2013) notes in his study that virtual users use the virtual space to discuss their suicidal attempts. His study examines an online conversational chat-room where people regarded as "suicidal attempter" come to disclose their suicidal intentions as it is a means of deriving online fraternity and inner social cohesiveness. The internet space has made taboo topics and difficult materials like suicide notes readily accessible for the purpose of research. There are chatrooms such as "My Death Space.com, SUIGI Chat" which are online platforms where people openly discuss the topic of suicide.

Scholars (such as Westerlund 2013, Westerlund, 2015) note that the internet has become a viable platform for the dissemination of knowledge about suicide. Suicide attempters and completers have resorted to social media to convey their suicidal intentions. Burke (2017) states that it is a common trend among teens to resort to the tool of social media especially facebook to publicise their suicidal acts. This act he suggested have inspired others to write their suicide notes on social

media. The recent use of using virtual spaces to convey suicidal intentions has generated rich “data and patterns about suicidal behaviours. “(Silverman, 2006: 529). Buttressing the above point is Desmet & Hoste (2013) and Schoene & Dethlefs (2016) who aver that there is a recognised trend that young people publish their suicide notes or express their suicidal feelings online. Different research designs have been adapted and adopted to explain suicide notes especially the use of qualitative and quantitative research designs. The present study would not account for the linguistic practices in computer-mediated-communication (such as clipping, abbreviations, phonological spellings among others) but only foregrounds how suicide completers have exploited computer-mediated-communication to disseminate their suicidal intentions which constitute some of the data for the present study.

#### **2.4 Empirical and theoretical foundations in suicide notes studies**

Different qualitative and quantitative analyses have been applied to suicide notes studies to expand its frontiers and to understand the phenomenon although the field is still considered evolving with limited theories on suicide notes. From the qualitative perspective, specific theoretical frameworks have been applied to suicide corpora to determine its suitability and appropriateness which suggest a deductive approach. Also, suicide corpora have also been examined from an exploratory stance in which the corpora inform the development of theories. An example of an inductively inclined study is Olsson (2004) theory of suicide although descriptive outlines the essential components of suicide notes. He avers that original suicide notes have these essential components: brevity; definite proposition about suicide being the best course of action; vague situational context, and definite addressee. To explain in details, Olsson theory of suicide notes postulates that (a) a suicide note should contain a definite proposition; (b) the proposition should communicate the act of suicide; (c) the proposition should be directed at an addressee; (d) the proposition should state that

“suicide is not just the best course of action; but the only course of act.,” and (e) the situational context of suicide note is always unobvious. These features would be examined in the African suicide notes aside being inductively analysed. While these descriptions are insightful, they are really culture specific as these conclusions were arrived from limited suicide notes within the reach of the researcher, as other variables like age, gender, socioeconomic class etc. influence suicidal constructions and compositions. Similarly, the theory did not take into consideration that suicide notes are subjective linguistic constructions which vary from one suicide completer to another. Although, Olsson’s theory gives uniformity to suicide notes in general the unrepresentative sample size used to make this conclusive claim is small and insufficient.

From the deductive approach, there are some theories that have been applied to suicide corpora. For example, Grundlingh (2018) apply the Martins and Ross (2003) Appraisal Theory to an old collection of suicide notes gathered in years 1957 and 1984. The study asserts that the appraisal theory categories present in the suicide notes can be used as legitimacy markers to identify authentic suicide notes. Hence, trust, a sub-category of affect, propriety, a sub category of judgment, and negative appreciation are the appraisal features that distinguish fabricated suicide notes from authentic notes. In other words, the appraisal categories of trust, propriety, and negative appreciation are the “legitimacy markers’ used to distinguish simulated and authentic suicide notes. Trust means suicide completers usually request the addressee or the individuals mentioned in the notes to perform specific obligations/acts. Propriety means suicide completers always criticize themselves and/or others for unethical conduct, and negative appreciation means suicide completers express dissatisfactions to non-human entities in their respective notes. Similarly, the study claimed that authentic suicide notes use more force, and are monoglossic in nature. However,

the data being too old limits the generalization of the study to recent suicidal texts (new corpora of suicide notes).

Another approach is the use of discourse analysis to understand suicide notes. For example, Prokofyeva (2013) using the insights of discourse analysis and comparative research methods opine that original suicide notes have clear reasoning for committing suicide. This coincide with Olsson (2014) notion of definite proposition, However Prokofyeva outlines this definite proposition which include diseases, offence, blame, and despair are the clear reasons and propositions for committing suicide. Prokofyeva also opine that expression of emotions, reliefs, doubt are the features of original suicide notes and that original suicide notes have the structure of introduction, culmination, and closing words. The study used twenty suicide notes and twenty suicide post. The genuine suicide notes consist of nine male and females with the two other suicide notes with no recognizable gender. The suicide completers age ranges from 13 to 74 years. The suicide posts consist of people of younger age group within the age range of 13 to 22. From the analyses of the suicide notes, the study notes that genuine suicide notes have specific textual structure which include: forms of address (usually specific, such as dear, dearest etc.); introduction (where the suicide completer states the reason for suicide without naming the action); culmination/body (this is where the suicidal act is mentioned and the different illocutionary forces are demonstrated) and conclusion. With insights from discourse analysis, the study also notes that genuine suicide notes use the past tense frequently and in place of present tense to infer their death and to emphasize their seriousness of their intention to commit suicide. Also, the study notes that three punctuation marks are prevalent in suicide notes which are: double dash, three or more full stops at the end of a sentence or phrase and exclamation marks.

Prokofyeva also analyse suicide posts and reported different results. The study notes that suicide posts are characterised with unclear reasoning, the conveyance of emotions that expresses the fear of death, desire, and doubt. Also the study claims that there is frequent alluding to previous suicide attempts in suicide posts.

From the quantitative perspective, various statistical analyses have been adapted. One is linguistic inquiry and word count analyses (Handelman and Lester, 2007; Malini and Tan, 2016; Stirman and Pennebaker, 2001). These statistical analyses have given reliable percentile representations of various linguistic indicators embedded in the suicide notes. These indicators include emotions (either positive or negative), cognitive verbs, pronominals, social words etc. These indicators are also pointers in differentiating between authentic and fabricated suicide notes. However, the contextual information of the notes cannot be explained by this analysis which suggests one of the shortcomings of the analysis. Another statistical tool is sentimental analysis used by Schoene and Dethlefs (2016) to outline the diverse emotions in suicide notes within the wide spectrum of positive, negative, and neutral emotions. Also Hedges'  $g$  is another statistical tool used to calculate the measure of association in the suicide corpora. It is a statistical tool used to measure the effect of size for the difference between mean and states how a group differs from another (e.g. experimental and control groups). Grundlingh (2018) used this statistical tool in addition to Martin and Ross (2003) Appraisal Theory. From the study it was discovered that Hedges'  $g$  is suitable for smaller sample size. These quantitative analyses have given percentile representations of specific linguistic features in the analyzed suicide notes. However, studies in suicide notes though inductively inclined have not generated much theory which also explains the need for deductive approaches to give uniformity to suicide note analyses although this could be restricted and impeded by dearth of suicide notes. The present study will investigate the discourse strategies in

African suicide note by adopting the positioning theory which examines the discursive strategies used to realise interpersonal positioning in discourse units. It explores social positioning, identity constructions, roles assignment, and individual narratives as positioning strategies for interpersonal relations. Positioning theory has three essential components: storyline (ongoing social episodes), illocutionary force, and moral aspects of the interaction. This is relevant to suicide notes as suicide completers assume different roles and identities with regards to their personal storylines or narratives. The moral aspect of suicide notes might not be applicable as suicide completers freely express themselves and assume judgmental stances and positions (more oriented towards 'self-positioning' than 'other positioning').

## **2.5 Studies that use the positioning theory**

Hirvonen (2016) study applies positioning theory to small group interaction and dynamics with the view of identifying the discursive patterns in these interpersonal interactions. Specifically, the research questions of the study are to investigate how decision making processes are a byproduct of conversational storylines; how social and task variables influence the context of small group interaction, and how moral order is established in such context. The study uses transcribed materials from four videotaped management board meetings of a Finnish public research institute held in 2009 and 2011 respectively which consist of 12 people. The data also include a total of 18 decision-making episodes. The duration of the meetings varies from 1 hour to 2 hours, 45 minutes. The study notes that the decision making process is inundated with different storylines and social positioning is linked to task positioning. The study notes that both tacit and explicit positioning of self and others were made manifest in the decision making episodes. Also is expert



positioning which involves offering information, giving instructions, and giving answers. The study notes that there was demonstration of first order performative positioning and second order of positioning by the chair. The study notes that positioning moves are always social and are part of the interpersonal aspect of group memberships. Also, the study observes that the perlocutionary effect of positioning is instrumental or task oriented negotiations. Furthermore, the study avers that task positioning is part of the construction and negotiation of institutional and conversational local moral orders. Institutional moral order means sets of rights and duties members of a group have towards each other and towards the group work. Conversational moral order is usually about the creation of future obligations. This proposed study intends to apply positioning theory to some African suicide notes.

Kayi-Aydar & Miller (2018) study examines the relevance of positioning theory to classroom discourse especially its interactional dynamics. The study examined 40 peer reviewed literatures in English that adapt the positioning theory in classroom interaction. They note that positioning theory in the content classroom has been in the context of literacy development in literature groups. Also there seems to be a lot of gender positioning in literacy groups. The term ‘oppressive positioning’ was used to describe how boys negatively position girls as people who should not be involved in decision making. Hence gender, storyline and status influences positioning in students to students’ interactions. For instance, it was reported that boys enjoy storylines that marginalize and silence girls. An argument proffered for this was made by Clark (2006) of the ‘preadolescent identity formation’ where boys see themselves as superior to girls. Their review also examines the positioning given to learners with additional languages which is usually the positioning of insider/outsider and competent/incompetent. Thus teachers help mitigate this stereotypes through revoicing EAP students’ utterances even if not conveyed in good academic English. This

positioning move gives identities to these learners as a co-contributor to classroom discourse. The study also examines how teacher positioning shapes identity construction, student engagement and decision making. Hence the different identities and roles the teacher exhibits help in the positioning of the students. More so assigning positions to students either limits agency or marginalizes students. Similarly, asking students questions relevant to their interests and backgrounds can position students from being disengaged to engaged learners. Furthermore, teacher's beliefs and values also influence students positioning as teachers with heterosexual orientations might marginalize students with queer inclinations and orientations. This proposed study differs from this study as it intends to examine the different positioning moves in African suicide notes using the positioning theory.

Wortham (2000) applied the positioning theory to one autobiographical narrative with the aim of investigating interactional positioning in autobiography narratives. He notes that the narrator uses the passive and active voice in her narrative to project her developmental and transformation phases. Wortham notes that the participant has a represented and enacted self which runs parallel through the narration. The thrust of his submission is that when narrators engage in storytelling, they characterize their past self and position their present self in the light of their past, hence there is always a negotiation of the past and present self through the active and passive voice to make the audience aware of their transformation and development. The present study differ from this study has it aim to apply positioning theory to African suicide notes.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

The methodological details for the realization of the research questions for the study are provided in this chapter. The research data (twenty African suicide note) is described, the research design, method of analysis, sample of analysis, sample of a study that uses positioning theory, context of suicide notes, and background information of the data are also explained.

#### **3.1 Data description**

The data are twenty suicide notes written by Africans from different nationalities namely: Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa. The suicide completers were from mixed gender (14 males' and 5 females' in addition to one couple suicide note) within the age range of thirteen to sixty. The suicide notes spanned from years 1994 to 2021 (although just one from year 1994 and the others from 2016 to 2021). The notes were written in English language; thus they were not translated. While there are suicide notes written in different African languages, the study restricts itself to English Language African suicide notes so as to retain the illocutionary forces of the notes. Also, it seems the suicide completers are aware that English Language is the lingua franca/official language in their respective countries despite the existence of different local languages, thus, they seek to disseminate such intention in a more accessible language (that is, English Language, which invariably is the language of the internet in this current era of computer –mediated-communication). It should be pointed out that English Language is/one of the official language in these countries (Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa). The suicide notes were derived online from numerous websites and blogs where African suicide notes are posted. The twenty web links and blogs where these suicide notes are collected are duly acknowledged.

### **3.2 Research design**

The study research design is basic, qualitative, and exploratory. It is basic as it aims at examining the discourse patterns inherent in African suicide notes anchored on specific theoretical frameworks (discourse analytic framework of positioning theory and insights from Discourse Analysis). It adopts the qualitative research design because suicide notes suggest a representation of verbal data (although expressed in written form with the intention of being read) which conveys the innermost thoughts and desires of suicide completers. Furthermore, it is constrained by a specific linguistic theoretical framework which justifies the appropriateness of the qualitative research design. It is exploratory because aside drawing insights from specific theoretical frameworks, the data would dictate the focus and direction of the study. Since this study is not experimentally inclined, treatments are not used.

### **3.3 Data analysis and procedure.**

The suicide notes are read in-depth and repeatedly to identify the discourse features in the suicidal texts (discourse/text analysis) such as intertextuality, metaphors, interrogatives, repetition, pronouns, and intensifiers embedded in the texts. Specific lexical items, and other content words like adjectives, nominals, and the vocabulary choices, and linguistic constructions are identified in line with the research questions. There is text-based analyses of the notes deductively analysed using Davies & Harré, (1990) Positioning Theory. Insights would also be drawn from Discourse Analysis to examine suicide completers use of language in social contexts. The discourse strategies of repetition, interrogations, pronouns, discourse markers, intertextuality, metaphors etc. would be investigated in the suicide texts. The positioning theory is adopted to account for how

the lexical items, syntactic constructions, and pragmatic acts in the African suicide notes reflect the identities and roles undertaken by the African suicide completers. Positioning theory revolves around the use of language to convey actions, behaviours and roles recognizable to the targeted audience (Davies & Harre, 1990). This is significant to the study as the writing patterns of suicide completers is mainly about negotiation of stances, expression of meaning, conveyance of attitudes, and manifestations of roles and identities to their prospective audience. In terms of the pragmatic functions, one of the positioning triad, which is force account for the diverse illocutionary acts embedded in suicide texts which include: asserting, questioning, responding, commanding, advising, and offering exist in every text. The results of the study are sequentially presented based on the order/arrangement of the research questions.

### **3.4 Method of analysis**

The suicide notes are thoroughly read to identify the inherent discourse patterns in the suicide texts. The different positioning moves, story lines and illocutionary forces that characterized each note would be discussed. Also the different orders of positioning such as first, second, third positioning order would be identified and discussed. First order positioning is a tacit way people position themselves without any intentions which could either be performative or implicit. Performative first-order positioning occurs when there are changes in others based on the way the person positions himself/herself ('I'm sorry if I have not been the best father to him). It is implicit when there are no concrete changes in others (I have chosen Jo Nketaih's poem as my suicide note). Second-order positioning occurs when people refuse to accept assigned positions on them from the first-order performative positioning. It involves repositioning and challenging first-order positioning. Third-order positioning is usually descriptive as participants usually recount past interactions and this type of positioning usually exist in talks ('He said that I did copy and paste').

Furthermore, interactive and reflexive positioning would also be identified and discussed. While interactive positioning involves assigning positions to others ('You are a good woman and you deserve the best'), reflexive positioning involves assigning position(s) to self (I'm not the heterosexual being I portray for you). Similarly, the different social variables that determines the performative positioning moves of the suicide completers would be identified and discussed in details. These include social class (social positioning), gender (gender positioning of 14 males, 5 females and 1 couple suicide completers), religion (religion positioning) etc. All these would help unearth the metalinguistic strategies in African suicide notes and the different roles, duties and rights undertaken by these suicide completers will be examined within the discourse analytic framework of positioning theory. Insights from pragmatics are drawn to explain the metalinguistic functions of some constructions in the suicide texts. This would involve investigating the illocutionary forces of some suicidal constructions such as apology, instruction, directive, command, request etc. and how it relates to their positioning moves.

Positioning in suicide notes is also realized through the deployment of certain discourse features by the suicide completers to reveal different positioning modes. Hence, the discourse strategies in the suicide notes would be examined under the broad categories of structural patterns and discourse patterns (Bassiouney, 2014). The structural pattern includes pronouns (exclusive and inclusive), presupposition, repetition, if conditionals, interrogatives, and intensifiers. Pronouns are used by suicide completers to construct an image of agency or victimhood, thus, the inclusive pronoun suggest victimhood while the exclusive pronoun denotes agency (Roubidoux, 2011). Presupposition is used to reiterate meaning inclusion of intended audience which represents a positioning strategy of inclusion and involvement of others. Repetition is used as a foregrounding device to achieve emphasis which usually is used to convey specific affective stance.

Interrogatives are used for rhetorical, probing, examining, and request functions which usually convey an agency positioning. Intensifiers are also foregrounding devices to accentuate specific affective statements. The discourse patterns are metaphors and intertextuality. Metaphors are used to give vivid/graphic images of certain affective stance and intertextuality is used to collaborate suicide completers stance of alignment or disalignment with specific dispositions. Furthermore, African suicide completers used other linguistic features like cataphoric reference, lexical and phrasal repetition, ellipsis, hedges of dialogue, antonymic construction, exclamatory construction, register of Nigerianess, and construction of victimhood. Cataphoric reference is usually used by African suicide completer to make reference to death or the act of suicide. Lexical and phrasal repetition is to heighten specific positive and negative emotions. Ellipsis is used to emphasize the vagueness of African suicide notes which emphasizes the dependency of suicide notes meaning on contextual details. Hedges of dialogue is used to mimic real-life communication and sometimes serve as boosters of emotions. Antonymic construction is usually used to emphasize other positioning versus self-positioning to either highlight certain striking qualities in themselves or others. Exclamatory construction is to accentuate specific affective sentences. ‘Register of Nigerianess’ (which is discourse specific) is used to appeal to the Nigerian audience usually used to elicit sympathy of the Nigerian readers. Construction of victimhood is to position the suicide completer as being helpless and to elicit sympathy from the reader as the decision to end their lives is based on the actions of others and not a willful act. Hence, constructions of victimhood are used to convey oppressive positioning by the suicide completers.

### **3.5 Sample of analysis**

#### **Suicide Text E (Nigerian)**

Forgive me. In case you are the one who found the body, I am really sorry. It had to be someone, you

know. I have chosen Jo Nketaih's poem as my suicide note: "They said you came looking for me.

I didn't

drown; I was the water." Where do atheists go to when they die? lol. Amen.

### **3.5.1 Brief synopsis of the note**

The note was written by a young intelligent Nigerian First Class student who was a graduating senior of English and Literature in one of the best universities in Nigeria.

### **Discourse strategies**

The discourse strategies used are rhetorical question, humour, intertextuality, pronouns and melancholic lexical items.

### **3.5.2 Rhetorical question**

*Where do atheists go to when they die?*

The suicide completer aired his religious disposition in an indirect yet succinct manner contrary to his family/societal religious inclinations. He challenged the essence of religion, and finally detached himself from the religious fraternity. The use of rhetorical questions is to penetrate into the minds of religious fanatics and supremacists about their default religious beliefs.

### **3.5.3 Humour-cum-sarcasm**



*Where do atheists go to when they die? lol. Amen*

The use of humour is to ridicule the perceptions that atheists would go to hell which underlies the perceived superiority of those in the faith over those who are not and to deride the belief in there is a life after death.

#### **3.5.4 Repetition of first person pronominal.**

The repetition of the active first person pronominal “I” to show agency. This pronominal was repeated four times in the note.

Also in the construction: *“Forgive me”*

In this simple declarative construction, the suicide completer positioned himself as a victim through the use of the objective pronoun ‘me’. This subordinate and victim position is further reinforced by the lexical item ‘forgive’ which suggest a lexis of powerless connotation hinged primarily on seeking approval and validation from others. It has the illocutionary force of an apology. Hence, there is no demonstration of agency in this specific construction as the writer seeks absorption of guilt from the targeted audience.

#### **3.5.5 Intertextuality**

*I have chosen Jo Nketaih’s poem as my suicide note: “They said you came looking for me. I didn’t drown;*

The suicidal message is obscure and intentionally vague which requires a lot of contextual investigations to unravel his knotty messages. However, from the poem, the suicide completer represents the new generation of young Africans whose voices seem obliterated by existing orders and rebel against this societal dogma through probing the sacred and interrogated long standing

beliefs which have default interpretations. His death represents the unrelenting stance of the society to ambitious youths who choose to chart a different course that runs contrary from established orders instituted by religion and culture. This specific suicide note represents the suicide completer 'non-physical means' deployed to challenge the African construct of the definition of religion, divinity, and belief in the afterlife.

### **3.5.6 Lexical items**

The content words such as 'sorry' 'drown' 'forgive' and 'die' are specific vocabulary items that convey the emotions of the suicide completers'. These lexical items are pointers/signposts to the themes of regrets, and dissatisfaction that characterise the suicide note for this study. These lexical items suggest/emphasize/accentuate the negativity and the melancholic dispositions of the suicide completers' and hidden and repressed crises and psychological trauma. Also, the use of the Christian register "Amen" ridicules this perception as just wishful thinking.

### **3.5.7 Social variable in the text.**

Religion is a sociological variable in the text. Aside stating his religious identities and affiliations implicitly, he uses this suicide note as an outlet to express his anti-religious beliefs which is not explicitly expressed (this is because Nigeria is viewed as a very religious country with huge respect and regards accorded to the Supreme Being). Hence, the suicide note is used to question existing religious beliefs. As seen thus: "*Where do atheists go when they die? Lol. Amen*" this is the use of sarcasm to downplay the existence and belief in the higher being. Aside being sarcastic, it is a probing and introspective rhetorical question to challenge the convictions of Africans about their beliefs in the afterlife.

### 3.5.8 Positioning

The text is inundated with different positioning styles hence the suicide completer in this note has a multiplex positioning which transcend from victim to agency. More importantly, the suicide completers write in the position of having certain rights and duties which is to challenge existing conception of the definition of life, the erroneous belief in life after death and the existence of hell. Significantly the rights demonstrated here is both anticipatory and retrospective justification that people would cease from allowing religion and religious ethos direct their lives. Thus the suicide completer exercises self-positioning moves, reflexive and second order positioning. The self-positioning move was stating his proposition to end his life but the second order positioning was the use of metalinguistic strategies to show his ideology which contradicts religious beliefs and dogmas (especially the belief in the afterlife) which is also reflexive repositioning to deride societal and religious ethos. Thus, all these positioning strategies are to construct an identity which is being a non-religious conformist.

### 3.5.9 Illocutionary forces

The above suicide note does not have ample illocutionary force hence, using another suicide note that has. In the suicide note below, the suicide completers position himself in different ways as he undertakes different roles and rights that transcend from a husband, father, counselor, preacher, to an authoritative figure who gives instructions (performative positioning). These different identities and positioning although expressed through directive sentences have underlying directive, apology and request pragmatic forces as expressed below.

*Please take care of our princess, X. (instruction)*

*Tell my family not to harbour any resentment against you. (instruction)*

*Tell her that I love her so much. (instruction)*

*Please take care of our princess, X. (request)*

*Be peaceable with everyone though not gonna be easy (admonition)*

### **3.5.10 Intensifiers**

Aside the lexical choices of negativity to express melancholic emotions and state, African suicide completers give emphasis to their expressions and emotions to accentuate their messages/communicative intents clearly and unambiguously. They use intensifiers to heighten their emotions and make conspicuous their message to their intended audience. From the analysed suicide notes, intensifiers are the equivalent of emoticons typical to computer mediated communication used to convey both positive and negative emotions as seen thus:

*I love you and Chinenye so much.*

*Tell her that I love her so much*

### **3.6 Sample of a study that uses positioning theory**

Al Ali (2018) investigates how Saudi Arabian and Australian women position themselves when performing apology acts. Aside from identifying different positioning moves, the study identifies culture as a key determinant of ‘saying sorry’ positioning in women's apologetic discourse. Drawing insight from Harré & Van Langenhove (2001) positioning theory. The study used intensive semi-structured interview, to elicit individualized narratives from 12 participants who are women domicile in Saudi Arabia and Australia respectively.

Using Harré & Van Langenhove (2001) positioning theory, the study identified self-positioning, other positioning, deliberate positioning, and forced positioning in the narratives of the women. Also using the socio cultural positioning elements of ethical and moral considerations, the study identified the different positioning keys used such as: reflective, redemptive, repair, emotional, and self-interest. Ethical positioning means acting in accordance with ethical principles. Moral positioning means to act based on the moral principles of goodness and worth. Reflective is to act following a period of reflection. Redemptive is to act to be saved from sin, errors, and mistakes. Repair is to act to redress an error or mistake. Emotional is to act predominantly on emotional impulse. Self-interest is to act saving one's face.

Also, the study identified the different metaphors used by the women in their positioning constructions. The metaphor of fragile women constructs the identity of a sensitive woman. The metaphor of super strong women demonstrates the positioning of an emotional, stubborn and sensitive woman. The metaphor of a patient woman shows the construction of a moral woman.

The study claimed that both the Saudi Arabian and Australian women used the four types of Harré & Van Langenhove (2001) positioning theory. However, there is the prevalent use of the 'forced other-positioning' and ethical, moral, redemptive, self-interest positioning by Saudi women (residing in Saudi Arabia) used to demonstrate power and exert control over others. Australian women residing in Saudi Arabia use the apology act of deliberative self and other-positioning associated with deliberation and parity. They also use repair positioning. Saudi women (residing in Australia) use self and other positioning and moral, redemptive, reflective, self-interest, emotional positioning while Australians residing in Australia deploys deliberate self and other positioning in addition to redemptive and relief positioning. Insights from these positioning mechanisms would be used to analyse the data for this study.

### 3.7 Context of the suicide notes

Olsson (2004) notes that the situational context of suicide notes is usually vague. The contextual vagueness of suicide notes is hinged on its brevity and the intended reader. The size of suicide notes is extremely limited as they leave out salient information partially because their intended reader has the shared contextual beliefs thus they consider it redundant to repeat already ‘shared’ knowledge. As a result of this, the contextual interpretation of some suicide notes is restricted to what is written in the text. However, some suicide texts that the researcher knew the context, such information would be used to explore the research questions of this study.

#### Background information of the suicide notes for the study.

The information of the suicide completers is provided below:

Table 3.1 Suicide Completers’ Demographics

	AGE	SEX	NATIONALITY	INTEDED RECIPIENT	MODE OF DEATH	YEAR OF DEATH	OTHER INFORMATION
CASE 1	In His 20’s	MALE	EASTERN, NIGERIAN	Family and some group of friends	Hanging	2016	Was a graduating senior at one of the Nigerian federal universities

							prior to his death
CASE 2	33	MALE	SOUTH AFRICAN		Died of intentional carbon monoxide poisoning.	1994	photojournalist and Pulitzer Prize winner, committed suicide just three months after winning the Pulitzer Award for feature photography of a controversial picture depicting famine in Sudan.
CASE 3	50	MALE	SOUTH AFRICA	Lover	Gun shot	2007	Was a pilot and was

							survived by lover and son
CASE 4	49	MALE	SOUTH AFRICAN	Wife	Hanging	2017	Survived by 14 children and was an actor prior to his death.
CASE 5	21	MALE	NIGERIAN	Undisclosed	Drinking insecticides	2019	Stated he had mental health challenges. Was a graduating senior in one of the Nigerian federal universities
CASE 6	19	MALE	SOUTH AFRICAN	Friends	Cut his wrists and threw himself from a hotel	2019	Died on a trip to Israel on a group trip with the BneiAkiva



					balcony to his death.		Jewish youth organisation
CASE 7	46	MALE	NIGERIAN	Wife	Drank a substance presumed to be snipper (insecticide)	2019	Survived by wife and daughter. Was a bank manager before he died
CASE 8		MALE	NIGERIAN			2020	
CASE 9	20	MALE	NIGERIAN		Undisclosed	2020	Committed suicide after he was wrongly accused of rape by a Twitter influencer.
CASE 10	27	MALE	NIGERIAN		Drank pesticides	2018	Graduating senior at one of the federal universities in

							Nigeria. Committed suicide after being asked to repeat a session because of plagiarism.
CASE 11	20	FEMALE	NIGERIAN	Mother	Took bottles of insecticides	2020	Died while performing her mandatory national youth service in Nigeria
CASE 12	22	MALE	KENYA	LOVER	Hanging	2018	Sophomore student in an African university
CASE 13	13	FEMALE	KENYA		Undisclosed	2019	Committed suicide because of her

							parents inability to sponsor her secondary school education after performing well in her Kenyan Certificate of Primary Education
CASE 14	28	FEMALE	KENYA	Father and daughter	Hanging	2019	Survived by a 3 year old daughter and father
CASE 15	Undisclosed but should be in her late 20's or 30's	FEMALE	KENYA		Undisclosed	2018	

CASE 16  (couple suicide)		MALE  AND  FEMALE  (NEWLY WED HUBAND  AND WIFE)	KENYA		UNDISCLOSED	2019	Committed suicide four days after wedding because of debt incurred from wedding which was with a debt of Ksh 7.9 million (almost US\$70,000).
CASE 17	38	MALE	SOUTH AFRICAN	Mother		2018	He was an Hip Hop Artiste who publicly admitted to be depressed and had attempted suicide 3 times.

CASE 18	In her teen years	FEMALE	KENYA	Sister	Not disclosed	2019	Was a student in the secondary school before her death
CASE 19	29	MALE	KENYA		Hanging	2019	Was the prime suspect in the murder of his wife
CASE 20	Late 20's or in his 30's	MALE	NIGERIAN		Undisclosed	2021	He was a digital strategist prior to his demise and was reported missing before his suicide.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **ANALYSIS SECTION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This section examines the recurring and specific discourse and structural patterns that characterized the suicide notes with copious examples extracted from the suicide texts. It will start with analyzing the prevalent structural discourse patterns then transit to the recurring discourse patterns in the selected suicide notes. Furthermore, it would examine the specific structural and discourse patterns characterizing each suicide notes then analyse the lexical items in each suicide notes.

#### **4.2 Recurring structural patterns in the selected African suicide notes**

Pronouns, presupposition, repetition, interrogatives, if conditionals, and intensifiers, are the recurring structural patterns that characterized the twenty (20) suicide notes. These common and prevalent structural patterns would be explained in detail.

##### **4.2.1 Pronouns**

There are two types of pronominals that characterized the suicide texts. The exclusive and inclusive pronouns which are either used to emphasize agency or victimhood, sole authorial identity or collaboration, power or shared responsibilities in addition to demonstrating self and other positioning. For example, these linguistic constructions “I am so sad, Toto’. We have been together and trusted each other’ express exclusive and affective statements in addition to self and other positioning. Also, there is the use of other pronouns such as possessive pronouns used to convey some emotional positioning, social inclusion, and sense of belonging to an in-group identity as expressed in these examples ‘My love, I can’t find words that would form a perfect

statement to express how much I love you.’ “‘My fellow gamblers, I am sorry’. Also, is the use of the personal pronoun ‘You’ used for other positioning as expressed thus ‘You’re a good woman and you deserve the best.’

#### **4.2.1.1 Exclusive pronouns**

This is used by African suicide completers to demonstrate agency, power, dominance, and authority. It is a powerful self-positioning posture that suggests absolute control, and an unwavering decision making process in suicidal construction which also reiterates an active voice or active sentence constructions. This first person pronominal was used in 19 suicides notes except for one written by a couple who uses the inclusive pronoun we to suggest joint decision making. Examples of these exclusive pronouns include:

*I got it all wrong when I rejected Jesus*

*I am taking away my life*

*I am going out of control*

*I am losing it*

*I ‘m depressed*

*I rejected Him.*

*I am sorry*

*I let you all down*

*I have gone to join Ken if I am that lucky*

*I do love you*

*I can't take it any more*

*I know our relationship would have changed*

*I will miss everyone and everything here*

*I'm dead*

*I feel like dying*

*I did this because I see nothing worth living*

*I loved you for it*

*I know it is the only way to solve this problem*

*I have fought the battle*

*I know how it feels*

*I told you that should I make any mistake then I am going to take away my life*

*I cannot take being sent away from school*

*I cannot withstand losing my precious wife*

*I've battled depression for 7 years*

All the above examples assert the use of the first person pronoun to demonstrate their respective sole decision making in suicidal act (self-positioning), authority, and assertion of agency rather



than victimhood. However, the exclusive pronouns is also used as an emotional positioning to signal an affective stance of melancholy and depression.

#### **4.2.1.2 Inclusive pronoun**

While the exclusive pronoun represents agency and sole authority in suicidal decisions the inclusive pronoun used in the suicide notes represents the merging of self and other positioning. This viewpoint was shared by Roubidoux (2011) that suicide completers use the first-person pronoun ‘we’ to show alignment with a referenced group. In the African suicide notes, African suicide completer use the pronominal ‘we’ to suggest equality among referenced individuals, reduce distance, and to affirm alignment. However, the limited number of the inclusive pronouns suggests that suicide completers aimed at displaying authority, agency and power in their suicide text which is demonstrated through the prolific use of the pronoun ‘I’ Examples of the few instances of the inclusive pronoun include:

*We will meet where we will depart no more*

*We played together like little kids*

*We are embarrassed & ashamed*

*We have been together and trusted each other*

*The cuddles we shared... we even have a bank account*

The use of the inclusive pronoun is used for three purposes. The first is to express nostalgic feelings of treasured memories they shared with their respective readers or loved ones. The second is to

give hints of hope of possible reconnection in the afterlife. The third is to demonstrate or express shared affective stance.

#### **4.2.1.3 Other pronouns**

These include the use of possessive pronoun ‘my’ and other personal pronouns like me, and our. The possessive pronoun “my” is used to reinforce and emphasize membership to an in-group identity which shows the reverence African suicide completers have towards social inclusion. The personal pronoun ‘you’ is used to refer to others specially to achieve other positioning for the conveyance of either positive or negative attitudes. The use of the pronoun ‘me’ shows passive constructions which convey some element of victimhood while the pronoun ‘our’ is used to show inclusion of the addressed. This would be explained thoroughly in the examples below:

*You married a wrong man*

This declarative construction is used for other positioning as the suicide completer addresses his wife with the second-person pronoun ‘you.’ The preponderance of the second-person pronoun in this particular suicide note has positive affective connotation of positioning his wife as a person worthy of admiration and applaud. Thus, these positively induced affective declarative constructions are imperative because in the Nigerian context which the suicide completer belongs when a man dies of suicide the wife is usually blamed for his death as a sign of negligence and putting undue pressure on him. Hence, he needed to clear all suspicions surrounding his death and fully self-absorbs himself as the sole cause of his suicidal intentions/act. Thus, he uses other positioning constructions to save the face of his wife and protect her against external aggressions which might arise from his suicidal decision. This explains the constructions ‘You're a blessing to

us' 'You need to be happy' and 'You need to soar.' which represent endearing affective statements to position the wife as someone worthy of praise and not rebuke or condemnation.

*You were a friend, a person I could confide in and most important, a lover.*

*I trusted you (until I found you (sic) another man).*

*I gave you my heart, hell ...even gave you my life.*

*You are my queen (or were, now that am (sic) dead!) I forever treat you with love*

*Always know that I could never hurt you*

The second person pronominal is used explicitly in this suicide text to describe the intended reader of this suicide text who is the suicide completer's lover. The use of this pronoun is to portray an agent-victim-relationship as the life of the suicide completer revolves around his love (other positioning). The lover being the agent and he being a victim. Thus, he uses these pronouns prolifically to express the height of his love (infatuation), affection, and devotion he exercises and portrays to his lover. This devotion is furthered portrayed when he said:

*The five promises I made you:*

*1. I will forever love you*

*2. I will never cheat on you*

*3. I will never lie to you*

*4. Most importantly your word is my command*

*5. I CAN NEVER LIVE WITHOUT you*

In all the promises made, the pronoun 'you' was repeated which aside demonstrating a foregrounding-cum-emphatic strategy of strong positive affection, it also conveys the stance of

victimhood which the suicide completer identifies with and his proud of. These positive affective dispositions are surprising as the suicide completer despite acknowledging his victimhood still relish the memories they had despite the expression of the sentence.

*You shouted at me*

This construction exemplifies the use of the second-person pronominal to position others (in this case his lover) as agent(s) in the storylines of victimhood that resulted in suicidal acts. Similarly, it implicitly conveys the negative affective disposition of the suicide completer to his lover who he positions as someone non-requital to his love despite his incessant outpouring of affection.

*It had to be someone, you know*

The use of the second-person pronoun is used to address an unidentified reader as the suicide completer writes the note to anyone who sees the note first. Here, the pronominal has no specific reader in mind but used indefinitely to whosoever sees the suicide note. Furthermore, this construction represents a hedged construction with limited agency but heightened victimhood as the suicide completer tries to negotiates and rationalize to the prospective audience or reader addressed with the exophoric pronoun ‘you’ that precede the lexical item ‘know’ to justify why the indefinite pronoun is used.

*My fellow gamblers*

Suicide completers also used their suicide text to show their in-group identity realized through the possessive pronoun ‘my’ which reiterates the ‘us’ membership. In this particular suicide text, the suicide completer has a social group which he recognizes and affirms as shown in the simple sentences ‘My fellow lions’ ‘My family’ he uses these constructions to convey his apologies to

the in-group identities that determines his inner affiliations which also index social meaning of 'inside' membership.

*Well here it is my love*

The suicide completer uses the possessive pronoun 'my' to convey his unrepentant love, fondness and faithfulness even till the point of death. The use of this possessive pronoun which conveys positive affective stance is shocking as prior to this construction, the former partner requested for his suicide note, thus, still according her with such respect and love is ironic.

One striking finding of the use of other pronouns by African suicide completers is to offer shocking revelation to their intended audience/reader the contrast between anticipated action by their reader and the real action which is a strategy to position themselves as victims in their suicidal decisions and sway the emotions of their readers in their directions. Aside pronouns, references are also deployed by suicide completers to convey agency and activeness in suicidal acts.

#### **4.2.2 Cataphoric reference**

Cataphoric reference is used through the use of demonstratives to refer to death vaguely and implicitly. Examples are expressed thus:

*I did **this** because I see nothing worth living*

*I know it is the only way to solve **this problem***

These are rationalizing sentences or constructions that suicide completer uses to justify their suicidal acts. In these two instances, the demonstrative 'this' refers to the act of suicide which refers contextually that the suicide completers have decided to end their lives. The use of these

cataphoric references also has self-positioning undertone of the demonstrating of agency in suicidal acts and decisions. Aside cataphoric reference is the use of interrogative which is a structural pattern in the African suicide texts used to convey different positioning moves.

### 4.2.3 Interrogatives

African suicide completers deploy interrogatives in their suicide texts for request, to probe (sometimes dogmatic thinking, and established order), to make accusations, and for rhetorical effects. Thus, the interrogatives serve informational, examining, indirect/direct request and rhetorical purposes (Athansiadu, 1990). Examples include:

*Where do atheists go to when they die?*

The interrogative used has manifold functions. It conveys an information about the suicide completer of being atheistic or agnostic. It is also a rhetorical question not necessarily to derive an answer but to probe the minds of his readers about the infallibility and existence of heaven, hell, and the divine order. It is also an examining question with an accusatory undertone to chide Christian faith of being all knowing and supreme. It is also an indirect request that mortals should stop believing in the afterlife or in the religious beliefs of the existence of heaven and hell. It invariably also has an expert positioning undertone as the question is not necessarily to seek a response but to convey a stance of superiority about his idiosyncratic religious misgivings.

*Guess what?*

This interrogative has different functions. It has rhetorical, probing, and accusatory effects. It is rhetorical as it wants the audience to feel and understand the pain of his masculinity being stripped from him. It is probing as it seeks to make the audience know why suicide is the next course of

action and it is accusatory because it blames its death on the loss of his material possessions which dictates and determine his life and well-being.

*“did I play my role in her life”, did u even add any value*

This is an examination question meant to probe the minds of the audience. It is also an indirect request question to spur the audience to live a purposeful life. In this instance the suicide completer assumes and positions himself as a preacher, counselor offering didactic messages on how mortals should leave their lives (expert positioning). Aside the use of interrogatives is the use of presupposition to establish mutual contextual beliefs between the suicide completer and their intended audience.

#### **4.2.4 Presupposition**

*“My fellow gamblers, I am sorry*

It could be inferred that the suicide writer has a predilection for gambling through the lexis ‘gamblers’

*I love Jeremy more than I can express and I'm sorry if I have not been the best father to him. God knows, I've tried. Forgive me Jeremy.*

There is an underlying perception that being a good father is questioned in addition to being a good husband, hence, he engages in a moral positioning stance by doing a lot of repairs to salvage his fatherly and husband roles that are being questioned.

*Trying to pretend to be someone I'm not in front of all of you is becoming more tiring by the day as I'm not the heterosexual being I portray for you.*

The suicide completer did not state explicitly his sexuality but it could be inferred that he is homosexual. The inclusion of the negator 'not' before the nominal group 'the heterosexual' suggests that the suicide completer did not identify with the mainstream African sexual orientation (heteronormativity/heterosexuality) hence, he seems to have a different and unpopular sexuality that can be perceived as queerness in the African sexual landscape.

*Don't cry for me but pray for me*

*I won't give up in Jesus' name, amen*

While the religious disposition of the suicide completer is not revealed, it could be inferred that he has subtle religious idiosyncrasies (most likely belonging to the Christian faith). Also, the inclusion of the nominal item 'Jesus' which is a lexis of Christian faith accentuate this connotation.

*even ur own blood can betray you, I know how it feels, I've experienced that already*

*How I wish I could have left an offspring to represent me in this cruel world*

From the metaphoric and indirect preambles in the beginning of the suicide note, it could be inferred that suicide completer is a victim of betrayer of trust. And have lost possessions and status. It also presupposes that he had no child or offspring.

*I didn't send my mum a note because I couldn't bear it.*

While not stated explicitly, the suicide completer had huge admiration, reverence for his mother and that he still has a living mother. It also presupposes (as a pragmatic strategy) his religious disposition of belonging to the Christian faith demonstrated through this construction with



underlying religious undertones “I pray the Father forgives him” In the Christian faith, God is regarded as a Father which they pray to.

*I'm depressed, I am going out of control, I'm losing it*

While this suicide completer was covert with why he chooses to commit suicide. His simple declarative constructions reveal his affective stances of negativity and presupposes depression as the cause of his suicide. Thus, these affective statements presuppose the negativity in the mind of the suicide completer. This was collaborated as this suicide completer openly admitted to being depressed as he had attempted suicide three times and also have visited suicide websites (Times, 2018). His depressed situation was also confirmed by his father publicly, who was a retired psychologist and claimed that his son complained of not getting the deserved respect from the music industry (City Press, 2018), this perhaps might be one of the reasons for his depression.

Aside the use of presupposition to demonstrate shared meanings between suicide completers and their intended readers, it is used to convey the emotional positioning of suicide completers. More so, suicide completers use repetition for emphasis and conveyance of specific affective statements.

#### **4.2.5 Repetition**

There are specific constructions and lexical items that were found in most of the suicide notes (external repetition). The lexical and syntactic repetitions are:

*I am sorry'*

This simple declarative sentence was a recurring discourse syntactic pattern in the suicide notes. Its equivalent is the single lexical item ‘sorry’ which is also repeated. This construction is used to

show penitence and remorse which also is a form of reflective positioning. Similar to this construction of remorse is:

*'Forgive me''*

This construction is also used as an emotional positioning to portray suicide completers' remorse and sorry state.

*I love you*

This construction is also repeated to display the positive affective disposition of the suicide completer to specific audience usually their partner, parents, best friends, and family. Some use specific endearment lexis such as 'the best' 'my love' 'my precious wife' to convey their happiness and satisfaction to the addressed.

While repetition is a structural pattern used as emotional positioning strategy, if conditionals are used also by suicide completers to express their different affective stance.

#### **4.2.6 If conditionals**

African suicide completers use a lot of if-conditionals as a strategy to convey apology and display remorse to their addressed audience. It is also used as a precluding strategy to announce suicidal intentions or conveying some information. Examples include:

*If I've hurt you, it has not been intentional*

This construction is addressed to his wife as an apologetic strategy to appeal for any misgivings surrounding his suicidality. This is done as the decision to end his life was not divulged or disclosed

to his partner who was oblivious of his suicidal ideation. He uses his failing health condition as a rationalizing strategy for his suicidal intention and a self-absorption technique to justify his action.

*if you're reading this, I'm dead*

This conditional construction is addressed to his online audience and reader as the suicide note was posted on his Instagram social handle. Hence, he uses this suicide note as a self-absorption strategy to inform the world of erasing the stigma and reproach that was attached to his name as he was alleged of rape. It could be inferred that he expressed his victimhood till the point of death as his suicide was neither impulsive nor premediated but done to get rid of the depression and shame his name has been labelled with.

*If you are reading this, then you know how much she meant to me*

This if conditional is used to address his potential readers to emphasize the height of the love and regards he accords his mum. He explained in his suicide note that the reason for the delay in his suicidal intention was because of his ever-supportive mum who has prevented him thrice from realizing his suicidal ideation. Thus, the suicide note was to position his mother as a supportive and empathetic mum who did her best to make him a better person.

*Maybe if he had stolen from me or put your life in any danger and I would comfortably chop off his head*

The use of the if-conditional in this suicide text is to convey the possibility and high likelihood of an action (which in this case is the action of murder). The suicide completer used this if-conditional construction to accentuates the height of his affection to his lover and his readiness to go to any height to prove it, even if it requires killing. In this particular suicide context, the suicide completer

was jilted by his lover as she preferred him to another man. Hence, he uses his suicide note to states that the only reason why he could not endanger the ‘new lover’ is because he never posed a threat to her and if he had, he would have willingly committed murder to prove his devotion and unconditional affection.

*If you are reading this, it's because I loved you, or had feelings that I thought I understand as love*

The use of the if-conditional represents an affective statement used by the suicide completer as the conveyance of affection to his girlfriend who might doubt his love for her. Hence, the suicide completer been aware of this doubt uses his suicide text to reaffirm and reiterate his strong feelings and love he had expressed in a compound sentence. The first part of the compound sentence has an embedded subordinating clause of reason ‘because I loved you’ to express his affection to the lady in question. Also, the suicide completer uses the conjunction ‘or’ to suggest alternative that though his love might be questioned he has feelings towards the girl which he understood as love expressed in the relative clause ‘that I thought I understand as love.’ Thus, the use of the if-conditional sentence is for emphatic and foregrounding purposes to reiterate and rehash the strong affection the suicide completer has to his girlfriend.

*If I have hurt you in the process, my spirit begs for forgiveness*

This if-conditional sentence has an illocutionary force of apology. As prior to the use of this construction, the suicide completer itemizes the strategies of affection his girlfriend has used to reaffirm her unconditional love for him. These acts of love are hugs, gifts, and positive words of affirmation. Hence, he apologizes in case of any possibility of wrongdoing from his end as he stated that the girlfriend has shown him nothing but love as stated in the compound sentence ‘I am thankful for you opening your heart to me, and showing me kindness even when I don’t think I

deserved it.’ The construction ‘My spirit begs for forgiveness’ reiterates the African belief in the existence of a person’s spirit even after their physical demise. Thus, the suicide completer shows a sense of indebtedness to the girlfriend for her priceless acts/service of love.

Aside if-conditionals used as an affective-conveying-strategy, intensifiers are also used to heighten these affective stances by suicide completers. Hence, both structural patterns have emotional positioning undertones.

#### **4.2.7 Intensifiers**

This discourse strategy is used to heighten the emotions and attitudes of the suicide completers. It is used to convey the depth of admiration, love, reverence to someone and the remorse they have to their suicidal intentions. Also, intensifiers are used melancholically by suicide completers to voice their regrets and frustration. Also, there are repetition of specific intensifiers such as ‘really’ ‘all’ and ‘so’. Examples include:

*I got it **all** wrong when I rejected Jesus*

The use of the adjective ‘all’ to describe the nominal item ‘wrong’ is to heighten his melancholy that he is the sole cause of his suicide. He attributed his suicide to negligence in his religious obligations as he decided to refute his Christian ethos and values. He ascribes his downfall to his inability to explore his God-given talents and potentials which explains the construction ‘*God gave me **all** I needed to succeed*’ Thus, the use of two intensifiers is to foreground a self-directed melancholy as a result of putting aside his prior religious convictions and principles.

*I’m **really, really** sorry*

The addressed in this particular simple declarative construction is unknown as the suicide completer only used his suicide text to convey his melancholic affective stance. It could however be inferred that he expresses this sadness through the repetition of the adverb ‘really’ to convey his regrets of suicidal intention to those who hold him in high esteem. As prior to his death, he is a globally recognized photographer who is renowned for his creativity and ingenuity in his artistic displays. Thus, he conveys his apologies and provide rationalization why he has to commit suicide because of his financial states which has questioned his manhood and masculine dignity.

*I am so sad*

This is an affective statement used to convey the inner turmoil of the suicide completer. It is used by the suicide completer to express his melancholy after his lover deserted him for another man. The adverb ‘so’ is to show the frequency/degree of his negative emotions which is enormous and huge.

*Tell her that I love her so much*

This construction has an inherent instruction-cum-request illocutionary force as the suicide completer performs his fatherly role and obligation by expressing his affection to his daughter. This is a positive affective declarative construction used to convey the affection of a father to his daughter to be conveyed by a third party (mum/wife).

*...to express how much I love you*

This is expressed by a mother to her daughter to convey her maternal love. This is another instance of affective statements conveyed through the adverb phrase ‘how much’ which expresses the degree of affection the mother has towards her daughter. Thus, the mother premeditatedly write a

suicide note with the intention that the daughter and the reader could explicitly see the immeasurable motherly love she exhibits even till the point of death.

*I know this will hurt you **soo much***

The suicide completer refers to his best friend here, who has been supportive towards him. The adverb ‘so’ is foregrounded with the addition of the grapheme ‘o’ which is to convey the height of the hurt, disappointment the friend is expected to display to his suicidal decision. Thus, the cataphoric reference ‘this’ contextually means suicide which the suicide completer presumed would be received sadly as conveyed through two adverbs of frequency ‘so’ and ‘much’

*The noise got **too** loud*

This is a figurative expression as the suicide completer does not refer to physical noise that causes disturbances and mental distress but psychological and emotional restiveness that beclouds his judgement and sanity. Noise generally are harmful and dangerous with uncomfortable connotations, hence, the suicide completer adapts this abstract nominal item to intensify and heighten this discomfort through the use of the adverb ‘too’ to suggest the level of unpleasantness the suicide completer is in, which offers a subtle rationalization as to why suicide is the only way out.

#### **4.3 Recurring discourse patterns in the African suicide notes**

Two discourse patterns is preponderant in the suicide note which is metaphor (with an element of personification) and intertextuality. While metaphor is used to invoke mental images with death associations, intertextuality is used to express the inherent affective stances of the suicide completers drawing associations from external texts.

### 4.3.1 Metaphors-cum-personification

African suicide completers use metaphoric constructions either at the lexical or syntactic level to indirectly convey information especially when referring to death. The metaphoric discourse strategy usually has personifying and euphemistic undertones. Examples include:

*Death is knocking at my door*

This means to end one's life. Most times African suicide completers use euphemism to convey death and suicidal intentions because words like death are not explicitly stated in the African culture but covertly conveyed using metaphors and euphemistic constructions. Also death is personalized as a god and deity in Africa which is accorded reverence hence using animate qualities for it. Thus, in this context, death is given the human attribute of knocking. Also, the lexis 'door' is metaphoric as it means the suicide completer mind which is the seat of his reasoning and judgment. Hence, his rationale mind has been overtaken by suicidal ideation and ultimately, suicidal action.

*even ur own blood can betray you*

In this context, blood means one's immediate family. That is people of the same parent. The suicide completer uses this metaphoric lexis to heighten the possibility of betrayer from anyone even from one's family (those who are expect to protect and safeguard one another). Hence, he subtly cautions his readers to be careful of trusting people as being related or belonging to the same family does not rule out the possibility of betrayer.



### 4.3.2 Intertextuality

*I have chosen Jo Nketaih's poem as my suicide note: "They said you came looking for me. I didn't drown; I was the water."*

Jo Nketaih is an African young female writer from Ghana (who post her poems online) who the suicide completer admires and had casual chat with online. When the poet was interviewed she claimed that the poem was more of a victory poem about her triumph from depression and not meant to be used as solace for suicidal intention (Premium Times, 2020). Thus, the suicide completer had 'wrongly' adapted the poem to convey his powerlessness and helplessness in his drowning predicament.

## 4.4 Specific discourse strategies in the suicide notes

Aside the prevalent discourse patterns that underlie the suicide notes for this study, there are specific and peculiar discourse mechanisms deployed by specific suicide completer. These specific discourse strategies are lexical and phrasal repetition, ellipsis, hedges of dialogue, antonymic construction, exclamatory construction, register of Nigerianess, and construction of victimhood.

### 4.4.1 Lexical and phrasal repetition

This is different from the recurring repetitive constructions that exist in all the suicide notes as they represent the idiosyncratic affective stances of each suicide completers (internal repetition).

The lexis 'fellow' and 'rejected' were repeated twice in suicide text A. The lexis 'fellow' is to demonstrate the in group identity the writer exhibits to his audience while the lexis 'rejected' is to convey his emotional frustration for rejecting the divine/the supernatural being. In suicide text B,

the lexical item 'money' is repeated four times which presupposes that financial incapacitation is one of the causes of suicide for this particular suicide completer. In suicide text F, the suicide completer repeated the phrasal construction 'deep down' twice. This is used also to reiterate self and other positioning. It suggests self-positioning because the suicide completer is aware of his different sexual orientation from his friends who belong to the mainstream sexual orientation of heterosexuality. Hence, the construction 'deep down' connotes the manifestation of a different identity (individual identity) despite belonging to a social identity characterized by manliness and heterosexuality. Similarly, the first use was to demonstrate other positioning as the suicide completer was definitive that his friends are aware of his sexuality and they choose to look the other way because of the African society disposition to a default sexual orientation. The second use of the phrasal construction is self-positioning as he believes revealing his actual sexuality will taint his relationship with his friends. Thus, there is an exchange/sacrifice of self for others to gain societal approval, the embracement of a sense of belonging and in-group identity at the expense of his real self. Furthermore, there is the repetition of the phrasal construction 'you need' by the suicide completer in text G to achieve emphasis and foreground the addresses rights to living a satisfying life.

Aside lexical and phrasal repetition, there is an instance of agency, power and sole ownership is demonstrated in suicide text Q through the repetition of the 'I'm' construction thrice in a suicide text of just one sentence. While suicide completers are deliberate in repeating certain constructions, there are also instances of suicide completers being parsimonious with information achieved through the use of ellipsis.

#### 4.4.2 Ellipsis

Ellipsis is a linguistic strategy that shows that the writer is withholding some information. This is applicable in suicide text as the context are usually vague (Olsson, 2004) which requires shared mutual contextual beliefs to decipher the missing links and information. In this particular suicide text, the suicide completer uses predot ellipsis when expressing his affective stance about the personal reasons for his resort to suicide. Thus, he uses this linguistic/discourse marker to express that his affective outburst cannot be sufficiently expressed in the written form as he has a lot going on his mind. Predot ellipsis is used eight times in the suicide note B. This conveys that the writer is withholding a lot of information about his current affective state which is negative as seen thus:

*The pain of life overrides the joy to the point that joy does not exist...I*

*am depressed...without phone...money for rent...money for child support...money for*

*debts...money!!!...*

Thus, while African suicide completers use ellipsis to convey their negative affective stance to communicate a theme of melancholy, suicide completers also use hedges that have semblance with dialogue to invoke the imagination and involvement of their audience and readers to their suicidal messages.

#### 4.4.3 Hedges of dialogue (use of ‘you know’ ‘Guess What?’)

While suicide is viewed as a one-way linear communication because the suicide completer only passes a message with no elicited response/feedback, this discourse marker of hedge is used to mimic real life interaction and conversation as used in suicide text E. It also represents shared

mutual contextual information as the addressed understand what the writer is expressing as it represents shared knowledge between them.

In the construction ‘guess what’ the suicide completer tries to elicit responses from his online audience about the new circumstances in his life that decided his suicidal decision. He started by providing information about how good his life was and uses the probing interrogative ‘guess what’ to provide the irony about the change in his status from a comfortable man to a financially unstable being. Thus, it represents using engagement mechanisms/ the use of interrogative to offer a solid foundation for the rationalisation of his suicide aside its underlying rhetorical effects.

Aside the use of hedges, is the use of antonymic construction to contrast positive and negative qualities of the suicide completer or specific individuals for highlighting affective effects. This strategy is used to accentuate self and other positioning.

#### **4.4.4 Antonymic construction**

In suicide text G, the suicide completer uses antonymic construction to achieve contrasting self and other positioning. The use of this construction of contrast is to highlight the positive qualities of the suicide completer partner so as to bring about a favourable perception of her. An example of this construction is:

*You married a wrong man. You're a good woman and you deserve the best.*

In this particular suicide note, the suicide completer is keen on protecting the ‘face’ of his partner thus, he seeks to discredit himself and applaud his partner as a self-absorbing strategy of claiming full ownership for his suicidal decisions and the circumstances resulting in his suicide. This

contrasting self-cum-other-positioning is needed as a redemptive strategy to protect his partner who might be liable to blame for his suicidal act.

Another affective conveying structural pattern in addition to antonymic construction is exclamatory constructions with different affective connotations.

#### **4.4.5 Exclamatory construction**

Emotions and affective dispositions are also conveyed through the use of exclamations used to convey different ranges of attitudes. An example is in suicide text I as shown below:

*Oh and if you're reading this*

This is used to convey an element of shock and surprise. The suicide completer predicts his readers who exercise surprise for his suicidal decision because he did not allow the law to acquit him of the alleged rape he was accused of. Thus, he envisages the mixed emotional reactions his suicidal intention might resonate in his readers.

*I CAN NEVER LIVE WITHOUT you*

While interjections like 'oh' is used to convey emotions, capitalization is used for emphasis and to convey stronger emotions. This is the only instance of capitalization in the whole suicide text in this data used by the suicide completer to express the strong feelings and affective stance he has towards his lover who jilted him for another man. This capitalization conveys the construction of victimhood as the suicide completer invariably stated the rationale behind his suicide which is his inability to deal with his lover rejection as his whole life revolves around her. Hence, this

construction heightened by the capitalized graphemes suggest the helplessness of the suicide completer in the face of rejection.

While suicide completers exploit different affective stance, they equally exploit their African contexts for inclusive meaning for audiences/readers that share this context.

#### **4.4.6 Register of ‘Nigerianess’**

The constructions used in suicide text J reflect the sociolinguistic landscape of Nigeria as these expressions are meaning inclusive to people of Nigerian nationality or those familiar with such linguistic construction. The complex nominal phrasal construction ‘copy and paste’ means plagiarism, ‘same research work’ means current research work. ‘I don tire’ means I am fed up. ‘Deep mess’ means an unsanitary situation. Thus, the suicide completer appeals to only his Nigerian audience due to the use of constructions with meaning inclusivity to only Nigerians. These constructions represent an in-group affiliation/membership as it represents the use of Pidgin English which is also a means of communication of wider coverage. This type of ‘lingua franca’ is used by Nigerian youths for easy communication and accessibility, hence the suicide completer writes with the Nigerian youths in mind to elicit their sympathy, and support.

Aside shared context details in suicide texts, suicide completers also use constructions that convey their victimhood states.

#### **4.4.7 Constructions of victimhood**

While this discourse strategy would be better explained under the positioning mechanism deployed by African suicide completers as suicide completers position themselves either to assert agency or victimhood. It is significant to note that passive constructions are intentionally made by suicide

completers to (re)position themselves as victims, a huge contrast to the demonstration of agency through the use of the first person pronominal 'I'. Examples of these passive-cum-victim-constructions are explicitly shown in suicide text L as shown below:

*Now that I cannot live without you*

*The sacrifices I made just to see you smile*

*Now that you judged and gave me a command*

*Now that you shouted at me from inside your room with your "boyfriend" that I should "go kill yourself" and even asked for my suicide note*

*well here it is my love," reads the suicide note.*

These are constructions of victimhood because the suicide completers rather than rationalize that their suicidal decision is as a result of willful intention, they based their suicidal acts on how they were treated by their respective partner. In this particular suicide text, the suicide completer only resort to suicide because of betrayer of trust and confidence which emasculate and dehumanize his manliness.

Aside these structural and discourse patterns inherent in these suicide texts, the lexical items in the suicide notes are also carriers of meanings which are significant for the discourse under investigation.

#### **4.5 Lexical items used in the suicide texts.**

The lexical items would be discussed text by text and are alphabetically ordered.

In suicide text A, there is the use of the lexis of religion and self-blame. The religious inclination of the suicide completer is revealed through prevalent references to register of Christianity such as 'Jesus' 'God' etc. The lexis used by the writer is also to convey some of his emotional stances and dispositions. Lexis such as 'wrong' 'rejected' (which was repeated twice) is a self-positioning strategy to accept all the blames that culminated in his suicide. In suicide text B, there is the lexis of negativity and melancholy. For instance, the lexical item 'haunted' provides a vivid representation of what is going on in the mind of the suicide completer. The suicide completer is troubled and disturbed (post traumatic disorder) of the ghastly images he saw as a journalist. Hence, these words reveal the level of underdevelopment, and deprivation Africans go through which spiral into suicidal thoughts. Lexis of 'corpses' 'starving or wounded children' also conveys the rate of police brutality, impunity, and lawlessness of (African) police officials who are meant to protect lives and properties but are destroying these lives. Suicide text C also rehashes the lexis of melancholy through the use of lexical items like: sorry, miserable, depression, continuous pain, and battle. Similarly, the lexis of negativity is also conveyed in suicide text D through the lexis: sad, trash, broke, and useless. There is also the lexis of religion and subtle sadness in suicide text E which include: atheist, and sad. Suicide text F uses lexical items that express fear, deceit, the double standard, and hypocritical lifestyle of Africans when it borders around sexuality expressed through the lexis: tiring, insolvable, difference, moving on, isolated, alone, pretend, and changed. Suicide text G uses positive lexis as a strategy to position his partner as a virtuous woman, thus we see extended lexical items like: My beloved, good woman, the best. Suicide text H uses extended lexis like: push through, push again, courage. These lexical items suggest depression and the absence of will in the suicide completer to continue to endure. Suicide text I was just a one-line suicide note with no foregrounding lexical items. Suicide text J uses



lexical constructions of depression and negativity such as: bad to worst, a deep mess, don tire me, dying.

Suicide text K uses positive lexis in addressing her audience especially through the repetition of the lexical item 'love'. Suicide text L uses lexis of positive and negative nostalgia such as: good, sacrifices, smile, remember, loved, judged, shouted, kill etc. Suicide text M uses lexis of definitiveness that suicide is the best option which shows wielding unlimited power and authority. The lexis includes: the best option, the only way. The adjectives used demonstrated the level of persuasiveness and complete authority, and power the suicide completer has towards the act. Also the use of the definite article 'the' affirms this. Suicide text N uses lexis of remorse such as forgive me, sorry, and love you. Suicide text O uses lexis of endearment, religion (Christian faith), and negativity such as: Dearest, my ever best friend, God, lord. Also the adjectives used convey hurt, disappointment, and resentment such as cruel world, painful past. Suicide text P used lexis of negativity such as embarrassed, ashamed. Suicide text Q uses lexis of depression through the use of words like depressed and extended constructions like 'going out of control' and 'losing it'. Suicide text R also rehashes victimhood through extended lexis like: forgive me, sent away. Suicide text S also used lexis of such as: blamed, losing, cannot withstand and a positive word 'precious' an adjective used to describe his late partner in the endearment construction 'my precious wife'. Suicide text T uses extended lexis like struggled, never loved myself used to convey depression and melancholy. There is also the lexis of positivity to show admiration to the specific audience especially the adjectives used to qualify the nominal item: thoughtful messages, the hugs, the gifts, positive words of affirmation, overwhelming feelings, thankful, kindness, I love you dearly.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.1 Introduction

The positioning moves and the social variables underlining the suicide notes are discussed in this chapter

### 5.2 Positioning strategies deployed in the suicide notes

There are different positioning strategies deployed which ranged from first-order positioning, intentional positional, second-order positioning, third-order positioning, expert positioning and moral positioning. Moral positioning has different strata to include: reflective, redemptive, repair, emotional, and self-interest positioning. Each of the suicide notes are analysed based on the positioning mechanisms deployed. Also, emphasis is placed on the pragmatic forces (illocutionary forces inherent in the suicide text) to relate it to the positioning moves in the suicide notes. Thus, each suicide notes are alphabetically ordered.

#### 5.2.1 Suicide text A

There is the demonstration of moral positioning in which the emotional impulses of the writer are displayed as that of being reflective towards his own deeds as expressed in the construction “I got it all wrong when I rejected Jesus.’ There is also intentional positioning as the suicide completer fully exercises agency through the repetition of the first person pronominal to position himself not as a victim but a key influencer of his own actions and future. His representation is explicit rather than tacit established through the use of declarative constructions which are information giving rather than information seeking. An example is ‘I let you all down.’

The predominant illocutionary force in the suicide note is claiming and acceptance of rights and duties which suggest agency. His duty is to receive full absorption of his guilt by telling his family, friends, and in group fraternity that he is the cause of his own death and that his suicide is not a because of being a victim but is of his own intention which also magnifies his intentional self-positioning stance. This expressed thus ‘My fellow gamblers, I am sorry; my fellow lions, I am sorry; my family, I let you all down.’

Tacitly, the suicide completer also exemplifies the first order or performative positioning by telling his audience to reverence God and Christ and that one way to avoid being in his own situation is to follow God and Christ completely. Thus, he uses the repair positioning to salvage his own inadequacies so that others will not follow suit. This is expressed implicitly in the construction ‘... I rejected Jesus ... God gave me all I needed to succeed. I rejected Him.’

### **5.2.2 Suicide text B**

There is intentional positioning in this suicide text as the suicide completer affirms that the choice to end his life is a volitional and the best course of action as expressed in the declarative sentence ‘I have gone to join Ken if I am that lucky.’ Furthermore, there is a negotiation with the targeted audience that suicide his is only remedy, hence, it is a right, duty, and obligation he has to fulfill. An example of this construction is ‘The pain of life overrides the joy to the point that joy does not exist...’ He positions himself as a helpless man who has lost the sense of purpose and direction in life and has to end his life.

### 5.2.3 Suicide text C

There is an explicit demonstration of intentional positioning to achieve certain rights, duties, and obligations. The duty of sharing his material and financial possessions suggest agency and the construction of ‘owned identity.’ There is no negotiation of roles or duties but an explicit assertion of his rights and obligations. The underlying illocutionary force in this suicide note is giving rights to others especially his partner and son. The lexis ‘authorise’ and the constructions ‘you can have this house’ “I leave everything else to Jeremy as stated therein” are agency positioning that stresses intentional and performative positioning.

Demanding illocutionary force which suggest agency, intentional and performative positioning are evident in the suicide text which include:

“Please look after him for me”

“please tell Barry and SAA it's no reflection on our pilot body.”

There is also moral positioning as the suicide completer explores reflective, emotional, and repair positioning to adjudge the moral principle of right or wrong. By being reflective and emotional at the same time he tries to persuade the sentiment and moral compass of his audience that the choice to end his life is the best alternative. Also, he tries to rationalize the evaluation of his fatherly obligations and spousal roles and to establish that any inadequacies were not intentional but based on his failed health. The below constructions affirms this beliefs and viewpoints:

““If I've hurt you, it has not been intentional - please forgive me.” This is using the if conditional to project an emotional, reflective and repair moral positioning.

“I love Jeremy more than I can express and I'm sorry if I have not been the best father to him. God knows, I've tried. Forgive me Jeremy.” The declarative constructions, simple sentences, and conditional statement is to repair (repair positioning) his purported fatherhood which is believed to have some shortcomings.

The suicide text began with the moral positioning of his fatherly and spousal obligations and duties. He tried to negotiate here that he is a good father and husband even if it is not obvious to his audience (wife and son). He thus engages in redemptive and repair positioning to prove that he is a good husband and father by making adequate provisions that their needs would be met in his absentia.

Constructions like “Move on, I pray you will find happiness that I couldn't give you.” “My love (and forgiveness) to your folks - they are fine people.” is giving full vindication to his partner and positioning her as a good woman who deserves appreciation and commendation.

#### **5.2.4 Suicide text D**

There is a negotiation to access to rights and duties of manly obligations in this suicide text as the suicide completer positions himself as a victim whose duties, rights, and obligations have been stripped from him (emasculated). This is expressed in the construction ‘I can't take it any more as you said I am broke and useless in bed.’ The inherent illocutionary force is a passive acceptance of a lower right and duties. There is also an oppressive positioning in this suicide text as the suicide completer expresses being a victim to ill treatment from his former lover.

However, there is a subtle intentional positioning in the suicide text in which the suicide completer demonstrated agency as he asserts the right to ownership of his life through the construction ‘I decided to do a wrong turn because I can't take it any more’ Thus he reckoned with the fact that

though his manly rights and duties have been stripped from him, he still has control over his life which he emphasizes through the first person pronoun ‘I’

Furthermore, there is the subtle moral positioning that he was unfairly treated and he seeks repair and redemption from this treatment by ending his life. While he projects himself as the victim, he positions others (his lover) as a cruel being who says hurtful and inimical words.

### **5.2.5 Suicide text E**

There is an explicit demonstration of intentional positioning as the suicide completer exercises agency with regards to his duties, rights, and obligations through the preponderance of the first person pronoun ‘I’ as demonstrated in the construction ‘I have chosen Jo Nketaih’s poem as my suicide note.’ The suicide completer positions himself as an agent with unlimited power. Also, there is a lot of claiming which seems to be the prevalent illocutionary force. An example is demonstrated in the use of interrogative to express a contrary view about the existence of heaven and hell as popularized by religious sects. He also uses this interrogative to reveal his atheistic disposition which is a deviant position to have in the Nigerian setting where people are predominately Muslim or Christian. This is expressed thus ‘Where do atheists go when they die?’

### **5.2.6 Suicide text F**

Intentional positioning which suggests agency is evident in this suicide text realized through the construction ‘The difference between me and my friends [is] insolvable’. Through this construction, the suicide completer intentionally recognizes his sexual orientation as the point of departure from his social identity (as all his friends are heterosexual) whose exposure might result in alienation. There is also the prevalent illocutionary force of acceptance of his true self

demonstrated in the declarative sentence ‘it’s about time I accept it too.’ Also, there is the moral positioning of living a double standard life which he seeks to repair by ‘coming clean’ about his true sexuality expressed in the sentence ‘Trying to pretend to be someone I’m not.’ Furthermore, there is a subtle representation of self as a victim by giving his rights of being his true self away in order to earn social acceptance and approval. He finally redeems this double standard when he claimed that ‘I’m not the heterosexual being I portray for you.’

He positions people of his sexuality as being in a hard decision, as the society and friends might not be fully accepting of their sexual preferences and orientation which is expressed in the compound sentence ‘I know you would have understood but deep down I know our relationship would have changed.’

### **5.2.7 Suicide text G**

There is a self-representation of the suicide completer as the guilty being and the person deserving of blame expressed in the simple declarative sentence ‘You married a wrong man.’ There is other positioning of his wife as someone worthy of praise and admiration demonstrated in these series of simple sentences ‘You’re a good woman and you deserve the best. You need to be happy. You need to soar.’ He was able to convey these representations through intentional and first order positioning which suggests agency as he sees it as his duty and obligation to right his wrong by making himself liable for the circumstances that culminated into his suicide.

In terms of illocutionary forces, the suicide completer gave a lot of rights to his wife as someone deserving of accolades and admiration. Also, he is accepting of his guilt, inadequacies, and shortcomings as the rationale for his suicide. There is also the illocutionary force of demanding as he relinquishes the rights of providing and overseeing the family to his wife as stated when he

requested that his daughter should be taken care of as expressed in the polite declarative sentence ‘Please take care of our princess.’

In all, there is moral positioning in which the suicide completer attests and affirms his own moral bankruptcy and the positive moral standpoint of his wife which is a redemptive positioning for his wife in the eyes of his family and public that she is a morally just lady who is not deserving of guilt or condemnation. This is expressed in the construction ‘Tell my family not to harbour any resentment against you.’ There is also an expert positioning of what it means to be the breadwinner and provider in the African hemisphere. Thus he gave instructions and offered information to his wife on filling the shoes of the head of the home. This is reinforced in the construction “Be peaceable with everyone though not gonna be easy.”

### **5.2.8 Suicide text H**

There is a subtle representation of self as victim expressed in the construction ‘...am back to square one’ which is a pidgin English expression in Nigeria that means to be relegated to a lower position or to be stripped of rights and privileges which in his is the loss of his job and his material possessions hence, he felt emasculated as the definition of manhood in the African hemisphere is the ownership of material possession which confers on someone a particular a status. Thus, he finds it difficult to renege his status for a lower one which will attract ridicule and shame (oppressive positioning). There is also the self-representation of cowardice through the construction “. I didn’t have the courage to push through last year” and “I was looking for a courage to do this a long time ago” which suggests hesitations in undertaking a task.



There is also the first order and intentional positioning which stresses agency through the repetition of the pronoun 'I'. Also the pronominal 'I' is to show alignment to closure derived from online spaces which is expressed in the construction 'I will miss everyone and everything here.'

There was a strong rationalization as to why suicide is the best cause of action, being financially incapacitated and being treated unfairly. There is also a subtle moral positioning as the suicide completer was reflective as to why suicide seems to be the noble cause to undertake as a redemption from stripped status and the injustice meted on him. This rationalization was expressed in the construction 'Life was okay for me. Had a car I was using for bolt. The owner of the car took back the car and am back to square one.' which positions him as a victim to elicit sympathy from his readers.

### **5.2.9 Suicide text I**

There is an explicit representation of intentional and first order positioning as the suicide completer exercises agency through the illocutionary force of declaration in the claim to end his life expressed concisely but powerfully in the simple declarative construction 'I'm dead lol'. The succinct manner the suicide completer uses to convey the message suggests willfulness in suicidal decision. This particular suicide note reinforces the vague situational context of suicide note genre as its audience are usually excluded from the full gist of the events culminating to suicide. However, the context that precipitated the composition of this suicide note positions the suicide completer as a victim (oppressive positioning) as he decided to end his life to escape the stigma association with his rape accusation.

### **5.2.10 Suicide text J**

There is the self-positioning of victimhood of a person whose rights have been stripped from him expressed in the construction ‘Am in a deep mess at @the moment.’ The use of passive constructions and reported speech reaffirmed the construction of victimhood when the suicide completer stated that ‘He said I did copy and paste. Ever since den, things changed from bad to worst.’ This suggests the influence of external force in his suicidal decision as not necessarily a voluntary undertaking but an expression of powerlessness and victimhood. These constructions and declarative sentences “My life don tire me. I feel like dying. I wish I can sleep and wake not wake up again”. Gives a self-position or portrayal of victimhood. This is also an example of third order positioning reiterating passivity in decision making in suicidal decision. There is the moral positioning of the acceptance and self-absorption of his own guilt conveyed through reflective and emotional positioning thus, he seeks to repair and redeem the situation through suicide. This is expressed in the simple sentence ‘He said I did copy and paste.’ which means being accused of academic dishonesty which is a serious allegation in academia.

### **5.2.11 Suicide text K**

There is the demonstration of first order positioning which suggests agency through the construction “did this because I see nothing worth living” in addition to the repetition of the first person pronominal ‘I.’ He positions and self-represents himself as a caring person who has the interest, thought of his family and friends at heart even till the point of death expressed in these affective statements ‘Mummy, I love you. Daddy I love you. Matthew and John, you guys should take care.’ Including these proper nouns in her suicide notes is to make her readers understand how dear they are to her.

### 5.2.12 Suicide text L

There is the construction of victimhood due to betrayer of trust. This particular suicide completer positions himself from a first person order positioning as a selfless, caring, and devoted lover who was sacrificing for the joy and happiness of his lover. He positions himself as someone who has been unfairly treated and who deserves public sympathy, empathy for his unrequited love and maltreatment. This positioning is demonstrated in the affective statement ‘I gave you my heart, hell ...even gave you my life.’

Using the reflective positioning, he brings his audience to the past using third order positioning to recount the sacrifices he had made for the relationship with a self-representation of a devoted and faithful partner who exercises patience to see her grow and mature into which she is today. This is expressed in the declarative construction ‘The sacrifices I made just to see you smile.’ He portrays himself as someone who fully undertakes his rights, duties, and obligations of being a devoted lover and exercising complete love against all odds as his commitment is unwavering. There is the other positioning of the lover as a callous and ruthless being who is inconsiderate and unfaithful. There are underlying negative affective constructions to recount his experience with his lover to position her as a mean and heartless being (other positioning) and him being a victim to love lost (self-positioning). This is expressed in this extended construction ‘Now that you judged and gave me a command. Now that you shouted at me from inside your room with your ‘boyfriend’ that I should “Go kill yourself” and even asked for my suicide note, well here it is my love. Similarly, the suicide completer seems to have given all rights to the lady in question as he follows her biddings with no question. The last bidding was to commit suicide which he did. Thus accentuate the height of his victimhood and helplessness.

The emotional positioning in this suicide note is to recount his travails and injustice in the unhealthy relationship he was in. It was to arouse and ignite the sympathy of his audience to his predicament. He portrays himself as a love struck being who loved his partner till the point of death as he addressed her as “my love” an emotional endearing construction that describes the depth of his love for her. This positioning is to ignite sympathy and admiration for him as someone who was unlucky in the love adventure. The use of reported speech to describe and recount the experience that culminated in his suicide reiterates being a victim.

The underlining illocutionary force is claiming as the suicide completer claimed explicitly and implicitly to be the faithful demonstrated in relinquishing his rights to his lover and undertaking his duties and obligations. He similarly evokes the moral positioning standpoint of being the faithful one. However, a self-interest positioning is also shown here as he only states his strengths without any weaknesses or shortcomings. An example is shown in the construction ‘I trusted you (until I found you another man).

Aside from self-positioning, there is the other positioning of the lover who has dual representations. The explicit representation is positive as the suicide completer never used any construction of negativity to describe the lover despite constructing himself as a victim. Instead, ‘endearment lexis’ were used to describe this lady in question which include lexical items such as: ‘friend’ ‘lover’ ‘my queen’ and ‘my love’ which are examples of affective statements used to express positive emotions. Thus, the suicide completer is explicit in accepting his victim identity and representation as he gracefully and willing admit such victim position to convey the depth of his devotion and affection to his supposed lover. The implicit representation of the lover is that of an ungrateful and undeserving person who reciprocates sincere affection with cruel and brutal treatments.

### **5.2.13 Suicide text M**

There is the explicit demonstration of moral positioning as the suicide completer rationalized why suicide is the best course of action expressed in the nominal groups ‘only way’ and ‘best option’ the adjective ‘only’ to qualify the noun head ‘way’ suggests definiteness about the decision to resort to suicide and the adjective ‘best’ (used to qualify the noun head option’) reinforce this finality in suicidal choice. Using first order positioning which stresses agency, the suicide completer portrays herself as someone who has weigh the whole options and decided the best choice as expressed ‘I know it is the only way to solve this problem.’ Thus, the suicide completer sees suicide as an obligation to undertake which is not negotiable. There is the assertive, confident, and willful self-portrayal and representations in this suicide text especially with the choice of adjectives with suggest definiteness in suicidal decision.

### **5.2.14 Suicide text N**

There is self-representation of the suicide completer as a loving, devoted and compassionate mother who has the best interest of her child in mind even till the point of death, this is expressed in the compound affective statements ‘Mum still loves you, and will always love you.’ The suicide completer also exploits her moral positioning by stating her penitence for are wrong doing as she is aware of the damage her action can have on her child thus, apologetic to her but remorseful to her father when she states ‘Dad, I am sorry, but I am not able to break the news that I am about to commit suicide. I hope you will find it in your heart to forgive me.’ Thus, she deploys first order positioning to assume her duty, rights, and obligation of a remorseful mother and daughter.

Also, there is the portrayal of helplessness as the suicide completer seems to be a victim to some unstated challenges which she seems not to have control over. This is expressed in this construction ‘I have fought the battle, but it seems I am almost losing it.’

The prevalent illocutionary force in the suicide text is apologies as the suicide completer rest on a moral positioning standpoint to apologize for her suicidal action. There is also the self-representation of a devoted Christian who has high regards for God. Perhaps the use of these religious sentiments is to appeal to her audience and prevent possible reprimand and condemnation. Her religious stance is expressed in this construction ‘Heavenly Father, guide and lead me through every trial I face today.’

### **5.2.15 Suicide text O**

There is an expert positioning in this suicide note as the suicide completer was offering information, giving instructions and answers to his audience on the betrayer of trust, and purpose of living. This is expressed in this extended construction ‘Behind every smile there is a very painful past, but ever wished u don’t want to exist anymore, coz trust me, when u have everything ,u have everyone by ur side,but when u lose it all, even ur own blood can betray you, I know how it feels, I’ve experienced that already.’ There is also intentional and first order positioning as the suicide completer undertakes a didactic self-representation while exercising his moral positioning to inform his audience on what is noble and appropriate. The suicide completer assumes fully his rights, duties and obligation as an expert in undertaking the illocutionary forces of giving instructions to his intended audience.

There is other positioning in which the suicide completer portrays his friends as real and true friend's worthy of admiration and commendation demonstrated in positive affective statements like 'my ever best friend'.

### **5.2.16 Suicide text P**

There is an explicit demonstration of victimhood in this suicide note. The use of the inclusive 'WE' suggests a shared demonstration of victimhood by the couple as expressed in the construction 'We are embarrassed & ashamed.' There is demonstration of emotional positioning in which the suicide completer voices his dissatisfaction towards the failure of expectations from people they hold in high esteem expressed in the subordinating clause 'because you people did not make us happy as we expected.' Hence, the suicide completer exploits his moral positioning to state how unjustly they have been treated. There is the other positioning of the other people (who might be friends and invited guests at their weddings) in the suicide note as cruel, selfish and self-centered people who are not concerned about their happiness but their misery.

There is the self-representation of entitlement as the couple felt entitled which suggests a self-interest positioning as expressed in the declarative sentence 'We are embarrassed & ashamed.' Hence, there are duties and obligations that were unfulfilled which resulted in their suicidal decision. In Africa, guests at the wedding are expected to give gifts (both in cash and in kind) to the couple to start their lives but such expectations were not met which perhaps explain their frustration as they thought their wedding debts would be paid from gifts received from guests and well-wishers.

### **5.2.17 Suicide text Q**

There is the overt demonstration of self-positioning in the suicide text as the suicide completer uses the first person pronoun three times which suggests agency, control, and exclusive power in addition to the repetition of the 'I'm' construction which is an example of an active sentence which invariably suggests agency. He uses his suicide text to convey emotional positioning as he reveals the inner crisis, turbulence, and turmoil he is undergoing. His simple sentences are affective statements that convey a storyline of depression and melancholy demonstrated through (extended) lexical items like 'going out of control' 'losing it' which subtly suggest victimhood-cum-helplessness as the suicide completer seems not be in control of his state of mind thus, resorting to suicide to calm this inner conflict. In a suicide text of just 11 words, the suicide completer positions himself as being helpless while asserting explicit-sole-power-demonstration through the use of the first person pronominal 'I'.

### **5.2.18 Suicide text R**

The suicide completer self-positions herself as a victim who has been an object of ridicule and disdain as a result of being frequently sent out from school because of school fees as expressed in the subordinating clause 'because I cannot take being sent away from school.' She portrays herself as an object of reproach, shame and disgrace and thus, ended her life to exterminate the prolonged disgrace. Her helplessness and victimhood is also portrayed in being an orphan who has no parental guidance, support, and care also expressed in the simple declarative sentence 'I want to join mum and dad in heaven.' This positioning is to endear and elicit sympathy from her audience and a sense of understanding as to why suicide is the best course of action.



There is the implicit other positioning of the government and guardians as selfish beings who have no plans or interest of the less privileged at heart. This is because if there had been free education or the willingness of her guardians to become invested in her education she would not have resulted into suicide.

### **5.2.19 Suicide text S**

The suicide completer positions himself as a victim expressed in the declarative sentence ‘I am being blamed for her death.’ The verb ‘being’ which suggests continuity suggests the repetition of the action of blame ascribed to him for the demise of his wife. In this instance, the suicide completer positions himself as a helpless being who is made guilty for his wife demise. Thus, his manly and spousal responsibility of protecting and safeguarding his wife has been put into question not just in terms of negligence but also for being the cause of his wife’s death. In the construction ‘I cannot withstand losing my precious wife’ ‘The suicide completer positions himself as a mourning and faithful husband who misses and love his wife dearly expressed in the lexical items ‘precious’ and ‘withstand.’ In a bid to save his negative face which has been threatened he uses the directive construction with imperative undertone ‘Let me now follow her.’ which reiterates his victim status.

The overarching positioning was that of victimhood and the desire to erase this victim status placed on him by the community, he decided to end his life as the only escape from blame and condemnation levelled on him.

### 5.2.20 Suicide text T

There is the demonstration of directive illocutionary force as the suicide completer is making demands and shifting rights, duties and obligations when he uses imperative constructions: ‘Take care of her for me. Take care of Folarin for me.’ There is also the manifestation of intentional and first order positioning as the suicide completer decides to end his life expressed in the construction ‘I could not let it, not for the 4th time.’ He uses his moral positioning to rationalize his suicidal decision as he had been a victim of depression for 7 years and have attempted suicide 4 times hence, he provided rationalizing valid reasons to his readers as to why he has to undertake his suicidal ideation. Thus, he invokes his expert positioning by offering information and giving answers as to why suicide is the best course of action in his own case. He stated this by using simile construction and the subordinate clause of time ‘Life is like a party. When you stop having fun, leave’ In this construction he displays expertise on the right approach to life and living.

He subtly represents himself as a victim in the hands of depression and uses other positioning to represent his mother as a virtuous and perfect mother who always has his best intention at heart. This expressed in the declarative sentence ‘The thought of her would have discouraged me.’ which expresses the supportive nature of his mum. The suicide completer also uses the redemptive and repair positioning to justify his suicide as a way out of his bad choices expressed in the construction “I couldn’t continue to live the way I did and make the same bad choices over again.” Thus, he tries to rationalize suicidal acts as the solution to his repeated mistakes.

There is also the demonstration of third order positioning by the suicide completer when describing his love life used to achieve introspection. The suicide completer also uses reflective and emotional positioning to reminiscence on his love journey, his duties and obligations of a loving and devoted

partner. This is expressed in the construction ‘I think about the care you showed me. The thoughtful messages, the hugs, gifts, and the positive words of affirmation.’ This is an other positioning strategy to position his girlfriend as someone worthy of praise and admiration

The illocutionary force of request and demand is also expressed in the suicide note to his readers and family as seen thus:

Please pray for my soul,

Pray that I finally find rest and peace

### **5.3 Variables influencing the positioning strategies**

Different variables influence the positioning mechanisms adopted by African suicide completers. Religion, sexuality, social identity, and certain African beliefs and systems which include African respect for family, reverence for African mothers, procreation, and African conception of masculinity and the African belief in the afterlife are the variables influencing African suicide notes constructions and compositions.

From the analysed suicide notes, religion is a strong sociological variable (Zaško-Zielińska, 2012) that is prominent in African suicide construction. Most of the African suicide completers reveal their religious dispositions as majority of them belong to the Christian faith. There are numerous references to the divine order and supernatural being ‘God’ which suggest the reverence Africans have towards God who they believed is a supernatural force that controls the lives and fate of mortals. Thus, the inclusion of their religious faith is to reaffirm their beliefs even till the point of death. However, the underlying rationale of the divine order reverence by African suicide completers exercise in their suicide notes is in contrast to some literature (such as Akotia, Knizek,

Kinyanda, & Hjelmeland, 2014). These studies note that when African suicide completers make reference to God, they do so to demonstrate the non-responsiveness of God to man's pleas despite the fulfillment of their religious obligations, hence, they commit suicide as a sign of disappointment in the divine. Thus, the present study refutes this claim as African suicide completers make extensive reference to God as a sign of reverence and to reemphasize their convictions in his existence and supremacy which they constantly called upon in their suicide notes to guide and protect their loved ones they are leaving behind.

Relating closely to the variable of religion is the African belief in the afterlife. Africans have the belief that there exists another life after the expiration/termination of their earthly life which is reechoed assertively in the Christian and Muslim faiths most African suicide completers belong to. The inclusion of African suicide completers beliefs in the afterlife is to offer some consolation and solace to their family and loved ones that though choose to end their lives prematurely they would be reconnected again inseparably.

Sexuality is a new variable in African suicide notes as African has a default perception of the accepted sexuality which is heterosexuality hence, any other forms of sexuality outside of this is considered defiant and unnatural. However, the introduction of sexuality expresses an angle of victimhood of marginalized and minority social groups whose presence is not acknowledged but silenced. Thus, the incorporation of sexuality is a subtle-cum-forceful-strategy that Africa/Africans need to be empathetic and accommodating to sexual preferences and orientation outside of the heterosexual domain.

Social identity is another forceful variable in African suicide notes. There is a reemphasizing and assertion of the 'in-group identities' the suicide completers associated with and they constantly

acknowledge even till the point of death. Thus, this variable of social identity leads to the African system of comradeship and fraternity meant to give identity and closure to Africans. Another strand of social identity that was demonstrated was online identity which suggests the influence of computer-mediated-communication in the lives of young Africans. Hence, Africans have a sense of belonging from online fraternizing which brings social closure to them which they prioritize and reaffirm in their suicide notes. Thus, the suicide notes explore how Africans discuss their personal lives even their decision to end their lives on social media platforms with the underlying motive of deriving online social community. Hence, it introduces the redefinition of social identity among younger suicide completers who prioritize the online community for social closure and discussion/dissemination of suicidal intentions.

The last variable that influences African suicide note is the African context which is enacted through specific African beliefs and systems. Family is central to Africans (Lugira, 2009) which define their core of existence hence, while the act of suicide could be perceived from the lens of negativity, suicide completers affirm their respective family ties in their suicide notes to express how dear and significant they are to them, thus lending forcefully to the African value of family. Relating to the value and system of family is how African mothers are honored in the African landscape. Motherhood in Africa is a priceless and dignified position that is treated with respect and awe. Thus, African suicide completers (especially male suicide completers) regard highly their respective mothers in their suicide notes which is a shared African belief system among the African community. Also, there are instances of high regard of fatherhood by female suicide completers. There is also an African conception of masculinity which is defined by his sexual virility and socio-economic status. In the African context, a man is considered a real man if he can undertake financial and sexual obligations, thus an indigent, sexually passive, and homosexual man is

considered a 'fake man' in Africa. Hence, African suicide completers who belong to this marginalized groups positioned themselves as victims in their suicidal construction as a result of lack of popular consent accorded to them, this argument was supported by Kizza, Knizek, Kinyanda, & Hjelmeland (2012) who posits that the cause of suicide among African men is because of their loss of masculinity. Another African system related closely to the conception of African definition of masculinity is procreation. In Africa, there is the belief that masculinity is the ability to procreate and have heir/offspring who is expected to continue the line/lineage/ancestry.

The identified and discussed variables are the key determinants in the positioning strategies undertaken by the African suicide completers to either assert agency or victimhood.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 Summary of findings

This study examined the discourse strategies, positioning strategies and sociolinguistic variables that characterize and influence African suicide notes. The findings of this study reveals that African suicide notes is characterized by specific discourse patterns and structures. The structural pattern of pronominals (both exclusive and inclusive), presupposition, repetition, interrogation are prevalent in the suicide notes. Pronouns are used by African suicide completers to convey agency, inclusion, as well as the demonstration of victimhood. Presupposition is used to reiterate mutual contextual beliefs/knowledge/information that exist between the suicide completer and the intended reader/audience. Repetition is used for emphatic purposes to foreground specific details and illocutionary forces and interrogatives are used for requests, examining, informational, probing, and rhetorical effects. However, the discourse pattern of metaphor and intertextuality are peculiar to some of the suicide notes. While metaphors are used to create mental schemas to intended readers, intertextuality is used to draw association, similarities and interrelatedness between present ideas the suicide completer intends to disseminate and external texts. Furthermore, there are lexical items prevalent in all the suicide notes used to express the positive and negative affective stances and dispositions of the suicide completers. However, each suicide text has unique lexical and syntactic constructions that reveal the wide range of affective idiosyncrasies of the suicide completers. This affirms Leenaars et al. (1992); Stirman&Pennebaker (2001); and Sudjuna & Fitri (2013) studies that inherent in every suicide texts are lexical choices otherwise known as “emotional endearments” (Schoene &Dethlefs, 2013) which are usually

pointers to the connotative interpretations of suicide texts and also linguistic carriers of negative emotions such as hate, loss, helplessness etc.

African suicide notes are inundated with different positioning stances used to construct an identity of agency or victimhood hence, African suicide completers deploy different positioning modes ranging from self, other, moral, expert, emotional, redemptive, repair, reflective positioning's to negotiate and reconstruct different positions, storylines and illocutionary force (s) with underlining agency or victimhood undertones.

Furthermore, the sociolinguistic variable of religion seems to be the most prevalent variable as African suicide completers frequently use the lexical item 'God' to reiterate their beliefs in the existence of a divine order aside revealing their religious dispositions, affiliations', beliefs and perspectives. More so, suicide text has also become a medium used by suicide completers to challenge some 'dogmatic' religious-cum-normative beliefs (which could be anti-religion, atheistic or agnostic) such as the belief in a life-after-death and the existence of hell. Furthermore, gender is another sociolinguistic variable as women generally construct themselves as victims in their suicide notes and use their suicide notes to express different affective stances to their loved ones usually their families. However, while there are instances of victimhood in African male suicide notes, there are usually the display of agency (Roubidoux, 2011) and demonstration of different positions of manliness and masculinity (Hawton, 2000) realized through the illocutionary forces of instructions to intended readers. For instance, Rasmussen, Haavind & Diesenid (2018) explore meanings attached to masculinity in the suicide notes of young Norwegian males between years 2003 to 2009. They aver that suicide among men is attributed to feelings of shame and inadequacy in their inability of not 'meeting the culturally dominated gender roles.' This view was collaborated by Rivers (2014) that men resort to suicide as the demonstration of masculinity to



redeemed their 'honourable masculine status.' Hence, Rasmussen et al., (2018) conducted interviews with families of the suicide victim to uncover the masculine identities of these suicide completers. A total of 61 persons closely connected to the deceased were interviewed (5 to 8 person per suicide). The data was qualitatively analysed with reliance on interpretative phenomenological analysis. The study notes that the driving forces (themes) of these young male suicide is expressed in these constructions 'when hope is lost, no one must know,' 'weakness was never allowed,' and 'presentation of self as heroic' which reiterate them proving themselves as adult men among their manly networks and thriving to follow the footsteps of their strong and successful father figures. Thus, suicide to these young men is seen as an act of 'compensatory masculinity.'

In conclusion, suicide notes seem to be the only text with fixed identities. It represents the final attempts by suicide completers to negotiate their identities to their respective audience/readers which explain why it need to be investigated. African suicide notes have added richer perspective to suicide studies as its African contexts unearth hidden messages that are inherent in suicide texts. This specific study has arrived at the conclusion that African suicide notes deploy various discourse strategies and positioning modes to convey different affective statements with inherent sociolinguistic variables that influences their suicidal constructions. Hence, the study demonstrated that African suicide notes utilize different discourse patterns which represents that lexical and syntactic constructions in suicide notes have meaning-oriented communicative values of conveying beliefs and perceptions to focal issues like religion, sexuality, manliness, and the purpose of living. Furthermore, different forms of alignment and disalignment are demonstrated by suicide completers as they see their suicide notes as their own safe planet to convey their deepest and innermost feelings. Also, the study revealed that family, religion, and sexuality are issues that suicide completers grapple with and they wish to shed light on as their dispositions' to these issues

contravene normative standards. Thus, they used their suicide notes to voice their dissenting opinions and perspectives. Hence, studying suicide notes would help understand the underlying motives of suicide completers and help view their different perceptions to societal issues from another focal lens.

## **6.2 Limitations**

While the present study use suicide notes, other studies could compare and contrast African suicide texts with suicide texts from other countries and continents to examine the similarities and differences in suicidal constructions across cultures. Furthermore, other studies can use an interdisciplinary approach by drawing insights from Sociology and Psychology to explain the phenomenon of suicide for a more holistic approach. Similarly, interviews could be done with people do generate ‘folk’ perceptions on suicide notes. More so, other discourse analytic frameworks like Appraisal theory, Critical discourse Analysis can be applied to suicide corpora for richer analyses.

## **6.3 Recommendations**

Suicide is global phenomenon that affects everyone. It has sociological and psychological effects and thus important to every discipline, specifically public health specialists, mental health experts, judges/justices, lawyers, psychologists, sociologists, criminologists, police officials, detectives, parents/guardians, school authorities and the generality of the public.

Suicide notes aside being forensic text are instances of language use used by suicide completer as a vehicle of communication to disseminate specific information. The pieces of information conveyed in suicide texts are important as they represent the ‘last words’ of a person which

invariably means what they want to be remembered for/with. Similarly, the linguistic constructions used to convey these messages are equally important as they connote deeper meanings that aid a holistic understanding of suicidal intentions and suicidal information. Hence, suicide texts should not be perceived with negative connotations but should be seen as social texts that encode social practices and systems expressed linguistically. Thus, suicide texts (especially in Africa) should be kept as data to examine patterns of recurring issues, themes, and motifs discussed as that could help understand the phenomenon and subsequently reduce its occurrences. Hence, Africa need to develop an African suicide corpus that would serve as firsthand data and source of information to understand African suicide systems and issues that require African combative techniques.

In Africa, suicide is perceived with negative connotations which explain why cases of suicide are suppressed and usually interpreted as death by natural cause. Also, clues about suicide such as suicide notes are obliterated which undermines (forensic) linguistic research in explaining this phenomenon empirically and scientifically. Hence, the negativity surrounding suicide should be quenched with the light of information that when people commit suicide they are intentionally passing a ‘secret’ message that they want the world to hear, thus, these messages should not be ignored but be ‘read’ scientifically and objectively with insights drawn from deductive and inductive approaches to shed light as to why suicide exist. Furthermore, those with suicide tendencies should not be ‘looked down upon’ but be encouraged to discuss their challenges and these discussions should be documented to serve as data for linguistic, clinical, psychological, sociological studies.

More so, communities where cases of suicide exist should be investigated to derive ‘folk perceptual analysis’ of suicidal phenomenon which will help give context to suicide and the suicide notes left behind. Hence, communities would learn to understand suicide adequately and give

‘communal’ support to suicidal victims/friends/families and serve as ‘suicide watch’ to people undergoing depression and other challenges that can result in suicide.

Recently, suicide completers have relied on social media and platforms to convey their suicidal behaviors and symptomatic suicidal tendencies, hence, more studies need to be done in this area to understand the rationale behind suicide completers’ usage of the social media as a channel of suicide dissemination and how help can be made available to online suicide victims.

Finally, the justice and police system should make suicide notes available for research purposes and also make ‘clearances’ for this kind of data less bureaucratic so that researcher can have access and help understand the phenomenon better to construct research questions that explore suicidal behaviors and tendencies because without the availability of suicide notes and other related suicide materials (especially those that involve language use) we cannot provide objective and reliable responses to other suicidal behaviours.

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## APPENDIX

### Case A

“I got it all wrong when I rejected Jesus. God gave me wisdom, God gave me all I needed to succeed. I rejected Him.

“My fellow gamblers, I am sorry; my fellow lions, I am sorry; my family, I let you all down,”

### Case B

I’m really, really sorry. The pain of life overrides the joy to the point that joy does not exist...I am depressed...without phone...money for rent...money for child support...money for debts...money!!!!...I am haunted by the vivid memories of killings and corpses and anger and pain...of starving or wounded children, of trigger-happy madmen, often police, of killer executioners...I have gone to join Ken if I am that lucky”.

**Case C**

"Dear Heather

"Thanks for all you have done and tried to do for me. I'm sorry I've been miserable - I do love you, but this depression and continuous pain and battle with my health is no longer tolerable.

"If I've hurt you, it has not been intentional - please forgive me. I love Jeremy more than I can express and I'm sorry if I have not been the best father to him. God knows, I've tried. Forgive me Jeremy.

"Heather you can have this house, you obviously will sell it and should meet all your future needs. I also authorise Standard Bank to give you immediate access to Plusplan - there is R579 000 which will not leave you battling. My love (and forgiveness) to your folks - they are fine people. There is also several thousand rand in the bottom drawer of the safe.

"Forgive me - it's not your fault. Move on, I pray you will find happiness that I couldn't give you. "God, forgive me.

"Lastly - please tell Barry and SAA it's no reflection on our pilot body - wonderful people.

"I've just had enough of fighting this health on a daily basis.

"God Bless you always. My blessings upon Jeremy for his future. He's strong and will come through okay. Please look after him for me.

"My will is in the brown envelope in the safe. I leave everything else to Jeremy as stated therein.

"Bless you - Wally xxx"

**Case D**

"I am so sad, Toto. We have been together and trusted each other, now that you got new friends and a boyfriend, I am now your trash. So sad, I decided to do a wrong turn because I can't take it any more as you said I am broke and useless in bed,"

**Case E**

Forgive me. In case you are the one who found the body, I am really sorry. It had to be someone, you know. I have chosen Jo Nketaih's poem as my suicide note: "They said you came looking for me. I didn't drown; I was the water." Where do atheists go to when they die? lol. Amen.

**Case F**

"The difference between me and my friends [is] insolvable. Deep down they know I'm different and it's about time I accept it too, All I see is them [friends] moving on from me and finding success and heterosexual love, leaving me isolated and alone. Trying to pretend to be someone I'm not in front of all of you is becoming more tiring by the day as I'm not the heterosexual being I portray for you. I wish I could have told you guys everything and I know you would have understood but deep down I know our relationship would have changed."

**Case G**

"The best, that's what I used to call you. Finally, this is the end of my journey here on earth.

"The evil I have been battling with has succeeded in quenching the flame. You married a wrong man. You're a good woman and you deserve the best. You need to be happy. You need to soar. .

"Please take care of our princess, Chinenyenwa. Tell her that I love her so much. Be peaceable with everyone though not gonna be easy. Tell my family not to harbour any resentment against you. .

"You're a blessing to us. That's the wish of a dying man. Don't cry for me but pray for me. I love you and Chinenye so much. Good Bye My beloved."

**Case H**

Death is knocking at my door. I will miss everyone and everything here. Twitter has been fun to me since I joined. I didn't have the courage to push through last year. But I do now. If you are

seeing this, tell my Mama, I Love her but I couldn't push again." "I was looking for a courage to do this a long time ago. I twitted here last year that I got a job. Guess what? I worked for one year but was paid for five months. Life was okay for me. Had a car I was using for bolt. The owner of the car took back the car and am back to square one."

#### **CASE I**

"Oh and if you're reading this, I'm dead lol".

#### **CASE J**

'same research work. He said I did copy and paste. Ever since den, things changed from bad to worst. Am in a deep mess at @the moment. My life don tire me. I feel like dying. I wish I can sleep and wake not wake up again".

#### **CASE K**

"I did this because I see nothing worth living," "Mummy, I love you. Daddy I love you. Matthew and John, you guys should take care. We will meet where we will depart no more. I love you guys."

#### **CASE L**

"Nostalgia kills me when I remember all the good times we spent together. The sacrifices I made just to see you smile. We played together like little kids and I still remember your lack of talent for little games. I loved you for it." "Now that I cannot live without you. Now that you judged and gave me a command. Now that you shouted at me from inside your room with your "boyfriend" that I should "go kill yourself" and even asked for my suicide note, well here it is my love," reads the suicide note.

#### **DETAILED SUICIDE NOTES**

Dear Stella Njeri Kagendo,  
 You were a friend, a person I could confide in and most important, a lover.  
 I trusted you (until I found you (sic) another man).  
 I gave you my heart, hell ...even gave you my life.  
 Nostalgia kills me when I remember all the good times we spent together. The sacrifices I made just to see you smile. We played together like little kids and I still remember your lack of talent for little games. I loved you for it.

You are my queen (or were, now that am (sic) dead!) I forever treat you with love, respect and compassion. The cuddles we shared, the kisses, the sex, we even have a bank account (congratulations its now all yours).

Always know that I could never hurt you (while I was still alive). Neither would I fight the man. Maybe if he had stolen from me or put your life in any danger and I would comfortably chop off his head.  
 Come to think of it, I shaved your (sic) so other men could (sic) it. Intriguing.

Now that I cannot live without you. Now that you judged and gave me a command. Now that you shouted at me from inside your room with your ‘boyfriend’ that I should “Go kill yourself” and even asked for my suicide note, well here it is my love.

The five promises I made you:

1. I will forever love you
2. I will never cheat on you
3. I will never lie to you
4. Most importantly your word is my command
5. I CAN NEVER LIVE WITHOUT you

### **CASE M**

I know it is the only way to solve this problem, but it is the best option for me to take,

### **CASE N**

My love, I can’t find words that would form a perfect statement to express how much I love you. I have fought the battle, but it seems I am almost losing it. I only pray that god may give you guidance, love and comfort. Mum still loves you, and will always love you. Kindly, forgive me,”

“Dad, I am sorry, but I am not able to break the news that I am about to commit suicide. I hope you will find it in your heart to forgive me,”

“Heavenly Father, guide and lead me through every trial I face today and every day...victory is near; and I pray that the trials i face will bring me closer to you. I won’t give up in Jesus’ name, amen.”

### **CASE O**

“Behind every smile there is a very painful past, but ever wished u don’t want to exist anymore,coz trust me, when u have everything ,u have everyone by ur side,but when u lose it all, even ur own blood can betray you, I know how it feels, I’ve experienced that already. Don’t come to my grave crying asking God questions, just ask urself, “did I play my role in her life”, did u even add any value. How I wish I could have left an offspring to represent me in this cruel world, but its too late for that, forgive me ooh Lord!! only for the wise,” My last good bye, Thankful to those friends who stood by me no matter what.. I appreciate u dearest “Nanu” my ever best friend... I know this will hurt you soo much, but i quit life. May almighty God forgive me, but may he rest my soul In peace. Bye bye life. Much love.”

### **CASE P**

“We are embarrassed & ashamed that we could not start our new life in happiness because you people did not make us happy as we expected.”

### **CASE Q**

"I'm depressed. I am going out of control. I'm losing it."

### **CASE R**

forgive me my sister for what I have done. I want to join mum and dad in heaven because I cannot take being sent away from school”.

#### **CASE S**

‘I cannot withstand losing my precious wife. I am being blamed for her death. Let me now follow her’,”

#### **CASE T**

“I’ve battled depression for 7 years, and now that the battle is over. I couldn’t continue to live the way I did and make the same bad choices over again. The noise got too loud, but now the noise can stop,” I didn’t send my mum a note because I couldn’t bear to. If you are reading this, then you know how much she meant to me. The thought of her would have discouraged me. I could not let it, not for the 4th time. Take care of her for me. Take care of Folarin for me. To my father, I pray the Father forgives him.