

Minimisation Strategies in Police-suspect Interactions in Ibadan, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the deployment of minimisation in police-suspect interactions (PSIs) in Ibadan, Nigeria. Existing scholarly efforts in PSI scholarship have remarked that investigating police officers (IPOs) unilaterally wield power in PSIs. Such studies note that IPOs subject suspects to untold physical torture during interrogation sessions. However, this study, following the thread of our recent arguments around power in PSIs, demonstrates that IPOs do more other than subjecting suspects to physical torture to glean confessional statements from them. Forty-five interrogation sessions on the cases examined were tape recorded. Each of the interrogation sessions lasted about one hour and forty-five minutes. This was done to have a representative sample size. Ten interrogation sessions were purposively selected because of their robust manifestation of minimisation strategies. The study asserts that IPOs and suspects adopt minimisation to achieve institutional goals in PSIs. Guided by van Dijk's model of CDA, the study reveals that IPOs stress the importance of cooperation, downplay legal consequences of suspects' offences, express sympathy and pose face-saving expressions to elicit confessions. Suspects, on the other hand, resort to topic avoidance, lexical substitution, message abandonment and downplay of guilt as minimisation strategies. The paper concludes that PSIs constitute a site for power negotiation between IPOs and suspects. Adoption of minimisation in PSIs has implications for criminal justice system in Nigeria.

Keywords: Minimisation strategies, power, confessional statements, Police-suspect interactions, Ibadan, Nigeria

Introduction

Police-suspect interactions are a platform for negotiating the facts of crime. While interrogating police officers (IPOs) deploy the contexts of cases to elicit confessional statements from suspects, suspects, on the hand, manipulate the contexts of cases to seek exoneration, and in some other instances, seek minimisation of punishment. A police officer is a member of the Force who is saddled with the task of investigating, arresting and prosecuting crime cases. A suspect, on the other hand, is an individual who is assumed to have committed a crime (though presumed innocent until proven guilty). IPOs are privileged social actors in PSIs by virtue of their membership of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), knowledge of law and crime and possession of warrant of arrest (Heydon, 2005; Komta, 2020). These institutional variables have continued to place IPOs at a vantage position in PSIs. Elicitation of confessional statements from suspects marks the success of police interrogation, and as such, IPOs deploy a variety of institutional and self-devised methods to achieve confession from suspects. In the Nigerian context, IPOs often subject suspects to untold physical and psychological abuse in a bid to achieve confessions (Farinde et al, 2015). In spite of the provision of the Nigerian Constitution that stipulates that suspects' rights be protected in crime interrogation, suspects'

rights are often violated. Studies within the Nigerian context have affirmed that the adoption of brute force by IPOs, in eliciting confessional statements from suspects, results into forced confession (Adewumi, 2016; Ajayi, 2016; Akinrinlola, 2016; Ajayi et al., 2024).

While studies have examined the implications of forced confession for the Nigerian criminal justice system (Akinrinlola and Ajayi, 2022; Farinde et al. 2015; Omoronghonwan, 2018; Sunday and Akinrinlola, 2021), adoption of minimisation as an elicitation strategy in PSIs has not attracted sufficient scholarly attention in Nigeria. This study argues that IPOs do not usually adopt brute force in gleaning confessions from suspects. They equally resort to milder strategy to elicit confession from suspects. At the State Criminal Investigation Department, Iyágankú, Ibadan, for instance, where the data for this study were elicited, IPOs and suspects consciously adopt minimisation to pursue institutional goals. Yet, studies have not interrogated the specific minimisation techniques deployed in pursuing such institutional goals. Gudjonsson (2008) describes minimisation as an interrogation technique in which an interrogator consciously decreases a suspect's resistance to confessing by downplaying the seriousness of crime. Minimisation is a discourse tactic adopted by IPOs to mitigate suspects' resistance to confessing. This study contends that minimisation is a discursive practice that is not unilaterally adopted by IPOs; suspects equally deploy minimisation to pursue goals, especially in the Nigerian context. While studies have remarked IPOs as participants that wield power by virtue of their privileged status in PSIs (Gaines, 2011; Abbe and Brandson, 2013; Akinrinlola, 2017; Akinrinlola, 2016; Normite and Scherr, 2018 and Omoronghomwan, 2018), this study argues that IPOs' powers do not only manifest in their use of brute force to legitimise authority in PSIs; their adoption of minimisation techniques is an instance of covert power display in such encounters. As such, discursive resources are recruited by IPOs to achieve confessional statements from suspects through subtle means.

The specific questions this study intends to answer are: what are the minimisation techniques adopted by IPOs and suspects in PSIs? What are the discursive resources adopted in deploying these minimisation strategies? What are the motivations for the deployment of minimisation techniques in PSIs? What implications does the adoption of minimisation strategies have for PSIs? This study interprets IPOs' adoption of minimisation as power play in PSIs. To respond to the aforesaid questions, the study adopts van Dijk's model of critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a theoretical framework. The motivation for the choice of CDA is premised on its resourcefulness in describing the relationship between language, context and social relationship, and how such connection teases out underlying power structures and potential biases in PSIs. CDA is appropriate in examining how discourse resources interact in framing identities in PSIs. A study of this nature is significant for a number of reasons. Apart from bringing minimisation technique into the academic mainstream, it will enhance our understanding of the diagnostic value of confession in PSIs. Besides, the study will reveal how dominance, submission, control, cooperation and resistance serve socio-cognitive appeal in PSIs in Nigeria.

Rationale for the study

Police interrogation has attracted the attention of scholars, especially from the Western clime. Such studies have examined the contextual nuances, methodologies and language of police

interrogation. Studies in this category include those of Abbe and Brandson (2013), Heydon (2005), Gaines (2011), Jol and Stommel (2021) and Normite and Scherr (2018). These studies remark that power is contextually erected in PSIs. While Heydon 2005 and Gaines (2011) contend that power is discursively mediated through lexical choices in PSIs, Abbe and Brandson (2013) hold that IPOs also resort to rapport management to achieve institutional goals. Jol and Stommel, however, contend that rapport management sometimes fails to elicit confessional statements from suspects. They argue that some suspects beat interrogation tactic by expressing unwillingness to confess. While the aforementioned Western studies are relevant to the present study in terms corpus, this study's focus on minimisation techniques provokes an understanding of how minimisation covertly constructs identities in PSIs in Nigeria. Some Nigeria-centred studies have examined the adoption of brute force in gleaning confessions from suspects (Aborisade, 2020; Akinrinlola, 2016; Ajayi and Akinrinlola, 2020; Farinde et al. 2015 Sunday and Akinrinlola, 2021). Such studies note that power resonates in PSIs through the use of force to elicit confessional statements. Farinde et al. (2015) note that IPOs adopt discourse resources to institute control in PSIs while Ajayi and Akinrinlola (2020) contend that laughter as a multimodal resource is potent in dousing tension in the interrogation room. Sunday and Akinrinlola (2021) maintain that IPOs' use of tactics to track suspects' denials is a subtle way of luring them to confess. While the aforementioned Nigeria-based studies have made refreshing submissions on the prevalent use of force and interrogation tactics by IPOs to enact power in PSIs, IPOs' adoption of minimisation as a discourse strategy remains outstanding. Existing studies have not deployed van Dijk's CDA in investigating the contextual import of minimisation in PSIs. Neglect of van Dijk's CDA has not only undermined an understanding of how discourse resources function in framing the perceptions, attitudes and identities of IPOs and suspects, it has also prevented an understanding of how dominance, control, cooperation and resistance are covertly expressed via minimisation strategies.

Theoretical model: van Dijk's critical discourse studies

van Dijk conceives critical discourse analysis (CDA) as an approach to solving the nuances of social problems. The model sees CDA as a social practice that examines patterns of social interaction. It is methodological approach aimed at investigating the connection between language, context and social relationships with the aim of identifying hidden power structures (van Dijk, 2008a). van Dijk's model of CDA favours the socio-cognitive approach. The model notes that issues of social inequalities, discrimination and patterned abuse, resistance, control and hegemony are implicitly constructed through discourse resources. The model strikes a connection between language and social structures (van Dijk, 2008b). It holds that every text features issues of social inequalities, power, control and resistance. It however notes that these discourse issues are subtly negotiated in texts. The model's emphasis on socio-cognitive appeal holds that power relations exist in texts and that language users manipulate contextual resources to achieve hegemony. To enact and sustain power in texts, Dijk (2008a) notes that language is deployed to manipulate the cognition of people in a bid to persuade and legitimise specific stances. It sees the use of language as a social practice geared towards influencing the thoughts, perceptions and opinions of people in interactions. The model notes that social groups pursue and adopt power to perform various social acts. Specifically, van Dijk observes that CDA is a

discourse enterprise that echoes power, dominance and inequality between specific social groups. He notes that social groups exist in discourse, and such groups navigate certain social acts. He observes that the social acts of people are context-driven because the social structure embedded in discourse enables legitimisation of the will of social groups (van Dijk, 2006).

van Dijk maintains that power is contextually implanted in discourse. He argues that a number of factors could give access to power. According to Dijk, social resources such as money, knowledge, force, fame, status and information could grant access to power. This presupposes that different forms of power exist, based on the resources employed to exercise such power. His approach to CDA maintains that such power is not absolute; it could be challenged, resisted and contested through discourse resources. The aim of his approach to CDA is to reveal how social relations are enacted, maintained, sustained and challenged (van Dijk, 2008b). Social power is pivotal to Dijk's model of CDA. This study describes PSIs as an instance of social practice. IPOs are participants that hold power, and such power is accessed through their membership of the Force, their knowledge of crime and law and possession of police materials. Suspects, on the other hand, are seen as vulnerable participants in the interactions. This study conceives minimisation as a social practice that is geared towards achieving institutional goals in PSIs. Minimisation is described as a form power relation is PSIs. IPOs and suspect deploy minimisation to achieve persuasive effects in PSIs. While IPOs adopt minimisation to elicit confessional statements from suspects, suspects adopt it to escape incrimination.

Data and analytical procedure

This study adopts the qualitative research method. Utterances of IPOs and suspects during crime interrogation constitute the data for the study. The study describes the stances, acts, goals, action, attitudes and perceptions of IPOs and suspects to the cases examined. The utterances of IPOs and suspects are situated within the ambit of van Dijk's model of CDA. The study examines how the utterances construct specific identities for the social actors involved in the interactions. The study uses naturally occurring data (interactions) obtained from the State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department, (SCIID), Ìyágankú, Ibadan. The motivation for the choice of SCIID, Ibadan is premised on the availability of robust data on crime interrogation. SCIID is the largest department of crime interrogation in the entire southwestern Nigeria. The unit parades police officers who are specially trained in the art of interrogation. The said department also has myriads of infrastructural facilities devoted to crime interrogation. The unit houses different departments of crime interrogation. It is a unit to which serious cases in other southwestern states are referred.

Interrogation sessions on murder, rape, kidnapping and felony were tape recorded at the SCIID, Ìyágankú, Ibadan. For ethical approval, letters of introduction were obtained from XX to the XX. The officers were told that the results of the study would only serve academic purpose. They were also informed that the data obtained would be handled with utmost confidentiality. Permissions of suspects were sought and granted. The names and locations of suspects are anonymised. The interrogations were conducted in English, Yoruba and Pidgin. For sessions conducted in Yoruba and Pidgin, efforts were made to translate them into English. Interrogations were observed from the distance to avoid interference and researchers' presence

influence. Forty-five interrogation sessions on the cases examined were tape recorded. Each of the interrogation sessions lasted for about one hour and forty-five minutes. This was done to have a representative sample size.

The data were analysed by situating them within the context of van Dijk's model of CDA. The analysis describes the connection between language, context and social relationships that exist between IPOs and suspects. The analysis is structured along the micro, meso and macro levels. The analysis describes the contextual forms and motivations for the use of minimisation in PSIs in Ibadan. At the micro level, the contextual import of lexical choices, participants' roles and syntactic structures are examined in terms of how they tease of power structures in the use of minimisation by IPOs and suspects. The meso level of analysis describes patterns of interactional dynamics. Attention is paid to how discourse resources interact in enacting and sustaining control in the use of minimisation in PSIs while the macro level describes how instances of socio-cognitive resources are deployed in resonating inherent power structures in the use of minimisation in PSIs. The study describes the implications of the deployment of minimisation for the PSIs in Nigeria.

Data analysis

Analysis of the selected interactions reveals that minimisation is adopted by IPOs and suspects to achieve institutional and personal goals, respectively. A critical discourse analysis of the interactions uncovers the motivations behind IPOs' and suspects' deployment of minimisation in PSIs. Adoption of minimisation serves different purposes in the interactions. While IPOs stress the importance of cooperation, downplay legal consequences of suspects' offences, express sympathy and pose face-saving expressions as mitigation strategies aimed at eliciting confessional statements from suspects, suspects, on the other hand, resort to topic avoidance, lexical substitution, message abandonment and downplay of guilt as minimisation strategies.

Stressing the benefit of cooperation/ topic avoidance

Expression of the importance of minimisation could be described as conscious efforts made by IPOs to inform suspects about what they (suspects) stand to gain from cooperation during interrogation. Cooperation in this context refers to suspects' readiness to align with IPOs' requests during interrogation (Farinde et al. 2015). Topic avoidance, on the other hand, refers to strategy of evading the case-related questions posed by IPOs. IPOs' accent on the benefit of cooperation manifests in the following excerpts.

Excerpt 1

1. P: I understand you were part of the gang. Inspector XX told me you were arrested near the scene of the incident.
2. S: Sir, I was not part of the gang. I was not, sir.
3. P: I want you to know that we can assist you in this case. We have handled more serious cases here, but you must be willing to tell us the truth and cooperate with us.
4. S: I am ready, sir, but I know I am an innocent person. I have never been arrested in my life.

5. S: I don't even know what to say about my arrest, but I know God knows the reason
6. P: If you confess, I will be willing to see the Station Officer and prepare your bail.
7. P: We always initiate bail for suspects that confess in good time.
8. S: I cannot even remember how I was dragged into this mess.

Excerpt 2

1. P: Your gang broke the door with an iron rod and entered into the room at 2 a.m. Chief XX raised an alarm, and you threatened her with guns. We can file a separate case for you as a minor offender if you tell us the roles of the gang leaders.
2. S: Officer, I am short of words. Whatever plan God has for me will come to pass. I am just tired of the whole thing. I need rest.
3. P: Are you willing to cooperate with us on this matter? Securing your bail is important at this point.
4. S: Don't you think I am too decent to be alleged of this crime?
5. P: We will give the needed support if you cooperate with us.
6. S: Kindly assist me out of this mess.

Excerpt 3

1. P: Do you want us to pardon all of you? If you cooperate with us, we will protect your interest.
2. S: Only God creates, and He is the only one that can kill. I have never killed in my life.
3. P: We are here to support you, but you must also show some cooperation. Your involvement in this case could be settled amicably if you confess.
4. P: But if you do not cooperate, we may continue with the interrogation.
5. S: Your assistance is what I need, sir. Do it for me and let me be free.
6. P: How can I assist you when you have not assisted yourself?
7. S: I cannot assist myself in this case. I am just an ordinary suspect before you, sir.

Excerpts 1-3 present a case of murder. The suspect was arrested for being part of a gang that allegedly killed a notable community leader in XX. Instances of van Dijk's model of CDA are to achieve socio-cognitive construct in the interrogation. Socio-cognitive resources manifest in the IPO's words. These socio-cognitive resources are used to emphasise cooperation. However, the suspect resorts to topic avoidance to pursue exoneration. Minimisation as a socio-cognitive construct is subtly echoed in the excerpts by examining contextual presuppositions that underlie the excerpts. A case of murder in the Nigerian context is a serious one. The Nigerian Criminal Justice Act (2015), section 17 and the Nigerian Criminal Code, 306, CAP "C38" hold that it is unlawful to kill any person unless such killing is authorised. The Act describes such an act as unlawful homicide (section 315 pg. 127). Irrespective of the circumstance that occasions a case of homicide in the Nigerian context, the suspect is liable to life imprisonment. However, socio-cognitive resources manifest in the IPO's and suspect's words to mitigate the severity of murder in the interactions. The first clause in line 1 presents evidentiality as a social construct to

incriminate the suspect. The IPO's deployment of the pronominal, *I* in the subject category of the first clause enacts a face-threatening act which is geared at posing an identity of a criminal for the suspect. Passivisation is adopted in the object component of the clause to further portray the suspect as guilty. The second clause adopts naming in the subject component to further establish evidentiality while the object component equally uses passivisation to establish the suspect's culpability and guilt. In line 1, *gang* and the adverbial component of the second clause, *near the scene of the incident* are instances of evidentiality that cognitively construct the suspect as guilty.

The suspect repetitively deploys negator *not* in line 2 to challenge the construction of guilt by the suspect. However in line 3, cooperation is emphasised by the IPO to minimise the severity of the suspect's offence. Minimisation is subtly initiated by deploying *I, you* and *we* to express power structures that run through the interaction. Apart from expressing unequal power relations in the interactions, *we* identifies the police as an institution that is capable of giving the suspect the needed assistance. *This case* socio-cognitively amplifies the power of the IPOs to demystify the severity of murder by providing the necessary assistance to the suspect. The power of the police as an institution is also re-echoed in the second clause. However, the IPO identifies the suspect's willingness to tell the truth and cooperate as conditions for providing the necessary assistance. In line 4, the suspect expresses readiness, but resorts to topic abandonment in a bid to pursue exoneration. Instead of responding to the subject of interrogation, he appeals to innocence and holds God responsible for his offence in lines 4-5. He strategically leaves the topic and delves into extraneous details. In spite of the IPO's insistence on confession in lines 6 and 7, the suspect avoids the topic by appealing to ignorance in line 8. While the lexical choices adopted by the IPO are geared towards constructing the guilt of the suspect, the discourse choices of the suspect are intended to avoid the topic in a bid to escape incrimination. This confirms Heydon's (2005) submission that linguistic devices are used by participants in PSIs to achieve institutional goals.

Evidentiality as a socio-cognitive construct is sustained in line 1 of Excerpt 2. The IPO specifically chooses some lexical choices *gang, door, broke, iron rod, entered, room at 2am* to contextually institute face threatening acts against the suspect. These choices are laden with underlying assumptions that portray the suspect as guilty of murder. *Your gang*, as used by the IPO in the first clause in line 1, consciously recruits the suspect as an offender. Again, the choice of *raised alarm* socio-cognitively expresses the powerlessness of the victim and the intention of the suspect to harm the victim. *Threatened* and *gun* are also adopted in the second clause to establish the suspect as an offender. Minimisation is adopted in the last clause in line 1 to mitigate the severity of murder in the interaction. The IPO introduces a condition for mitigating the enormity of the case by posing a recategorisation of the offence committed. Such recategorisation includes a description of the suspect's offence as minor. The suspect, however, responds by appealing to topic abandonment in line 2. He appeals to psychological stress occasioned by the long interrogation process. The IPO further seeks his cooperation in line 3 by emphasising the need to free the suspect. The suspect rhetorically appeals to innocent to avoid the topic of the interrogation. While the IPO emphasises the significance of the suspect's confession in line 5, the suspect avoids accent on confession by pleading. The suspect's choice

of *this mess* is a subtle way of downplaying the severity of the murder case instituted against him.

Excerpt 3 starts on a rhetorical note. The rhetorical question posed by the IPO does not only portray the suspect as an offender, it also expresses unequal power relations between the two social actors. *You* and *us*, as adopted in line 1, portray the IPO as a super-ordinate character in the interaction and the suspect is described as a lesser participant. Emphasis on cooperation is also emphasised as a condition to pursue the suspect's interest in line 1. The suspect appeals to topic abandonment by describing the enormity of God. The suspect's response is cognitively constructed to counter the allegation instituted by the IPO. The IPO continuously takes turns to stress confession and cooperation of the suspect as minimisation strategies in line 3. The choice of conditional clauses in lines 3 and 4 is meant to institute cognitive control so as to lure the suspect into confession. In line 5, the suspect avoids the topic by seeking the IPO's assistance. While the IPO insists on confession as a condition for his release in line 6, the suspect appeals to powerlessness in line 7. In Excerpts 1-3, above, IPOs and suspects adopt interactional dynamics to achieve institutional goals. While IPOs deploy such dynamics to seek suspects' cooperation, suspects adopt such interactional dynamics to construct avoidance of interrogation topics. In Excerpts 1-3, the IPO and suspect adopt instances of van Dijk's socio-cognitive tools in constructing identities in the interactions.

Downplaying legal consequences/ lexical substitution

Omoronghowan (2018) notes that participants in crime interrogation downplay the consequences of crime in a bid to elicit confessional statements and mitigate offences during interrogation. Lexical replacement refers to the use of alternative words to capture the offences of suspects in such a way that suspects' offences appear ordinary. Instances of downplay of the legal consequences of suspects' offences manifest in the following excerpts.

Excerpt 4

1. P: Dem arrest you with two people sey you kidap this young woman. Why you come kidnap am?/You were arrested along two other men for kidnapping this young woman. Why did you choose to kidnap her?
2. S: I no dey for the group, sir. Na my friend call me sey make I come one place. The time wey I reach there, I see you and you come arrest me./I was not part of the group that did it, sir. I received a call from my friend that I should come to a particular place. When I got there, I met you and you arrested me. I have never done it in my life.
3. P: You know sey your case na bail-able one? In fact sef, you know suppose spend 24 hours for cell if you answer my questions well./Do you know that your offence is a bail-able one? In fact, you should not spend 24 hours in police cell if you answer my questions well.
4. P: You know sey bail na free? The only thing na for you to tell truth./Are you also aware that bail is free? All you need to do is to tell us the truth.
5. S: I no sey na bad thing and I no dey do that kind thing. XX na him tell me about am./I know that it is a very bad thing, and I do not engage in such. XX only told me about the issue.

6. P: Wen him tell you, watin you do for inside? Tell me. Instead wey I go take you go court, Station Officer go approve your bail application./When he told you, what role did you play? Tell me. Instead of preparing a case file and taking you to a court for further trial, the Station Officer will approve your bail application. I will help you to draft it.

Excerpt 5

1. P: We don dey track you for two weeks now before dem arrest you. How much you collect from this woman family?/ We had been tracking you for about two weeks before your eventual arrest. How much did you collect from the family of this woman?
2. S: Sir, the thing be sey we no do am. Thing thing wey dem sey we do, we no do am. Me I no fit do am self./Sir, the issue is that we did not actually do it. The thing we are accused of is not true. Personally I cannot be part of it.
3. P: Your case no strong like that. We fit help you.*(Brings out the ransom as evidence of claims made)*. Your offence is a mild one, young man. We can help you out.
4. S: I for happy, officer./I will be glad, officer.
5. P: Make I tell you, we don sey we go bail you all wey dey the kidnapping case if you say truth./ Let me tell you that, we have decided to grant bail to suspects alleged of kidnapping only if they tell the truth.
6. S: Sir, sir,... I no sey I fit guilty, but make you just forgive me./Sir, Sir.... I know I may be guilty of it, but just forgive me.
7. P: No be serious case. I don tell you./ It is not a serious crime. I have told you.

Excerpt 6

1. P: Na you dey call the family for ransome. How you negotiate with the family first self.?You were the one contacting the family on ransom. How much did you negotiate with the family at first?
2. S: Dem no negotiate am, sir./It was not negotiated, sir.
3. P: Wetin you suppose know be sey all of you go get bail. I don tell your leader sey na bail-able offence. But you need tell truth o./ What you should know is that all of you will be bailed. I told your leader that it is a bail-able offence. However, you need to tell the truth.
4. S: I go you the trut, sir. I get the money from them./I will tell the truth about the whole incident, sir. I got the money from them.
5. P: How much im be? We suppose know the price make we fit write am for bail application./How much was it? We need to know the actual amount so that we can capture it in our bail application.
6. S: Na five hundred thousand naira./ It was five hundred thousand naira.

Excerpts 4-6 present a case of kidnapping. The suspect was arrested in connection with the kidnap of Mrs. XX at XX. The IPO adopts minimisation in the interactions to cognitively persuade and control the decisions of the suspect. Minimisation in Excerpts 4-6 assumes the

form of downplaying the legal consequences of the suspect's offence. In line 1, the offence of the suspect is mentioned. To further identify the suspect as a guilty participant, the IPO mentions *for kidnapping this young woman*. Situating the offence of the suspect in the Nigerian context, any person who unlawfully confines or detains another in any place against his will, or otherwise unlawfully deprives another of his personal liberty, is guilty of a misdemeanor, and is liable for imprisonment for ten years ('CAP 365'). The IPO contextually institutes allegation against the suspect in line 1 by fronting a rhetorical question to establish such allegation. The suspect, however, uses lexical replacement to seek exoneration in line 2; the use of the pronominal *it* is meant to downplay the severity of the offence committed by the suspect. The suspect uses the pronominal *it* in line 2 to portray an identity of an innocent person. In line 3, the IPO consciously downplays the severity of the offence by categorising the suspect's offence as a bail-able one. Such categorisation of the suspect's offence as a bail-able one is an instance van Dijk's socio-cognitive control device which is aimed at establishing the suspect as an offender.

The second clause in Excerpt 4 also introduces a condition that could enhance the bail of the suspect. Excerpt 4 captures the IPO's voice on the need for the suspect to tell the truth. The IPO cognitively sensitises the suspect on bail conditions. In line 5, the suspect resorts to the use of lexical replacement by fronting the pronominal *it* and the nominal phrase *bad thing* and *the issue* to capture the offence committed. The adoption of these discourse devices tends to mitigate the face threatening acts constructed by the IPO. Line 6 further captures the IPO's conscious use of discursive resources to downplay the severity of the suspect's offence. Naming is adopted by the IPO as a replacement for preparation of case file. The mention of Station Officer is an instance of naming strategy aimed at downplaying the legal protocol that the suspect's case requires. The IPO's resort to Station Officer is meant to cognitively persuade the suspect to confess his crime. In response, the suspect resorts to the use of lexical replacement to pursue exoneration. The suspect's use of *the thing* and *it* in line 6 is meant to dissociate self and construct an identity of a minor offender in the interaction.

Excerpts 5 and 6 further present instances of the use of downplaying strategy and lexical replacement by the IPO and suspect. While the interrogative construction in line 5 is geared towards alleging the suspect, the suspect adopts *it* and *the thing* as substitutes to the crime committed. Such lexical cum phrasal replacement is meant to contest the allegation leveled against the suspect. However in line 3, the IPO downplays the offence by assuring the suspect that it could be settled in the police station. Although the IPO's statement socio-cognitively constructs the suspect as an offender, it also portrays such offence as that which could be resolved without pursuing the path of the law. The pronominal, *we* is fronted to express the collective power of the police as an institution to address the case. The IPO's assurance is further pursued in line 5, but a condition is attached in the same line; the suspect must be willing to confess. While the suspect uses lexical replacement to express admittance in line 6, the IPO downplays the severity of the offence by assuring the suspect of the police readiness to shun the path of legal protocol. Line 1 of Excerpt 6 alleges the suspect as an actor in the kidnapping case through the fronting of the pronominal *you* to construct the identity of an offender for the suspect. The interrogative construction in the second clause of line 1 further attests to the IPO's allegation. While the suspect contests such allegation in line 2 through the deployment of

lexical replacement (*it*), the IPO downplays the enormity of the offence by constructing the crime as a bail-able one in line 3. He further identifies the suspect's confession as a yardstick for filing their bail. In line 4, the suspect admits that he got the ransom. The IPO further persuades the suspect to give the exact amount so as to prepare a better documentation of the bail application. The suspect gives the exact amount in line 6. In Excerpts 4-7, power is instituted through cognitive strategies adopted by the IPO while such power is resisted and contested by the suspect through the use of discursive devices. This is in consonance with Farinde et al's (2015) submission that power is enacted and contested in PSIs.

Expressing sympathy/message abandonment

Aborisade (2020) describes expression of sympathy as IPOs' expression of affectionate statements towards suspects during crime interrogation. Message abandonment is described by Gaines (2011) as a deliberate attempt made by suspects to ignore IPOs' questions. Such abandonment is geared towards escaping incrimination. Expression of sympathy and message abandonment exists in the following excerpts.

Excerpt 7

1. P: Kílódé tóo fí serú n kan tiò dára yí sí ọmọbinrin rẹ? Why did you decide to do such unprintable thing to your daughter?
2. S: Mi ò ti ẹ rántí esun yí. Bàbá gidi nímí./I cannot even recollect this allegation. I am a true father.
3. P: Ó ti rẹ. Sé o nílò omi? Sọ fún mi bóse sẹlẹ. You are really weak. Do you need some water now? Tell me how it happened.
4. S: Jòwọ, sàlàyè ọrò yí fúnwà. Gbogbo wa nílò láti kọgbón nípa ọfin./Please, educate all of us on this matter. Everybody needs to learn about the law.
5. S: Ojú rẹ tirí tó. Ọmọ XX niẹ. Mo mo ìtúmò ọrò oro yí ní àsà rẹ./You have really gone through a lot. You are from XX. I know what this means in your culture.

Excerpt 8

1. P: Miò ní fiẹ sí àtímólé A. Maa ri pé o ní ìtójú tó péye./I will not put you in Cell A. I will make sure you are well taken care of.
2. P: (*Ó fún afurasi lóúnjẹ*). Fokónbalẹ kóo sọ gbogbo nkan tóo bá mò fúnmi nípa ejó yí./ (*Hands a pack of food to the suspect*). Feel free to tell me everything about the case.
3. S: ẹni tó méjọ wá kii se èniyàn gidi. Mi mo nkan tí mon se fún àwon èniyàn. Sé n kan tí wón fẹ fí san mí niyí?/The complainant is not a good person. I know what I do for people. Is this my reward?
4. P: Won ò ní fiyà jẹ ẹ. èmi ni ọlópàá ejó yí mo sì fi dáp lójú pé oò níyọnu./You will not be subjected to torture. I am the IPO, and I assure you that you are safe.
5. S: Mo mò pé mi ò lè jẹ oníyẹyẹ./I know I cannot be mocked.
6. P: Ojú rẹ ti wú. Sé o wá dáadàa? Jòwọ, dide kín wo ìdúro rẹ. Your eyes are swollen. Are you okay? Please, stand and let me access you physically.

Excerpts 7 and 8 present instances of IPOs' deployment of sympathy to elicit confessional statements from suspects. The excerpts present a case of rape. The suspect was arrested for allegedly defiling his biological daughter. Power is socio-cognitively constructed by the IPO to control and elicit confessions from the suspect. Within the Nigerian context, defilement is a serious criminal offence. Section 218 of the Nigerian Criminal Code CAP "C38" p. 93 holds that any person who has unlawful carnal knowledge of a girl under thirteen years is guilty of a felony, and is liable to imprisonment for life, with or without caning. Carnal knowledge is described as defilement or complete penetration. Considering the severity of defilement in the interrogation, the IPO douses the enormity of the crime by expressing sympathy towards the suspect. The IPO alleges the suspect in line 1 by affirming that the suspect carried out the unprintable act. The IPO uses lexical replacement (*unprintable thing*) to capture the offence in line 1. The suspect, however, abandons the question by appealing to memory failure. He further uses a face-saving device (mention the device) to construct a positive identity in the second clause in line 2. In line 3, the IPO further sympathises with the suspect by emphasising the suspect's psychological distress. On account of the suspect's distress, the IPO expresses readiness to offer him some water to regain his strength. The IPO's expression of sympathy is followed by a question meant to elicit his involvement in the crime. However, in line 4, the suspect abandons the IPO's question by appealing to extraneous details. In line 5, the IPO further describes the distress of the suspect and emphasises the cultural implications of the suspect's act. The IPO's reference to the suspect's culture is an instance of van Dijk's socio-cognitive control device. The IPO refers to the suspect's culture to contextually construct the suspect as an individual that has violated his cultural norms. It could be deduced from the IPO's words that the suspect's culture forbids such an ignoble act.

In Excerpt 8, the IPO initiates sympathy by appealing to the physiological needs of the suspect. The IPO makes a categorisation of cells in the Police Station by identifying the cells in terms of the cruelty of the cells' handlers. He expresses readiness to keep the suspect in Cell A so that the suspect could be well taken care of. The implicit assumptions that underlie the IPO's statement is that Cell B is meant for hardened criminals and the criminals are subjected to physical and emotional trauma in Cell B. On this note, he decides to keep the suspect in Cell A. His sympathetic gestures towards the suspect continue in line 2. However, the non-verbal act of the sympathy expressed in line 2 is followed by the IPO's demand to be kept abreast of the suspect's involvement in the crime. This study interprets the IPO's expression of sympathy as a form of socio-cognitive control aimed at eliciting confessional statements from the suspect. In line 3, the suspect abandons the message expected by the IPO. Instead, he (the suspect) defames the character of the complainant and deploys a positive face device to emphasise his (the suspect's) good deeds. He further expresses wonderment as to why he does not get such good disposition in his interactions with people. The IPO assures the suspect of better treatment in line 4 by emphasising his (the IPO's) privileged position as that which could guarantee the suspect's safety. While the suspect further abandons the theme of the interrogation in line 5, the IPO further expresses sympathy towards the suspect by assessing his physical wellness. Excerpts 7 and 8 provide instances of van Dijk's socio-cognitive control devices by the IPOs and the suspects. While the IPOs deploy sympathy as a means of mitigating the suspects'

offence in a bid to elicit confessional statements, suspects, on the other hand, resort to message abandonment to escape incrimination.

Posing face-saving expressions/downplaying guilt

Heydon (2005) notes that face-saving devices are discourse devices adopted to construct credible identities in police interrogation. She observes that participants in PSIs adopt discourse devices to mitigate the severity of offences in a bid to achieve specific goals. Instances of face-saving devices are used in the following excerpts.

Excerpt 9

1. P: I have gone through the documents of the land. XX said that you sold it without the his consent.
2. S: Sir, I have sold a number of plots for Mr. XX, and I have never cheated him.
3. P: I know you could not have done it. From your records, I can see you are a good Christian.
4. S: I can never be involved in such. I am not a cheat at all.
5. P: I am not happy with the way the case was approached. You are a prominent member of your community. Would you have done such thing?
6. S: I remain my innocent self. Nobody can bring me down.

Excerpt 10

1. P: I understand you have settled a case like this in your community.
2. S: Yes, sir. Everybody knows what I do in my community. I do not touch what is not mine.
3. P: You are very confident of your social profile in your community. I like that.
4. S: It is not good to associate criminal acts with a notable person like me.
5. P: Did you make efforts to settle this case within your community?
6. S: XX would not listen. He got the whole thing wrong.

Excerpts 9 and 10 present a case of felony. The suspect was arrested for encroaching on Mr. XX's land. The suspect allegedly encroached on the land and erected structures on it without the consent of the owner. This study situates the case in an appropriate context by examining the dictates of the Nigerian Criminal Justice on felony. In the Nigerian context, a case of stealing is a serious one. The Nigerian Criminal Code (2004), CAP "C38" section 383 (1) states that, "A person who fraudulently takes anything capable of being stolen and fraudulently converts to his own or to the use of others anything capable of being stolen, is said to have stolen that thing". An act of felony is punishable under the law and as such, anyone found guilty of an act of felony is liable to seven years' imprisonment. Considering the legal implications of the act of felony committed by the suspect, the IPO consciously constructs an allegation against the suspect in line 1. Deploying van Dijk's model of CDA, this study interprets the IPO's construction of allegation as a form of cognitive control. Such control stems from the IPO's knowledge of the criminal law, professional training on interrogation and his possession of the warrant of arrest. Power is contextually expressed in line 1 through evidentiality; the IPO

affirms that he has gone through the documents. The assumption that underlies the IPO's comments on the documents is that he has established the suspect's culpability after a careful examination of the case documents. However in line 2, the suspect downplays his guilt by appealing to positive face. The IPO appeals to face-saving devices in line 3 by justifying the suspect's proof of innocence. He subtly refers to the suspect's track records as a form of evidentiality in the interaction to appeal to his positive face. In line 4, he further reaffirms his innocence by posing positive track records. The IPO resorts to positive face by commenting on the suspect's character strength as a responsible member of his society. The suspect constructs a positive self by downplaying his guilt. Excerpt 10 starts by the IPO constructing an identity of leadership for the suspect. The suspect affirms the IPO's position in line 1. In line 4, the suspect constructs a positive identity for himself by expressing dislike for criminal tendencies. The IPO asks if the case has been settled in the suspect's community while the suspect downplays his guilt by blaming the complainant as the individual that does not understand the facts of the case. The deployment of positive face strategies to minimise the culpability of the suspect (who comes across as a high-profile suspect) in the excerpt echoes Akinrinlola's (2016) claim that high-profile suspects (HPSs) largely enjoy some kind of positive treatment from IPOs in PSIs. High-profile suspects, according to Akinrinlola (2016), are suspects whose profiles reveal, either by virtue of affluence, education, social status, among others, belong to the high or middle class in the Nigerian society.

Implications of minimisation strategies for PSIs in Nigeria

This study holds that IPOs and suspects' adoption of minimisation strategies in the selected interrogation sessions has implications for the language of PSIs in Nigeria. Although existing Nigeria-based studies maintain that IPOs subject suspects to physical abuse in a bid to elicit confessional statements, this study argues that IPOs and suspect adopt minimisation to achieve institutional and personal goals. In the selected interactions, the structure and implicit import of the IPOs' questions reveal that IPOs are considered as super-ordinate participants in PSIs while suspects are treated as lesser participants. The discursive choices of the IPOs, especially the interactional dynamics which manifest in their choice of turns, sentence forms, modals, pronouns and face-threatening acts contextually enact control. These discourse devices are adopted to manage suspects' face in a bid to mitigate/minimise blame, challenge credibility and influence suspects' perception of reality. The use of the interactional dynamics point to the fact that control, especially at the SCIID, Ibadan, Nigeria is covertly enacted by IPOs during interrogation sessions. Again, IPOs dwell on the socio-cognitive resources to institute control in the interactions. This is so because the discursive choices adopted by IPOs in the questions are laden with socio-cognitive imprints that help to construct specific identities for the suspects. The entire interactions are imbued with socio-cognitive resources such as assumptions, inferences and presuppositions that construct blame and guilt for the suspects. The deployment of van Dijk's CDA in the interaction reveals that minimisation serves covert purpose in the interaction; it is adopted by IPOs to incriminate suspects. The study reveals that the language of police interrogation, especially with regard to the examined cases, is structured to institute and sustain individual, legal and institutional dominance. Again, the selected interrogation sessions reveal that domination is not an exclusive preserve of the IPOs; suspects also adopt

topic avoidance, lexical substitution, message abandonment to covertly/subtly challenge the dominance of IPOs. The study reveals that PSIs are a site for power struggle between IPOs and suspects. While IPOs structure interrogatives to incriminate suspects, suspects, on the other hand, resort to minimisation discourse resources to escape incrimination. This study interprets the adoption of minimisation by IPOs and suspects as a form of power contestation.

Conclusion

This study has undertaken an investigation of minimisation strategies in PSIs in Ibadan, Nigeria. Existing scholarly debates, within the Nigerian context, have examined IPOs' use of force to elicit confessional statements from suspects. The studies argue that IPOs enact and sustain dominance by subjecting suspects to a series of untold physical abuse during interrogation sessions. This study argues that IPOs do not always subject suspects to physical torture. Similarly, studies have argued that IPOs are granted power by virtue of their membership of the Nigeria Police Force, their professional training, interrogation skills, knowledge of law and crime, possession of handcuffs and other warrants of arrest. These studies also identify the IPO as the only participant that exerts power in PSIs. Such studies neglect the place of the suspect in PSIs. This study however notes that power, in PSIs, transcends the use of physical force. An investigation of the use of minimisation in PSIs through the lens of van Dijk's CDA, reveals that IPOs and suspects resort to the use minimisation to achieve their institutional and personal goals.

Although, IPOs overtly use minimisation to downplay the severity of suspects' offences, a critical investigation of the deployment of minimisation reveals that IPOs' use of minimisation is geared towards challenging the credibility of suspects' testimonies. A critical discursive approach adopted in the study reveals that IPOs' questions are imbued with interactional dynamics which covertly echo social control. A critical analysis of the selected interrogations reveals that IPOs' adoption of minimisation manifests by stressing the benefit of cooperation, downplaying the legal consequences of suspects' offences, expression of sympathy and posing of face-saving expressions. It is important to note that the deployment of these mitigation strategies is dependent of the offences committed. The IPOs do not unilaterally hold power in the interactions. Suspects equally adopt minimisation strategy to pursue exoneration. Suspects' adoption of minimisation strategy manifests in the use of topic avoidance, lexical substitution, message abandonment and downplaying of guilt. A discursive study of minimisation strategies in PSIs in Ibadan, Nigeria does not only extend the frontiers of studies in PSIs in Nigeria, it also enhances an understanding of how language functions in constructing identities of participants in PSIs. The study's deployment of van Dijk's CDA reveals that power negotiation is covertly initiated and sustained in PSIs through discourse resources.

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