‘Gender Disparities’ In Zimbabwe: A Discourse-Communication Analysis on the Female Journalists’ Columns: A Case of the Herald and Newsday

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ABSTRACT

In today’s postmodern era, gender disparities arise from differences in socially constructed gender roles. The aim of this paper was in three folds. Firstly bring to fore the news articles by female columnists and evaluate whether they influence the continual growth of gender gaps in Zimbabwe. Secondly to, evaluate how female columnists close or widen the gender gap especially the representation of women by basically looking at the lexico-grammatical discourse used and lastly to analytically scrutinize the language used in these news stories in order to get whether female columnists have been able to strengthen the efforts made to fight for women space in the Zimbabwe. This research was conducted using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the theoretical framework. The findings revealed that female journalists have carried on with the norm of misrepresenting women in most of their articles which was usually done by male reporters. Moreover, In light of the findings gathered after analysing the news articles from the three female columnists, recommendations were made to come up with different ways of closing up gender gaps as far as a misrepresentation of women is concerned.

Keywords: Gender disparities, discourse-communication analysis, female journalists, Herald, Newsday, Zimbabwe

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1.0 BACKGROUND OF STUDY
Gender disparities in Zimbabwe have since full-fledged from the old patriarchal system as women continue to be the disadvantaged group. Wikipedia states that "Gender disparities refer to unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals based on their gender. It arises from differences in socially constructed gender roles as well as biologically through brain structure and hormonal differences". These can be income disparity, educational, occupational gender segregation and much more. Clearly, women have been given opportunities in influential ministries such as communications and the media but gender gaps continue to exist with the women being seen as the minority even by other women.

Taking into consideration the current existing statistics, continually women are accorded less privileged as compared to male counterparts, possibly because women are always presented as weak by the media. As the old patriarchal practices continue to exist in other societies most modern-day societies have made considerable efforts to wean themselves off these unfair practices – typical of most early civilisations – which undermined the status and potential of women.

Contrary to the macho system, women fought for greater and unfettered participation in all sectors of life, especially the political and influential spheres. This has seen the government develop policies and programs to bridge the gap between men and women in accessing resources and providing equal opportunities but the question is how these have worked and put into action.

The policies include:

- Women’s Affairs, Gender and Community created in 2005
- To spearhead the “gender mainstreaming efforts by all sectors and promote the advancement of women”, they created the “national gender machinery”
- Gender focal points in all line ministries at the director level were also formed so as to influence
- Creation of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Gender, which monitors and assesses activities and implementation of gender equality

Considering these policies being in place it is rather disappointing that the media has still not assisted much in recognising these efforts. The Media Monitoring Council of Zimbabwe further cites that, "The relationship between the Zimbabwe Women's Parliamentary Caucus (ZWPC) and the media is currently weak and had "negatively affected the coverage of female Parliamentarians in the media.

Women are continually misrepresented in the media no matter all the efforts made to build a new image of womanhood. Gallager (2001:166) noted that identifying the importance of combating the misrepresentation of women in media, there is a theory that suggests that the simple advancement of women within the field of media is the answer to fighting against the stereotypical representation of women.

This study, thus, seeks to investigate the role of female journalists in the media and whether they are playing their influential role in creating the necessary groundwork for the sustenance of gender equity in the country through critically analysing their discourse when reporting news stories.

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Considering that the media itself has done nothing more to close the still existing gender indifferences in Zimbabwe that affect more of women.

1.1 Statement of problem

The media industry, like many other fields, has a history of male domination (Lewis and Boswell 2002) and many newsrooms are still male dominated around the world. It is, however, important to note that women have for some time now been able to fight for their seats in the influential positions however the gap between women and men has not been closed.

The research is a yardstick for measuring female journalist’s roles in giving impetus to the gender equity principle. Media houses have been accused of portraying women as inferior beings through the degrading discourse they use when referring to women in their articles.

The notion of portraying women as inferior to men have since worsened as women in power and with the opportunities to close the patriarchal gender gaps have done nothing more than strengthening the patriarchal custom. It is of interest to note that female journalists have also strengthened the idea of representing women as inferior beings possibly unconsciously through their news articles and discourse.

This study will, therefore, look at several articles by three female columnists from two of the leading newspapers in Zimbabwe, The Herald and News Day, in order to justify whether the female journalists are widening or closing up the existing gender gaps as far as a misrepresentation of womanhood, is concerned.

1.2 Aims and objectives

- To bring to fore the news articles by female columnists and evaluate whether they influence the continual growth of gender gaps in Zimbabwe
- To evaluate how female columnists close or widen the gender gap especially the representation of women by basically looking at the lexicogrammatical discourse used
- To analytically scrutinise the language used in these news stories in order to get whether female columnists have been able to strengthen the efforts made to fight for women space in the Zimbabwe

1.3 Research questions

This study aims to investigate the following questions

- How much change have the female journalists brought in discrediting negative views towards women in the society?
- In what ways does the language used in the media influence the society and what can be done?
- Shortcomings and implications of the news articles by the female columnists to the views of the nation towards women?
- How is gender discourse used as a manipulative tool towards what the society is made to think about women?
- How best can female journalists close up existing gender disparities brought by the news stories?
2.0. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The aspects of gender disparities and representation of women in the media are controversial aspects which have drawn the attention of various scholars and individual media critics. Different scholars such as Lowe Morna (2001) and McCombs (2004) amongst others have shared different sentiments as regards to the issue of representation of women in the media especially when talking about the still existing gender gaps.

The views from these scholars will be discussed below with the intention of finding out what the female columnists in Zimbabwean media have done to address the existing gender differences as far as representation of women is concerned.

Basically, this section looks at how other scholars have portrayed the issue of gender disparities and the gap in the media by giving a comparative analysis of the views, theories, methods and approaches. The researcher will briefly look at Zimbabwean laws on gender disparities and the relation between the women in the society and female journalists. Leedy (1989) cites the benefits of the literature review as follows.

- Provide a method of dealing with a problematic situation.
- Literature review can also reveal to the researcher sources of data which one may not have known existed

2.1 Language and communication

Communication is based on language use. Language is a crucial medium for communication and separating them is impossible as the two work hand in hand. This is so as language is used to communicate, share ideas and ideologies. Hence, language usage makes up communication though it’s not the only means of communication as we can have images to communicate as well.

According to Wathiong’o (1981:13), "Language, any language has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture". This implies that the primary use of any language is to transfer that is to send or receive information. Therefore it is critical to note and analyse the language used in the media by the female columnists in their articles as far as gender disparities are concerned.

Chimhundu et al (1998:02) maintain that language is "...a cultural asset, we transmit knowledge and information, we articulate values, beliefs and traditions and even past achievements." They go on to argue that the relation between language and culture is, "inseparably intertwined" therefore it plays a crucial role in erecting political, social and other institutions. To this end, this study will critically analyse the discourse used in the articles by the female journalists in order to do away with the norms of misrepresenting women and close the gender gaps.

2.2 Images of women in the media

The media has been criticised for its misrepresentation of women as objects whose value is measured only in terms of their usefulness to others or the little things in the society as motherhood. It becomes rather difficult to regard or see them as capable and thinking people. Portraying women in a sexualized way gives the readers ideas that all women will be seen as sexual objects and men as rational. The society usually creates their identity in relation to the images they see around them as they grow. Therefore the current representations of gender disparities in the media can have undesirable effects.
In addition, as the media continue to portray women as the weaker beings not fit in enough for higher posts in the country. A recent UNESCO report realised in 2009 describes the litany of common images of women in the media: "The glamorous sex kitten, the sainted mother, and the devious witch..." The report also states that, at the current rate of progress on stereotyping women, it will take another 75 years to achieve gender equality.

As media is part of our everyday life it is a powerful tool that provides us with current information and entertainment. To a larger extent, it reflects our society and it influences the way people think. Hence the misrepresentation of women or rather demonstration of inequality in the media has significant negative consequences towards women.

2.3 Language use and meaning in the media

Lee (2001:205) argues that, "Meanings exist as objects like entitles in the minds of individuals. They are inserted into the language in the form of speech or writing and the hearer or listener is to extract meaning from that text.”

This implies that the writer does not directly impose meaning on a particular work of art but the way in which the writer writes helps the reader in coming up with a particular meaning to the text. This view supports the fact that language can be used to influence the readers, in this case, widen or close up existing gender gaps in the articles written by female columnists.

It is also important to note that media use language to construct their own images and meaning as they are crucial presenters of culture, politics and so on. The research will explore the use of language as a tool that is powerful enough to influence public views towards women. Thus, the language used by Ruth Butaumocho, Sekai Nzenza and Ropafadzo Mapimhidze will be analysed paying closer attention to how the use of language can widen or close up gender gaps.

2.4 Women coverage in the media

Lowe Morna (2001) notes that the current studies of news coverage show that there is disproportionately low coverage of women, and when women appear in the news, they are most likely to be in a photograph and misrepresented. When women’s voices appear in news coverage, they are most likely to be quoted as a homemaker, sex worker or beauty contestant (Curphey 2003). This study will analyse what the female journalists have done in order to discredit the existing negative images towards women as they are part of the media.

Spill man and Spill man (1991:58) argues that: ...

...images of the enemy are thus formed by perception created solely by negative assessment, film, television, radio; newspapers can be used to create enemy images.

Spill man and Spill man are of the view that negative assessment of facts through the manipulative use of language can be used to change public opinion towards a particular point of view. He mentions the fact that newspapers can be used to create enemy images. Therefore, it is important to note that the discourse used by the female columnists has the power to close or widen the gender gaps in Zimbabwe.

These enemy images are negative opinions concerning a particular view in society and are influenced by the way a writer presents his or her articles. In this case, the negative views are the damaging pictures that the media have created towards women. The research will, therefore, scrutinize the articles by the three female columnists in order to find out what they have done to create a better image and also how discourse can be used to influence the views of the public towards women. It will go on to analyse whether the discourse in these articles has been able to close or widen gender gaps in Zimbabwean media.
2.5 Media and society
Media can influence how something is viewed or perceived by the society at large. As a result, the consistent stereotypical representation can set a norm or a value that can affect public opinion more still when it's also being influenced by other women (McCombs 2004:87). Therefore, the media plays a major role in determining how society views certain issues e.g. Gender.
It is important to note that the female reporters don't necessarily have to write about gender issues but it is the news articles themselves and the discourse that always portrays some gender bias. Hence, this study seeks to identify the bias in the articles by the female columnists looking mainly at the discourse in use.

In the same way that, “views can be shaped by what is available in mass media, views can also be swayed by what is not seen in mass media” (Armstrong 2004:140). This ‘packaging of messages’ can be defined as ‘attribute agenda setting’ and McCombs states that similar to this ‘packaging’, “people also frame objects, placing varying degrees of emphasis on attributes of persons, public issues or other objects when we think or talk about them” (McCombs 2004:87).

The negative portrayal of women in the media can also lead to society thinking the same about women. However, attention should also be shifted to the female journalists who are in the media and look at what they have done in strengthening the images of fellow women positively. Although the media plays a major role in the views of their audience on various stereotypes, this research will mainly look at how women are portrayed as weak, housewife and sex symbols by the other women in the media. Misrepresentation of women in the media has since proved to be opening the gender gaps as the female reporters are failing to make the change towards the nation’s opinion on women which is negative.

The media plays the significant role in building the society with what they write and what they do not write in their news articles. For some time now a number of articles and images portray women as weaker and sex objects that are controlled by the men with men being the superior beings in control of the world. It is therefore important that this research has picked three female journalists from two leading newspapers in Zimbabwe to analyse the language in these articles as far as the widening of gender gaps is concerned.

Barben (1953:102), a Swiss psychologist states that "Two basic assumptions of neuro-linguistic programming are that firstly, reality is not vital since everyone has his or her own reality and secondly language is used as a means of understanding." Barben’s stance does condemn the manipulation of language but tends to support it with her justification that language is a means of influencing public opinion.

Therefore, in support of Barben, this research will pay more attention to the language in the news articles by Ruth, Sekai and Ropafadzo in understanding whether these articles close up or widen the misconception of women.

2.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.6.1 Critical discourse analysis
The research will be conducted using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the theoretical framework. The framework is also referred to as Critical linguistics (CL) and is expected to aid in providing a comprehensive analysis of how discourse can be used as a tool to influence public views as far as the misrepresentation of women is concerned.

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Critical Discourse Analysis has three basic properties that are relational, dialectical and transdisciplinary. According to Fairclough (1989), CDA is not an analysis of discourse in itself but an analysis of dialectical relations between discourse and other objects, elements or moments, as well as internal relations of discourse. Hence, CDA will be able to bring out the relations between the female journalists, what they write and the issue of gender gaps towards the representation of women.

Fairclough (1995) argues that the popularity of discourse analysis lies within social sciences that contribute to its use in the description and analysis of discourse meanings. Scholars have brought in views and perspectives about how language can be manipulated to suit certain ideas and interests. Most Scholars agree that the meaning of the text can be extracted from the language itself as used by the writer. The study, therefore, will be able to critically analyse news stories by female journalists in order to find out whether the discourse in the stories is closing up or widening the existing gender gaps in Zimbabwe. The broad term discourse can be employed in these circumstances as it refers to the various ways in which communication between people is achieved. Discourse can be considered as an active relation to reality. The use of Critical Discourse Analysis will, therefore, be vital in understanding the research as it will aid in vigorously analysing the meaning conveyed by female journalists choice of language thus reaching a conclusion on whether or not they close up existing gender disparities in Zimbabwe.

Graham, Lemke and Wodak (2001) argue that Critical Discourse Analysis is not just analysis of discourse texts or more concretely text but is part of some form of systematic transdisciplinary analysis of relations between discourse and other elements of the social process. Therefore, this study will do a discourse-communication analysis on articles by the female journalists in order to find out what they are communicating to the public only on gender issues, which is the social aspect. Van Dijk (1997) postulate that the main point of the CDA is to show how various ideologies are expressed in various kinds of structure. Van Dijk (2001) also adds that textbooks are ideologies and claims that enforcing hegemony and dominance over the community is achieved by controlling discourse. Therefore it is important to note that the media can control their discourse in order to bring out certain information or strengthen certain ideologies.

In addition, Critical Discourse Analysis addresses social wrongs in their discursive aspects and possible ways of correcting and mitigating. CDA, in this research, will be used to analyse the lexico-grammatical discourse used by the female journalists and whether it widens or close up the existing gender gaps in Zimbabwe. This is so as to see whether they are addressing the existing social damages on the portrayal of the African woman.

Fiske (1994) also argues that Critical Discourse Analysis is a move from seeing language as abstract to seeing our words as having meaning in a particular historical, social and political condition. In understanding this research, the news articles falls under the category of written text where one can discuss issues of dominance under the subject matter of gender disparities. Critical Discourse Analysis becomes a suitable and relevant theoretical framework as the written articles will be scrutinised to analyse the aspects of the strength of language in corrupting the public views towards women.

Young and Fitzgerald (2006:16) asserts that:

Critical Discourse Analysis approach is meant to highlight the inequality that is expressed, produced and reproduced through language with its sole focus being on linguistic analysis to expose misrepresentation, discrimination of particular positions of power in all kinds of discourse.
Young and Fitzgerald assert that Critical Discourse Analysis is therefore necessary when undertaking a research on discourse—communication analysis as the research will explore the misrepresentation of women through the language used by the female journalists.

Fairclough (1992) argues that Critical Discourse Analysis examines the form, structure and content of discourse, from the grammar and wording employed in its creation to its reception and interpretation by a wider audience. Therefore, the employment of nouns, pronouns and verbs is of much significance.

In addition, Van Dijk (1997) defines Critical Discourse Analysis as the analysis of text and talk in humanities or social sciences. More so he adds that texts are analysed according to three inseparable elements which are language use, communication and interaction. Therefore the use of CDA will allow the researcher to look not only at language use but also communication interaction of what is written in the news articles to its readers.

Considering this view, Critical Discourse Analysis becomes vital in analysing articles by Ruth Butaumocho, Sekai Nzenza and Ropafadzo Mapimhizde as the form, structure and content of their discourse will be analysed in line with CDA theoretical framework to ascertain whether or not they close or widen gender gaps.

3.0. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The literature review section highlighted various views from different scholars on gender disparities and efforts made by the media to close these gender gaps. As mentioned earlier this study will be based on the Critical Discourse Analysis. Nine articles by Ropafadzo Pamhizde, Ruth Butaumocho and Sekai Nzenza will be selected using the stratified sampling method whereby three articles from each columnist will be analysed.

The articles will be analysed with the intention of finding out whether the discourse used by the three female columnists in their stories have widened or closed up existing gender gaps. This chapter also brings out the population of study, the sample and information gathering devices as well as the merits and demerits of having used the stratified sampling and qualitative research methods.

3.1 Research design

According to Guba and Lincoln (1989:20), a research design is an overall strategy for gathering data in an attempt to answer the research questions. In addition, a research design is a fixed plan according to which information is collected and analysed to investigate the research theory or rather hypothesis (Huysamen 1994). Hence, with this being said a research design is a model of proof which allows the researcher to draw inferences concerning casual relationships among the variables under investigation.

There are two types of research methods which are the qualitative and quantitative research. However, this study used the qualitative method to assess the use of the discourse news articles by female columnists as far as closing up the gender gaps is concerned as perceived by the researcher. This was because only qualitative method assured validity and accuracy.

It is important to note that qualitative research is studying factors influencing human behaviour and a deeper understanding of the target population therefore adequate for this study. In this study, the researcher focuses on analysing the discourse-communication of the language used in the news articles by female columnists in relation to gender disparities.
3.2 Qualitative research

Qualitative research method will be used in the study as well. Its distinctive sorts are naturalistic, interpretive and progressively critical. Marshal and Rossman (2014) assert that qualitative research draws on importance techniques for inquiry.

In the current study, the researcher noted that with qualitative research meaning develops through interaction and is not standardised from individual to individual as in quantitative research hence the need for the aforementioned techniques in analysis.

According to Berkwits and Inui. (1998) qualitative research is "the plan of conditions for gathering and analysis of information in a way that anticipates joining relevance to the research purpose." The design depicts issues in their common settings without experimental manipulation. Information gathered is first-hand.

The technique uses preconceived theory and more centred and narrower extent of analysis. Information is gathered as words and pictures more than numbers. The qualitative strategy was picked to comprehend certain phenomenon and issues that can't be quantified.

Silverstone (1990) adds that this approach is embraced to situate the use of language in media in the context of ordinary life. This study focuses on how discourse is used in the media and whether it closes or widen existing gender gaps. Hunt (2001) says qualitative research picks up a deeper understanding of a group’s experience. In light of this, this study used the qualitative methodology to break down articles by the two daily paper articles, giving careful consideration to the representation of women in the media.

3.2.1 Merits of qualitative research

- Provides depth and detail as it looks deeper than analysis
- It by all means attempts on avoiding pre-judgements

3.2.2 Demerits of qualitative research

- Qualitative Research is dependent on the skills of the researcher particularly on observations and interviews
- It is difficult to make systematic comparisons when using this research as it is highly subjective

3.3 Systematic stratified sampling

Sampling refers to the way information will be gathered and analysed in this research. The news articles by the three female columnists will be subject to scrutiny using the systematic stratified sampling method in order to ensure a balanced study. The newspaper articles will be compiled stretching from May 2013 – March 2015.

The research is set to identify the news articles that the female columnists write and analyse whether these articles are closing up or widening existing gender gaps focusing mainly on the discourse they use.

At least three articles per year from the female columnists will be analysed due to limited time in undertaking the research. The selected articles will show whether the way the female columnists write has changed with time starting from 2013 to March-2015. Furthermore, this will enable the researcher to do a proper discourse communication analysis on the news articles basing on the fact...
that writing changes with time. These articles will be analysed using the Critical Discourse Analysis so that will be able to look at the simple language aspects used in the news articles and the role the discourse plays in closing gender gaps.

The systematic stratified sampling method, due to its selective nature, cuts the crux of the relevance of the matter as the articles which the female columnists write mainly on women will be compiled as the research focuses on gender disparities. Picking gender-related articles will make it easy for the research to analysis these articles as the research focuses more on the gender gap in the media.

With the systematic stratified sampling method, the research will look at least two articles per columnist from the year May 2013-March 2015 so as to get a balanced conclusion. This conclusion will be based on whether female columnists continue opening or closing gender gaps with time or not.

The selected sampling method, which is systematic stratified in combination with Critical Discourse Analysis theoretical framework, will be used in order to come up with valid facts. This basically involves the analysis of discourse used by the female columnists in their articles. This will enable the researcher to come up with a conclusion on whether Ruth Butaumocho, Sekai Nzenza and Ropafadzo Pamhizde widen or close existing gender disparities.

Three steps will be followed when using the systematic stratified sampling method

- Compiling of news articles
- Analysing the news articles using Critical Discourse Analysis
- Analysing the linguistic structure of the news articles

3.4 Population

In this study, the population are the journalists, editors, and the people who read The Herald and Newsday daily paper articles in Zimbabwe. News articles on gender-related issues by the three female columnists will be targeted as the study focuses on the misrepresentation of women and the growth of gender disparities in Zimbabwe.

3.5 Subpopulation

The 9 articles by the three female columnists which aid in assessing whether the news articles have widened or closed existing gender gaps mainly on the representation of women will be used as the subpopulation of the research.

3.6 Data collection methods

According to Masuku (1999), the researcher should record the data as the information is being collected so not to lose the concept as it is the backbone of data analysis and the whole research. After selecting the columnists to look at the research visited the two media houses to collect the news articles to analysis and others were taken from the websites as they were not in hard copy.

The researcher selected gender-related articles so as to analysis the discourse used when representing women in the media by the female columnists.

3.7 Case study

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The researcher used a case of The Herald and NewsDay from May 2013 to March 2015 in order to have a specific area of study. According to Lindenman (2006) defines case study as an inquiry that congregates information on a precise personage or company with the investigation focused on understanding its unique qualities. In this case, the researcher will look at news articles produced by the female columnists in the two media houses.

In addition, Yin (1984) goes on to define case study as a research method that investigates an issue under study or rather contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. In this case, the researcher will look at articles written by the three columnists in the two media houses.

3.8 Data analysis procedure

According to an internet website, data analysis is a practice in which raw data is ordered and organised so that useful information can be extracted from it. This process is important in understanding what the data does and does not contain. There are different ways in which data analysis can be approached and it is easy to manipulate data during the analysis process.

For this reason, it is important to pay attention when data analysis is presented and to think critically about the data and the conclusions which were drawn.

Over the course of the data analysis, the gathered data is ordered in a way which will be useful. For instance, this study will analyse the news articles from the headlines to the little elements of discourse as verbs and so on. The available news articles will also be included in the form of an appendix so that people can look up specifics for themselves and according to their understanding.

4.0 Data presentation and analysis

This section analysed articles by Ropafadzo Mapimhidze, Ruth Butaumocho and Sekai Nzenza focusing mainly on the discourse they use and whether they have widened or closed up existing gender gaps. The focus will be on the discourse communication analysis of the headlines and the news articles by the female columnists. Critical Discourse Analysis will be used to break down the news articles from the language microstructure to the contextual relevance of how the messages are put across in the news articles.

4.1 Women Stop whining, grab opportunity (The Herald, 23 September 2014)

In Ruth Butaumocho’s article entitled Women Stop whining, grab opportunity she encourages women to fight for their space but the concept is lost in the story. The article rather exposes women and represents them as voiceless beings that need someone to say things for them. So already by the title, Ruth draws the reader's attention to a weaker woman who can see opportunity but cannot grab it.

In addition to that, Ruth notes that,

While their reasons range from socialisation to hindering factors such as lack of collateral and strong financial base, the majority still want to confine themselves to small businesses that are not very risky.

The use of phrases like the majority still want to confine themselves to small business brings out an image of women that are not strong enough to venture into big businesses. Therefore, though her purpose is to make women realise the opportunities, she also presented women that cannot take risks.

It is important to note that social beliefs are strengthened by the discourse in use. Rogers, et. al. (2005) identify the final level of CDA which is the theory used in the analysis, as of social
practices, concentrating specifically on the relation of discourse to power and ideology. More so, due to the use of clauses such as, *most women chose to shy away*, in her article give the readers weaknesses that women have to men. Hence women can be judged according to what Ruth says in her news article.

Ruth Butaumocho went on to compare women to men in the article when she talks about a female friend that got carried away and missed the Zim-Russia deal where she wanted to secure something for herself and women from her district. She clearly mentions how the male friend ended up taking the opportunity.

According to Ruth, women are quickly carried away with rather unnecessary things for instance in this article Ruth mentions that

> …she was so overwhelmed with grandeur, high turnout and the presence of several international visitors from Russia that she could only marvel at the spectacle. She forgot to enquire...

Ruth went on to mention how a male counterpart ended up taking that opportunity and getting the deal.

Part of the article also reads,

> Women are being presented with the same opportunities as men, but the majority of them are failing to strike when they should.

This gives readers a negative perspective towards women and without realising it female columnists continue widening the gender gap by looking at women as scared and less risk takers than men.

### 4.2. Of women who kill, deadbeat father (The Herald, 10 March 2015)

In another article by Ruth Butaumocho **Of women who kill, deadbeat father**, she tends to strengthen the idea of patriarchy and motherhood. She states,

> This is unthinkable for any parent, more so for the mother who is considered a nurturer, and regarded as an embodiment of life. So, just the idea of a mother murdering her own child, for whatever reason is against the ideas of motherhood.

According to Ruth, if men commit crime its fine but when women do they are said to have done an unthinkable act which is against the expectations of motherhood. According to Richardson (2007), all types of words, but particularly nouns, adjective, verbs and adverbs carry connoted in addition to denoted meanings. Hence the words and phrases Ruth uses to define women such as nurturer, an embodiment of life in writing her article plays an important role in defining women and setting limitations and gender gap between men and women.

Ruth mentions that,

> Women who have forsaken their divine and natural role of being nurturer

This strengthens the idea of patriarchy that women are emotional and men rational hence women inferior to men.

Considering that motherhood supports the ideas of patriarchy, Ruth rather strengthens the gap between men and women where women should remain inferior to men.

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As female writers continue to represent women negatively the society also views women in that way as the media also builds the minds of its readers with the stories they produce.

Furthermore, Ruth also writes,

*Such a mother is seen as someone who is not guilty of a crime but has violated a law of nature and rebelled against instinct.*

By violating a law of nature also suggests that certain things women are not supposed to do because they are women and not men. That gap set by the media can then never view the two as equal. According to Fairclough (2010),

“In contemporary societies, mass media are the predominant social field in the creation of…the public knowledge and information, beliefs, values and attitudes which are necessary for establishing and economic, social and political systems and orders.”

Meaning the public views and base their opinions on what the media says no matter social or political. It always brings out the fact that discourse shape ideology to some extent. The selection of words in Ruth's articles continues to represent women from the patriarchal way. One start wondering which law and instinct are being referred to.

4.3. Women are own worst enemies (The Herald, 3 February 2015)

In addition to another article by Ruth, **Women are own worst enemies**, the headline already misrepresents women or rather widens the gender gaps existing in Zimbabwe by referring to women as a major reason for their failure. Ruth gives her readers a negative rather than positive perspective towards women which only strengthens the fact that men are rational and think better than women. Moreover, the discourse used in these articles plays an important role. In the same article Ruth also speaks of the relationships between mother in laws and their daughter in laws. Female writers, like Ruth, rather bring out their ideas pulling women down first even if it's an article to support them. In this article, Ruth brings to light acts of women and not men and this only gives readers different ideas on women,

*Instead of protecting the hapless woman from the vicious attack from her rival, the group of women present used her attack as an opportunity to hit back at her and teach her a lesson for snatching somebody’s husband.*

The way Ruth analysed the incident and the choice of words, clauses and phrases like a hapless woman and vicious attack from her rival only portray women as rival and unable to control themselves. Female columnists hardly write positive things about women and have carried the traditions of the media that always misrepresent women and never men.

Van Dijk (1993) mentions that Critical Discourse Analysis is basically concerned with and explores the way in which powerful social agents influence social beliefs and values, and shape ideologies. In this case, one can note that the writings from the female columnists shape the old tradition that misrepresented women.

Furthermore, when we also look at Sekai Nzenza’s articles, the way she writes does not seem to differ much from the way Butaumocho writes. Sekai is an independent writer and writes her articles in a narrative form.

4.4. A good woman must stay in the village (The Herald 8 April 2015)
In her article entitled **A good woman must stay in the village**, Sekai talks about a lady by the name Shamiso whose uncle and mother in law wanted her to stay in the village. The title of the article shows Sekai Nzenza’s perspective of women and by mentioning that one should stay in the village to prove that she is a good woman and wife does nothing much than strengthening the old tradition where men stayed in the city and women in the village.

The choice of the title and words such as a *good woman* can only mean that a real woman is expected to be in the village if she is to be regarded as the perfect woman. Sekai suggests that only a proper woman should be able to listen to her in-laws. This rather continues to widen negative views towards women of today. The terms that she uses to narrate her story are indicative expressions of what is expected of a woman.

This article sways public opinion to rally behind the definition of a good woman by use of positive language. It is thus evident that discourse choice does aid in shaping the reader's perspectives.

In the same article, one can argue that Sekai strengthens the old tradition that men should control the families with her character Sekuru, who in her article give the power to determine the future of Shamiso.

> Then Sekuru Zinhopi reminded everyone that one reason for his Easter visit was to tell Shamiso that so far she had shown little respect for Philemon’s people by refusing to stay in her husband’s village.

In this article Sekai clearly shows her angle of writing in support of patriarchy where men are regarded as heads of the family and have the final say in family issues, a position that opens the gender gaps between men and women. Hence men will always that controlling figure and women forced to do accordingly as media also to some extent shape the minds of its readers.

4.5. **Harare: Sex and the city** (The Herald 21 January 2015)

In another article by Sekai entitled **Harare: Sex and the city**, she focuses more on women and not men. The fact that these writers chose to write more about women portraying a negative image influences her readers into developing a negative attitude towards women. In her article Sekai notes,

> Whenever Mbuya wanted to scold us, she would watch out for shavi or bad spirit that encouraged women to like men too much

Sekai Nzenza uses phrases such as *shavi encouraging women to like men* in her article to define women though using other characters to do it. She talks of a bad spirit that encourages women to like men but does not talk about men liking the women too.

The gap between these articles is that many of the female columnist's articles talk negative things about women and rarely about men.

In this article, she gives her male characters the opportunity to speak their minds about women and prostitution whilst she is silent. Piri one male character says,

> No deal for her. I would rather starve than walk like that.

Piri was referring to a woman they had seen on the streets. By giving her male characters voices to comment on women strengthens the idea of the superiority of men.

4.6. **Choosing the profile picture for social media** (The Herald 22 July 2015)

**Author:** Tanyaradzwa Virginia Munouya
Nzenza in another article portrays an image of a woman who was innocent while she stayed in the village but the moment she came to the city was different. Sekai notes that,

*She is smiling with her head tilted to the side in a pose that others might call seductive or flirtatious. It’s a cheerful profile photo of a young girl who is no longer innocent as she was when she first came to town three years ago. The city does that to young people.*

Nzenza brings out negative characteristics of women as she uses adjectives such as seductive to describe the way a woman posed for a picture which is regarded as inappropriate behaviour. These writers sometimes they blame the women for the positions that they are in right now.

In the same article Sekai talks about how the city was never a place for women,

*She said the city, or tawindi as she called it, gave women too much independence and forced them to become prostitutes.*

Literally, readers, when they read articles like this they continue regarding women as in the past, were are not supposed to be too independent rather should be controlled by the male counterpart. Therefore the fact that female columnists portray weaker women and never men creates more damage and widens the gender differences between the two.


Ropafadzo Mapimhidze, from News Day, also writes so many articles centred on women, not that it’s a bad thing but these articles do not focus on empowering women but rather expose their weaknesses and misrepresent them. In one article titled *Are butt-fattening pills real?* Ropafadzo talks of women who enlarge their butt which only brings out the inferiority complex in most women whereby they work on changing themselves mostly to impress men.

Part of the article reads,

*Women are doing this to attract the opposite sex because men have the tendency of making advances at curvaceous women.*

Hence, in as much as these female writers talk about women the more they expose them and continue to open the gap between women and men because most of the articles only portray weaknesses of womanhood.

The sentence above brings out a woman who only does things to make the opposite sex happy and does not bring out one who possibly might be doing it for her own good.

In addition, the idea portrayed in this article that because men like curvaceous women, women tend to go an extra mile to please these needs no matter the after effects only influence the views of the public.

The fact that these suggestions are coming from fellow women strengthens the fact that female columnists are rather widening gender disparities in their news articles. Ropafadzo makes use of rhetoric question to these acts when she says,

*But why would someone desire to have big buttocks when she is not naturally endowed?*

The rhetoric question only suggests that women go beyond the expected only to please men. Therefore such writings by female columnists only continue to degrade women and not strengthen them in a way the media is supposed to do. It brings out a desperate group of women who put so
much effort to please men. The stories are not balanced and whenever men are mostly mentioned it's in business or any other important issues, unlike women.

4.8. Are women in miniskirts asking for rape (NewsDay 10 October 2014)

In another article by Ropafadzo entitled Are women in miniskirts asking for rape she talks about how miniskirts are not the reasons why women are raped. However, no matter how much her intention was on supporting women she brings in male characters to comment on that.

Part of the article reads,

    For example, a woman cannot wear church regalia to a bar and she cannot also wear party wear to church. Miniskirts are generally associated with loose women and places of entertainment

Considering this view one would be right in arguing that female columnists are widening gender gaps in some of the articles. This article brings out different bad images about women. The uses of verbs like, “loose women” terribly define women and give them less value in the society.

5.0. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research set to find out whether the media discourse used in news articles by the three female columnists Ruth Butaumocho, Sekai Nzenza and Ropafadzo Pamhidze widen or close up existing gender gaps in the case of The Herald and NewsDay particularly from May 2013-March 2015. The study analysed at least three articles from each year to get a balanced analysis whether the discourse has changed with time.

The use of Critical Discourse Analysis as a framework necessitated the study to focus on the simple elements of language such as verbs and adjectival phrases. As evidenced in the research the use of language to widen gender differences continue to be a problematic issue in the media. It is important to note that female columnists have also failed to close the gaps and to do away with the misrepresentation of women.

The researcher found out that the headlines and articles by female columnists widen the idea of misrepresentation of women by the media. The columnists use discourse that does not protect women from the old patriarchal practices. The study analysed the selected articles focusing mainly on the language used within the articles and then highlighted the representation of content and discourse to widen gender differences existing in Zimbabwe mainly caused by the media.

5.1. Findings

The major purpose of undertaking the research in discussion was to clearly bring out whether female columnists have widened or closed up existing gender disparities. The researcher observed that the female journalists have carried on with the norm of misrepresenting women in most of their articles which was usually done by male reporters. The discourse used by Ropafadzo Pamhidze, Ruth Butaumocho and Sekai Nzenza in the headlines and in the articles continue to strengthen the misrepresentation of women.

They portray sexual, weak and emotional images of women and rarely do they misrepresent men in these articles. The study also deduced that the problem is in that the media has already created their own image of women and the moment female reporters and columnists try to resist that they tend to open gender gaps because they continually use the same discourse.

It is also important to note that it is mainly the discourse in use that has failed to do away with the gender gaps existing in Zimbabwean society.

Author: Tanyaradzwa Virginia Munouya
The fact that the readers are influenced mainly by what the media produce makes it difficult for them to view women differently from the way they are represented in the news articles.

Sekai Nzenza to be precise writes in narrative form and most of her articles are based on the patriarchal practices. This makes it difficult to build a new image of womanhood far from the old macho system.

5.2. Limitations

The researcher was supposed to look at three articles from each columnist however since the News Day upgraded their website some of the articles by Ropafadzo Panhidze were yet to be uploaded. Hence the researcher was able to look at two of her articles and six articles by the other two columnists.

5.3. Recommendations

In light of the findings gathered after analysing the news articles from the three female columnists, recommendations were made to come up with different ways of closing up gender gaps as far as misrepresentation of women is concerned.

- There should be equal and fair representation of both men and women in the media. This will help in creating same opportunities economically and same positions socially by not looking at men as rational and women emotional.
- There is need to do away with discourse that is degrading and negative used in news articles especially when talking about women.
- It is a social obligation for News Day and The Herald to educate their reporters and also produce articles that fairly represent women considering these are daily family newspapers. The media ought not to be in charge of making false negative images of women by the use of biased discourse.
- It is also basic for media houses, both public and private to observe the essentialness of reliable social communication is to the closing up of gender gaps and to the development of nationhood. They should understand that discourse can shape the way in which readers view the world as indicated by the media.

6.0 REFERENCES


Author: Tanyaradzwa Virginia Munouya