



**Face strategies in headlines from the Nigerian tribune's court and
crime column**

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ABSTRACT

This study conducts an in-depth analysis of face-saving and face-threatening acts as depicted in selected headlines sourced from the Court and Crime Column in the Nigerian Tribune, with a specific focus on the context of marital relationships. Employing a qualitative content analysis, the research looks into the intricate elements of language and communication strategies employed by individuals within these headlines. The findings elucidated both face-saving and face-threatening acts, illuminating the many dynamics inherent in marital communication. Through careful examination, key themes emerged, encompassing a spectrum of behaviour including accusations, justifications, denials, and endeavours aimed at preserving one's reputation. By shedding light on these underlying patterns, the study underscores the crucial role of language and communication in marital relationships, offering valuable insights into the strategies individuals employ to safeguard their own dignity or challenge the integrity of their partners. Moreover, the research contributes significantly to our understanding of the complexities surrounding communication dynamics within marriages, emphasizing the profound impact of face-saving and face-threatening acts on perceptions and relationship outcomes. Ultimately, the study advocates for the adoption of effective communication strategies, emphasizing the importance of positive language choices, empathy, and understanding as fundamental pillars for fostering and sustaining healthy and harmonious marital relationships.

Keywords: Face-Saving; Face-Threatening Acts; Marital Communication.

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ABSTRAK

Studi ini melakukan analisis mendalam terhadap tindakan penyelamatan muka dan ancaman seperti yang digambarkan dalam berita utama terpilih yang bersumber dari Kolom Pengadilan dan Kejahatan di Nigerian Tribune, dengan fokus khusus pada konteks hubungan perkawinan. Dengan menggunakan analisis konten kualitatif, penelitian ini melihat ke dalam elemen rumit bahasa dan strategi komunikasi yang digunakan oleh individu dalam berita utama tersebut. Temuan ini menjelaskan tindakan yang menyelamatkan muka dan mengancam muka, menjelaskan banyak dinamika yang melekat dalam komunikasi perkawinan. Melalui pengujian yang cermat, muncul tema-tema kunci yang mencakup spektrum perilaku termasuk tuduhan, pembenaran, penolakan, dan upaya yang bertujuan menjaga reputasi seseorang. Dengan menyoroti pola-pola mendasar ini, penelitian ini menggarisbawahi peran penting bahasa dan komunikasi dalam hubungan perkawinan, memberikan wawasan berharga mengenai strategi yang digunakan individu untuk menjaga martabat mereka sendiri atau menantang integritas pasangan mereka. Selain itu, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi yang signifikan terhadap pemahaman kita tentang kompleksitas seputar dinamika komunikasi dalam pernikahan, dengan menekankan dampak besar dari tindakan menyelamatkan muka dan mengancam muka terhadap persepsi dan hasil hubungan. Pada akhirnya, penelitian ini menganjurkan penerapan strategi komunikasi yang efektif, menekankan pentingnya pilihan bahasa yang positif, empati, dan pemahaman sebagai pilar fundamental untuk membina dan mempertahankan hubungan perkawinan yang sehat dan harmonis.

Kata Kunci: Menyelamatkan Wajah; Tindakan yang Mengancam Wajah; Komunikasi Pernikahan.

1. INTRODUCTION

Marital relationships are complex and dynamic, often characterized by various challenges and conflicts (Ember, 2016). Effective communication plays a vital role in navigating these challenges and maintaining a healthy and harmonious relationship. One important aspect of communication within marriages is the use of face-saving and face-threatening acts. Face-saving refers to the strategies employed by individuals to protect their positive self-image and maintain social harmony, while face-threatening acts involve behaviours or statements that potentially damage the self-image of others (Brown, 2023; Boyle, 2000; Brown, 2000). Understanding how face-saving and face-threatening acts manifest in marital communication can provide valuable insights into the dynamics of relationships and shed light on effective communication strategies.

Despite the significance of face-saving and face-threatening acts in marital communication, there is limited research specifically examining these concepts within the context of selected headlines from the Court and Crime column. The headlines in this domain often depict intense conflicts and grievances between spouses, making them a valuable source for understanding the dynamics of face-saving and face-threatening acts. However, there is a gap in the literature regarding an in-depth analysis of these acts within this specific context. Therefore, there is a need for a study that focuses on face-saving and face-threatening acts in

the selected headlines to gain insights into the strategies employed by individuals in marital relationships to preserve or challenge their public self-image.

The goal of this study is to analyze and explore the presence of face-saving and face-threatening acts in the selected headlines from the Court and Crime column. By examining the language and communication strategies employed by individuals in these headlines, we aim to understand how couples navigate conflicts, express grievances, and present their side of the story. The study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on language and communication in marital relationships by specifically focusing on face-saving and face-threatening acts within the context of the selected headlines.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that studies how language is used in context and how meaning is inferred beyond the literal interpretation of words (Brown & Levinson, 1987). It focuses on the pragmatic aspects of communication, such as implicature, presupposition, speech acts, and the influence of context on interpretation (Yule, 1996). Pragmatics examines how speakers and listeners negotiate meaning and understand each other's intentions based on shared knowledge, social norms, and contextual cues (Eelen, G. 2001; Ellis, Zhu, Shintani & Roever, 2021).

In recent years, several studies have explored various aspects of pragmatics. For example, Holmes & Schnurr (2017) investigated the role of politeness strategies in workplace communication, highlighting how speakers use linguistic and non-linguistic cues to convey politeness and maintain positive social interactions. This study contributed to our understanding of how pragmatic principles shape professional relationships and influence communication dynamics.

Another study by ChinturuAdindu & Ogbonnaya (2020) examined the use of implicature in advertising slogans, focusing on how advertisers exploit pragmatic inference to create persuasive messages. By analyzing a corpus of advertisements, the authors identified various pragmatic strategies, such as implicature and presupposition, used to engage consumers and elicit desired responses. This research shed light on the pragmatic principles underlying effective advertising communication.

Thus, pragmatics plays a vital role in understanding how language is used in context and how meaning is conveyed beyond literal interpretations. Recent studies have examined different domains, such as workplace communication and advertising, to explore pragmatic strategies and their impact on effective communication. These studies contribute to our knowledge of how pragmatics influences language use and interpretation in various social and professional contexts.

2.2. Language and Marital Communication

Language and marital communication refer to the use of language in the context of a marital relationship, encompassing how couples communicate, negotiate meaning, express emotions, and resolve conflicts (Omeje, Ugwu & Ogidi, 2022). It examines the ways in which language choices, tone, and nonverbal cues impact the quality of communication and overall relationship satisfaction.

Recent research has shed light on various aspects of language and marital communication. For instance, Chomba, Kiarie, & Njani (2023) conducted a study exploring the use of positive and negative communication strategies in marital conflict. Their findings revealed that couples who employed more positive and constructive language during conflicts experienced higher relationship satisfaction and lower levels of distress. This study highlights the importance of language in shaping conflict resolution and overall relationship dynamics.

In another study, Horn & Meier (2022) investigated the role of language in expressing emotions within marital relationships. They found that couples who effectively communicated their emotions using clear and specific language experienced higher emotional intimacy and relationship satisfaction. This research emphasizes the significance of language in expressing emotions and fostering emotional connection within marriages.

Furthermore, a study by Koerner & Fitzpatrick (2002) focused on the impact of nonverbal communication on marital satisfaction. Their findings suggested that couples who effectively utilized nonverbal cues, such as eye contact and body language, alongside verbal communication, experienced higher levels of marital satisfaction and better understanding of each other's emotions. This study highlights the interplay between language and nonverbal communication in marital relationships.

From the above, we will observe that language and marital communication play a crucial role in shaping the quality and dynamics of a marital relationship. Recent research underscores the importance of positive communication strategies, clear expression of emotions, and effective use of both verbal and nonverbal cues in fostering satisfaction, emotional intimacy, and conflict resolution within marriages.

2.3. Politeness and Concept of Face

Politeness is a sociolinguistic concept that refers to the use of language and behavior to maintain social harmony, respect, and positive interactions within a given cultural context (Klein, 2002; Watts, 2003). It involves strategies and linguistic choices that individuals employ to mitigate potential face threats and uphold face, both their own and that of others (Kadar, D. & Haugh, 2013). Face, in this context, refers to an individual's public self-image and social identity, which can be damaged or enhanced through communication and interaction.

Recent research has contributed to our understanding of politeness and the concept of face. For example, Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed a politeness theory that outlined different strategies individuals employ to protect face during communication. Their theory highlighted the distinction between positive politeness, which involves seeking approval and connection, and negative politeness, which involves mitigating potential threats to autonomy and maintaining social distance. This seminal work laid the foundation for further research on politeness and face-saving strategies.

In a more recent study, Arua (2020) examined the Non-verbal Cues and Politeness Strategies in Post Office Service Encounter in Nigeria. She found that customer service representatives utilized a variety of politeness strategies, such as positive politeness and face-enhancement, to maintain positive interactions and customer satisfaction. This study underscores the importance of politeness in professional contexts and highlights its impact on customer perceptions and experiences.

Furthermore, a study by Huang (2008) explored Politeness Principle in Cross-Culture Communication. Their findings revealed cultural differences in the use of politeness strategies, with Chinese participants employing more indirect and face-saving strategies compared to American participants. This research highlights the influence of culture on politeness norms and the need for intercultural sensitivity in communication.

Politeness and the concept of face are integral to understanding how individuals navigate social interactions and maintain positive relationships. Politeness involves employing linguistic and behavioral strategies to uphold face and mitigate potential face threats. Recent research has contributed to our understanding of politeness by exploring its role in customer service interactions, cross-cultural communication, and interpersonal relationships. These studies shed light on the complex dynamics of politeness and its impact on social harmony, communication effectiveness, and relationship satisfaction.

2.4. Face-saving and Face-threatening Acts

Face-saving and face-threatening acts are concepts rooted in sociolinguistics and refer to communicative behaviors and strategies that individuals employ to either preserve their own positive self-image (face-saving) or potentially damage the self-image of others (face-threatening) in social interactions. Recent research has provided insights into face-saving and face-threatening acts in various contexts. For example, Hou (2023) examines Face and Identity in Intercultural Conflict Management, focusing on Chinese overseas students. The study combines face negotiation theory with Spencer-Oatey's face and identity model to analyze the complexities of conflict management in intercultural settings. The findings reveal the critical importance of face and identity in understanding the dynamics of intercultural conflict management, particularly for Chinese overseas students. The study provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of intercultural communication and contributes to our understanding of the complexities of intercultural conflict management. However, the study's limitations, such as the small sample size and the lack of recorded naturally occurring discourses, suggest the need for further research in this area.

Furthermore, a study by Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed a politeness theory that encompassed both face-saving and face-threatening acts. They explored various politeness strategies individuals employ to mitigate potential face threats and maintain social harmony. This theory provided a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals navigate communication while considering face needs (Mehellou, Ramdani & Adetunji, 2019).

This study aims to focus on face-saving and face-threatening acts in the selected headlines to examine how individuals in marital relationships employ language and communication strategies to preserve or challenge their public self-image. By analyzing the chosen headlines, we can gain insights into the dynamics of marital communication and the ways in which individuals navigate conflicts, express grievances, or present their side of the story.

The analysis of face-saving and face-threatening acts in the selected headlines allows for an exploration of the strategies employed by individuals to manage their own face and potentially threaten the face of their partners. By examining the language choices, accusations, denials, justifications, and other communicative behaviors present in the headlines, we can gain a deeper understanding of how individuals in marital relationships

attempt to maintain their positive self-image while dealing with conflicts, accusations, and challenges to their reputation.

3. METHOD

This study utilised a qualitative approach. A purposive sampling technique was used to select specific headlines from the Court and Crime column in the Nigerian Tribune, focusing on those related to marital relationships. The selected headlines were then subjected to a thorough reading and analysis. Data collection involved extracting relevant information from the headlines and identifying instances of face-saving and face-threatening acts. The data analysis procedure involved a systematic examination of the language and communication strategies employed by the individuals in the headlines, identifying patterns and themes across the selected samples. The findings were then synthesized and discussed to explore the significance of language and communication in upholding or limiting a couple's public self-image within the context of marital relationships.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the analysis of face strategies in selected headlines from the Court and Crime column in the Nigerian Tribune. This section provides a comprehensive overview of the identified face-saving and face-threatening acts, highlighting the patterns and themes that emerged from the analysis.

Excerpt 1

'My husband got married to a prophetess much older than him' - Wife (July 15, 2023: p. 21)

In the excerpt, the wife's words carry an implication, suggesting a potential face-threatening act towards her spouse. By accentuating the considerable age gap and specifically mentioning the bride's role as a prophetess, the wife appears to cast a shadow of doubt over her husband's choices. This deliberate emphasis on the unconventional aspects of the marriage hints at a complex interplay of emotions—perhaps a blend of skepticism, surprise, and possibly even disapproval. The statement not only unveils the stark contrast in ages but also insinuates a subtle challenge to the husband's judgment, prompting readers to contemplate the intricate dynamics at play within this matrimonial union.

Excerpt 2

'My husband accused me of prostitution, threatened to disfigure me' - Wife (July 15, 2023: p. 21)

The headline signifies a serious face-threatening act by the husband. The gravity of his accusations transcends mere verbal assault, going into damaging the wife's reputation and, shockingly, physical harm. Accusing a spouse of prostitution is a grievous attack on her character, carrying serious emotional implications. The husband's threat to disfigure her adds a sinister layer, heightening the potential for lasting psychological trauma. This conjures a distressing image of an intimate relationship marred by not only verbal abuse but the looming specter of physical violence. Such egregious actions not only tarnish the fabric of trust within

the marriage but also underscore the urgent need for addressing issues of control and aggression within the relationship.

Excerpt 3

'I dated another woman, cos' my wife drinks heavily, neglects her duties at home' - Husband
'I'm ready to change' - Wife' (July 15, 2023: p21)

The husband's revelation of infidelity exposes a face-threatening act, as he justifies his actions by attributing them to his wife's alleged heavy drinking and neglect of domestic responsibilities. In laying bare his reasons for seeking companionship elsewhere, he not only confesses to breaching the marital bond but also indirectly criticizes his wife's behaviour. On the other hand, the wife's response signals a readiness to change, suggesting a desire to address the issues at the heart of their relationship. This revelation underscores the fragility of trust within the marriage and sets the stage for a potentially transformative journey towards reconciliation and mutual understanding.

Excerpt 4

'My wife is not trustworthy, she duped me of my money twice' - Husband
'I used the money to buy second-hand pants and bras for our female children' - Wife (July 15, 2023: p21)

This headline highlights a face-threatening act towards the wife by the husband. By accusing his wife of duping him of money on two occasions, he questions her integrity and trustworthiness, potentially damaging her reputation and the trust between them. The wife's statement in this headline is a face-saving act. She attempts to justify her actions of using the money for purchasing clothing for their children, implying that it was for a noble cause. By emphasizing the purpose of the expenditure, she seeks to minimize the potential negative judgment from her husband.

Excerpt 5

'She's troublesome, fights me all the time' - Husband (July 8, 2023: p21)

Within the concise yet revealing statement, "She's troublesome, fights me all the time—Husband," a subtle but potent face-threatening act unfolds. The husband, in framing his perception of his wife, employs language that casts a shadow over her character. The characterization of her as "troublesome" implies a consistent pattern of behaviour that may tarnish her reputation. Moreover, the emphasis on frequent conflicts further accentuates a strained marital dynamic, potentially leading others to form unfavorable opinions about her. This verbal portrayal not only exposes a rift within the relationship but also serves as a public declaration that could influence how others perceive and interact with the wife. The husband's choice of words not only reveals the challenges within the marriage but also hints at the complex interpersonal dynamics that contribute to the apparent discord.

Excerpt 6

'My husband beat my mother, came to my office, beat, stripped me naked' - Wife (July 8, 2023: p12).

In the chilling account in the headline, "My husband beat my mother, came to my office, beat, stripped me naked," the wife unveils a distressing tale of face-threatening acts committed by her husband. The revelation of physical violence against her mother underscores the gravity of his aggression, extending beyond the marital relationship to inflict harm on family members. The husband's alarming actions reach an even more egregious level as he invades the wife's workplace, perpetuating a cycle of violence by subjecting her to further beatings and humiliation. This narrative not only exposes a deeply troubled relationship but also unveils a public spectacle of brutality that has the potential to irreparably damage the husband's reputation. The wife's courageous disclosure sheds light on a disturbing pattern of abuse, emphasizing the urgent need for intervention and addressing the pervasive issue of domestic violence within this tumultuous union.

Excerpt 7

'My husband threatened to set me ablaze, took over my property' - Wife

'I never made such a threat' - Husband (July 8, 2023: p21)

Here, the wife accuses her husband of engaging in severe face-threatening acts. By alleging threats of arson and claiming that he took over her property, she not only portrays him as a potential danger but also implies that he has wrongfully seized her assets. The husband's statement is a face-saving act in response to the wife's previous accusation. By denying making any threats, he attempts to preserve his own image and reputation, aiming to counter the negative portrayal of his behavior.

Excerpt 8

'I'm no longer interested in our 4-month-old wedlock' - Wife

'I still love her' - Husband (July 8, 2023: p21)

In this headline, the wife expresses her disinterest in the marriage, which can be seen as a face-threatening act. By openly stating her lack of interest, she challenges the traditional notion of commitment and brings into question the stability and longevity of their relationship. The husband's statement represents a face-saving act. Despite the problems within their marriage, he affirms his continued love for his wife, attempting to preserve his image as a caring and committed partner.

Excerpt 9

'I want divorce, custody of our children' - Wife

'I don't agree that our children live with her' - Husband (July 8, 2023: p21)

The wife's statement reveals her desire for a divorce and custody of their children, which can be considered a face-threatening act for the husband. By expressing her intentions, she challenges the unity of their family and potentially questions his ability as a parent. In response to the wife's desire for custody, the husband's statement indicates a face-saving act. By expressing disagreement with her custody request, he tries to protect his image as a responsible and capable parent, implying that he believes the children would be better off living with him.

Excerpt 10

'I want my ex-lover to compensate me for breaking my wrist' - Wife (July 8, 2023: p21)

This statement unveils a complex web of emotions and legal considerations. The woman's demand for compensation implies an attribution of responsibility to her former partner for the physical harm endured. In doing so, she not only seeks redress for the injury but also asserts a narrative that could tarnish her ex-lover's reputation. This claim extends physical pain, going into issues of accountability and consequences. By publicly declaring her intention to seek compensation, the woman not only aims to address the financial and emotional toll of the injury but also positions herself as a claimant seeking justice for the alleged wrongdoing, thereby attempting to salvage her own sense of dignity and well-being.

Excerpt 11

'I still love my wife despite deserting me' - Husband (July 8, 2023: p21)

In a poignant and introspective declaration, a man reveals, "I still love my wife despite deserting me." This statement portrays a face-saving act as he confronts the discord between his actions and emotions. The admission of desertion unveils a breach in the marital bond, a departure that may elicit judgment and criticism. However, by emphatically asserting his enduring love for his wife, the man seeks to salvage his tarnished image, perhaps mitigating the potential fallout from his decision. This statement becomes a delicate balancing act, an attempt to reconcile the undeniable reality of physical separation with the preservation of emotional connection. In sharing his ongoing love, he endeavors to communicate a sense of inner turmoil and complexity, allowing glimpses into human relationships, where the heart's sentiments may persist, even in the face of outwardly conflicting actions.

Excerpt 12

'I pray the court to dissolve our union' (July 1, 2023: p12)

In a solemn plea birthed by both vulnerability and determination, the wife declares, "I pray the court to dissolve our union." This poignant statement carries the weight of a face-threatening act, as the wife seeks legal intervention to sever the bonds of matrimony. By invoking the authority of the court, she not only signifies a profound dissatisfaction within the marriage but also challenges its perceived permanence. This public declaration transcends a personal lament, transforming into a formal and legal assertion that lays bare the instability and irreconcilable issues plaguing the union. The use of the term "pray" imbues the plea with a sense of urgency and supplication, underscoring the gravity of her decision. In seeking the dissolution of their marriage through legal means, the wife initiates a process that not only reshapes the trajectory of their lives but also exposes the complex interplay of emotions and conflicts within the marital framework.

Excerpt 13

'My husband arrested my mother, pastor with the police, insisted I aborted my pregnancy' - Wife (July 1, 2023: p12)

In a distressing narrative that unfolds within the headline, "My husband arrested my mother, pastor with the police, insisted I aborted my pregnancy," the wife unveils a

tumultuous saga marked by face-threatening acts on the part of her husband. The involvement of law enforcement in arresting her mother and pastor amplifies the gravity of the situation, suggesting a deliberate attempt to exert control through external forces.

Moreover, the revelation of his insistence on her having an abortion unveils a disturbing facet of his coercive behaviour, potentially disregarding her autonomy and well-being. This public disclosure not only sheds light on the tumult within the marital relationship but also raises poignant questions about the limits of personal agency and the alarming extent to which control is exerted. The wife's courageous revelation hints at a complex interplay of power dynamics, emphasizing the urgent need for intervention and addressing the pervasive issue of control within the context of this troubled union.

Excerpt 14

'My husband's siblings sent his previous four wives packing, they now threaten me' - Wife (July 1, 2023: p21)

Within the harrowing account presented in the statement, "My husband's siblings sent his previous four wives packing, they now threaten me," the wife exposes a deeply unsettling narrative marked by face-threatening acts committed by her husband's siblings. The revelation of a pattern where his previous four wives were sent away hints at a troubling history of familial interference and perhaps an inherent dysfunction within the household. The current threat she faces not only jeopardizes her well-being but also implies a potential tarnishing of the husband's family reputation. This disclosure unveils a cycle of familial control and intimidation that transcends individual marriages, raising questions about the dynamics within the extended family. The wife's courageous revelation sheds light on the urgent need to address the systemic issues at play, highlighting the challenges she faces in a marriage fraught with familial interference and potential harm.

Excerpt 15

'She took my ATM card, withdrew money from my account at will' - Husband
'My husband neglected, starved me, our children' - Wife (July 1, 2023: p21)

Here, the husband accuses his wife of a face-threatening act. By claiming that she took his ATM card and withdrew money without his consent, he implies that she has breached his trust and potentially damaged his financial standing or reputation. In this headline, the wife exposes her husband's face-threatening act of neglect and starvation towards her and their children. By revealing this mistreatment, she challenges his role as a provider and caregiver, potentially damaging his image as a responsible husband and father.

Excerpt 16

'I still love my husband despite hitting, locking me out' - Wife (July 1, 2023: p21)

This statement portrays a face-saving act, as the wife acknowledges the undeniable challenges within her marriage. Despite enduring the distressing experiences of physical abuse and being locked out, she resolutely affirms her love for her husband. In doing so, she seeks to preserve her image as a committed spouse, perhaps grappling with the societal expectations and internalized ideals surrounding marital loyalty. This declaration hints at the layers of emotions, where love coexists with pain, and the preservation of a positive self-

image becomes a coping mechanism amid adversity. The statement not only underscores the complexity of intimate relationships but also invites reflection on the endurance of emotional bonds even in the face of adversity and mistreatment.

Excerpt 17

'Allow us to settle our differences.' (July 1, 2023: p21)

In a conciliatory plea, the husband extends the olive branch with the words, "Allow us to settle our differences." This statement unfolds as a strategic face-saving act, wherein the husband positions himself as a cooperative and reasonable partner amid apparent discord. By proposing a resolution through dialogue and compromise, he endeavours to salvage his image and emphasize his openness to reconciliation. The use of the term "allow" suggests a willingness to engage in a collaborative process, subtly projecting a sense of humility. In making this appeal, the husband not only acknowledges the existence of differences but also signals a desire to navigate them amicably. This statement unveils a delicate dance of emotions, where the quest for resolution becomes a means of preserving the semblance of harmony within the marital dynamic, portraying the husband as invested in the longevity and well-being of the relationship.

Excerpt 18

'My husband married another wife, brought her into our home, woman tells court' - Wife (July 1, 2023: p21)

In the excerpt, a face-threatening act unfolds as the husband's actions challenge the very foundations of the marital union. By marrying another woman and integrating her into their shared home, he not only breaches the exclusivity inherent in marriage but also undermines the commitment and trust essential to such a relationship. This revelation exposes the wife to emotional turmoil and the potential erosion of her marital rights. Moreover, the public disclosure of these actions before a court emphasizes the gravity of the situation, with legal consequences looming on the horizon. The husband's decision not only jeopardizes the emotional well-being of his wife but also carries the weight of potential reputational damage and legal ramifications as the complex narrative of their marital discord unfolds within the courtroom.

Excerpt 19

'My husband refused to work, his parents fed, clothed him' - Wife (June 24, 2023: p12)

In a candid disclosure laden with implications, the wife unveils a face-threatening act within her marriage, stating, "My husband refused to work, his parents fed, clothed him." This revelation strikes at the core of societal expectations surrounding adulthood and self-sufficiency. By openly acknowledging his reluctance to work and dependence on his parents for basic necessities, the wife challenges not only the financial stability of their union but also her husband's reputation as a responsible and independent adult. This public revelation portrays him in a light that contradicts societal norms, potentially triggering judgment and scrutiny. The husband's choice to eschew work not only places strain on the marital dynamics but also exposes a complex interplay of expectations and responsibilities within the

relationship, inviting reflection on the broader implications of such a face-threatening revelation.

Excerpt 20

'Please, don't dissolve our marriage' (June 24, 2023: p21)

This heartfelt request unfolds as a strategic face-saving act, wherein he endeavors to salvage his image as a committed and dedicated spouse. By expressing a fervent desire for the preservation of their marital union, he not only acknowledges the challenges within their relationship but also subtly positions himself as a partner invested in its stability. The use of the word "please" imparts a sense of urgency and vulnerability, underscoring the gravity of his appeal. This statement becomes a delicate dance of emotions, as the husband seeks to maintain the perception of a stable and lasting connection, exploring the complexities of intimate relationships with a plea that transcends the immediate challenges, embracing the broader narrative of enduring love and commitment.

Excerpt 21

'His girlfriend spilled water on me' (June 24, 2023: p21)

This accusatory statement not only suggests a face-threatening act but also implies a deliberate and disrespectful action by the husband's girlfriend. By alleging that the spilled water was intentional, the wife portrays herself as a victim in this scenario, seeking to save face and garner sympathy. The choice to share this incident publicly hints at the complexities within the relationship and the desire to shed light on perceived mistreatment. This revelation, beyond its literal implications, becomes a symbolic representation of the emotional discord within the marital dynamic, where actions as seemingly innocuous as spilling water take on heightened significance in the context of strained relationships and the quest for validation.

The excerpts provide a vivid view of the dynamics within marital relationships, where face-saving and face-threatening acts unfold against a backdrop of emotional turmoil and interpersonal conflict. Through these narratives, a spectrum of challenges—from accusations of infidelity and neglect to instances of physical violence and familial interference—is laid bare, exposing the vulnerability and complexity inherent in intimate connections. Each headline reveals a delicate dance of emotions, where individuals exhibit trust, loyalty, and personal agency amidst societal expectations and interpersonal strife. These revelations not only shed light on the fragility of marital bonds but also prompt reflections on the broader societal norms and power dynamics that shape and sometimes fracture these relationships. Amidst the turmoil, expressions of enduring love, pleas for reconciliation, and assertions of personal dignity emerge as beacons of hope, underscoring the resilience and humanity that persist even in the face of adversity.

5. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the provided headlines underscores the crucial interplay between language, communication, and the maintenance of public self-image within marital relationships. These findings align with previous research that highlights the significance of language in shaping interpersonal dynamics and perceptions within intimate partnerships (Gottman & Notarius, 2000; Caughlin & Vangelisti, 2000). According to Gottman and

Notarius (2000), effective communication strategies, including the use of constructive language and expressions of empathy, are crucial for fostering marital satisfaction and resolving conflicts. The headlines from the Court and Crime column in the Nigerian Tribune exemplify how language serves as a tool for individuals to assert grievances, protect their self-image, or challenge their partner's reputation.

In line with Caughlin and Vangelisti's (2000) research on facework in marital relationships, the analysis reveals instances of face-saving and face-threatening acts employed by both spouses. Face-saving acts, such as expressions of love or denials of wrongdoing, are utilized to preserve one's self-image and minimize potential damage to reputation. Conversely, face-threatening acts, such as accusations of infidelity or neglect, challenge the partner's reputation and potentially tarnish their public self-image. These findings echo Caughlin and Vangelisti's (2000) assertion that facework plays a crucial role in managing conflicts and maintaining relational harmony within marital contexts.

Furthermore, the analysis highlights the broader societal implications of language and communication within marital relationships. These findings align with research by Baxter and Montgomery (1996), which emphasizes the social construction of marital narratives and the influence of media portrayals on public perception. The choice of words, accusations, and justifications within the headlines contributes to the construction of a narrative that shapes how couples are viewed by society. As Baxter and Montgomery (1996) suggest, media representations of marital conflicts can influence public opinion and perpetuate societal norms and stereotypes regarding gender roles and relationship dynamics.

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