

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Language use as stancetaking on motivations for romantic relationships among female undergraduates

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores motivations for love as stancetaking in the discourse on romantic relationships among female undergraduates in two Universities in Southern Nigeria. Insights from Community of Practice and Appraisal Theory were used to instantiate the use of situated linguistic choices to establish the different impulses for female undergraduates' engagement in heterosexual relationships. Data for the study were generated through (non)participant observation, informal interactions and semi-structured interviews involving a representative sample of 44 female undergraduates. The findings show that the participants utilised youth culture of sexual expressiveness to establish their motivations for love, cognitively construed as stancetaking on romantic relationships with their male sexual partners. Participants' language use shows that the female students' motivations for loving their male sexual partners include: high sexual performance, good academic performance, financial benefits, intention to get married in future, access to power and security, and physical attractiveness. This study, aside from establishing the increasing practice of heterosexual relationships among Nigerian university undergraduates, has also presented participants' motivations for sexual practices as the girls' peculiar sexual narrations of their worldview. This also shows the creation of situated linguistic choices as outcome of 'new' youth expressive culture as demonstrated in the discourse of their sexual relationships and experience within the liberal university environment.

Keywords: language use; stancetaking; romantic relationships; sexual motivations; female undergraduates

1. Introduction

Love is a fundamental desire among humans that binds relationships across time, social groups and cultures, and is motivated by different factors depending on the individuals involved. Burunat^[1] argues that love is placed within the category of physiological motivations, such as hunger, thirst, sleep, or sex, on the basis that love also is essential for human survival and happiness. Its essentiality, according to Stenberg^[2], is because it enhances peaceful co-existence among the practitioners. It is also a complex and multidimensional phenomenon conveyed through different expressions and behaviours that account for its types. Gulia^[3] categorises love into seven forms: eros (erotic, sexual and romantic), philia (love for friends), storge (familial love), agape (love of everyone), pragma (enduring love), philautia (love of self) and mania (obsessive love).

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Each strand aims to build and sustain human relationships in different ways. The focus of this paper is romantic love (relationships), and it is used operationally and interchangeably (in this study) with heterosexual relationships engaged by female undergraduates (with male students) for reasons that define their individual (and collective) stance.

Categorically, de Almeida and Lomonaco^[4] state that romantic love is characterised and shaped by cognitive, behavioural, genetic, social and endocrine activities that define the interrelated relationships. These features, in the view of Bode and Kushnich^[5], demonstrate the complex nature of sustainable love. It is established that romantic love has three interrelated characteristics: intimacy, passion and commitment. These are close-knitted attributes that define lasting romantic relationships practised across social groups and cultures in the global scene.

Globally, Smith^[6], Bogle^[7] and Wade^[8] demonstrate that institutions of higher learning are increasingly becoming fertile avenues for practicing heterosexual relationships being motivated by several factors and described in language with situated meanings that define their social realities. In Africa, Helle-Valle^[9], and Cole and Thomas^[10] emphasise that heterosexual practices have long been in existence among young people in African Universities. Also in Nigeria, studies have accounted for the increasing trend of romantic relationships among undergraduate students. For instance, Johnson's^[11] study on heterosexual activities among students in ten Universities concludes that the practice is widespread among female undergraduates. Onyeoku^[12] also argues that such relationships are heavily influenced by sociocultural and economic factors especially among female undergraduates in the Universities in South-eastern Nigeria. Again, Tade and Adekoya^[13] claim that romantic practices in Nigerian Universities are on the increase because some female undergraduates see sex as agency to attend to their basic needs. On the contrary, Odu and Akanle^[14], and Okonkwo^[15] argue that this trending practice is capable of having a corresponding increase in the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases among Nigerian undergraduates who form the desired human capital for national development. The authors' claim reiterates the risks involved in unprotected sex and the consequences it portends to the growing population.

In the emerging youth expressive culture, sexual experiences often preoccupy the heterosexual discourse among female undergraduates. On this, Olugbile, Abu and Adelakun^[16], as cited in Uwen^[17], claim that the girls used labels such as 'aristo', 'boo', 'hustling', 'struggle', 'runs', and 'paroles' to describe their sexual partners, relationships, experiences and expressiveness. Expressiveness, as a tool for communicating sexual experience, is a key component of gender performativity. Performativity idealises contemporary youth culture practiced through verbal and nonverbal repeated acts. Butler^[18,19] describes the youth as social agents for the (re)construction of gender and the templates for positioning of fluid identities in the expression of their sexual activities, emotions, intentions and self needs. For the female undergraduates, the University environment is perceived as a liberating site for re-ordering gender balancing in terms of behaviour and expressiveness. On this, Babatunde and Ake^[20] demonstrate that the trending women's desire for sexual pleasure and intimacy has been identified as a dominant route through which gender imbalance and unequal power relations are reinforced and interpreted. For Ashcraft^[21], this category of emerging sexual practices and orientations among the youth are expressed to instantiate willingness for sexual encounters. Willingness in this context, is anchored on expectations and motivations that determine the making and sustenance of love. The making of love, it is argued, grows on the expectations (which maybe on cash or kind, material or non-material and other securities) for a meaningful relationship to be negotiated, performed and maintained^[13]. This claim also establishes that women in different social groups engage in romantic activities for different purposes that sustain the affairs. The gap created by dearth of studies on the defined motivations indexed as motivations for stancetaking by Nigerian female undergraduates' engagement in heterosexual activities (with male students) is the major drive

for this study. This study, using a representative sample of female students in two Universities, both in Southern Nigeria, aims to define these motivations as the crux of the romantic relationships in the institutions. The choice of female students is informed by their relevance in gender performativity and the interest women's issues generate in gender roles and discourse. By so doing, the motivations would be viewed as the indices for making of love that stimulate the increasing heterosexual relationships among undergraduates in Nigerian Universities.

2. Theoretical framework

The relevant theories for this study are Community of Practice (CofP) and Appraisal Theory (ApT). The tenets of CofP are anchored on the practicing value system of social groups that manifest in their social interactions which define their identities that differentiate them from other groups. Lave and Wenger^[22] proposed the ideals of CofP which were later developed and modified by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet^[23]. The authors' view of CofP is expanded to define a congregation of people who have mutual belief system and are mutually engaged in a common way of talking, doing things and practicing activities that suggest their common identity and membership. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet^[23], and Holmes and Meyerhoff^[24] explain that the peculiar language practices and belief system in CofP situate it as aspects of linguistic studies which show the tenets and practices of such groups as not only mutually constitutive, but complex and dynamic with common goals. CofP is conceived as a process and set of practices where new entrants into a social group learn to gain competencies to be socially included in the group's way of talking and doing things. According to Wenger^[25], and Bucholtz^[26], members of such groups, over time, and through regular interactions gain the sociolinguistic competence that facilitates appropriate communication of the group's internal linguistic identities that create its social boundaries with other groups. This, in the views of Garrett^[27] and Eckert and Wenger^[28] deepens practices that construct, negotiate, and challenge the discourses and social boundaries that particular code indexes within the group's CofP's performance and competencies. This also defines the procedural progression to the attainment of comprehensive competence achieved through regular use of ingroup linguistic choices with situated meanings. Eckert^[29], and King^[30] posit that it is these choices and the commonality in doing things that enhance social integration, cohesion and sense of belonging combined to construct their identity and protect intragroup interest towards the achievement of their social goals. The complex conception of CofP as explained above, has also been demonstrated by Uwen^[17] to convey that identities are negotiated, constructed, shaped, gained and used over time, and are derived from a participatory and consistent discourse engagement by (with) members on their common concerns and behaviours.

ApT as a framework, according to Ortony et al.^[31], and Roseman and Smith^[32], is anchored on the conception that emotions are conscious developments that occur as a result of human's evaluation of the (un)expected situation in his social world and the differences in appraising such situations by individuals. Martin and Rose^[33], and White^[34] argue that human beings are emotionally conditioned to negotiate, manipulate and evaluate their situations-induced feelings. This situates people's perceptions and stance in social relationships and how they communicate them to others. It implies that communication partners react in their own ways in terms of feelings that define stance in the occurring events around their social world. Stance, is therefore an individual or collective perception that communicates one's position on situation(s). Smith^[35] and Moors^[36] contend that since events occur differently, stance-taking is therefore context-dependent, and depends on the individual's appraisal pattern anchored on certain components. On this, Martin and White^[37], and Pascual and Unger^[38] identify three basic components of the ApT: attitude, graduation and engagement. Attitude, according to them, deals with individual's emotional reactions and peculiar pattern of evaluating situations in order to take stance. The component of graduation evaluates the various sub-events that could strengthen or weaken the intended attitude towards occurring situations. Engagement, according to the authors,

is the interfacing component that interprets affect and graduation in order to make decisions on situations during interactions with others which establish individual differences in the approach to situations. For Roseman^[39], this implies that people react differently to same situation based on the appraisal pattern and their subjective evaluation of situations. The components are therefore utilised by individuals to construct alternative stances in similar life's experience. According to Du Bois^[40], stance is negotiated in a complex web of interconnections linking stance with dialogical intersubjectivity, by the social actors who jointly enact stance, and the mediating frameworks of linguistic structure and sociocultural value they invoke in doing so during discursive practices. Stance production and meaning interpretation in the context of simple or complex interactions is construed within the participants' deepened knowledge of the scope of language used in the interactions and the sociocultural milieu that informed the discourse. The triangular relations suggests the components of stance (alignment, evaluation and positioning stances on the object and subject of discourse), and drawing from discourse on the evaluating shared object, stancetakers position themselves to define alignment with each other (whether convergent or divergent)^[40]. This implies, according to Hanks^[41] that the interpretation of any stance involves the stancetaker, object of stance and the bearing of the stancetaker's response in the referential foregrounding which combine in the process of interpretation. Stancetaking varies, and people are often at liberty to apply varying perceptions to same events depending on several factors including sociocultural orientations, belief system, emotional attachments and the benefits they derive in their engagement in certain activities. For instance, Goodwin^[42], among others, suggests that discourse participants could cooperate towards the accomplishment of the object of discourse, show knowledgeable experience and understanding of the subject, generate emotions from anger against a participant who refuses to participate properly in an action and establishing trust in an action of a participant. These tenets of ApT, as described above (and as applied in this paper) have been earlier utilised by Uwen et al.^[43] to explain the discursive stances of wives on cheating husbands. The theoretical significance of CofP and ApT in this study is premised on the insights that provide the prerequisite knowledge on the female students' motivations for love. The theories provide the implied knowledge on how the commonality in terms of behaviour, ways of doing things and use of peculiar linguistic items with situated meanings are collectively utilised to freely express their individual stance on engagements in heterosexual relationships. ApT, in this context, is more important as a framework in studying female undergraduates' understanding of love and the influence it has in their decision making. These decisions are emotionally and individually enacted to communicate the benefits they derive from the romantic engagements expressed in the language of mutual understanding within the female undergraduates' CofP. Each stance is therefore identified and coded through the use of language that is trending in the social context that expresses such sexual rewards within the girls' social realities.

3. Materials and methods

The study adopts a qualitative approach that involved a five-month (October 2022 to February 2023) period of fieldwork involving female undergraduates at two Universities in Southern Nigeria. Ninety-three female students were randomly consulted in the two Universities, however, 44 (who are representatives of the sample population) were willing to participate and were recruited after screening for eligibility. The eligibility criteria for participation include: age (age bracket of 19 to 25), year of study (between year two and final year in any programme offered by the Universities), involvement (admission to have one or more motivations for being involved in heterosexual relationships). The participants who were very familiar with the topic also gave their consent individually before they were engaged in the exercise. The criteria for selection of participants were considered relevant to the research. For instance, the age range agreed with local laws that guarantee the age limit that is legally permissible to make self-decision. Participant's year of study is presumed to be long enough to have had sexual experience in the University, while involvement shows participants' familiarity

with the topic which helps in producing valid data. The frequency and simple percentage distribution of the participants include: four participants were 19 years old (9.1%), four were 20 (9.1%), eight were 21 (18.2%), six were 22 (13.6%), eight were 23 (18.2%), six were 24 (13.6%) and eight were 25 (18.2%). Also, the participants' years of study showed that 14 were in their second year of study (31.8%), 16 in third year (36.4%) and 14 in their final year (31.8%). The choice of the two Universities was informed by the heterogeneity of the students in terms of their multiethnic, multireligious and multicultural composition. This is in addition to the consideration of the relevance of females in the increasing discourses on sex, sexuality, gender issues and roles in contemporary studies. These factors are believed to have impacted on the girls' sexual orientations, practices and expressiveness.

Data for the study were generated by means of participant observation, informal interactions and unstructured interviews while audiotape served as research instrument for recording and preservation of relevant data. The selected representative population of the female undergraduates served as research assistants and participant observers who revealed their motivations for heterosexual relationships in unsolicited interactions. The informal interactions enabled the free use of the linguistic forms that express the participants' worldview on sex. Unstructured interviews complemented the interactions to provide deepened knowledge on language framing that reveal stancetaking. Six meetings (three times at each University) were held with the participants in the course of the research. One was before the commencement of the study where the participants were trained on the expectations, the second was to assess the progress of work while the last was for the validation, cross-referencing, harmonisation of the data and debriefing. After this, the researchers met to merge the data and code them on the basis of the themes on the female students' motivations for romantic relationships. The coded data were used in the qualitative analysis. The research was conducted as prescribed in the ethical standards of the two Universities particularly as the names of the participants and participants are concealed for ethical concerns.

4. Findings and discussion

Based on the clarification on the analytical methods, the motivations for engagement in heterosexual activities by the University female undergraduates are coded into relevant themes which further instantiate the different stances of the participants. Sacks^[44] and Mason et al.^[45] explain that thematic categorisation in this context instantiates the social realities related with the totality of information available for participants within their CofP used in discussing themselves. Insights from Stokoe^[46], Fitzgerald^[47] and Tanner's^[48] studies show that communication partners [and the female undergraduates in particular] are marked into different appraisal patterns and the stances they maintain about their social actions, including sexual motivations. The motivations are: love induced by male sexual performance, love based on financial benefits, love induced by good academic performance, love based on intention to marry, love for access to power and security, and love based on male physical attractiveness. Some of the linguistic creations in this study corroborate the categorisations, the situated meanings and usage as demonstrated in Uwen^[17], used in a different perspective to demonstrate male representations in heterosexual discourse among female undergraduates. The numeral figures 1-6 are used to describe the informal interactions in Excerpts (1-6), while A, B, C or D (depending on the number of interactants) is used to refer to the particular speaker in each of the conversations. Based on this categorisation, the female students' sexual commitment to the male partners, in the context of this study, is seen as the product and practice of love as discussed below.

4.1. Love induced by sexual performance

Some female sexual partners maintain and show commitment towards the continuation of romantic relationships with male partners because of sexual satisfaction. Satisfaction in this context, is measured in the

combined activities during sexual encounters that result in delayed ejaculation and ability to maintain erectile function for a longer time. In the view of Conaglen and Conaglen^[49], these activities are described in three sexual activities: sexual desire, arousal and orgasm which women used (often) to assess the sexual performance of their male lovers. According to the participants, the size and proper utilisation of the penis in delayed ejaculation is what stimulate arousal and cause them to reach orgasm which climaxed sexual satisfaction as captured in the Excerpt below.

Excerpt 1

A1: Some guys are not sexually satisfying, they are so boring.

B1: Self confession, I know it's your boyfriend you are reporting.

C1: But my guy is a bolt driver, he turns me crazy, he is really sweet in bed.

B1: (Referring to C1). Same sexual experience with my guy. The gbola is big pin, he goes deep in me. He is hot between my thighs. I love him.

A1: Wa o! I am missing something here!

Excerpt 1 above captures the informal interaction among three female students (A, B and C). A1 complains of a boring sexual experience with his boyfriend which juxtaposes the narrative of her two friends (B1 and C1) that shows divergent alignment. C1, utilising the linguistic choices from the female undergraduates' CofP, uses *bolt driver* (a male lover who sexually satisfies the girlfriend as bolt drivers do to their clients), *turns me crazy* and *sweet in bed* as sexual terms that connote optimal sexual satisfaction. B1, who has earlier mocked A1 for keeping a sexually dysfunctional boyfriend, describes her own boyfriend as having *gbola* (penis) that is of the size of a *big pin* (big and long) that *goes deep* into her and generates hot sensations between her thighs during sexual encounters. This desired experience, in the opinion of B1, re-vibrates her love for the boyfriend. The revelations from B1 and C1 reconstruct the missing gap in A1's sexual encounters indexed in the exclamation *I am missing something* here! The participants' claim corroborates Hrenjak^[50] and Khan et al.'s^[51] position that long and big-sized penis symbolises good sexual performance, the reason many females keep their sexual relationships just as small-sized penis could destroy such relationships. A 23-year old final year female student also argued that "my boyfriend has the big pin, it is really big between his thighs, that's all I want. He makes me come often, in fact, each sexual encounter is just as memorable as the other. I love him for that, and I really mean it. He is fully in control and in charge of my kpekus." The participant's opinion deepens one's understanding of the girls' preference for high sexual performance often enhanced by big-sized penis which gives them memorable sexual encounters. The satisfaction described as he makes me come often connotes the many times such encounters stimulate arousals and orgasm. This experience cedes the control of the participant's *kpekus* (vagina) to the sexually performing partner. This nature of control, is what makes men deemed sex as another agency of power, dominance and governance, and the exercise of masculine power to control women^[51]. In Excerpt 1, *big pin*, *bolt driver*, *kpekus*, *turns me crazy*, among other items, are derived from the undergraduates' CofP, and combined with other expressions to communicate male's sexual performance (which is the established stance) that motivated the girls' involvement in heterosexual relationships. The decision of the stancetakers arises from situation-induced feelings following their evaluation of the particular object of discourse.

4.2. Love based on financial benefits

Students do many things to get money to survive and attend to demands of University education in Nigeria. Some female undergraduates are engaged in transactional sex to pay for the demanding bills in University education. Mensah^[52] has explained that to such girls, sex is a trading agency for economic independence which makes sex becomes the driving force that boosts female's economic options while in search for better

living. This situates financial rewards as a key motivation for sexual relationships contracted by the participants as captured in Excerpt 2 below.

Excerpt 2

A2: It's really uncomfortable to date and cope with a broke guy!

B2: Not now that things are really expensive. My boo is loaded, he is a happening guy, valid ATM. That's why I go crazy for him, I love him.

C2: Lucky girl! Your guy gather, he is a destiny helper.

A2: Such male students are few in this campus, you know.

B2: That's the more reason I am protecting mine. I can always give him sex to get enough money to pay my bills.

In Excerpt 2 above, speaker A2 reveals her uncomfortable situation arising from dating *broke guys* (poor men/male students), this stimulates a divergent alignment by speakers B2 and others who maintain the position that such decision as unwise especially as things are really expensive. She adds that her *boo* (boyfriend) is rather *loaded* (gives money in bundles), *a happening guy* (lives an expensive lifestyle) and *a valid ATM* (gives money as sexual rewards whenever it is demanded just as the Automated Teller Machine dispenses cash once a valid credit card is inserted). This is why speaker B2 loves her boyfriend and always offer him sex for money. Speaker C2 describes B2 as a lucky girl while acknowledging that B2's boyfriend *gather* (is rich) and is a *destiny helper* (one who helps others with money without asking for the commiserate sexual reward). To reiterate B2's luck, A2 narrates that such male sexual partners are few in the University. This discourse places money at the centre of love. This corroborates Hunter's^[53] position that women engage in transactional sex for financial gains. A 22-year old third year female student claimed that "some of us (including myself) keep boyfriends because of how much they can offer us. Even when you feel like backing out, you will think of the financial enticements and continue. After all, there are quite a lot of things to do with the money on campus." The participant's opinion substantiates the argument by Cole^[54], Cole and Thomas^[55], and Uwen^[56] anchored on the fact that men often entice their female sex partners with rewards such as gifts, material exchanges and economic support in order to sustain such romantic relationships. For Cornwall^[57], this situates spending power as the essence of love and sex. In the Excerpt above, the participants used *boo*, *loaded*, *valid ATM*, *happening guy*, *destiny helper* and other forms derived from their CofP, to establish stance expressed as motivations. The participants' positioning follows the participants' evaluation of the object of discourse that is known to them which further strengthens the alignment of their positions as revealed in their linguistic choices.

4.3. Love induced by good academic performance

Students' academic performance is a rating and gradable phenomenon in the Nigerian University system. Student's continuous stay in the University depends on his or her academic performance within the programme of study measured by the cumulative gradable points aggregate (CGPA). The average of the cumulative points determines whether the student is to be withdrawn, placed on probation, repeat courses or take only current courses. This awareness compels (female) students to do everything they could to continue their academic programmes. One of such is to date intelligent male students who assist in their academic activities. According to Chukwuemeka^[58], a student is intelligent where he (or she) has a high and quick cognitive capacity and the ability to understand easily which is shown in exceptional academic performance. The Excerpt below shows female undergraduates' love for such students.

Excerpt 3

A3: My boo is real ashii, I just love him for that. Na real brain box, first class material.

B3: Just to help you pass exams?

A3: Yes, bestie. Not only exams, tests, assignments, term papers, name it! Why are we in the University then? Is it not for good result? Jackoo is the code, babe!

B3: That's just why you love him and give him sex all the time?

A3: What else dear? My body is his as long as he remains intelligent. I dey follow person wey sabi book (I will keep loving an intelligent person).

In Excerpt 3, speaker A3 eulogises his *boo* who she claims to be the *real ashii*, *brain box* and *first class material* (students' slangy expressions for a very intelligent student). Speaker B3 queries the motivation for the sexual relationship (to pass exams) which indexes a non-cooperation stance. A3 accepts the 'blame' to initiate an opposing alignment, but extends the duties of his boyfriend to include helping in class tests and assignments, among other tasks that form the basis for their academic engagements. According to A3, those assignments which justify his boyfriend's intelligence are enough reasons to have her (have sexual encounters with him) which affirms her choice of being in romantic relationship with an intelligent student (*person wey sabi book*). A3 has earlier emphasised that the reason for doing University programmes is to come out with a good result which she is willing to offer sex to have. To her, the alternative way of doing this (where the girl is not brilliant) is to adopt the formula (*Jackoo is the code*) which means dating an intelligent male student (*follow person wey sabi book*) who engages in tedious and productive academic activities that manifest in good academic performance. This manifests through these qualities: determination and consistency, engagement in educative discussions, regular studies, receptiveness, confrontation of challenges, broad reading and practical learning^[58]. A 24-year old female undergraduate in her final year reported that "some programmes are really difficult. In such cases, you have to befriend any of the intelligent male students who helps you in many of the academic tasks. It does not matter if he gets sex (which one will be willing to offer) as reward." Uwen and Ekpenyong^[59] argue that the narration of the situated experience of the participants and the social context of the interaction of this nature, are indices that facilitate meaning realization. Love, in this context, is motivated by the intellectual capacity of the male sexual partner which is measured in academic performance. Female undergraduates love male students in this category so that they will do well in their studies, especially in programmes that appear to be difficult. The linguistic choices that express this stance and ascribe intelligence identity were derived from the participants' CofP. Uwen and Mensah^[60] also demonstrate that such choices aim to exclude 'outsiders' from the vocabulary of identity that is prevalent in this community of practice. Stance here, is sufficiently established by the involvement of the stancetakers, the object of stance and stancetakers' position drawn from their knowledge of, and experiences in sexual relationships within the University social context.

4.4. Love based on intention to marry

Many romantic relationships that later result in marriages often take some varying period for courtship. It is this period that both partners study each other to assess and determine their compatibility and excesses. Within this period, partners show high level of (sexual) commitment to each other with the hope of marriage in the future. On this, McCabe^[61] argues that commitment is an integral aspect of sustainable romantic relationships that builds trust and keep partners together. The conversation that shows that the participants love their male partners with the hope of marrying them is marked Excerpt 4 below.

Excerpt 4

A4: Your boo is good!

B4: No eye am o, abeg (don't make sexual advances at him, please). He is my husband material, vacant, and loves me for who I am.

C4: Yours is better. Hold him tight. Give him enough sex to keep him.

B4: Yes o, I give him often. Marriage is the code. He is my future partner. We go reach house (we'll get married).

A4: It is good to secure a fiancé while in the university. It's often difficult after graduation.

B4: Is it sex? I'll give him whenever he wants it. I love him, we'll marry.

In the above Excerpt 4, speaker A4 praises (*your boo is good*) B4's boyfriend who warns that A4 should not extend the praises to making sexual advances. B4 reveals that his boyfriend is a *husband material* (has all the qualities of a good husband), *vacant* (a bachelor in no relationship) and loves her for who she is. As C4 advises B4 to do everything possible (including offering sex) *to keep him*, she responds in the affirmative *yes o, I give him often*. The epenthetic (inserted) vowel in *yes o* shows emphasis and prior (common) knowledge of the girls who should know that even without being advised, she (B4) will offer sex to keep his man. B4 maintains that securing a husband (*future partner*) as an undergraduate is important, reiterating that *marriage is the code* (marriage is of relevance). Love, here, is stimulated by the intention of marrying the male sexual partner, and the girl is willing to *give him sex whenever he wants it* in order to protect her dreamed husband. In such situations, the girl invests much, and is willing to show other commitments that will lead to marriage. A 25-year old female student who was in her third year, argued that "majority of us are into these romantic relationships with the hope that we could become husband and wife after studies in the University. Bearing this mind, we endure and commit a lot (money, sex, jealousy from friends, just name it) in order to sustain the relationship and ensure it leads us to marriage." This corroborates the position that every young woman who invests in a relationship wishes to see it grow into marriage. Women believe that with constant, honest and healthy communication with the male partner, they could nurture their relationships through to marriage^[52]. This experience helps in adequate knowledge of the partner to avoid conflicts when eventually in marriage. Again, the participants express their stance in accepting to love for the sake of marriage through the use of expressions with situated meanings known to the interactants. Such expressions, according to Uwen and Ushie^[62], often provide insights into the motivations that create the differences in their linguistic choices. These premarital experiences prepare the love partners with better ways of negotiating love, resolving disputes and strengthening fidelity in their future marital relationships. This prior and collective knowledge, upon the evaluation of the object of stance, informs the decision of the participants to offer sex to enable the partner propose for marriage.

4.5. Love for access to power and security

There are many categories of groups ranging from social, ethnolinguistic, cultural, religious to cult affiliations that define University undergraduates. Students willingly (and are sometimes coerced to) join these affiliations for different reasons that are personal or collective. One of such groups is secret cult which students belong (particularly) to, to canvass the cause of its members and associates within the school. Members of such groups, within the context of the University, are believed to wield some degree of power and dominance through the protection of members (and their girlfriends) and the intimidation of those perceived as enemies. Uwen and Eyang^[63] posit that the ideological construction of power and dominance is shown male ruggedness, courage and resilience. This sort of power is believed to be a motivating agency for some female students' choice of male sexual partners. The conversation of female undergraduates in this category is captured in Excerpt 5 below.

Excerpt 5

A5: Babe, you don dey kolo with your guy o! (Babe, you are getting obsessed with your male lover)

B5: This is Naija! Follow who know road. My boyfriend has is a member, he belongs.

C5: Sex with such people? For defense? That's madness, dear!

D5: Though is condemnable, but some of us do that, please. It's a matter of choice.

B5: Whatever you call it, it's my pussy. My guy is in the gang, after all, everybody needs security in this campus.

A5: That's your load.

B5: Thank you then!

In the conversation above, except for B5, speakers A5, C5 and D5 are not comfortable with having any romantic relationship with a male student who belongs to a cult group. This positioning simultaneously instantiates opposing alignment that indicates non-cooperation stance informed by morals drawn from the sociocultural milieu of the participants. This majority opinion shows the risks in such choices and substantiates the fact that those engaged in sexual relationships by this motivation are fewer in number. However, speaker B5 reiterates her stance on her choice described as *follow who know road, member, he belongs* and *gang*. Speaker A5 describes the consequence as *load* (a waiting punishment) following B5's declaration that it is her *pussy* and the only motivation for her engagement in the sexual relationship is because she *needs security in this campus*. A 19-year female student who was in her second year argued that she cannot date a cultist but "I know my hostel roommate that is in a romantic relationship with a male student who is a cultist. She said she engaged in the relationship to protect herself and scare away many others who were making sexual advances on her." This claim substantiate Mediyanose^[64] and Janneh's^[65] argument that some female students easily fall in love with cultists for protection against any form of harassment and to have a sense of belonging. Cultists are known for their dreadful lifestyle and can do anything to protect their girlfriends. It is this orientation that motivates some female students to fall in love with them which is expressed with the linguistic choices (*gang, belongs, member* and others) within the participants' CofP. Since stance is a choice and maintaining a position (whether morally or immorally conceived) in discourse, the female students who have chosen to offer sex to guarantee their security on campus do so based on evaluation of the object of stance, and it does not really matter if their position is a minority opinion.

4.6. Love induced by male physical attractiveness

The last motivating factor that makes female undergraduates fall in love is the physical looks of the male. Participants value male attractiveness as a vital aspect of sexually appealing dispositions. This is the combined dress pattern and physical stature of the male that can make females easily fall in love. One of such informal interactions that communicates this strand of stance is shown in Excerpt 6 below.

Excerpt 6

A6: XX is really handsome!

B6: You want to snatch him from his girlfriend?

C6: The guy is cute and stainless. He looks takeaway.

A6: Athlete, that's what we call them. His body size is the code, he looks sporty. That's the looks of my boo too.

C6: His style of dressing makes him even more attractive.

A6: I love such guys, I offer mine sex any time he wants. I don't want to lose him.

D6: Clean looking guys are always sexually appealing, no doubt.

Excerpt 6 above indexes the female students love for male students who have attractive looks. In the conversation, speaker A6 mentions a known (XX) handsome student, a declaration that makes B6 to enquire if A6 intends to *snatch him from her girlfriend* (who is known to them). Speaker C6 continues with the description of the male student as *cute* and *stainless* (very clean looking), and *looks takeaway* (irresistible gift) especially with his dressing style. Speaker A6 joins again using the participants' communicative terms *athlete* and *sporty* (a tall, slim and physically fit man) to establish the looks emphasising that such category of male

students are the ones to fall in love with (*the code*). Speaker A6 then informs the interactants that the entire description suits her boyfriend and she *offer him sex any time* in order not to *lose him* to any other girl. Speaker D6 agrees with them that male students of this description are always sexually appealing. Corroborating this, a 21-year old second year female undergraduate affirmed that “we also choose boyfriends based on their physical looks and manner of dressing. The fat looking guys are often boring and those that look dirty in appearance have nothing to attract us. Mine is tall, slim and looks very agile. I enjoy him a lot.” These opinions support the claim that women love men who are not just handsome but appear strong^[52]. Other studies such as Kearney-Cooke and Steichen-Asch^[66], and Singh^[67] maintain same view that women are sexually attracted to men with slim bodies, physically fit with youthful vigour and in good health. This preference suggests stancetaking expressed in the ‘language’ of the participants which is informed by their ‘way of doing things’. The exchanges and the interviewee’s report show the participants’ common position that indexes stance that communicates alignment and cooperation.

5. Conclusion

The study is guided by insights from Community of practice and Appraisal theory in the analysis and discussion of the categories of motivations for the female undergraduates’ engagement in romantic relationships with male students. The study identified six strands of stance derived from the heterosexual interactions and semi-structured interviews of the participants. The strands suggest that female undergraduates do not just fall in love for the sake of it, but they individually have justifications which formed their motivations for engagements in romantic relationships. These motivations include: derivation of sexual satisfaction, material benefits, good character, admirable physical features, securing a future husband and protection within the University environment, which are considerations for sustenance of heterosexual relationships in the participants’ worldview. Exploring from the social context of the Universities, the participants devised linguistic creations that define their worldview and foster bonding, social cohesion and sense of belonging. The University environment is situated as a fertile site for heterosexual practices and the engagement in discourses that liberate the female undergraduates from social hindrances prescribed by cultural practices in their familial homes. The interactions highlight the ideals of gender performativity that activate self-expressiveness on discourses on the complex (sexual, emotional, social and actualisation) needs of the participants.

CoP and ApT, as frameworks that guided the analysis, are well utilised in the contextualisation of the participants’ exchanges and interviews’ reports within the discourse of stance and stancetaking with the appropriate linguistic creations for a more nuanced perspective. In the various exchanges, the key components required for stancetaking (the object of stance, stancetakers and stancetakers’ positions in the discourse) were all available in the initiation, positioning and nuancing stances. Whether participants’ alignments were convergent or divergent, they follow the positioning of decisions arising from the knowledge of, and experiences in the subject of discourse and its proper evaluation. Studies on stancetaking are rooted in linguistic research, and as demonstrated in this study, it is the interactants’ participation in the discourse, and their nuanced positions within the discourse using appropriate choices. It is evident that the participants use linguistic expressions (drawn from Standard English, Nigerian Pidgin, Nigerian indigenous languages and students’ slang) in their exchanges and interview reports from where the categorisation of the stances are based. The choice of female undergraduates, against the males’ is a deliberate attempt to demonstrate the perspectives of the girls in their engagement in heterosexual relationships. The findings would help in situating their narrations from the perspective of young female adults within the discourses on gender roles and performativity, sexuality and gender issues. The study has opened new horizons for studies on the sexual motivations, the stances they index and the linguistic creations used in the framing of stances in the discourses of different

social groups. This way, it has expanded knowledge on sexual motivations among Nigerian youth and accounted for the considerations that sustain heterosexual relationships.

Author contributions

Conceptualization, GOU and OMM; methodology, GOU; software, MEO; validation, GOU, OMM and MEO; formal analysis, GOU; investigation, OMM; resources, MEO; data curation, MEO; writing—original draft preparation, GOU; writing—review and editing, OMM; visualization, GOU; supervision, OMM; project administration, MEO. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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