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**IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND RITUAL FRAMING IN NIGERIAN POLICE
PRESS RELEASES**

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joesfudma@gmail.com

Katherine Banku Odok,

Federal University Lokoja

Department of English and Literary Studies

E-mail addresses: kathaodok@gmail.com

07067002062

Peter Ochefu Okpeh (PhD)

Federal University Lokoja

okpehp@gmail.com

Abstract

Previous studies have examined cybercrime in Nigeria through socio-economic, criminological, and media lenses, often focusing on perpetrator narratives and the symbolic strategies used in digital scams. This study examined how identity is constructed and ritual crime is framed in Nigerian police press releases on cybercrime, with a focus on cases that involved ritual killings and symbolic violence. The study adopted a qualitative, interpretive design, and analysed fifteen purposively selected press releases that were issued between 2021 and 2025. The data was sourced from the Nigerian police website and other reputable media outlets such as the Punch Newspaper, Vanguard, Guardian and the Nation's Newspaper. The analysis was guided by Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis and Goffman's dramaturgical theory, which enabled a multi-layered interpretation of how language performs both representational and ideological functions. The findings revealed that suspects were discursively positioned through the inversion of social and moral expectations, while ritual themes were used to dramatise deviance and amplify public fear. These narratives also positioned the police as moral arbiters, using language to perform legitimacy, control, and moral restoration. The study concludes that police press releases function not simply as crime reports but as symbolic performances that construct deviant identities, shape public perception, and reinforce the moral authority of the Nigerian state.

Keywords: Ritual, framing, charms, yahoo, priestess, fetishism, identity construction.

Introduction

In recent years, Nigeria has witnessed the emergence of a hybrid form of cybercrime that intertwines digital fraud with ritual or fetish practices. Popularly referred to in public discourse as *Yahoo Plus*, this phenomenon reflects a convergence of technology, indigenous spirituality, and youth aspiration, resulting in a type of deviance that is both modern and metaphysical (Tade, 2013; Edun, 2024). Unlike conventional cybercrime, which is typically framed in economic or technical terms, this variant introduces ritual belief systems as part of its operative logic, suggesting that success in internet fraud may be enhanced through spiritual acts and symbolic performances.

Ojedokun (2013) describes this form of cybercrime as a culturally embedded ideology that reflects more than criminal intent. He argues that many young Nigerians engaged in these practices see their actions not merely as illegal, but as responses to structural hardship, inequality, and economic exclusion. Framing these crimes as part of a morally ambivalent

hustle culture, Ojedokun (2010, 2012) shows how ritual elements become tools for navigating precarious modernity, blending spiritual worldviews with aspirations for material success. This hybridisation of crime and culture complicates existing legal and moral frameworks, challenging law enforcement agencies and the broader public to make sense of acts that draw on both indigenous belief systems and contemporary technologies.

One of the most visible means through which such crimes are narrated and explained is the institutional discourse of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF). Press releases issued by the police serve not only to inform the public but also to frame criminal events within culturally intelligible narratives. These texts are often circulated widely through media platforms and thus play a central role in shaping societal perceptions of crime, deviance, and morality. Far from being neutral, they operate as discursive tools through which the state performs its authority, constructs suspect identities, and engages in moral storytelling (Fairclough, 1995; van Leeuwen, 2008). In cases involving ritualised cybercrime, these press releases tend to draw on culturally charged language that blends institutional authority with symbolic references, thereby turning crime reporting into a form of ideological narration.

While previous studies have examined how cybercrime is portrayed in media discourse or enacted by perpetrators themselves, less attention has been given to how official police communication frames such crimes and constructs identities of suspects as well as the institution (Chiluwa, 2013; Tade, 2013). The role of institutional texts in shaping public interpretations of ritual-inflected cybercrime remains underexplored. This study seeks to fill that gap by investigating how the Nigerian Police Force, through its press releases, constructs suspect identities and frames ritual elements in ways that reflect broader ideological and institutional goals.

The study aims to understand how language is used in these press releases and how it describes criminal acts and performs symbolic work that shapes public perceptions of deviance, morality, and state legitimacy. It focuses on the discursive strategies through which suspects are represented, the cultural and spiritual codes that are mobilised, and how police narratives contribute to the symbolic management of social fears and institutional authority.

By examining how ritual-related cybercrime is framed in official police discourse, this study contributes to broader discussions in discourse analysis, criminology, and cultural studies. It illuminates how state institutions, through carefully constructed narratives, respond to the

ideological complexities of crime in a context where traditional belief systems and digital technologies increasingly intersect.

Clarification of Concepts

This section examines key terms that are central to this study, concepts such as Identity and the dynamic process of identity construction. It explores institutional discourse as it relates to the communicative practices of law enforcement agencies and crime discourse. The concept of cybercrimes and fetishism is also reviewed in order to provide the context for the linguistic practice and framing of fetishistic framing in police press releases.

Identity

Identity has moved from being seen as an inherent, psychological trait to being recognised as a socially and discursively constructed phenomenon. Rather than being fixed, identities are dynamic, context-dependent, and continuously reconstituted through language and social interaction (Hall, 1996; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). This discursive turn has redirected attention from *what* people are to *how* they are represented and positioned in interaction and institutional texts.

Hall (1996) argues that identity is formed not outside but within representation. He sees identity as a positioning within discourse, subject to the constraints of language, culture, and power. Similarly, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) conceptualise identity as emergent, relational, and indexical, constructed through positioning, stance-taking, and interactional negotiation. These perspectives share a focus on language as the principal means through which social actors are located, evaluated, and typified.

Identity construction is the process through which individuals and groups are represented and positioned in specific ways within discourse (Hall, 1996). Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy contributes to the understanding of identity construction by conceptualising social interaction as theatrical performance. In his view, individuals present themselves strategically to manage impressions and reinforce social roles. Therefore, identity is managed through performance cues and role-based expectations that are shaped by the social context in which the interaction takes place. Gee (2000) sees identity construction as not merely about who people are, but how they are socially and discursively recognised as being a particular kind of person across different contexts.

Within critical discourse traditions, identity construction is inseparable from questions of power and ideology. Fairclough (1995) and van Leeuwen (2008) highlight how institutional discourse constructs social roles through naming strategies, grammatical structures, and representational choices. Such discourse does more than reflect reality; it reproduces hierarchies, legitimises dominant ideologies, and regulates the visibility or deviance of particular identities. Thus, identity becomes not merely descriptive but ideological, shaped by the discursive strategies that institutions deploy in producing texts.

In crime discourse, identity construction often involves the projection of criminality, moral failings, or cultural deviance. Institutional texts such as police reports and press releases are compelling in constructing suspects' identities because they operate under the aura of legal legitimacy, yet social ideologies and public sentiment profoundly shape them. They are sites where categories such as “ritualist,” “fraudster,” or “spiritual deviant” are linguistically produced and morally charged.

Previous Studies on Identity

Studies on identity have evolved from early essentialist views that see identity as a fixed attribute that is biologically determined by biological, psychological or cultural essence. Erikson (1968) views identity as “a sense of personal sameness and historical continuity”, while Jung (1953) emphasised inherited archetypes as shaping personality across cultures. Such approaches suggest that individuals possess core, unchanging attributes based on their race, gender, or psyche. However, more recent scholarship has rejected this view, asserting that identity is not a pre-existing fact but a discursive and social construction through interaction (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005; Gee, 2014; Crenshaw, 1986).

Benwell and Stokoe's (2006) work, *Discourse and Identity*, offers a detailed exploration of how identity is constructed through discourse in everyday and institutional interactions. They argued that identity is not fixed, but it is an interactional and situational accomplishment. Through concepts like positioning, membership categorisation devices, and narrative sequencing, the study demonstrates how individuals and institutional actors negotiate and perform identities within power-laden communicative contexts such as classrooms, interviews and legal settings.

While Benwell and Stokoe focused primarily on Western, conversational, and media-based contexts, the study applied their framework to written institutional discourse within a crime-focused context. The current study extends their analytical model into the domain of

criminalised ritual discourse and cybercrime, highlighting the cultural ideological particularities of identity construction in Nigerian security communication.

A growing body of scholarship has examined the role of discourse in framing cybercrime in Nigeria, with special attention to how youth identities are constructed around themes of ritual, desperation, and digital deviance. Tade (2013) shows that young internet fraudsters, popularly referred to as *Yahoo boys*, are often portrayed as employing ritualistic elements to enhance their fraudulent success both in their self-representations and public narratives. These representations blend modern and traditional belief systems, constructing cybercrime as both a digital and metaphysical phenomenon.

Olajimbati (2018) provides a linguistic analysis of email scam discourse, revealing how scammers often draw on cultural codes, familial address terms, and religious metaphors to manipulate victims and legitimise their actions. His work also explores how institutional and media narratives mirror this hybrid framing, portraying suspects as both technologically savvy and spiritually corrupted. Chiluwa (2013), in his study of scam emails and newspaper reports, likewise demonstrates how Nigerian cybercriminals are discursively constructed through references to rituals, wealth display, and spiritual manipulation, showing that language encodes not only criminality but also cultural anxieties about youth, morality, and power.

While these studies offer valuable insights into how cybercrime is represented in media or perpetrator discourse, relatively few have explored how the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) discursively frames cybercrime suspects in its press releases. Legitimise state actions, assigning moral blame, and reinforcing social order. Police discourse often draws on ritual and spiritual symbolism not just to describe crimes but to moralise them, invoking terms like “native doctor”, “charm”, “blood”, or “shrine” to construct suspects as spiritually deviant and socially dangerous.

More recent studies, such as Edun (2024), argue that this ritualised framing performs cultural work: it links crime with impurity, spiritual threat, and national decline. However, the extent to which the NPF uses these tropes to construct suspect identities and how this reflects broader ideological and institutional goals remains under-explored. This study responds to that gap by analysing NPF press releases as discursive acts that construct ritual-inflected criminal identities through patterned linguistic and symbolic strategies.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive approach, guided by Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Goffman's dramaturgical theory, to explore how the Nigerian Police Force constructs identities and frames ritual elements in its press releases on cybercrime. The dataset comprises 15 press releases issued by the Nigerian Police Force between 2019 and 2024 that explicitly report cybercrime cases involving alleged ritual or fetish elements. These documents were collected from official NPF communication channels (e.g. www.npf.gov.ng) and major news media reporting on NPF statements such as Punch Newspaper, Vanguard, Premium Times and Nation

The data were selected based on their discursive density with a focus on passages where identity roles, ritual objects and practices were explicitly described. That is, the presence of identifiable identity roles, patterns, and lexical framing of fetish-related actions or symbols. Non-related content was excluded to maintain focus on language-in-use. The selection aimed to capture textual diversity while allowing for pattern recognition in fetish-crime framing in police press releases.

The analysis examined lexical choices used to describe acts associated with fetish practices. Particular attention was paid to recurrent vocabulary and phrasing used in the representation of ritual-related cybercrime. Lexical items were identified and grouped to observe patterns in naming practices, object references, and descriptive labels. This stage focuses on documenting the terms used and considering how they contribute to the portrayal of events and individuals, without projecting audience reception beyond what is evident in the language itself. The analysis proceeded in three interrelated phases, guided by the dual frameworks; (i) identification and categorisation of identity types which is grounded in Goffman's face-work that focuses on four core tenets such as; Roles and Role Performance: examining how suspects, victims, and police actors are represented and perform social or institutional roles within the discourse; Setting, which involves analysing spatial or symbolic locations (e.g., shrines, forests, police headquarters) where actions are staged; Impression Management identifying how language is used to shape audience perception and protect or project a specific institutional face; and dramatic realisation that depicts how certain actions or identities are amplified or foregrounded to achieve communicative effect; (ii) analysis of syntactic structures Guided by Fairclough's textual analysis dimension, the study examined the grammatical architecture of the excerpts.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Goffman's dramaturgical theory of social performance, which together offer a robust analytic lens for unpacking how institutional language constructs and performs identity. Fairclough's (1992, 1995) CDA framework views discourse as both a product of and a contributor to social structure. His model comprises three interrelated levels: the textual (lexis, grammar, cohesion), the discursive practice (production and interpretation), and the social practice (ideological and institutional context). This allows for a multi-level analysis of how NPF press releases linguistically encode meaning (text), borrow from interdiscursive traditions (discursive practice), and participate in broader ideological projects (social practice). Particularly relevant is Fairclough's assertion that language is a site of power struggle, where institutional discourse naturalises specific identities while marginalising others.

Chiluwa (2013) used Fairclough's model to analyse Boko Haram-related discourse on social media and found that language choices constructed terrorists as threats to national identity while legitimising state security responses. Also, Amodu (2017) applied the model to examine how Nigerian media reports on ritual killings rely on cultural stereotypes and metaphors to sensationalise deviance and reinforce fear. This model is suitable for the analysis of institutional discourse as it enables a multilayered analysis of how the Nigerian police construct deviant and moral identities. It helps in revealing how textual features like metaphors and passive voice contribute to ideological positioning while situating press releases within a wider discursive formation, including crime, religion, and law.

In addition to Fairclough's model, this study also draws on Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical framework of identity to examine how institutional actors perform and manage their identities. Goffman conceptualises social interaction as a theatrical performance. In this view, identity is not internal but performed, and it is structured by roles, props, and audience expectations. Police press releases can be seen as front-stage performances in which the institution presents itself as morally upright, unveiling the *backstage actions* of criminal suspects who are scripted as spiritually contaminated or socially deceptive. Concepts such as *impression management*, *role segregation*, and *audience framing* allow the study to read police discourse not just as reporting but as a public spectacle aimed at sustaining institutional credibility and moral authority.

Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical framework of identity has been widely applied in discourse studies to explore how institutional actors perform roles and manage impressions in public

communication. For instance, Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013) explored how individuals curate online identities through digital performances that align with the audience's expectations, which reinforces the idea that identity is not static but carefully managed in interaction. Manning (1997) analysed police work as a staged performance, highlighting how officers project authority and legitimacy through symbolic and linguistic resources. Jones (2016) also applied this framework to political media discourse, revealing how speakers perform favourable identities through tactical language use.

These studies underscore the theory's value in uncovering how institutions manipulate language to construct identities. It is particularly apt for the current study as it illuminates how the Nigerian police, through carefully structured press releases, perform and manage identities.

Together, these frameworks offer a dual analytic strategy: Fairclough enables close linguistic and ideological analysis, while Goffman provides insight into the symbolic and performative dimensions of the discourse. This synthesis supports the study's aim to uncover how police language not only describes but also performs and constructs criminal identity, reinforcing state legitimacy and shaping public perceptions.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The table below presents a synthesis of twelve representative excerpts, each illustrating a particular mode of identity construction and ritual framing. For each excerpt, the constructed identity, ritual elements, discursive strategies, and ideological functions are identified. This tabular summary provides a basis for the thematic analysis that follows, allowing for deeper exploration of how Nigerian police discourse symbolically renders deviance and legitimises institutional authority.

Table:

S/ N	Excerpts	Identity constructe d	Ritual Framing elements	Discursive strategies	Ideological Functions
1.	“I kill her for money ritual – Islamic cleric AbdulRahm	Religious deviant	Black soap, charms, body parts, blood	Role-labelling, lexical contradiction (cleric vs ritual)	Moral deviance, betrayal of sacred trust, legitimization

	an confessed... ”				of state retribution
2.	I met a native doctor on TikTok... he instructed me to remove her eyes, lungs, tongue...	Cyber- spiritual youth	Digital contact, calabash, and body harvesting	Interdiscursivity (tech + tradition); narrative sequencing	Hybrid deviance, dramatisatio n of youth corruption, justification of policing
3.	Charms and human skulls recovered from a shrine used for money rituals	Ritualistic entreprene ur	Shrine, charms, skulls, objects of power	Forensic listing; passive voice	Symbolic spectacle of evil; rationalisati on of state surveillance
4.	Alfa Jamiu was using a white handkerchie f to clean her private parts...	Religious predator	Handkerchief, trance, unconscious victim	Vivid imagery, passive victimisation, spiritual coercion	Police as protectors of minors; clerics as disguised threats
5.	He confessed to using oshole/ajoo owo (money rituals) with	Cultural ritualist	Yoruba coinage, dismemberme nt, confession	Code-switching (indigenous lexicon); confession frame	Localisation of deviance; othering of native beliefs

	victim's blood”				
6.	Akinlosotu said he sold fresh human heads at ₦50,000...	Ritual capitalist	Pricing of organs, sales chain, ritual supply	Commodification; market metaphor	Criminal economy framing: justification for forceful crackdowns
7.	Yahoo boy removed her eyes, liver, tongue... and waybilled parts to the native doctor.	Yahoo+ hybrid	Tech-enabled ritual, organ couriering	Sequential narrative; ritual logistics	Cyber + spiritual corruption; narrative of trans-regional criminality
8.	Seven-year-old twins lured to bush... penis, eyes, tongues cut off for ritual”	Victims of a sacrificial offering	Mutilation, innocence, and native doctor	Emotive detail; religious sacrifice trope	Moral panic sanctification of victimhood, public legitimization of punitive state
9.	I only prepare ritual soap with human parts brought to me... I	Reluctant accomplice	Ritual soap, the delegation of killing	Disclaimers: passive construction	Dilution of guilt; portrayal of networked crime

	didn't kill anyone.				
10	EFCC chair: Yahoo boys now into kidnapping, ritual killings..."	Expanding deviant identity	Institutional voice, ritual escalation	Authoritative tone; generalisation	Mandate expansion; mobilisation of institutional legitimacy
11	A domestic worker cuts off the genitals of a 72-year-old woman for ritual"	Subaltern ritualist	Genitals, spiritual promise of wealth	Pathos; shock value	Inversion of domestic trust; incitement of outrage; affirmation of police intervention
12	Three teenage boys hypnotised a girl, cut her finger, and sprinkled blood on the mirror"	Juvenile ritualists	Mirror, blood, hypnosis	Lexical exoticism; occult referencing	Youth deviation from innocence; reinforcement of moral hierarchy
13	Suspect claimed the ritual was instructed by a popular online prophet for wealth and fame."	Digitally networked cleric	Online prophecy, spiritual fame, and money	Fame economy, discourse of influence	Warning against online spiritual gurus; ideological containment

14	Alfa Jamiu was found with an unconscious girl... cleaning her with a white handkerchief for a money ritual.”	Spiritual predator	Trance, ritual cleansing	Emotive imagery, inversion	Exposure of false prophets; safeguarding innocence
15	Pastor John kept a decomposing human head in his prayer room, wrapped in white cloth.”	Pentecostal ritualist	Prayer room, human head	Semantic inversion, sacred space violation	Exposure of corruption within new religious movements
16	Church ritual done to attract rich members, as instructed by his spiritual father.”	Prosperity gospel deviant	Church growth, spiritual mentorship	Institutional hierarchy, reported motive	Critique of commodified religion

Data Analysis

Excerpt 1: “I kill her for money ritual – Islamic cleric AbdulRahman confessed during interrogation”.

This excerpt condenses a confession into a single, chilling utterance. The use of direct speech (“I kill her for money ritual”) creates a robust dramatic frame, staging the suspect's voice at the centre of the narrative. It positions the cleric as both speaker and actor, while the police remain the silent facilitators who allow the crime to narrate itself. The phrase that introduced the suspect as an “*Islamic cleric*” constructs an immediate tension between expected moral authority and transgressive behaviour. The sacred identity embedded in the title collides with the profanity of the act. What emerges is not merely a deviant individual, but a figure whose betrayal of spiritual responsibility heightens the moral weight of the crime.

By allowing the suspect's reported words to lead the account, the narrative suggests a moment of raw, unfiltered truth. The self-incriminating phrase “*I kill her*” marks a collapse of denial or ambiguity, while “*for money ritual*” discloses a motive saturated in both spiritual and economic desperation. The suspect is no longer just a killer; he is presented as a ritual actor who weaponises spiritual belief for material gain. The title “*Islamic cleric*” is not incidental; it embeds the identity of the criminal within a religious structure associated with trust, piety, and moral guidance. This makes the confession more than criminal; it becomes spiritually treasonous. The narrative thus constructs a layered deviant (one whose outward identity camouflaged inner corruption, and whose moral authority was always performative).

The phrase “*money ritual*” invokes a whole symbolic economy that is deeply embedded in Nigerian cultural discourse. It signals not just homicide, but participation in a logic where human life is commodified in exchange for supernatural wealth. The ritual motive adds a moral and metaphysical dimension to the act, distinguishing it from mundane violence.

The lexical choices “*charms*”, “*shrine*”, or “*body parts*” call forth an intertextual network of meanings recognisable in the public imagination: bloodletting, occult promises, spiritual betrayal. This allows the narrative to do more with less, using a single phrase to conjure fear, outrage, and familiarity. The structure of the sentence places the voice first in the phrase “I killed *her*...” followed by institutional attribution: “...*confessed during interrogation*.” This sequencing gives dramatic primacy to the deviant, but moral authority to the police. It is a linguistic choreography that allows the state to present itself as a neutral recorder of truths while simultaneously orchestrating the exposure.

The absence of the victim's name or background is discursively used to shift the focus away from individual loss and toward symbolic violation. What matters is not *who* was killed, but *why* the victim was killed, prioritising the acts (ritual killing) over its human cost, thereby

turning the event into a cultural spectacle. This excerpt performs a social unmasking. The suspect's presumed role of guidance and sanctity is now revealed as fraudulent. The act of confession, staged through the police's press releases, becomes a stage for ritual exposure that provides details of the crime. In this framing, the deviant is brought from the shadows into the light, not by divine judgment, but by state authority.

By mediating this exposure, the police implicitly claim spiritual jurisdiction, which is a frontstage, the power to discern and reveal hidden evil. They occupy the moral high ground not only as enforcers of law but as interpreters of spiritual corruption. This transforms the press release into a form of ideological storytelling, where state power reclaims authority over the sacred spaces that have been infiltrated by ritual violence.

Excerpt 2: "*Pastor John kept a decomposing human head in his prayer room, wrapped in a white cloth*".

The above statement presents a clash between the sacred and the grotesque. It is set in a place meant for prayer, a space socially understood as sacred, private, and spiritually protected. The presence of a decomposing human head within such a space, and its being wrapped in a white cloth, depicts a scene that is not only criminal but symbolically desecrated. The language does not sensationalise the act; instead, it delivers it with forensic calm, allowing the symbolism to resonate more forcefully.

The suspect is identified as "*Pastor John*" with a title that comes with an expectation of holiness, integrity, and spiritual leadership. That expectation is methodically dismantled in the following clause ("*kept a decomposing human head*"), where his sacred identity is contradicted by an act steeped in occult imagery. The statement constructs the suspect as a spiritual deviant identity (SDI) masquerading as a man of God. The name "*Pastor John*" is a signifier of legitimacy within Nigeria's Pentecostal Christian culture, where pastors often wield religious, social and political influence. This familiar role is subverted by the criminal act that has turned a religious figure of guidance into a looming danger. The construction of SDI is further foregrounded through the collocation of "*wrapped in a white cloth*". The head is not merely hidden in a closet or buried in a compound; instead, it is placed in a prayer room. This suggests that the suspect's spiritual practice is not abandoned but redirected toward dark ends, revealing a backstage deviant performance. He is not presented as having fallen from grace, but as one who performs spiritual violence from within the boundaries of religion itself.

The white cloth is central, the colour white is typically associated with purity, holiness, and divine presence, which is used as wrapping for a decomposing head that portrays the ultimate symbol of death and corruption. The cloth signifies a ritual veil, concealing not just the physical object but the moral transgression it represents. It mirrors the suspect's own dual identity: outwardly clean, inwardly defiled. There is no emotional language in this excerpt, no adjectives, no direct quotations, no confessions. The language is formal and straightforward, but this simplicity is deceptive. Its stark structure leaves room for cultural inference, trusting the audience to fill in the blanks. This restraint allows the act to remain culturally saturated without being narratively overloaded.

By placing “Pastor John” at the front of the sentence and ending with “white cloth,” the structure creates a fall-from-grace arc. It begins in spiritual familiarity and ends in symbolic contamination. The subject, the setting, the object, and the wrapping together produced a densely layered frame that dramatises internal contradiction. The divine, the suspect's prayer room is now exposed as a chamber of horror. However, this stage was hidden until disrupted by police intervention. The press release acts as a public unmasking, where the suspect's performance of holiness is interrupted, and his secret role as ritual actor is revealed.

The state does not merely report the crime but claims epistemological superiority. It assumes the authority to reveal what religious institutions could not, revealing the hidden violence behind the veil of sanctity. The police thereby perform not just legal, but moral arbitration, positioning themselves as guardians of both public safety and spiritual order, enacting the moral actor identity (MAI).

Excerpt 3: *“The suspects include an Osun priestess and a traditional healer who confessed to using body parts in ritual ceremonies”*

The excerpts foreground the involvement of indigenous ritual specialists (a priestess, a healer, and a native doctor). These figures, culturally coded as custodians of spiritual knowledge, are instead shown as agents of ritual violence. The narrative isolates them not just as criminals, but as actors who repurpose ancestral practices for destructive ends. The collocation of traditional authority and bodily dismemberment positions the crime within a culturally familiar yet morally inverted framework. In both cases, the suspects are defined by their ritual titles “priestess,” “healer,” and “native doctor”, suggesting roles embedded in indigenous cosmology. Rather than being anonymous perpetrators, they are marked by cultural specificity, creating a deviant identity that is not only personal but also symbolic of broader traditions.

This framing turns what could be isolated criminal acts into cultural corruption narratives, where the very custodians of communal rituals are recast as manipulators of sacred knowledge for personal or criminal gain. Excerpt 3 refers generally to the use of “*body parts*,” while Excerpt 4 provides a more graphic instruction: mixing blood and body fat. The language here is materially charged; they are not abstract rituals but concrete, anatomical procedures. The use of “*mixture*” evokes both traditional medicine and black magic, reinforcing the association with ritual manipulation of the human body for transformative (often monetary or protective) purposes, constructing the cultural deviant identity (CDI).

The phrasing is clinical and almost procedural. This style positions the police as dispassionate narrators, allowing the cultural horror to emerge through content, not tone. The use of confession and reported directives functions to authenticate the narrative, suggesting insider knowledge of the ritual logic. By emphasising instruction and ceremonial context, the discourse shifts focus from isolated violence to systemic practice, presenting the crime as part of an embedded ritual structure rather than as deviant improvisation.

In both excerpts, the suspects are seen as active participants in a hidden ritual world. Their spiritual performance, once private and possibly revered, is exposed through state intervention. This turns the press release into a moral spectacle, where tradition is placed under surveillance and ancestral authority reinterpreted as a threat. The role of the native doctor as an instructor adds a layer of hierarchical ritual structure, turning the crime into a performance with roles, instructions, and procedure. The police, by narrating this exposure, position themselves as disruptors of dangerous knowledge systems. These excerpts serve a dual ideological function. On one hand, they individualise blame by naming specific traditional figures; on the other, they generalise risk by connecting such individuals to a ritual economy marked by human exploitation. Indigenous ritual practice is thus re-coded as latent criminality, and the police emerge as crime fighters and modernised force tasked with policing the boundaries of acceptable spirituality.

Excerpt 5: “*Charms and a fresh human heart were recovered from the shrine in the forest*”

Excerpt 6: “*Human skulls and blood-stained calabashes were found in the house of a suspected ritualist*”

The scenery from these statements is shifted from the body (as in previous cases) to material artefacts and ritual spaces. In both cases, ritual paraphernalia are discovered in private or secluded locations (a *shrine in the forest*), and a domestic space is transformed into a sacred

threshold. These sites are not random; they serve as symbolic theatres where hidden spiritual performances are believed to occur. The forest is traditionally loaded with spiritual meanings in Nigerian cosmology.

The suspect is no longer identified by name or title but by association with ritual instruments such as “*charms*”, “*hearts*”, “*skulls*”, “*calabashes*”. Identity is constructed metonymically, whereby the person becomes known through the objects they possess and the space they inhabit. The term “*suspected ritualist*” is no longer just an accusation but a category made visible through curated imagery. Here, there is no need for a confession, because the scene and items tell the story. This shift from actor-based framing to evidence-based characterisation marks a discursive strategy that blends the aesthetic of a crime scene with the suggestion of deeper spiritual crime.

Also, each item recovered carries an intense symbolic charge, “*charms*” index spiritual manipulation; “*human heart*” evokes vitality and sacrifice; “*Skulls*” signify death, memory, and occult power; and “*calabashes*”, stained with blood, suggest completed rituals or failed containment of spiritual forces. These are not neutral objects; they are signifiers of taboo knowledge, and their listing transforms the police report into a kind of ritual catalogue of deviance. The body is fragmented into symbolic parts, reimagined as spiritual tools within a broader ritual context.

Meanwhile, the excerpts rely heavily on inventory narration that lists ritual items rather than storytelling. This clinical technique, often associated with law enforcement discourse, constructs a narrative of *objectivity and authority*. The sparse style gives the impression of factual neutrality, but the selected items and setting are not as neutral; they are curated for maximum symbolic resonance. The performance here is not verbal, but it is spatial and material. The suspects' *performance of ritual* is inferred from what they leave behind. These artefacts function as residues of a spiritual drama, disrupted by police intervention. By revealing them, the state turns the private, potent, and sacred into public evidence. The recovery narrative further dramatises state power. The ideological messaging speaks to the delegitimisation of unregulated spiritual and cultural practices, reinforcing the religious deviant identity (RDI) and cultural deviant identity (CDI) simultaneously.

Excerpt 7: “*A teenage boy was caught trying to exhume a corpse at midnight for ritual use*”

Excerpt 8: “*The seven-year-old twins were lured to a bush and their throats were slit by suspects for ritual sacrifice*”

These excerpts centres on youthful transgression and ritual victimhood, drawing attention to how both perpetrators and victims are portrayed in terms that heighten emotional and cultural resonance. In one, a teenage boy engages in the culturally profane act of exhumation, defiling the dead at midnight, a time connoting secrecy, spiritual danger, and moral inversion. In the other, innocent children become symbolic sacrifices, with the location (*a bush*) and method (*throat slitting*) reinforcing ritualistic intent.

The teenage boy is presented as a misguided youth and a ritual aspirant (someone actively seeking spiritual power through sacrilege). This challenges the normative view of adolescence as protected or in a formative stage, framing the youth instead as already aware of ritual potency. He is portrayed as a morally contaminated figure. The seven-year-old twins are constructed as archetypal victims who were innocent, helpless, and numerically symbolic (twins bearing cultural and spiritual significance in Nigerian cosmology). Their murder is not just tragic; it portrays moral decadence where children are no longer safe, deepening public outrage and reinforcing the need for state action.

In both cases, ritual purpose is clearly stated “*for ritual use*”, “*for ritual sacrifice*”. These phrases function as discursive shortcuts to a broader cultural script in which life is commodified for gain. “*Midnight, bush, and throat-slitting*” are all culturally loaded elements, indexing secrecy, wilderness as spiritual territory, and sacrificial logic, respectively. The language is stark, unadorned, and clinical, where each word carries semiotic weight. The boy's attempted exhumation is portrayed as an act of covert ritual preparation. He is caught mid-performance, which heightens the narrative's effect of a rescue where the state intervenes before the ritual is completed. This interruption reinforces institutional vigilance. The murder of the twins, however, is narrated as already completed, offering no opportunity for prevention, only for symbolic restoration through justice. In both cases, the excerpts transform crime scenes into ritual stages, and suspects into figures whose roles are defined through their deviation from communal norms.

Excerpt 9: “*A 300-level student of mass communication was arrested with charms, a human tongue, and a calabash*”

Excerpt 10: “*He removed her eyes, lungs, liver, tongue, and the fleshy part of her buttocks for money ritual*”.

The conceptual focus of the above excerpts is deviance framing that emphasises ritual dismemberment and the collection of symbolic body parts, grounding the narratives in themes

of modernity and anatomical precision. In Excerpt 9, the suspect is a university student who is typically associated with enlightenment, social mobility, and aspirational progress. At the same time, his possession of ritual objects (charms, tongue, calabash) challenges this social expectation, indicating a fusion of academic modernity with occult aspiration.

Excerpt 10 provides a more graphic image of an individual who carefully extracts specific organs from a female body. The dismemberment reflects culturally constructed meanings attributed to various body parts in Nigerian ritual discourse. The student in Excerpt 9 is introduced with social specificity, mentioning his academic level and course. This detail constructs an identity that contrasts sharply with the objects in his possession. He is not a faceless suspect; he is someone situated within the future of the nation, now cast as a bearer of ancestral violence. This contrast constructs a hybrid deviant identity that reflects modern, educated, yet spiritually regressive.

In Excerpt 10, the suspect is unnamed and undescribed, while his identity is constructed through the act. The precision with which organs are removed (eyes, lungs, liver, tongue, buttocks) positions him not as a violent actor alone but as someone enacting a culturally coded anatomical ritual. The body becomes a ritual text from which symbolic value is extracted for ritual purposes. Meanwhile, in Excerpt 9, the calabash (often a vessel for ritual containment) and tongue indicate an attempt to channel specific powers, likely connected to persuasion or command. The student becomes a ritual aspirant, not merely a criminal.

Both excerpts are tightly controlled in tone, allowing for the reserved register to speak for itself, relying on cultural familiarity for meaning-making. The objects and organs are not explained instead; they are assumed to be legible signs of ritual deviance to the audience. The use of present perfect (“was arrested with...”) in Excerpt 9 freezes the suspect in a moment of possession, while the past simple (“he removed...”) in Excerpt 10 makes the act feel definitive and irreversible. These temporal frames influence the reader's perception of how one is apprehended mid-process; the other has completed a ritual.

In both excerpts, suspects are caught mid-ritual or post-ritual. Their performances, once hidden, are made visible through institutional exposure. The student, performing dual identities (academic and occult), is a particularly disruptive figure serving as a symbol of modern youth corrupted by spiritual capitalism. The police, by narrating this exposure, reinforce their ideological authority as boundary-keepers not only between legality and crime but between

cultural continuity and moral decay. The message is subtle but clear: even the educated and the elite are vulnerable to the seduction of ritual power.

Excerpt 11: *“Charms and human skulls were recovered from a shrine used for money rituals”*

Excerpt 12: *“The suspect, a woman in her late 30s, confessed to supplying teenage girls for ritual use”.*

Excerpt 11 focuses on the gendered construction of ritual identity, it returns to the shrine as ritual space, which is a recurring motif in the NPF press releases. The reference to “*charms*” and “*human skulls*” reinforces a familiar symbolic vocabulary of occult violence. The phrase “*used for money rituals*” makes the purpose explicit: the shrine is not for worship but for transactional death, a ritual economy where human remains are currency. While excerpt 12 introduces a female actor, shifting the lens toward gendered complicity. The woman is not framed as a direct killer but as a supplier; her role lies in the facilitation of ritual violence rather than its physical enactment. This distinction is crucial; it constructs her as a mediator in a sacrificial system, someone who leverages the vulnerability of others (teenage girls) for material gain.

The shrine in Excerpt 11 is depersonalised, shielding the suspect's identity. Here, identity is produced through the objects and space, turning the location itself into the deviant. The shrine becomes a ritual tool with items discovered serving as proxies for the unseen actor. In contrast, the woman in Excerpt 12 is partially individualised: she has an age, a gender, and a voice (she confesses). Her identity emerges as a moral contradiction in contrast with the cultural roles assigned to women in Nigerian society. Women, often culturally associated with nurturing, now become an enabler of harm. The detail that her victims are teenage girls introduces a layer of betrayal and perhaps female complicity in patriarchal ritual economies.

The objects in Excerpt 11, like “*skulls*” and “*charms*”, function as ritual residues. Their presence implies prior sacrifice and continued spiritual potency. They signal a completed ritual space, one whose spiritual operations have already left material traces. In Excerpt 12, the ritual act is ongoing. The supply chain of human lives is active, with teenage girls positioned as ritual commodities. Their youth evokes purity, reproductive potential, and symbolic power, making them valuable in ritual discourse. The woman's confession ties her directly to this supply chain of sacrifice, positioning her as a broker of spiritual transactions.

Excerpt 13: *“A 25-year-old herbalist was caught with blood-stained clothes and a severed hand believed to be for rituals”*

Excerpt 14: *“A father and his son confessed to using the boy’s classmate for ritual money-making”*.

Excerpt 15: *“The suspect lured a woman to his apartment, where he killed her and took parts of her body for Yahoo+ rituals”*.

These final excerpts emphasise relational betrayal, intergenerational participation, and the fusion of digital and ritual crime. In Excerpt 13, the herbalist, who is a figure that is traditionally linked with healing, is now an agent of harm. The evidence (blood-stained clothes and a severed hand) foregrounds bodily fragmentation as a key ritual practice, again underscoring the commodification of the human body.

Excerpt 14 intensifies the moral breach: a father and son conspiring to sacrifice a schoolmate. This transforms the family into a ritual enterprise, reversing the logic of kinship protection into one of calculated violence. Excerpt 15 adds another layer that links ritual sacrifice to cyber-fraud under the colloquial tag “Yahoo+”. Here, ritual is not rooted in indigenous belief alone but fused with digital-age ambition, pointing to a new hybrid identity that blends traditional sacrifice with contemporary scams.

In Excerpt 13, the herbalist's title suggests spiritual legitimacy, but his identity is recoded through the presence of forensic residue (blood, dismemberment). His tools of healing are converted to instruments of death, making his deviance one of inversion and betrayal of his profession. The father-son duo in Excerpt 14 is constructed as inherited evil, such as ritualism passed down, normalised, and even tutored. The son’s youth compounds the transgression, painting the ritual act as not only criminal but culturally intergenerational. In Excerpt 15, the suspect assumes a double-coded identity: part fraudster, part ritualist. His apartment becomes the modern shrine, his victim a human offering not to deities, but to the spiritual logic of wealth accumulation through digital deceit.

Across all three excerpts, the language is clipped, descriptive, and indirect. The use of passive constructions (“was caught,” “confessed,” “lured”) removes emotional tone but leaves symbolic gaps for the reader to fill. The repeated use of “for rituals” or “Yahoo+” functions as shorthand for a broader cultural knowledge base that includes urban myths, news reports, Nollywood narratives, and oral tradition.

These narratives construct deviance not only in what was done, but in who did it, and to whom, as in an herbalist, a father and son, a tech-savvy killer, a body, a classmate, a woman.

Each excerpt reinforces the notion of ritual as socially corrosive, breaking down kinship, friendship, profession, and gender expectations. The exposure of these acts by the police reasserts the idea that institutional surveillance is the last line of defence in a society where the sacred has been inverted. The inclusion of “Yahoo+” aligns the traditional with the digital, suggesting that ritualism is not fading but migrating into new, hybrid forms. The state, in disclosing these stories, affirms its capacity not only to detect bodily violence but to name, map, and contain emerging cultural threats.

Findings

The analysis of Nigerian police press releases on cybercrime-related ritual offences reveals a set of recurring discursive patterns through which criminal identities are constructed and ritual practices are framed. The findings are presented thematically across three major domains: (1) spiritual deviance and institutional betrayal, (2) commodification of the human body in ritual economy, and (3) state narration and the restoration of moral order.

A dominant finding is the construction of ritual suspects as morally inverted actors who operate under the guise of spiritual or social legitimacy. Religious figures such as pastors, Islamic clerics, and native doctors are frequently presented as having violated the moral expectations of their roles. Their titles are preserved in the narratives “Pastor John” and “Islamic cleric AbdulRahman”. However, they are juxtaposed with acts such as possession of human heads, body dismemberment, or confession to murder. This narrative structure allows the press releases to frame these individuals not as ordinary criminals, but as symbolic violators of both legal and spiritual codes.

The betrayal is not limited to religious figures. In several cases, suspects who hold socially respected or morally neutral positions, like students, fathers, and healers, are redefined through their actions as agents of sacrificial violence. The father-son collaboration in Excerpt 14, for instance, illustrates how kinship roles are inverted and intergenerational trust is weaponised for ritual gain. These narratives not only highlight deviance; they intensify it by embedding the acts within roles culturally associated with care, authority, and mentorship.

A second major pattern is the ritualised deconstruction of the human body into objects of spiritual value. Across the dataset, specific body parts like tongue, eyes, liver, heart, and

buttocks are mentioned with a frequency and specificity that points to a ritual logic of symbolic utility. These anatomical references are rarely contextualised or justified; their mere presence is treated as evidence of ritual practice, reflecting shared cultural scripts regarding the value of different organs in occult procedures. This pattern also extends to the age and gender of victims. Young girls, twins, and classmates are presented not merely as victims but as ritually significant lives that are chosen for their symbolic and spiritual potency. The repetition of certain types of victims reinforces a cultural narrative in which human life, particularly vulnerable or pure life, is convertible into supernatural capital.

Material artefacts like charms, calabashes, skulls, and blood-stained clothing function in the same way. They are treated not as incidental evidence, but as ritual indicators, making visible the otherwise hidden spiritual dimensions of the crime. Their presence in shrines, homes, or forests constructs physical spaces as ritual theatres, each containing traces of spiritual transgression.

The press releases are not merely descriptive; they perform a ritual of exposure, revealing hidden crimes and restoring the symbolic balance between good and evil. Suspects are often caught in the act or confess during interrogation, and these disclosures are framed as moments of moral truth. The state, via the police, becomes the arbiter of spiritual clarity, intervening in ambiguous or contaminated spaces such as shrines, prayer rooms, and forest altars to restore transparency and accountability. Notably, the narratives position the police not only as enforcers of law but as moral interpreters of culturally resonant crimes. The institutional voice never adopts sensationalism; it relies on clipped, clinical descriptions and the strategic placement of symbolic details to guide interpretation. Through this restrained but ideologically potent style, the police assume the role of protectors of both national law and communal morality.

This narrative structure also supports the modernising image of the state. By confronting both traditional and hybrid ritual forms (e.g., “Yahoo+ rituals”), the press releases suggest that state authority is equipped to handle evolving forms of spiritualized crime, whether rooted in indigenous practice or emerging from the intersection of digital and occult economies.

The findings of this study highlight how ritual-related cybercrime is discursively constructed in Nigerian police press releases, particularly through the symbolic framing of identity, body, and space. Across the dataset, the releases deploy a calculated narrative economy, selectively invoking cultural symbols, spiritual roles, and bodily imagery to perform ideological work that

goes beyond simple crime reporting. In doing so, they position the state as a moral authority capable of managing both spiritual transgression and its sociocultural consequences.

The representation of suspects as clerics, pastors, herbalists, and healers reflects a recurring motif of spiritual deviance. Rather than being constructed as ordinary lawbreakers, these individuals are framed as corrupted embodiments of sacred trust. Their ritual practices, uncovered in shrines and prayer rooms, render them not just criminal but spiritually treasonous. This collapse of expected institutional boundaries, where religious and therapeutic figures become perpetrators, echoes Goffman's insight that performative identities can be disrupted, reversed, or revealed under institutional observation.

The family, school, and religious community typically cast as sites of protection, now reimagined as zones of betrayal. In this narrative economy, crime is not merely an act; it is a violation of communal ethos, producing symbolic shock. The father-son collaboration, the student-turned-ritualist, and the woman who supplies teenage girls disrupt normative roles and emphasise the plasticity of identity in the context of ritual crime. Identity here is not stable; it is a shifting performance shaped by material motives and exposed through institutional intervention.

Central to many of the excerpts is the human body as a site of value, not in its entirety but in segmental form. This dismemberment is not gratuitous; it aligns with a ritual logic that views certain body parts as repositories of power. The tongue, liver, buttocks, and skull are not merely anatomical features but are saturated with symbolic and transactional meaning, reflecting culturally grounded beliefs about their efficacy in wealth acquisition, spiritual manipulation, or control.

This discourse signals a shift from traditional religious framing toward a ritual economy, where the body is parsed into usable commodities. In this system, victims are objectified as means to an end, often monetary or supernatural. The emergence of “Yahoo+” as a hybrid form of ritualised cybercrime underscores this shift. It illustrates how spiritual violence is being recalibrated through digital ambition, combining sacrificial logic with contemporary fraud cultures. This convergence not only complicates the moral terrain but extends the ritual frame beyond traditional spaces into urban apartments and online economies.

The settings where ritual items are found in forests, shrines, and domestic spaces are portrayed as cloaked arenas of spiritual drama. These places are not passively described; they are moralised through the recovery of charms, skulls, calabashes, and blood-stained artefacts. Such

discursive framing transforms ordinary geography into ritual topography, where hidden evil is staged and subsequently disrupted. However, these acts of discovery do more than expose. They reassert the legitimacy of state power as both a moral and epistemic force. By entering these closed spaces and extracting ritual evidence, the police are symbolically reclaiming authority over domains traditionally governed by spiritual actors. This reclamation is ideological: it assures the public that the state is not only capable of regulating material crime but also decoding and dismantling the metaphysical systems in which such crimes are embedded.

While the tone of the press releases is typically restrained, the strategic inclusion of culturally loaded symbols and body parts invites readers to fill in the horror. This discursive under-coding is an effective technique; it invites interpretation without requiring elaboration. In this way, the state curates a moral script without overtly preaching, positioning itself as a neutral expositor of truth and protector of social order. This subtle framing reinforces what Foucault (1977) might consider the productive power of institutional discourse, where crime is not only punished but also narrativised to reinforce state hegemony. The suspects are not just apprehended; they are exposed and reclassified, often through the very language that describes their tools, spaces, and victims. This exposure is a ritual act in itself: a dramatic performance of the state's ability to unmask the unseen.

Conclusion

This study has explored how Nigerian police press releases construct ritual-related cybercrime through symbolic framing and identity work. By analysing fifteen excerpts across a range of geographic, social, and ritual contexts, the study demonstrated that these texts do more than record criminal events; they actively shape public perceptions of morality, deviance, and state authority.

The study's findings revealed that suspects are frequently positioned within culturally loaded identities through the frequent use of titles such as pastors, traditional healers, students, and family members, whose betrayal of communal expectations heightens the symbolic charge of the crimes. Ritual practices are framed not only as criminal acts but as spiritual transgressions, often dramatised through the use of phrases such as “dismembered body parts” and “recovered charms”. These details serve as culturally legible signs of occult activity, drawing on shared beliefs about power, sacrifice, and supernatural wealth.

Also, the press releases function as institutional performances of moral surveillance. Through the narration of discovery, confession, and intervention, the state asserts its role not just in legal enforcement but in regulating spiritual and symbolic economies. In exposing ritual crimes, the police reframe themselves as defenders of both national law and communal order, capable of disrupting practices that blur the boundaries between tradition, modernity, and violence. In summary, the study contributes to ongoing discussions in discourse, criminology, and cultural studies by showing how identity is discursively constructed in the intersection of crime, ritual, and state narration. It underscores the need to attend to how crime is represented, not just what is represented, especially in contexts where language, belief, and power are deeply entangled.

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Appendix

Operatives of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, on Friday, July 1, 2022, rescued an alleged kidnapped yahoo-yahoo apprentice, 17-year-old Destiny Peter, from an apartment in Mpape, a suburb of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Peter had on July 1, 2022 contacted the EFCC on its official twitter handle, @officialEFCC, narrating how some yahoo-yahoo boys kidnapped him and intended to use him for rituals. He was guided to send a screenshot of his location to the Commission, using the Google Location App in his Android phone.

In a series of tweets, Peter wrote:

“Good afternoon sir, I called the EFCC number and lay some complaints about some yahoo boys intending using me for ritual and he said I should send a screenshot of the location. The house is in Mpape, but don’t know the exact place so check google map and save the screenshot.

“I’m in the bathroom because I don’t want his boys to know what I’m doing. My name is Destiny Peter and the place is Mpape. I don’t know the actual place but I used google maps and the people in the house now are his boys. Hold on let me try and do a video, sir”

Upon the twitter alert, the EFCC quickly mobilized a team of detectives to the area for his rescue, and they found him locked up in a room. They rescued him and arrested 16- year-old Aboaba David, 18 –year-old Isaac Johnson, 20- year-old cook, Miracle Moses, a hair stylist, and the leader of the syndicate, 20-year-old Jamilu Aliyu, popularly known as Jamilu Smith.

During interrogation, Peter said he was threatened by Jamilu Smith, leader of the gang. He further stated that Smith threatened him, that if he was not able to cash out (defraud) people within two weeks, he would be sacrificed for rituals.

Under interrogation, David said Smith was their leader and recruited them to join him in scouting for potential online dating victims for fraud. All other suspects pointed at Smith as their leader.

On his part, Smith debunked Peter’s claim that he was kidnapped. He rather said Peter’s brother brought him to him willingly to teach him bitcoin and gift cards trading.

All the suspects are in EFCC’s custody for further investigation, and would be charged to court as soon as investigation is concluded.

Media & Publicity

7 July, 2022

Datum 11

Domestic worker cuts off woman’s genitals for money rituals in Anambra

5th March 2023

A domestic help, identified as Onyebuchi Ezech, has cut off the genitals of a 72-year-old woman, including other parts of her body in an attempt to use it for money ritual purposes. The incident happened in Umunze, Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra State on Thursday.

It was gathered that the victim was rescued by neighbours who later took her to the hospital after she raised the alarm.

The suspect, who was later caught confessed that he and some others at large, committed the act on the instruction of a native doctor, who had promised to make them rich if they brought the required organs.

The media assistant to the commissioner for women affairs and social welfare, Miss Chidinma Ikeanyionwu, disclosed this to journalists on Sunday.

Ikeanyionwu said the victim was currently recuperating at the Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Teaching Hospital, Amaku Awka, where the commissioner, Mrs Ify Obinabo had visited her.

Ikeanyionwu said, “The incident was discovered after the survivor raised the alarm on Thursday. One of her workers alongside two other men stampeded her in her house and cut off her genital organs including nipple, ear, fingers among others.

The culprit by name Onyebuchi Ezech who was later caught, confessed that they were sent by a native doctor to get the needed organs of the 72-year-old woman in order to become billionaires.

“The suspect hails from Abakaliki in Ebonyi State, and usually helps the victim in cutting palm-trees. He was said to have explained that they embarked on the act because they wanted to get rich according to the assurances of the native doctor.”

She also said the commissioner expressed sadness over the development, while assuring the victim that other persons involved in the crime would also be apprehended and charged to court.

According to her, the suspect is currently at the State Criminal Investigative Department of the Anambra State Police Command, Awka and will soon be arraigned before the Children and Gender Based Violence Magistrate Court in Awka, soon.

KWARA STATE POLICE COMMAND.

PRESS RELEASE.

16TH FEBRUARY, 2025.

CULPABLE HOMICIDE: KWARA STATE POLICE COMMAND ARREST ONE SUSPECT IN GRUESOME MURDER CASE.

The Kwara State Police Command, under the leadership of Commissioner of Police, CP Victor Olaiya psc(+) has arrested one Abdulrahman M Bello ‘M’ who resides at Offa-garage area in Ilorin, aged 25years in connection with the gruesome murder of Miss Yetunde Hafsat Lawal ‘F’, aged 24years.

On February 11, 2025, at about 1800hrs, Mr Ibrahim A. Lawal ‘M’ of Adefalu’s Compound, Oju-Ekun Area, Ilorin, reported at the divisional police headquarters C-Division Oja-Oba; that his daughter, Yetunde Lawal, had attended the naming ceremony of her friend’s baby not far from their place of residence, the previous day February 10, 2025, at about 1400hrs but never returned home.

Concerned about her whereabouts, her mother contacted some of her friends, but no useful information was obtained. When her father was informed, he made several attempts to call her phone numbers, but the calls went unanswered.

Her phone number was tracked, and the result led to the arrest of one Abdulrahman M. Bello. The suspect was immediately apprehended and taken into custody. During interrogation, he confessed to the killing of the victim. Further search at his residence led to the recovery of exhibits, including two mobile phones and slippers of the deceased, dismembered body parts (both hands), a plastic bottle containing the victim's blood, a cutlass, a knife, an axe, a wooden box of black soap, a sack containing charms and a center table used in carrying out this heinous act. The suspect Mohammed A Bello has confessed to the crime with the intent to do oshole/ajoo ówò (money rituals).

The case has been transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) Ilorin, for discreet investigation and subsequent prosecution.

The Kwara Command also extends its heartfelt condolences to the entire family of the bereaved. May Almighty God console and comfort them in this period of grief while assuring that justice will be served.

The Kwara State Police Command urges the general public to remain vigilant while reporting any suspicious activities of person(s) to the authorities.

In case of emergencies, call these numbers 07032069501 or 08125275046.

SP Adetoun Ejire-Adeyemi anipr

Police Public Relations Officer,

For:- The Commissioner of Police,

Kwara State Police Command.