

# Investigating Multimodal Analysis In Female Documentaries About Refugees Crisis: A Case Study

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## ABSTRACT

*The art of documentary filmmaking has always been seen as a way of representing the world in a myriad of subjective ways. It is the ideal medium that represents migration, flight and exile. Attuned to the depiction of landscape, physical environments, and the movement of bodies through space, documentaries representations shift dynamically from microscopic detail to macroscopic overview, from the particularity of the local to the generality of the global, from the individual to the mass. When it comes to migration issues, documentaries represent the complexities of the journeys of refugees focus on various cross-cultural issues surrounding representation in documentary filmmaking, both in front of and behind the camera. Through the analysis of the BBC film "The Hidden Lives of House Girls" produced in 2019, the study produces multi-faceted narratives towards the analysis of African gender studies which are seldom tackled. The study uses Machin and Mayr (2012) multimodal analysis to explore the central question of "Who has the right to tell whose story, and why, how documentaries shed light on the refugee's crisis especially when it comes to young females and what are the ethical considerations that are represented in the depictions of African refugees?" Through the analysis of verbal and non-verbal components incorporated in the filmmaker's choice of certain elements in the film, the study elucidates that the use of the linguistic and semiotics choices helped greatly in showing the suffering of Eastern Ugandan young women when they travel to neighbouring countries to work as domestic workers. In addition, the representation strategies used in the visual communication were utilized perfectly to unravel the complexities endured in the lives of three girls. Also, the participant-observant mode helped in making the audience engaged in the protagonists' lives as they were directly involved in the film narrative.*

**Keywords:** *Multimodality, Critical Discourse Analysis, African Female Migration, Documentaries, Narratives, Gender Studies.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

There has been a recent increasing amount of research on feminization of migration, which has started to fill the gap created by the earlier focus on male labour migration. However, the stereotypical representation of African female migrants still need much more research that could focus on causes and changing configurations of emerging female migratory flows. This study argues that documentary production about

the female African refugees faces two challenges simultaneously. First, it faces the representational challenges of refugee documentary as a genre, with its potential for exploitation, sensationalism and emotional manipulation. Second, the orientalist tradition that continues to influence much of the discourse about women in particular and Africa, as a focal point. The experiences of refugees and the politics of representing refugees and migrants are issues at the heart of cultural production in the world today. There

have been waves of a rise in extreme-right politics and a hardening of public sentiment towards migrants and refugees at the beginning of the migrant issues towards those who attempted to penetrate Europe fortress. No sooner was there an opposite wave raised by scholars, intellectuals and journalists to humanize the issue especially after the spread of the horrific image of the three-year-old Alan Kurdi's swept across the Mediterranean shore in Turkey in 2015.

Not only did the humanitarian issue of the Syrian refugee crisis top the headlines, but it also made newsmakers and news organisations turn eyes to the refugee's crisis worldwide, including the Venezuelans, the Palestinians, the Uganda's, the Afghans and more recently the Ukrainians. Though the media portrays Africa as the continent on the move, in fact 80 percent of African migrants do not have an interest in leaving the continent. The so-called "continent on move" accounts for only 14 percent of the global migrant population, compared to 41 percent from Asia and 24 percent from Europe. Nigeria, South Africa and Côte d'Ivoire are regarded as among the top five destination countries on the continent as they truly represent the largest economic hubs for their respective subregions (The African Centre for Strategic Studies 2023).

More importantly, the world's genocides, terrorist acts, refugees' crisis and their aftermath – these and other instances of mass violence, destruction and suffering – continue to offer endless images for global media consumption. In this respect, Shohini Chaudhuri (2014) rightly points out:

In today's world, atrocity images circulate with apparent ease and instantaneity via 4-hour TV news, the Internet and mobile phone cameras. Yet mainstream news remains strictly regulated, by considerations of not only what is "acceptable" for public viewing but also, what is "newsworthy" and friendly to government interests. (Chaudhuri 2014, 2)

Truly, mainstream news is often restricted to specific agenda set by a specific government interest or by wealthy businessmen which makes a piece of news more worthy than another. This leaves much of the humanitarian refugees crisis elsewhere in the world uncovered and unearthed as it does not grasp media attention. In his report "Moving Stories" Jan Egeland, Secretary-general of the Norwegian Refugee Council, tried to shed light on the way media organisations portrayed the refugee crisis. In this report, he gives much importance for the need for a wider media attention for the refugee crisis worldwide as news media organisations often fell on deaf ears with an apparent lack of interest on the part of the vast majority of television and radio companies and major

newspapers. In this account, he added:

(...) in war-torn South Sudan, for example, this country is rarely in the limelight. In 2011, it gained independence from Sudan ending a generation of war. Two years later, the civil war broke out resulting in massive forced displacement and today the country is one of the world's impoverished places. Every two minutes another South Sudanese child becomes severely malnourished. But these stories are seldom told. (White 2015, 6)

May be all refugee crisis especially the ones resided in Africa need a picture like the Syrian Kurdi's one so that news media organisations can turn heads to all the world's hardest-to-reach areas of violence and conflict. In fact, today's journalism is under pressure from a weakening media economy, political bias, globalisation and opportunism that drive the news agenda; stereotyping and social exclusion of refugees and migrants. This brings international news reporting at the forefront of this study where reporting foreign affairs is often governed by the kind of image of a country or a culture predominates. Given the structural conditions of the international flow of news, countries with economic and political interests in having a positive image in a certain region must mount publicity campaigns. In addition, in spite of the fact that most governments would officially subscribe to the concept of freedom of the media, reality sadly shows a very different picture. The media and their representatives fall all too often easy prey to outside interferences and open repression (Dohnanyi 2003). Boczowski (2004), for example, showed how factors such as economic and political pressures, personal and religious attachments, changes in news gathering and production technology and the role of sources and source strategies impact on journalism. It is of vital importance to see if these conclusions are relevant to Africa's coverage in the international news coverage especially when it is associated with the refugee's crisis. In a comparative study conducted in Africa, covering 11 countries in 22 opinion-leading newspapers in six European and five sub-Saharan African countries, it retrieved 1,512 articles which appeared in the years between 2015 and 2017. It found out that the causes of the migration topic were much less discussed in African countries as the coverage of migration in the African media was more negative (Fengler et al 2022).

Media representations of Africa are often associated with the near-constant stream of visual propaganda as it predominantly showcases scenes of violence, devastation and starvation (Ekanath, 2018). Such negative stories were created as a result of the efforts of colonial officials and institutions to perpetuate white supremacy and Western domination of the

African continent (Harth, 2012). However, the image still continues to grow as negative stereotypes and myths that undergirded colonialism have not been challenged by the Western media. Even in the twenty first century, the Western media has not challenged these myths as Western supremacy still dominated the news scene. Although Africa when represented, is represented from a negative "Western" point of view, the same frame applies too, to the female African refugees who are seldom represented in the Western media.

### 1.1 Significance of the Study

In most countries, refugee crisis stories are dominated by two themes – numbers and emotions (White 2015). Academic literature in this context highlighted issues of concern regarding the stereotyping of migrants, refugees and other minorities in certain media, which may result in prejudice and discriminatory attitudes against individual representatives of such groups and the rejection of cultural diversity altogether (Firmstone et al. 2007; Ferjani 2007; Siapera 2010). Media coverage is led with a political agenda dominated by loose language and talk of invasion and swarms. At other moments, refugee stories have been laced with humanity, empathy, compassion and human suffering. This should bring the filmic representations of these crises on the top of the news media organizations where the visuals and the narrative can truly showcase the human sufferings. On the one hand, films can "help to shape prevailing normative perceptions", on the other hand, "they can also question those perceptions and build different ones" (Chaudhuri 2014). The humanitarian refugee crisis worldwide can be and should truly become one of the central objects of inquiry in contemporary documentary film-making.

With regard to the current refugee crisis and documentary filmmaking, Bennett (2018) identifies its distinguishing feature in "the degree to which it is being recorded visually not only by professional filmmakers, but by journalists, artists, activists and charity workers, politicians, police, troops, border officials and vigilantes, and by migrants themselves" (15). Indeed, this highly diverse documentary material questions not only the form, but the very essence of the film-making process, as well as the relationship between the film-maker, their subjects and the spectators.

The democratisation of the refugee crisis is seen everywhere today with every digital tool used to record the moment. Bennett says that the current refugee crisis is not only recorded visually by professional film-makers, but by artists, activists, journalists, charity workers, politicians, police, border

officials and vigilantes, and by migrants themselves (2018). What makes it special is the speed and mobility via which this audio-visual scenario can circulate around the globe and go viral within seconds. The context via which the 'refugee crises occur now coincides with the rapid democratization of media production (Bennette 2018). However, the African female migration system still remains a permeated issue which is often left unquestioned, untouched or being tapped in the Northern European mainstream media in its representation.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The ethnography of media production that explores the challenges of the refugee crisis in Africa are often scarce and very limited. Such a limited number of studies often dealt with the representation of Africa in foreign news reporting especially in print and online media, leaving out much of the visual -audio journalism. The labour of a shared production and the distribution of the audio-visual documentary films across a number of countries unfolded within a field of diverse, and at times, conflicting interests. For this reason, judicious attention to female African migration as represented in documentary films can construct different narratives and different representations to the African migrant issues. Such analysis will provide one framework for theorising the challenges of researching with marginalised subjects and stories, and the contradictions of developing shared practices within proprietary contexts. Much of the refugee-focused documentary production claims to present the most intimate reality of the victims. Moreover, many of these films seem to compete with each other as to whose truth is the truest.

From full-length films such as *Salaam Neighbor* (Temple & Ingrasci 2015) to short video features on celebrities visiting the refugee camps, they often reflect exploitation, manipulation and misrepresentation of the victims. This makes the researchers facing a highly problematic representational discourse for the misrepresentation of the refugees in westernized films, though the eyes of westernized filmmakers. Audio-visual culture made and filmed by western filmmakers are rarely able to escape the same old traps of stereotyping and preconceived notions about the Africa region (Anishchenkova 2018). Moreover, it is assumed that that the same stereotypes for the social issues, politics, ideology, religion, culture or any other aspects of people's public and private lives still prevail in most refugee's crisis documentaries. In short, when it comes to contemporary portrayals of females African's documentary, orientalism is alive and is well.

### 1.3 Aim of the Study

Such an account puts the study at the forefront of the African migration cause. The research aims at developing an exploratory and critical practice of inquiry that not only responded to the ethical complexities of research with refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants, but also created opportunities for research subjects to interpret, analyse and document their experiences as newcomers to all the neighbouring countries, North Africa and Europe. The cultural practises are also analysed thoroughly as the films depict the subaltern culture and investigates it to the core of the issue. The role female migrants play, who are always ignored and subsided in both films and even in research analysis, will be heavily examined as the narrative of discourse marks its race.

This study focuses on the role of females in the African migration issue. It explores the multi-facets of the African migration issue as represented in documentary films. It mainly aims at analysing the documentation of the refugees' and the migrants' journeys as they inhabit the complexities of their journeys from their original hometowns to their new settlement across the Middle East, North Africa and Europe. A key dynamic documented throughout the study is investigating the multiple ways that different news media organisations used to represent their journeys and their displacements whether it is forced or unforced migration. The purpose of this study is to examine the gendered perspective in examining the ways in which women's migration is shaped by unequal power relations which carry particular implications and challenges. It seeks to understand the structural conditions in which the refugee image is created and reimagined in our heads which reinforces or nor the idea of the "other" and westernisation of news towards the oppressed Africans.

### 1.4 Research Questions

- a) What are the visual, linguistic and stylistic features selected in the documentary filmmaking that depicts the African female discourse?
- b) What are the cultural, economic and political practises employed in the African migration issue?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The related literature review is divided into two main sections: The Female African Migration Scholarship and the media portrayal of the African migration issue.

### 2.1 Female African Migration Scholarship

Women in earlier migration research were seen as companions to men, passive non-decision makers in the migration process. Moreover, female African migration scholarship has been rarely tackled by media scholars. And if tackled, it has been much influenced by media images of massive refugee flows and boat migration (Flahaux & Haas 2016). Scholars have noticed that there have been developments in female migration leading them to try to understand the dynamics of these female migrations, their causes, their flows and their experiences (Grossman & O'Brien 2008). The rapid change of the configuration of the female migratory system from a dependent female underpowered to an independent owner may suggest a different portrayal and a changing stereotypical idea not only to the African females but also to the entire continent.

In terms of the African migration context, it has a history of pull and push factors. These factors involve citizens pushing themselves to get better opportunities from the destination countries or citizens countering their pull factors which involve mainly conflict and poverty (Diop & D'Aloisio 2018). According to the UNHCR 2020 report, the number of international migrants is estimated to be 272 million, an increase of 51 million since 2010. Recent years have witnessed an overall 'feminization' in migration from Africa as it stands as almost as 49% --of all migrant workers are women (UNHCR 2019). Although Europe and Northern America have been the biggest hosts for international migrants in the second half of the twentieth century, migrant populations have grown more rapidly in Northern Africa and Western Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2019, Europe hosted the largest number of international migrants (82.3 million), followed by Northern America (58.6 million) and Northern Africa and Western Asia (48.6 million) (UNHCR 2019).

### 2.2 Media Portrayal of African Migration

Media studies have much focused the representation of irregular migration and its hyponyms which includes smuggling, trafficking, kidnapping and death toll. Migrants' journeys have been analysed and represented in most media studies as "desperate", "fragmented", "risky" as these terms have become a common feature of the global migration system (Collyer 2010). As of year 2000, there has been a surge in qualitative studies on contemporary African migrations (Schoorl et al. 2000; Van Dijk & Foeken 2001; Bilger & Kraler 2005; Bredeloup & Pliez 2005; Pian 2009; Lessault & Beauchemin 2009; Bakewell



& Jónsson 2011; Berriane & De Haas 2012; Schielke & Graw 2012; Whitehouse 2012; De Bruijn Lessault & Flahaux 2013). These studies have shed light on the diversity of African migration and have shown that most African migrations are not directed towards Europe, but towards other African countries (Sander & Maimbo 2003; Schoumaker et al. 2015) and that those moving out of Africa do not only move to Europe but also to the Americas and to some Gulf countries (Bakewell & De Haas 2007).

Responding to the surge studies of migration, O'Brien and Grossman (2007) offered an exhaustive interdisciplinary practice in their project: *Projecting Migration: Transcultural Documentary Practice*. The book attempts to critically reframe the ways in which the migrancy experiences are represented and how they are understood. The project's materials are produced by film and documentary artists, photographers, ethnographers and visual anthropologists who collaborated together along the themes of diaspora, migration and representation of various cultures in one project (Grossman & O'Brien 2008). Hence, it acts as an anthropology presenting work that transgresses multiple boundaries and explores contemporary migratory narratives through the medium of film, photography and multimedia.

In a recent attempt that aims at changing the narrative of the refugees in Europe, "Refugees Reporting", a European Region study was conducted to stimulate discussion and dialogue in the refugee cause in Europe. This research was conducted to examine the media representation of refugees and migrants in Europe in seven European countries: Greece, Italy, Spain, Serbia, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Norway (Brown, Green, Moritz, Reimann & Speicher 2017). Key findings concluded that only 21% of news items on asylum and migration reference a refugee or migrant. Over three-quarters of the stories analysed neither identified an individual refugee or migrant nor they included their voices. Certain groups of people are even more invisible such as women. Of the 21% of articles that identified a refugee or migrant, only about one-quarter (27%) was that person a woman. Of all people mentioned in the news articles, only 6% were refugee women (Brown et al 2017).

Another study examined eight newspapers in three countries in Europe and how they dealt with the humanitarian crisis, which has turned millions of people into refugees, asylum seekers or migrants. The study entitled "Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Press Coverage", was produced by the Cultural Institute for the Benelux. Based on qualitative and quantitative analysis, the study concluded that "voices of the

refugees are heard less often than those of politicians and experts" (Refugees & Asylum Seekers in Press Coverage 2016, 3). Refugees and migrants were often out quoted and effectively silenced by more dominant narratives and non-refugees, such as politicians and experts in different fields. Viewpoints that represent a negative attitude towards immigration are also included, but they are counterbalanced with the writer's own comments and commentaries by guest writers (Refugees & Asylum Seekers in Press Coverage, 2016).

Another study was conducted in 2016 to analyse the press media coverage of immigration between 2006 and 2015 entitled "A Decade of Immigration in the British Press". The study analysed trends in the language used by newspapers regarding immigration and how they are associated to the British political context (Observation 2016). The report suggests that press depictions of migrants have been much concerned on net migration, and particularly EU migration. Illegal migration has been framed largely in the British National newspapers (Observation 2016).

Though numerous comparative studies examined the press coverage of migratory systems across Africa and Europe, a very few which tackled how pictures and documentaries drew attention to the complexity and cultural specificity of migration experiences from different locations of origin and at different times. In their paper "Vite sospese", Scarparo and Luciano (2013) explored the female migration in contemporary Italian documentaries. They examined the forms of 'otherness' and marginalized sectors of society through their analysis of two documentary films: Sidelki/Badanti (2007) by Katia Bernardi and La stoffa di Veronica (2005) by Emma Rossi Landi. The study investigated the transnational mobility by presenting a search for a new notion of home that requires mental, social and spatial mobility away from familiar spaces into new territories (Scarparo & Luciano 2013).

Gayatri Spivak asked in the mid-1980s if the subaltern can speak where his argument was stronger in the context of colonial production (Spivak 1988). At the end of his essay, he said "if the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (Spivak 1988, 44). Whereas Spivak's essay hones in on the historical and ideological factors that obstruct the possibility of being heard for those who inhabit the periphery, many scholars took his argument as groundwork for their research. A 2010 Catalan study proposed an alternative way of discussing documentaries in terms of two documentary productions by Helena Taberna and Ana Torres portraying migrant subjects in Madrid

and Barcelona (Rodríguez 2010). Both documentaries offered innovative ways of projecting a vision of migrant experiences in urban settings where it poses a question 'can the subaltern speak?'. Both films offer a rejection of legal practices which promote segregation and ghettoization by several European governments. The study emerged as new multicultural identity and a strong determination of the film-makers to project a reflection on immigration which stands out against current derogatory images associated with prostitution and delinquency in contemporary documentary filmmaking (Rodríguez 2010).

Anishchenkova (2018) discussed the Middle Eastern refugee crisis through the analysis of two documentary films as case studies: *James Longley's Iraq in Fragments* and Matthew Firpo's *Refugee: Human Studies from the Refugee Crisis*. Both films highlighted a number of typical repetitive aspects of orientalist representational discourse in Middle East and the Western classic portrayal of Syrian Refugee image as a persistent media construction in the Western media. She argues that documentary production about Middle Eastern refugees faces two challenges. First, they are represented as potential cases for exploitation, sensationalism and emotional manipulation (Anishchenkova, *The battle of truth and fiction: Documentary Telling and Middle Eastern Refugee Discourse* 2019). Second, the idea of the old orientalist tradition continues to impact much of the discourse about the Middle East (Anishchenkova, *The battle of truth and fiction: Documentary Telling and Middle Eastern Refugee Discourse* 2019).

Another research study addressed the migration issue and the representation of migrants as it established a link between sex trafficking and European citizenship. It looked at the anti-trafficking campaigns that were launched in post-colonial Europe. Andrijašević, in her article "*Beautiful Dead Bodies*", illustrated what techniques are used in the production of image. The images analysed do not re-signify dominant representational practices nor do they propose new forms of representation for women (Andrijašević 2007). Quite the contrary, they deploy techniques that frame women's body in a voyeuristic manner and lock it into an (im)position of immobility. The findings convey that these campaigns convey images of unhappy, desperate and suicidal women, and therefore re-install the stereotypical rendering of feminine bodies in terms of passive objects of violence (Andrijašević 2007).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Data Selection

The data selected for this study is the documentary "*The Hidden Lives Of 'House girls'*". It is a BBC Africa Eye documentary which depicts the lives of young Ugandan women who migrate to neighboring countries for better jobs as domestic workers (Kacungira 2019). This documentary investigates the reasons behind the migration of young Ugandan girls to Kenya and their struggles to find better lives.

The data selection of this aforementioned documentary film is based on the following reasons. First, the film is produced by renowned international news media organisations, which is the BBC, the largest British Broadcasting Channel in its African which is specialised in carrying out investigations in Africa. Second, the variant production in this documentary show how news media organizations see the problem, record the moment and discuss the narratives inside their films. Such diverse perspectives give the documentaries more depth and presumably will make the researcher explore different experiences and expand the awareness and the understanding of the real stories of migrants.

Third, this documentary film depicts the journeys of the African refugees to neighbouring countries as witnessed by different international news media organisations. In addition to the desperate routes that African migrants face towards Europe, this documentary film discusses gender issues they face as female migrants such as domestic labour and the unemployment problems that cause them to migrate to neighbouring countries to work as house girl workers. Hence, these points of discussion add more depth to the research in terms of the correlation between migration and gender studies, from an African point of view.

Fourth, the chosen documentary was produced in 2019. The year chosen is very relevant and fresh as it represents the value of timeliness in journalism. It tackles the very recent problem of the African migration routes where multiple changes have occurred towards the migration policy worldwide. Consequently, these changes are reflected in the narratives of the four documentaries and therefore will be mirrored in the analysis.

### 3.2 Theoretical Framework: Multimodal Analysis

This study uses a multimodal discourse analysis to analyse qualitatively the documentary *"The Hidden Lives of House girls"* from the perspective of context of culture, context of situation and meaning of image. The multimodal analysis will help the research analyse the textual structure exemplified by the linguistic signs, in addition to the visual features which are embodied by the layout, colour, lighting, and typography both at the level of "clause" and at the level of "discourse" (Wei 2015). The multi-model discourse will enable the researcher to analyse the visual, audio, sense multi-lingual symbol system to communicate through multi-means and symbol recourses such as character, image, sound and action. (Zhang 2009).

Multimodality refers to the growing concern of linguists to analyse not only the content analysis of texts but also the graphics and the visuals tools that accompany them. Among linguists and discourse analysts, there has been a growing concern to analyse meaning through the visual communication in various media texts not only through language but also through the visual image (Hodge & Kress 1988; Kress & Van Leeuwen 1996; Kress 2010). These linguists began to develop how meaning is understood through language, images and other modes of communication such as sounds and nonverbal cues and they referred to it as multimodal analysis. According to Kress (2010) multimodality refers to using "three modes in one sign - writing and image and colour". Each mode has a specific purpose that should be taken into consideration. "Image shows what takes too long to read, and writing names what would be difficult to show. Colour is used to highlight specific aspects of the overall message" (Kress 2010, 1).

Drawing on Halliday systematic functional grammar, theorists like Hodge and Kress and Kress and Van Leeuwen considered that the visual communication needed much more of a toolkit for analysis. They decided that some principles of Halliday's SFG could be used to analyse visual communication. Alike CDA which allows us to study grammatical and lexical choices for a discourse, they coined the term "multimodality" to account for the choices of the visual and the non-verbal features located in the media discourse. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* by Kress and van Leeuwen offers a model of three accounts for images: representational meaning, interactional meaning, compositional meaning. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) consider the model of three accounts works well not only for language but also for thinking about all modes of representation, hence

images (20).

Furthermore, Bezemer and Jewitt (2010) explains that multimodality refers to a "field of application rather than a theory", which studies texts or practices that involve the combination of image, gesture, gaze or sound with language (1). Since the data of this study is analysing films, the researcher opts to use a strongly approach that could scrutinize the films as social practices allowing meaning-making potential (van Leeuwen 2006). Turner further elaborates those films, unlike writing, does not embody one discrete system of signification. They rather incorporate several technologies in lighting, camera angles, editing, sound design that all contribute to meaning (1996). Films rely generally on the iconic pictorial representations combined with a depicted unfolding over time employed for narrative purposes. Thus, the approach used in analysing the documentary films is the Multimodal analysis framework as proposed by Machin and Mayr's book, *How to do Critical Discourse Analysis: A Multimodal Introduction*.

Machin and Mayr (2012) offer a theoretical framework for analysing audio-visual discourse. They categorize their frameworks into two levels: the lexical choices used and the visual semiotic choices made by the filmmaker. On the lexical choices level, the researcher asks questions like what kind of words are used in the text? are some words over lexicalized or foregrounded, backgrounded, erased ...etc. Analysts in this area described the significance of this kind of analysis which signifies that different lexical or word choices can signify different set of lexical fields (Machin & Mayr, 2012). They further analysed the lexical choices into word connotations, over lexicalisation, structural oppositions and the lexical choices which reflect authority and ideology. In the visual semiotic level, the researcher analyses the iconographic choices made by the filmmaker. This level examines the images which denote or connote, the attributes (or which ideas and values are communicated through the objects, settings such as the use of key lighting to suggest optimism, and salience were certain features are opted to stand out in the cinematography techniques, for example, colour, tone, cultural symbols, focus, foregrounding and overlapping.

Hence, the study adopts Machin and Mayr (2012) theoretical framework of multimodal discourse analysis, which includes the beforementioned levels to account for the framing techniques used in these films. With regard to Bennett (2018) identification of the distinguishing features that makes nowadays documentary films, he says that "the degree to which it is being recorded visually not only by professional

filmmakers, but by journalists, artists, activists and charity workers, politicians, police, troops, border officials and vigilantes, and by migrants themselves" (15). Bennett's statement brings us to use a qualitative method approach to be in an attempt to answer the research questions which do not only focus on the form, but the very essence of the film-making process, which is the relationship between the filmmaker, their subjects.

## 4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides a detailed analysis of the narrative visualization of the documentary under discussion. Through using the features of multimodal analysis set by Machin and Mayr (2012), the study analyses the representation strategies used in language and visual semiotics. "*The Hidden Lives of House girls*" in which BBC News Africa follows the trails of three houseworkers from Eastern Uganda who are striving for change. The film traces the narrative stories of three girls, namely, Scovia, Ester and Mercy who decided to leave their places in Eastern Uganda to search for better lives in, Nairobi in Kenya. When they moved to Kenya to start their new jobs as houseworkers or housemaids, they were shocked by the harsh lives they faced and the poor conditions they had to endure. When she faced criminal charges at a police station because she had no papers that proved her identity, Scovia decided to return back to her grandmother and continued her education after finding a granting support organization. After being robbed with her flat mates, Ester decided to return back to her family after her wishes became to ashes. Mercy was brutally tortured in one of the domestic homes for whom she worked at, she raised a case at court and she is now facing her past employers with charges. The documentary asks the question of what makes a better life for all these girls? Why the families, the community and the government decided to abandon them? Through the eyes of the reporter, Nancy Kacunigra, who acts as a participant observant in the film, the audience can see and feel the suffering journeys of these young girls.

### 4.1 Representational Strategies through Language

There are many ways in which the filmmaker has decided to represent the social actor or the participants of the film. Such section deals with the naming and the representation of social actors through the use of linguistic devices and a realm of semiotic choices, which are often referred to as representational strategies (Fowler 1991; Van Dijk 1993; Fairclough 2003). There

is no neutral way to represent a person as there are many possibilities drawn to portray and characterize the social actors given in any context. Such possibilities serve to identify the social, psychological and political purposes for the filmmakers.

#### 4.1.1 Classification of social actors

##### Example 1:

- **Quotation:**

Narrator:

Those girls need support from the community especially if they are orphans or lost one parent. Poverty and the lack of opportunities around them is the main reason why so many girls fly away.

- **Documentary Name:** The Hidden Lives of House Girls
- **Documentary Mode:** Participatory, Expository and Observational
- **Context:** The narrator in the film describes the harsh condition of the young girls from Eastern Uganda who have no options but to go to Kenya and work as house girls.
- **Classification of Social Actor:** Personalization and impersonalization
- **Lexical Choices:** Community /poverty /lack of opportunities
- **Transitivity:** need.../lost/ fly away

##### Interpretation:

The above-mentioned quotations are part of the protagonist narration which has been performed by the reporter Nancy Kacunigra. The reporter used here both impersonalization and personalization techniques to give extra weight to a particular statement not a particular person. It serves to conceal who actually believed what and who is responsible in each case. The lexical item "*community*" does not show the identity of the community or what she means with community. Does she mean the school, the university, the church/ mosque, social institutions? The identity of the "*community*" is concealed too because the responsibility is not known to whom it should be borne. Moreover, "*Poverty and the lack of opportunities*" are impersonalized as agents or acting members in society who drive the girls to fly away and travel to other countries. It seems that poverty and lack of opportunities are persons who force these young girls towards their conditions they have come into. Again, the doers or and their identities are concealed and hidden.

Transitivity is the study of "meaning making" or in other words, what people are depicted as doing Who does



what to whom and how," (Machin & Mayr 2012, 34). Such focus on transitivity clause structure includes the subject (agent/participant) and the objects. The use of the verb "fly away" connotes that these girls are travelling without any returning back due to the hard conditions they are facing. In addition, the sentence is active but without mentioning the object, which reflects that these girls are flying away to any country, not only to Nairobi but also to other countries which can offer them opportunities. In addition, the verb "lost" is uttered without the object. This highlights that these girls are not responsible for the condition they are in. It also reinforced the image of the omniscience of parents in this documentary because even if they are physically present, they are materialistically and morally not present.

### Example 2:

- **Quotation:**
  - *Reporter: Like Scovia, there are many girls who are living the same conditions and are facing the same challenges.*
  - *Ester: "Here people can treat you like a donkey. I want them to know that we are people too."  
It is just that we have not any money.*
  - *Ester: Life would be good for us too. But I don't know why God made this. Some people are while others are not.*
  - *Edith Morogu (the founder of the domestic training and development centre): Many of them are confined as they work in slavery like conditions .... "If you get a child educated, you educate a nation" ...*
  - *One of the Kenyan domestic workers said: The influx of the Ugandans made bad situation worse in Kenya"*
- **Documentary Name:** The Hidden Lives of House Girls
- **Documentary Mode:** Participatory, Expository and Observational
- **Context:** The beginning of the documentary is quite startling with Ester, one of the house girls living in Eastern Uganda, is struggling for a better life. She decided to follow her sister's path and travelled to Nairobi as a house girl looking for a job at a decent house. After she travelled there, she faced many challenges and difficulties that made her consider her position and how she is living in a very humiliating condition. This is why she said these words to the protagonist upon asking her about how she feels.

From an expert eye, Edith Morogu, the founder of the domestic training, recalls the importance of education

in the lives of the nation. Morogu was keen to help Scovia, a 17-year-old girl from Uganda who was forced to flee her country and work as a house girl. Captured by the police with no identity card and any documentation that proves her identity, the domestic training center was keen to help her and get her out of the trouble. Following this incident, the center operated by Morogu helped her to return back to Uganda and pursue her education in private school.

- **Classification of Social Actor:** Individualization versus Collectivism
- **Lexical Choices:** them /you /we are people, too / educated / you educate a nation /many
- **Transitivity:** educate /are/

### Interpretation:

Individualization vs. Collectivism strategy is used here to consider how participants are described as individuals or as part of a collective community. The information provided by the narrator /protagonist seems to be generic or as simply as generic group. This does not give any personalization to the issue but a global perspective. The use of personal pronoun "we" by Ester seems to be generic and generalization to their own specific group of house girls. The personal pronouns "you", and "we" reinforce the idea of polarization between two different kinds of categories.; the house girls and the rest of the world.

This framing is also depicted in the way the reporter uses Scovia as an example of house girls who have no documents and no identity to their own existence in Kenya. "Like Scovia," or in other words, similar to Scovia, there are many girls who are living the same conditions and are facing the same challenges. No documents that prove they are even alive. "Many of them are confined and work in slavery like conditions" shows that all house girls are seen as cases and that their problems are generic, not specific to one or two, but to many of them. Moreover, this sentence reinforces the idea that they are treated like slaves, tied by their necks, to their debt, poverty and meagre conditions.

The statement by Edith Morogu "If you get a child educated, you educate a nation" reflects the importance of education. Such individualization is seen here as a necessity, not an option. It shows the importance of getting a child educated. When educating one single child, it is like educating a whole nation. At the same time, there are many parts where the documentary sheds light on the individualist aspect of the four domestic workers. Scovia has narrated her story for the first time when she said that "because

my parents died in a young age," she was brought up by her grandmother who is poor. She dropped out of school due to lack of financial support. Therefore, she wanted to work to pay for her school fees. This reflects the problem of Scovia as an orphan whose parents died in a young age and the only breadwinner of the family is her grandmother who is old and fragile and needs someone to care for her. The clear binary oppositions between the individualistic and the collectivistic problem renders the documentary an in-depth narrative of the problem adhered. What's the role of the society, the government, when a girl becomes an orphan? And so the problem becomes bigger when she received no education and is left for only a society who drove her to fly away to face all the "slavery like conditions".

### Specification vs. Generalization

The framing of the girls from Uganda as a group of girls who fly away and are driven like a wave of sea who cannot be stopped. The negative connotation which associates the word "influx" is very powerful as they are being drawn as an ethnic minority group of migrants who are not welcome in Kenya. They are seen as generic as they are all the same, with no individualistic or a specific reference to each one of them who has a different story. Khadija, one of domestic workers in Nairobi said "Those girls from Uganda. They really mess us up". Here it is generic concept that these all girls, who are coming from this specific country, i.e., Uganda, are really messing up with the domestic household in Kenya. She furtherly elaborates and explains the reasons of why she is saying so because they are lowering the rates of the work in Kenya. It seems that the house girls' problem is not a specific one but rather a generic one with great consequences on the Kenyans themselves.

Ester, one of the house girls is posing a philosophical rhetorical question. *Life would be good for us too. But I don't know why God made this. Some people are poor while others are not.* She is dividing the world into poor and rich. In such sentence, the poor and the rich people are framed as two divergent opposite ones. It could be like saying that if she has had enough money; she would not have been put into the same position. If she had enough money, she would have been happier, satisfied and so on and so forth. If she had enough money, she would not be in the same position she is in right now.

#### Example 3:

- **Quotation:**

"If you get a child educated, you educate a nation"

Ester: *"Life would be good for us too. But I don't know why God made this. Some people are poor while others are not."*

- **Documentary Name:** The Hidden Lives of House Girls
- **Documentary Mode:** Participatory, Expository and Observational
- **Context:** The narrator in the film describes the harsh condition of the young girls from Eastern Uganda who have no options but to go to Kenya and work as house girls.
- **Classification of Social Actor:** Suppression/ Representing the Other
- **Lexical Choices:** child /nation /you
- **Transitivity:** get

#### Interpretation:

What is missing from a text is just as important as what is in a text (Fairclough 2003). Here, the agent is missing. Education is not something or someone who has the power to change things but is a system to describe a perceived process that is caused by particular agents. In such an occasion, the agents can be the parents, the government, the charitable organizations the society who must act to make sure that every child gets proper education.

Representing the Other is exemplified verbally in Ester, one of the house girls in the documentary, "**The Hidden Lives of House girls**" who posed a rhetorical question, trying to reach a conclusion. She asked if she has had the enough money, would it be in the same position she is in right now. *"Life would be good for us too. But I do not know why God made this. Some people are poor while others are not."* In the before mentioned quotation, she is dividing the world into two sides: the rich whom, in her own eyes, do not have any problems and troubles because they have "enough money" and the poor whom she belongs to, and that's why they are so much suffering. Here, money appears as the magic tool which makes people happy and comfortable.

Representing the Other can be also exemplified by who is excluded linguistically from the text. This image was represented by the reporter saying: *"the villagers are giving up their daughters for this new way of migration."* In the before-mentioned sentence, there is an exclusion for the villagers or the male figures in Ugandan society who are supposed to be the breadwinners of their families and daughters. In fact, parents are linguistically absent from their daughter's conversation about the suffering they endure in Uganda. Linguistically and metaphorically, their fathers seem to be absent.

## 4.2 Representation Strategies in Visual Communication

### Example 1:



Figure 1. The reporter looks directly at Ester when she was robbed off everything the night before (Kacungira 2019).

**Context:** The reporter looks directly at Ester and the other flat mates who were facing robbery in the middle of the night. She was trying to be with Ester at the time of her crisis when Ester and her flat mates were robbed of everything the night before.

- **Documentary Name:** The Hidden Lives of House Girls
- **Documentary Mode:** Participatory, Expository and Observational
- **Context:** The narrator in the film describes the harsh condition of the young girls from Eastern Uganda who have no options but to go to Kenya and work as house girls.
- **The visual tools:** Distance and Gaze
- **Positioning the viewer in relation to people inside the image:** GAZE

### Interpretation:

The reporter is presented in a medium shot and looking towards Ester as she is engaging with us, the audience and the other house girls. Here the audience is invited to share with the documentary the thoughts and the feelings of the protagonist as well as her narration and reflections of the situation. On the one hand, linguistically through the personal address of "you" and "I" but also visually through the gaze in front of the camera.

Participant- observation kind of documentary is so much given importance in this film. How is it participant? Because we can see the protagonist walking with us, taking us to the house girls, physically inside the settlements. She is talking to us through the camera to create a kind of strong intimacy between herself and the viewer.

Linguistically, the usage of the personal pronouns "I" and "they" creates the image of how others are represented as groups that could serve ideological ends. The reporter does not judge them but rather align the audience creating an image that they are all the same, looking like, acting and posing like each other. So no one can tell them apart. This image with its verbal and visual semiotic tools reinforces the concept of individualistic vs collectivism.

### Example 2:



Figure 2. Nancy Kacungira is heading towards Ester in a rush wondering how they are going to be after being robbed off everything they have (Kacungira 2019).

**Context:** The reporter looks directly at the viewers when she heading towards Ester, one of the house girls, who has turned to realize the harsh world of Nairobi. She was trying to be with Ester at the time of her crisis when she Ester and her flat mates were robbed of everything the night before.

"I am going to see how they are "

- **Documentary Name:** The Hidden Lives of House Girls
- **Documentary Mode:** Participatory, Expository and Observational
- **Context:** The narrator in the film describes the harsh condition of the young girls from Eastern Uganda who have no options but to go to Kenya and work as house girls.
- **The visual tools:** Distance and Gaze
- **Positioning the viewer in relation to people inside the image:** GAZE

### Interpretation:

This kind of participatory documentary mode makes the filmmaker interacts with his or "her subjects rather than unobtrusively observe them. Unlike the observational mode, the reporter (participant-observant) in this kind of documentary mode directly engages with the audience and is directly involved in



the film narrative. She does not only observe or “fly on the wall” as in observational mode but she appears in front of the camera to speak directly to the viewers. Also, the audience can see her during an interview and in her voice is constantly being heard behind the camera. Such a mode creates a major influence on the audience and the kind of intimacy she tries to build with her subjects and her audience.

In such a shot, Nancy looks directly to the viewers and looks “on frame” which tends to draw the attention of the viewers that something big is happening and that’s why she appears on camera. Although Nancy is constantly there with her voice over or while doing interview, this incident is the only time she appears looking directly at the viewer. In this incident, she tries to be present for Ester to see the crisis of robbery she is facing. In the middle of the night, she goes to the Ester’s harsh place where she and her flat mates have been robbed off everything and tries to console her and see what’s happening and what they are going to do. Here, Nancy’s appearance has a profoundly role to play as she is actively playing an important role in the house girls stories and has meaningful exchanges with the people they’re filming.

**Example 3:**



Figure 3. Mercy Mwake shows how much she was abused and tortured as a domestic worker back in 2018 when she first appeared on National TV (Kacunigra 2019).

- **Context:** Mercy Mwake, one of the house girls, was beaten and was subjected to domestic violence by her employers. In 2018, she managed to make her story to public and had her story broadcasted on the national TV. These images show her she was beaten as she was showing the scars on her neck and her body.

- **Documentary Name**” The Hidden Lives of House Girls
- **Documentary Mode:** Participatory, Expository

and Observational

- **The visual tools:** Distance and Gaze
- **Positioning the viewer in relation to people inside the image:** GAZE

**Interpretation:**

Machin and Mayr (2012) analyzed the close up shots as shots being “used when it is meant to imagine the woman as the agent of the feelings expressed in the text.” (p. 97). Such interpretation is typically applied in the above-mentioned photos where the agent is the house girl. Mercy was crying heartily for being abused by her employer. It shows the physical evidence of her report, i.e., she was beaten by her domestic employer. Such shots show the complex relationship between the maids and the employer as there is no contract or any legal document which provides protection to the vulnerable.

**Example 4:**

**Group (A)**







Figure 4. Collection of medium shots that illustrate their lives in their new settlements in Nairobi where they travelled for better lives (Kacunigra 2019).



**Group B:**



Figure 5. Collection of medium shots of the house girls when they were in their hometowns in Uganda (Kacunigra 2019).

**Context:** These different medium-length shots were extracted to verify the poor conditions that house girls live in. These medium shots are divided into two groups. Group (A) denotes the poor conditions they used to live in, in Eastern Uganda where there is a scarce the minimal living conditions. Group B represents their lives after they decided to travel to Nairobi as house girls.

- **Documentary Name:** The Hidden Lives of House Girls

- **Documentary Mode:** Participatory, Expository and Observational
- **The visual tools:** Distance -Medium Shots
- **Positioning the viewer in relation to people inside the image:** Medium Shots

**Interpretation:**

The medium shots are used when it is not meant by the filmmaker to depict intimacy or a sense of closeness, but we are drawn to identify with his point of view (Machin & Mayr 2012). In addition, the filmmaker tried to show the disparity between the source counties and the destination counties, which ironically speaking, they are not so different. Group B pictures show the living conditions in their home countries. The filmmaker wanted to show the living conditions of the house girls in their hometowns and how much they are deprived of decent lives. In Eastern Uganda, their homeland country, they lack access to primary key services such as water, electricity and sewage system. They live with a very large family members in which they can scarcely lead a good educational life and most of them dropped out of school as they cannot manage to pay the school fees, as is the case with Scovia. She dopped out of school because her grandmother was not able to pay the tuition fees.

Ironically speaking, the girls went to Nairobi to lead a better life with their better work opportunities working as house girls. Group A photos show their lives in the new destination countries. However, pictures tell different narratives of the stories. The images show how degrading they had to live and share their 2 feet room with other girls as well. The cooking utilities seem very dirty and just one or two. Poor sanitation and overcrowding are among the problems that bedevil these informal settlements in which these house girls settle in. The shacks and buildings are mostly illegal and consequently, lack basic infrastructure services like water, sanitation and health facilities.

Therefore, the medium shots serve greatly the narrative of the visuals as the audience is exposed to the subjects in their own close environment. The audience can see how they sleep, how they eat, how they live in an environment where key services are not there. Most importantly, how vulnerable they are as women and young girls who can be robbed and raided anytime with no protection at all. The same happened with Easter and her room mates who were robbed in the middle of the night and no body took action about it.

**Example 5:**

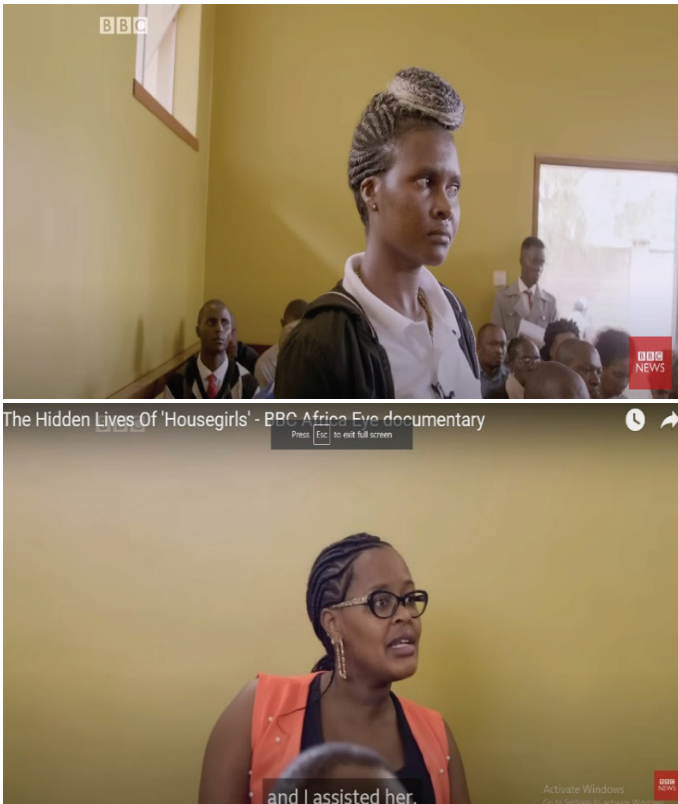


Figure 6. The visuals above show the disparity of angles between Mercy Mwake and her employer at court (Kacunigra 2019).

**Context:** These close-up shots were used in the court between Mercy Mwake and her employer when Mercy filed a case against her employer because she was physically abused and tortured by her employer.

- **Documentary Name:** The Hidden Lives of House Girls
- **Documentary Mode:** Participatory, Expository and Observational
- **The visual tools:** Distance -Close- Up Shots
- **Positioning the viewer in relation to people inside the image:** Close-Up Shots

**Interpretation:**

Close up shots were also used for Mercy Mwake and her employer for the differences in appearances and attitude. It shows the difference of Mercy from 2018 when she made her case to the public eye to reports her abusers and her employers and 2020 when she was in court. The close-up shots on Mercy look show how much she was in disbelief of her employer’s statement in court. But it also shows how powerful she became when she was supported by a non-governmental organization who was trying to bring Mercy’s rights back.

Such polarization of angles greatly serves the context. Such disparity of angles between Mercy and her employer shows how much they become enemies. The employer is pointer at her saying that she has assisted her and took her to holidays and treated her as being part of the family. Mercy, in contrast, is accusing her of being abused and tortured while showing the scars that were visible on her neck and body.

**Example 6:**



Figure 7. These medium shots are contrastive as they show Scovia in two different situations (Kacunigra 2019).

**Context:** These shots depict Scovia in two opposite situations. The first shot from the left side shows how she was arrested in Nairobi because she did not have papers that proved her identity. In addition, she was just a teenager of 17 years old with no legal rights to work in Nairobi or any other country. The second shot from the right side shows her sheer happiness and excitement when she returned to her grandmother in Eastern Uganda. Later, she resumed her education with the support of a non-governmental organization which support and empower women.

- **Documentary Name:** The Hidden Lives of House Girls
- **Documentary Mode:** Participatory, Expository and Observational
- **The visual tools:** Lighting techniques



- **Positioning the viewer in relation to people inside the image:** Close-Up and Medium shots

#### Interpretation:

How are the social actors represented visually? In the light of Machin (2013) concept of visual communication, it is important to look at how we look at images. He referred to this as the 'acts of seeing'. In a sense, this is akin to thinking about the way that people are positioned in ideology to see the world through particular discourses. This throws up a number of issues as regards the problems with approaching an image from a systemic point of view.

By looking at the lighting techniques used in the above images, it can be illustrated that the lighting technique plays a great role in conveying the denotative visual properties. In the first shot, the filmmaker uses the dark light that overcast Scovia's face which denotes the dark side of her life. It denotes her ultimate suffering when she travelled to Kenya and fell into the police affairs when being arrested. The loss of documents and the un-identification of migrant workers is one of the main challenges which face African female migrants. That is the trap that Scovia has fallen in. Franceschelli and Galipo (2021) state that visual arts play a major part in documenting, disseminating, and even creating a performance of events. The above-mentioned images show the difference between Scovia when she was in Uganda vs when she returned to her grandmother in Kenya. The contrast of light creates an immense different in interpretation the audience can elicit from the images. At some point, the value of a light background works in the editing sequence and the contrast of natural light help immensely the narrative lines of documentary films. In these sets of shots, it is evident that the filmmaker used dark lighting, depending solely on natural light, to convey the dark sides of Scovia's life when she was a house girl. She experienced several traumas including being arrested, living in a very poor slum conditions, not getting educated, and so on and so forth. On the other side, the natural source of light in daylight which is portrayed in her reunion with her grandmother show the bright side of feelings and her true happiness.

Furthermore, the filmmaker chose the dark shots of lighting in all situations where harsh conditions are predominant in the lives of the three house girls. It was used repeatedly in the film. It was evidently conveyed in all Ester close up and medium shots when she moved to the two feet room in Nairobi whom she shared with three other girls. It was evident when she was robbed by the gang in the middle of the night.

#### Example 7:

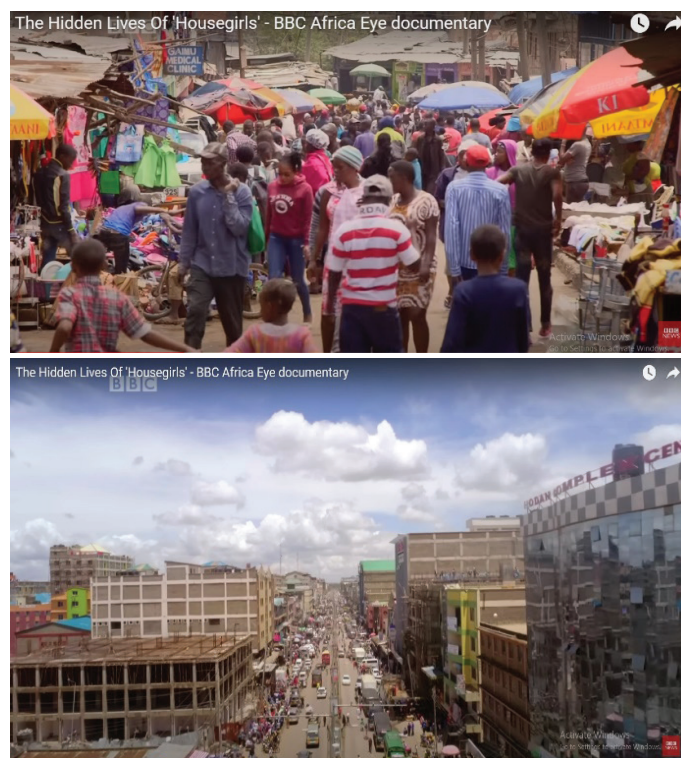


Figure 8. These long contrastive shots show Kenya, as a big economic hub, vs Kenya slums and settlements (Kacunigra 2019).

**Context:** These are two shots that both represent Nairobi, Kenya, the destination country Ugandan girls travel to. Although Nairobi is represented as a big economic hub with financial means, the underlying shots show the slums and the impoverished areas of living.

- **Documentary Name:** The Hidden Lives of House Girls
- **Documentary Mode:** Participatory, Expository and Observational
- **The visual tools:** Iconography
- **Positioning the viewer in relation to people inside the image:** Long Establishing shots

#### Interpretation:

Machin and Mayr (2012) contend that iconography deals with how people use discourse to connote or denote different ideas. In the visual above, there are two different connotations resulted from denotations. The first establishing shot of Nairobi show the city as a big economic hub, where every migrant dream can be fulfilled. In comparison, the second establishing shot denotes the real poor living conditions of the people living there. It denotes the multi-layered meanings

of being in slums where minimal conditions are not met. Accordingly, the visuals enough say something about particular places, particular events and particular people and so they denote that opposition factor that lies within the two visuals. "Asking what an image connotes, is asking what ideas and values are communicated through what it is represented," (Machin & Mayr 2012, 49). In such sense, the visuals represented in the first image, connotes the idea that Kenya is a large economic giant that will endorse all people. It represents the dream destination country for all migrants who travel from Uganda for a better life in Kenya. In the second accompanied visual, the long establishing shot connotes the harsh living conditions where migrants live. Later on, the filmmaker exposes the slums, the poor conditions the migrants live in where food and clean water are becoming scarce, and so is everything else.

**Example 8:**

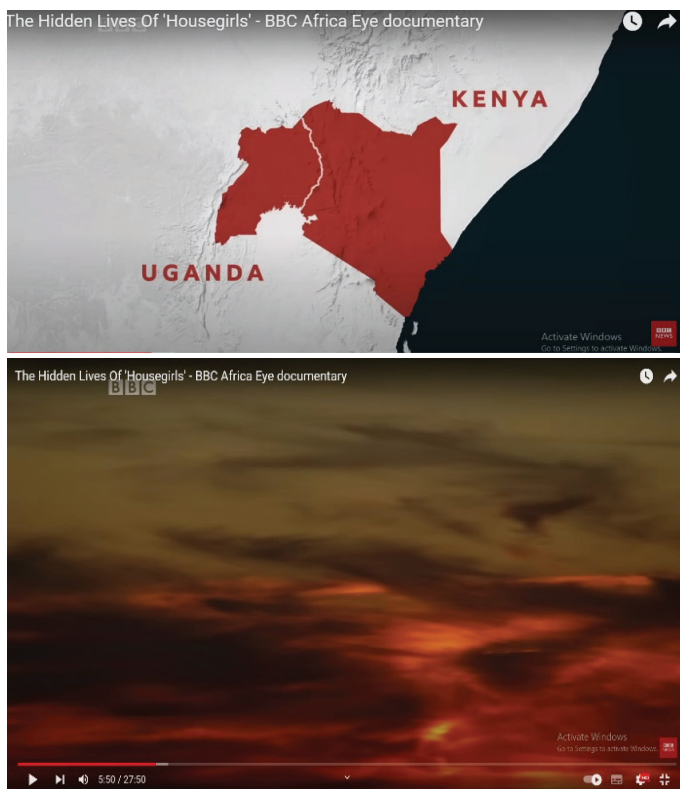


Figure 9. These visuals show the transitions the filmmaker used to shift between sequences (Kacunigra 2019).

**Context:** The filmmaker used several transitions in the film to shift between sequences. The first image on the right, show a timelapse where the second image on the right displays the map of Kenya and Uganda to show how the two countries are close to each other, geographically.

- **Documentary Name:** The Hidden Lives of House Girls
- **Documentary Mode:** Participatory, Expository and Observational
- **The visual tools:** Attributes and Setting
- **Positioning the viewer in relation to people inside the image** transitions

**Interpretation:**

The filmmaker uses transitions to move between different contexts or different settings. Transitions are often used to accentuate the passage of time, a character’s movement, storylines, pauses, silence, and much more (Video Editing 2022). In such context, the filmmaker uses the time lapse transition to indicate a shift of change in place. He used the timelapse transition to move from the source country (Uganda) to the destination country (Kenya). Time lapses are used for capturing natural phenomena that would otherwise be too slow to observe with the naked eye, like clouds moving across the sky or flowers blooming over several weeks (Brtiannica 2017).

Attributes refer to how ideas and concepts are often communicated through the visual image (Machin and Mayr 2012). Settings are used to communicate general ideas that connote action and values. Setting can also be used by the filmmaker to symbolize rather than documenting. In the visuals illustrated above, the filmmaker used the screen recording map, or the animated map, to illustrate better the two neighbouring countries, namely Uganda and Kenya. Filmmakers often used animated techniques to provide map with motion and to undermine most of its meanings by "adding an element – movement – which integrates the world’s static order into a flow of processes and changes. (Fidotta 2014, p.1). This phenomenon of combining cinematography and geography is called cinematic cartography. It is a hybrid form of cartography that recognises the importance of cartography as a scientifically based discipline and acknowledges the importance of conveying different forms of, feelings, emotions and sensations about places through cinematographic language (Fidotta 2014). In this sense, it combines the documentary side of cartography with the fictional side of cinema (Caquard & Taylor 2013). The filmmaker used here this kind of cinematic cartography by showing the geographical factual spaces between countries and also to form a cinematic image by an accompanied music (Caquard & Taylor 2013). It shows the shift between the changes that will happen to migrants when moving between two countries. It represents the dark vs. the light, the fall vs. the rise, the waste country vs. the dreamland country.



## 5. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

In the light of the first research question, the findings of the study concluded that the visual semiotic choices between the source and the destination countries are not different from one another. On the contrary to what the girls expected in Kenya, the country where they travelled to, they suffered from poverty, poor conditions, competing enemies, unlawful working hours, domestic abuse and status un-identification of documents. These examples have been realised in the visual semiotic choices selected in the documentary under study. For example, the polarization of angles between Mercy Mwake and her employers show much the disparity angles between them. It furtherly explores how gazes, and angles help in exploring the multifaceted visuals play in the documentary. The contrast of light that was distinguished between Scovia when she was arrested vs. Scovia when she was reunited with her grandmothers shows evidently the dynamic use of light between two opposite situations. It does not only create a visual mood and atmosphere but it also creates a sense of meaning for the audience.

The lexical choices and the representation of language in the documentary have been utilized effectively to convey better the stories of the three house girls. For example, the linguistic strategies "suppression" and "representing the other" were utilized to represent the hidden and the missing roles in the film, i.e., the girl's families, their friends, their communities and the government. These aforementioned roles were missing in the film although they are the ones which can have a greater role to play in the girls' lives. Moreover, they were represented as the "other", which the audience knows nothing about. Such image signifies how remote and how far they are from the girls' lives on both psychical and physiological terms.

The filmmaker has been successful in using Machin and Mayr (2012) linguistic strategy "individualization vs Collectivism" which has been used repetitively in the film. This strategy is used to reveal how the selected girls were represented on behalf of hundreds and thousands of other house girls who have been going through the same painful journey. In addition, the narrator gives the stories a global perspective as the information provided gives the audience a comprehensive overview of the problem and its dimension as a social cultural issue.

The film's mode which is "participant-observant" greatly helps in making the audience interact with the filmmaker and the reporter. This kind of participant documentary does not only observe the happenings

but it also engages with the audience. Grindstaff (2014) notes that that participation – be it of ordinary people or celebrities – is seldom investigated as a contribution to production processes (p. 324). In this film, the reporter Nancy Kacunigra, constructs the argument, provides background information, and engages with the audience. In such context, it abides to Hearn (2006) study which bases her argument about the way participants construct and mould their image within an enforced tight production framework.

In the light of the second research question, ***what are the cultural, economic and political practises employed in the African migration issue?*** the study concludes the following. The Eastern Ugandan girls who have travelled to Kenya for better lives have suffered from extreme poverty and lack of education. The three of them belonged to poor families who can barely live on loaf of bread. Scovia whose parents died in a young age, had not been given any financial or social benefits from the government or the community. She had to work as a house girl so that she can return back and afford her education. She travelled in a young age so the first thing she faced in Kenya was the lack of any documentation and her illegal status. If not for the non-governmental organisation which paid her prison fees and managed to bring her back to Uganda to her grandmother, she would have spent her youth in prison in a foreign country.

It seems that the non-governmental organisations play key roles in these girls' lives. The growing participation of non-state actors is enhancing democracy and reshaping multilateralism. While there are challenges related to access to documentation and lack of literacy and education for women, the non-governmental organisations represented in the documentary act the as the sole rescuer for these girls. At one time, Mercy's Mwake's case in court in which she filed a case for being abused by her employer, highlights what happens between domestic workers and employees behind closed doors. It is the charity organisation which raised a case in court to help her in her quest for justice. In other words, most cases like Mercy's are never heard., if not for this charity organisation which took the lead in helping her.

Besides Mercy, another non-governmental organisation has played a significant role in Scovia's life when she was imprisoned for the loss of documentation and being underage. When Scovia was threatened to get imprisoned for lack of any identity cards and for her illegal status in Kenya, one NGO showed solidarity and compassion with Scovia. They paid her the fines to get her released and they pushed her to continue her education years in Uganda by paying her first semester. By funding her school education, Scovia was able to

return back to her home country and reunite with her grandmother. Such NGO's have proved to become key actors in responding to poverty and related sufferings for female refugees in Africa.

The examples of the three girls' journeys from Uganda to Kenya bring to light real factual problems these females face in a foreign country. It proves that the diverse conflicts in West African countries, lack of livelihood opportunities, economic turmoil are among the key factors that have fuelled irregular migration and human trafficking (Idris 2022). In the film, such factors are neither carried out by non-state armed groups and organised criminal groups but by the individual themselves who decided to migrate (Idris 2022).

The documentary portrayal of girls showed that there is not any organisation, documents, working force law, or legal status which may protect them against any harm. The audience can walk through their journeys and witness their endurable sufferings and hardships they face. When they moved to Kenya, the better country they were looking forward to, they all endured hardships in the shape of theft, illegal status and domestic abuse. They faced imprisonment, lack of security, low payment and domestic abuse without any kind of protections. Such narrative has proved that research on contemporary media production has drawn extensively on a range of social theories, in particular those that focus on the shaping of the self within late modernity (Gill 2011). Therefore, the contemporary media production which is reflected in this documentary pays certain heed to the subjective experiences of cultural workers, with concepts such as emotional labour (Hochschild 2003), governmentality (McRobbie 2002) and moral economy (Hesmondhalgh 2011). This makes the audience understand this kind of media production within a new context (Paterson 2016).

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