ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Assessment of Newspaper Coverage of Gender-Based Domestic Violence in Nigeria: A Focus on Rape of Women and Children

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Abstract

This study assesses newspaper coverage of gender-based domestic violence in Nigeria with a focus on rape from January 2019 to December 2019, with *The Punch*, *The Sun* and *Vanguard* as the selected newspapers. It makes use of content analysis research technique. The study adopts multi-stage sampling method, and uses the purposive sampling technique as one of the stages to pick 42 issues. Furthermore, the research uses the agenda setting theoretical framework. From the findings, it was discovered that the contributions of Nigerian newspapers in tackling the scourge of rape as a sexual violence against women and children are not impressive. Based on these findings, the study recommends that there is need for Nigerian newspapers to wake up from slumber to play a leading role instemming the tide of sexual violence against women and children by giving prominence to sexual violence stories. Also, women should try and set up newspaper organisations through which they can expose sexual violence against them and make their voices heard.

Key Words: Coverage, gender-based violence, domestic, agenda setting, rape, newspapers

Introduction

Cases of rape have continued to increase in Nigeria. Almost every day, there is a fresh rape case. This sad situation is surprising because, for a country that is known for its religiosity, one would expect that sexual escapades will be on a low level. However, the surprising part of it is that even members of the clergy are guilty of this act of sexual indiscipline. The term "rape" is therefore the most serious kind of sexual assault and is punishable with life imprisonment. (Okonkwo &Naish, 2013). It is also one of those actions that fall under violence against women (Nwammuo, 2013). Rape, in its entirety, is a violation of human rights.

Rape is a criminal offence. According to Section 357 of Criminal Code Act, Law of Federation of Nigeria 1990 CAP77, any person who has unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or a girl, without her consent, or if her consent is obtained by force or by means of threats or intimidation of any kind, or by fear of harm, or by means of false and fraudulent representation as to the nature of the act, or in the case of married woman, by personating her husband, is guilty of an offence which is called rape (Cited in WACOL, 2002, p.1). It noteworthy here that any person (male or female) who through tricks, threat or force engages in a sexual intercourse with a girl or a woman is guilty of having raped the victim. Therefore, rape has to do with coitus obtained not exclusively through force as is commonly believed but through either force or other means. It is also deducible from the above law that the Nigerian criminal code does not either consider or envisage sodomy or the possibility of a girl or a woman securing sexual intercourse with a boy or a man either through force, trick or intimidation. This position of the criminal code is affirmed by Women's Aid Collective (WACOL) as it posits, "a woman cannot be convicted of raping her husband or any man because the offence can only be committed upon a girl or a woman" (2002, p. 4). Not only the law but also the society does not sympathize with male victims of rape.

When men or boys are victims of sexual violence, the problem can be compounded. While at least some legal and social networks often exist for women and girls, who have been sexually attacked, there is rarely anything comparable for male victims (UNHCR, 2005, p. 5). Rape has

become a moral burden in Nigeria. Oduah (2014, p. 26) states that "the rate at which rapes occur in our society today is becoming alarming and outrageous." Musbau (2013, p. 53) reports that "687 cases of rape were recorded" in 2012, which is an average of two cases per day, 100 cases of rape in Kano took place in 2013 out of which 40 offenders were convicted". In Anambra State, the *Guardian* Newspaper of Friday 7 February, 2014 reports that there were 115 rape incidents and complaints but only 12 cases were taken up by the police. These were not the only rape cases reported in 2014.

On January 10, 2014, a similar incident was reported by the Daily Sun Newspaper. In this case, a seventeen-year-old girl was gang raped by three men on her way back from school. On June 6th 2013, the Guardian Newspaper had it that Masonter Iyanga of Akwabo Street raped a young girl. The Vanguard Newspaper of 25th October 2013 reported that a 50 year-old pastor of Choice Bible Church allegedly raped three girls aged nine, seven and eight years. Also, the Daily Sun of October 31st 2013 had it that a virgin school girl at Ikorodu, Lagos State was gang-raped by men to coma. As if all these cases were not enough, the Daily Sun of 19th December 2013 reported that a seven-year-old girl was gang raped by three men. The above instances are ugly scenarios that flood the Nigerian press on the alarming rate of rape in Nigeria. This is despite the provision made in section 357 of the Criminal Code Act CAP 77, Laws of the Federation cited before.

The media have the capacity to modify or shape attitudes. Based on this, the media can be good channels through which sexual violence can be minimized. The media are expected to take a strong position in condemning rape, agitating for stiffer penalty against those who engage in such barbaric act and the newspaper is the most suitable medium for actualising this. They should also encourage the society to support rape victims.

Statement of the Problem

According to Edwards and Sharpe (2004),gender-based violence has become recognized over the past decades as a major social relationship and justice problem. Gender-based violence is also a chief concern of human rights groups in all societies. It is a violation of the fundamental human rights which perpetuatEssex-stereotyped roles and the violations undermine the victims' human dignity and self-worth, which can in turn hamper human development.

Similarly, gender-based violence reinforces the subordination of both sexes but more importantly it perpetuates the power and the control of males over females in many communities around the world (Amnesty International, 2014). Ajala and Isiugo-Abanihe (2016) suggest that the perpetuation of this brand of violence has continued because of the economic dependence of women on men, patriarchy and the differential socialization processes that females and males undergo. Specifically, the authors emphasise that gender-based violence is a vice that afflicts females in particular and males in general irrespective of their ages, cultures, sexual orientations and socio-economic statuses around the world (Naved & Persson, 2005; Odimegwu. 2015; Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH), 2002).

The manner of newspaper coverage of rape is worth investigating because of the power of the media to set agenda for the public. Gever, (2014) found that the media have the ability to set agenda for the public. What this means is that the media can achieve this through the language used in reporting rape, the sources of stories on rape as well as the prominence accorded to stories on rape cases in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess newspaper reportage of gender-based domestic violence in Nigeria with particular focus on rape of women and children. Specifically, the study seeks to:

i. Ascertain the volume of stories on rape as a gender-based domestic violence reported by the newspapers.
ii. Determine the prominence of selected

newspapers reportage of rape cases as gender-based violence in Nigeria.

iii. Identify the cases of sexual violence in Nigeria reported by the chosen newspapers according to content categories.

Scope of the Study

The empirical study is focused on *The Sun, Vanguard,* and *The Punch* coverage of gender-based domestic violence against women and children in Nigeria. The scope specifically covers the reportage of these newspapers from January 2019 to December 2019.The articles of interest are limited to 'rape' and not all forms of gender-based domestic violence in Nigeria.

Review of Literature

The Meaning of Violence Against Women

Gender-based violence is a key health risk for women globally. Violence against women is now widely recognized as a serious human right abuse, and an important public health problem with substantial consequences for – physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health (WHO, 2005 and Dunkle, 2004). Despite the fact that Nigeria is a signatory to almost all of the international conventions on women's rights, which heralded the national gender policy to promote gender equity, her efforts have not translated into the expected social sphere for the women folk (Country Information and Guidance, 2015; Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey NDHS, 2013). Women, as a result, continue to be at the receiving end of violence in Nigeria (Oladeji, 2013; Okemgbo, 2002). For instance, women are regarded as objects to be used for pleasure, temptation and elimination (NDHS, 2013). Also, Arisi and Oromareghake (2011) report men's double standard against women. While the concept 'women' is used generically for females (George, 2015),studies affirm that gender violence is shockingly high and not limited to Nigeria (NDHS, 2013). The improvement of the socio-economic status of women and professional counselling will reduce significantly the incidence of violence against women (Oluremi, 2015; Oladepo, Yusuf, & Arulogun, 2011; Adekeye, Abimbola & Adeusi, 2011). Gender-based violence impeded the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for women and girls (Saferworld, 2015) and is currently affecting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, this violence includes women's double burden of productive and reproductive labour; the number of women dependents (including the injured and orphaned); the diseased and malnourished women and girls (Saferworld, 2015; Ormhaug, Meier, & Hernes, 2009; Rehn & Sirleaf, 2002). In domestic violence, NDHS 2013 reported that justification for battering women by their spouses includes: She 'argues with him', 'burns food', 'goes out without telling him', 'neglects the children' and 'denies him of sex'.

Violence against women is a human rights violation that affects women all over the world. It is prevalent, endemic and debilitating. The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (2017) defines violence against women as: any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Types/Forms of Domestic Violence

There are different forms of abuse a person may be subjected to in the home. They include:

1. Physical Abuse: This is the use of physical force in a way that injures the victim or puts him/her at risk of being injured. It includes beating, kicking, knocking, punching, choking, and confinement. Female genital mutilation is a physical abuse. Physical abuse is one of the commonest forms of abuse. Obi and Ozumba (2007) found that 83% of respondents in their study reported physical abuse.
2. Sexual abuse: This includes all forms of sexual assaults, harassment or exploitation. It involves forcing a person to participate in sexual activity, using a child for sexual purposes including

child prostitution and pornography. Marital rape also comes under this.

3. Neglect: This includes failure to provide for dependants who may be adults or children, denying family members food, clothing, shelter, medical care, protection from harm, or a sense of being loved and valued.
4. Economic abuse: This includes stealing from or defrauding a loved one, withholding money for essential things like food and medical treatment, manipulating or exploiting family member for financial gain, preventing a loved one from working or controlling his/her choice of occupation.
5. Spiritual Abuse: This includes preventing a person from engaging in his/her spiritual or religious practices or using one's religious belief to manipulate, dominate or control him/her.
6. Emotional Abuse: This includes threatening a person or his or her possession or harming a person's sense of self-worth by putting him/her at risk of serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional or mental disorders. Shouting at a partner which was found to be the most common abuse by Obi and Ozunba (2007) is included. Also included in emotional abuse are name-calling, criticism, social isolation, intimidating or exploitation to dominate, routinely making unreasonable demands, terrorizing a person verbally or physically and exposing a child to violence.

   Abuse may occur once, or it may occur repeatedly often in an escalating manner. A person may be subjected to more than one form of abuse.
7. Trafficking: This involves the procuring and transfer of women and girls with or without their consent for commercial sex work, forced domestic labour, or other slave-like practices, both within and outside the country.
8. Forced prostitution: This is when women (including wives, daughters, female wards, and house girls) are forced into prostitution. Women are forced to use their bodies to get gain for their male relatives or for their bosses in many ways—for example, providing sex in order to secure jobs for their husbands or contracts for their employers.
9. Some widowhood rites: In some cultures, a widow is forced to drink the water that is used to wash the husband's corpse. In addition, the widow may be shaven clean of all hair on her body, especially during the burial period of her husband. Some cultures do not permit widows to own or retain any of the husband's property. In fact, widows are not permitted to retain their own property or joint property acquired while the husband was alive. Often, a widow is accused of being the cause of her husband's death. In some cultures, widows are an inheritable part of the husband's property, while some cultures force the widow to marry a relative of the husband if she is still to be considered as part of the family.
10 Rape: Earlier definitions of rape focused on women, seeing them as the only victims. However, the twenty first century has witnessed a gradual change in the definition and scope of rape, as it has been observed that men and children are also victims of rape. To this end, the World Health Organization World Report on Violence and Health (2002, p.149) defined rape as "physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration—even if slight—of the vulva or anus, using a penis, other body parts or objects".

Causes of Gender Based Violence (GBV) in Nigeria

Violence against women in Nigeria results from biological differentiation of sexes. This is because females are biologically and physiologically perceived as the weaker sex who requires considerable protection by men. The relegation of women to the second class status dates back to several centuries ago. Early history showed that the human society has been a male dominated one. For instance, a society like the Arabians regards the birth of a daughter as a matter of shame and disgrace and treats them as such while the birth of a son is welcomed with jubilation and celebrations

and the new born sons are cradled in bed clothed in robes and given jade sceptres as toys. Likewise, in Nigeria, the birth of a male child excites members of the family than that of a female child. As the girl passes through the stages of development, she is bewildered by the peculiar violence of that stage, and as the girl child grows older the discrimination against her increases.

Another cause of gender based violence is culture. In Nigeria, there is the belief that boys are stronger than girls and so are trained to accept more strenuous tasks like hunting, shooting with bows and arrows, farming and fighting back enemies that are about to out-run their communities while girls are stereotyped to perform simpler tasks like sweeping the rooms, scrubbing the walls and collecting firewood to cook for the family so that they can become good wives and mothers in future. In addition, women are excluded from rigorous and traditional activities like tree climbing (e.g. palm tree) or from engaging in traditional sports like wrestling, canoeing and horse-back riding which were exclusively made for men. What was reserved for women were lighter recreational activities requiring graceful movement, or they were only allowed to watch the men and cheer them up. This cultural unequal power led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of women's full advancement.

Financial insecurity, according to Njenga (1999) cited Uwameije and Iserameiya (2013), is another cause of gender based violence. Njenga observes that "if a man cannot establish his authority economically over his family members, he would tend to do so physically". A situation where a man is unable to meet the financial needs of his family members means he has failed in his responsibility, as it is well known no man would like to be seen as a failure. In other words, total dependency on a man by the family members leads to frustration and sometimes he expresses it through the use of violence.

Another cause of gender based violence against women is poverty. Ndungu (2004), cited in Uwameije and Iserameiya (2013),opinesthat the reproductive and productive roles of women often place them at the bottom of the ladder. They are mostly found in low paid jobs, which rob them of power to participate in decision making, within the political, social-economic and cultural spheres of life. This situation results in the over burdening of women with family and domestic responsibilities while giving them no resources or political room to improve their standard of living. In some parts of Nigeria, it is known that the input of the girl child into the family income is so high that it becomes economically unwise to allow such a child to go to school. Examples of such inputs include generating income by hawking food items, helping with the household chores and looking after the younger ones or even working as house helps to wealthier families to ease the financial burden on their own families. Other causes of gender-based violence in Nigeria are:

Stereotypical Roles

Females are biologically and physically perceived as the weaker sex who requires considerable protection by men. As the girl child passes through the stages of development, she is bewildered. Gender based violence has been a serious problem in most societies throughout history. Women in Nigeria, like their counterparts in other parts of the world, suffer gender based violence irrespective of age, class, religion or social status (Hamm, 2016). Njenga (2018) opines that the cause is the image created by the society which portrays a man to be viewed as being strong, educated, creative, and clever while a woman is the opposite of all these traits. The way parents bring up their children, which creates disparity between boys and girls, is also a source of gender-based violence in later life. When a boy grows up knowing that he is not supposed to wash his own clothes, cook or help in the house, if he gets married to a woman who comes from a home where duties are equally shared between girls and boys, this can create tension that might lead to violence. Udegbe (2012) opines that in the rural areas, gender-based violence is perpetrated where that relationship between men

and women is that of senior-junior. This is also in line with the studies of Ezeh and Gage (2019). Morrow (2015) states that, at the societal level, the discrimination against women is traceable to male authority and decision making in the home, rigid gender roles, definition of masculinity that are linked to dominance or male honour, economic inequality between men and women, and the use of physical force for conflict resolution. According to Adewale (2007), although wife beating is a worldwide phenomenon, it is accepted as part of our culture. This is reinforced by the concept of sex role socialization of women, which encourages and emphasizes submissiveness, and divorce is not always a viable alternative due to the stigma attached to it. Adewale's result was supported by Loi, Los and Clement (1999) who posit that domestic violence exists because of the deep rooted attitudes regarding socially and culturally prescribed roles, responsibilities and traits of men and women. For instance, a wife must show respect or reverence to all male members of consanguine (relationship by blood) family irrespective of their age. Akande (2017) observes that there is a clause in the Nigeria laws that allows husbands to reasonably chastise their wives. Religious teachings do not promote gender based violence against women. The violence is entrenched in the cultures and traditions and as the girl child grows older the discrimination against her increases.

Childlessness

Some men beat their wives at the slightest provocation because they have not had any issue-child. They verbally abuse women by calling them childless and threatening to return them to their parents. This state of childlessness, contrary to expectations, leads to constant abuse of women. Equally, women with only female children are abused by their husbands in some societies. This is because much importance is usually attached to male children; therefore, women who find themselves in this condition do not enjoy peace in their matrimonial homes. Childlessness has also been found to be associated with a significant higher risk of intimate partner violence (Koenig, 2006). In most cases men often hold their spouses responsible for the tendency to have only female children (Mendie, 2009; Okon, 2009 in Akpan, 2011). This is a big misconception on the part of men. In effect genetically, a woman's ovacomposed of the XX sex chromosomes can only supply a constant of X ovum for fertilization, making the male sex chromosome composed of XY the sole game changer in determining the sex of a baby. Thus, if the man releases an X a female child will be conceived, but if he releases a Y a male child will result. However, most men both literate and illiterate blame the repeated conception of a female child on their spouses: some out of ignorance, others out of mischief and frustration.

Environmental Factor

Njenga, (2018) posits that one of the causes of gender based violence is the surrounding influences. According to him, the more crowded people are in place, the more violence is likely to be experienced. He concluded that poverty, which also determines where and how a person lives, is a contributing factor in violence against women. Also dwindled love relationship, nagging on the part of the women, infidelity, and impotence of the man all contribute to gender based violence.

Consequences of Gender-based Violence in Nigeria

The effects of Gender-based violence can be devastating. They pose a danger to a woman's reproductive health and can scar a survivor psychologically, cognitively and interpersonally. A woman who experiences violence and lives in an abusive relationship with her partner may be forced to become pregnant or have an abortion against her will, or her partner may knowingly expose her to a sexually transmitted infection. Bitangaro (2010) reports what a child psychologist says that "violence absolutely impacts on children…" A girl child who has undergone or witnessed violence may become withdrawn, anxious, or depressed on the one hand; on the other hand, the child may become aggressive and exert control over younger

siblings. Male children usually carry out the aggressive forms of behaviour and, as adults, may be at their spouses. The effects of sexual abuse are the exploitation of power. Young people are especially at risk and this can have lasting consequences for their sexual and productive health. The costs can include unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STI), physical injury, and trauma. Bitangaro (2010) reported that in Uganda as in many parts of the world, a lot of stigma is attached to a woman who has been raped. The effects of female Genital cutting (FGC) are many. According to the report of women vision in Uganda (2018) the surgeons, who perform the cutting, are old women. These women according to the report claim that they have ancestral powers. Female genital cutting can be seen as an impediment to a girl's sexual enjoyment. The girls according to the report of women vision (2018) are known to experience intense pain, bleeding, painful abdominal menstruation, infection, and psychological trauma.

The Population Reference Bureau (2014) reports the World Bank as saying that gender-based violence is as heavy a health burden for women of age 15 to 35 as that posed by HIV, tuberculosis and infection during child birth, cancer and heart diseases. The fourth world conference on women has adopted a platform for action, which declares that "violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objective of equality, development, and peace." Gender based violence against women is a problem that limits girl child education, and causes poor enrolment and attendance in primary and secondary schools. The girl children continue to face many obstacles that impede their path to learning. In some parts of Nigeria, it is believed that enrolling girls for formal education is a waste of time and resources, as she would be married off sooner or later. In other to buttress this belief, cultural aspects like forced marriage, inheritance law, sexual harassment, unintended pregnancy, and domestic responsibilities tend to conflict with enrolment and attendance of girls in schools. Statistics has it that the enrolment percentages of the boy child are consistently higher than that of the girl child, and out of the number that enrol in primary schools in Nigeria only 43% enter secondary schools (UNICEF, 2013). Gender based violence has a serious impact on the mental health of the girl child which consequently affects her performance in school. WHO (2010) explains that abused girls are more likely to suffer depression, anxiety, and psychosomatics symptoms. It further points out that violence against the girl child affects their ability to learn or even the willingness to take part in school activities, thus exposing them to serious dangers.

Incidents of Rape in Nigeria: An Overview

The rate at which incidents of rape occur in our society today is becoming not only alarming but outrageous. Statistics have it that in Lagos alone, 678 cases of rape were reported in 2012, which is an average of two cases per day (Musbau, 2013, p. 53). No fewer than 100 cases of rape were equally recorded in Kano courts in 2013 alone out of which only 40 offenders were convicted. In Anambra, some NGOs working on sexual violence recorded 115 incidents and complaints on rape but only 12 cases were taken up with the police while none of them was successfully prosecuted (Guardian Newspaper, Friday February 7, 2014, page 20). Perhaps, the most goose-pimple raising incident of rape was the recent incestuous rape of a 60-year-old mother at the Ajabamidele area of Ado Ekiti by her own 21-year-old son, Akintunde Omotehinde.

One is most likely to ask at this juncture, why are the cases of rape on the increase in the Nigerian society today. Oduah (2014, p. 10) gives the following as factors that bring about increased cases of rape in Nigeria: gaps in the country's laws and stringent burden of proof placed on victims and prosecutors, Stigmatization, Unnecessary delays in the judicial system, Corruption in the judiciary, Family ties (where cases of child rape and/or rape are committed against victims by their close relatives following which the family members more often than not decide not to report these crimes to

the police for prosecution owing to consanguinity or family ties), Intimidation and fear of attacks(where victims of rape are more often than not afraid of reporting the rapists for fear of attacks by some of these rapists who sometimes are deadly and fiendish), and Indecent dressing by girls and carelessness on the part of parents. It is important to note that failure to prove any of the above ingredients of rape means that the accused will be exculpated even when the crime was, in fact, committed. This is disheartening. Musbau (2013, p. 53) satirically regrets the situation thus:

> Rape culprits are having a field day because the onus of proof lies only with the victims. The victim is the one that must provide the bed sheet used to rape her. She must provide her pant and not wash herself before going to the police station and the hospital even when it is sure that there would be delay in getting and presenting the report of medical tests because of the nature of our health facilities.

Methodology

Content analysis was used for this study. This was because the study seeks to establish the communication attention given by the newspapers to rape cases in Nigeria from January 2019 to December 2019. The data gathered from the selected newspapers were subjected to quantitative analysis.

Population of the Study

The population of the study includes all the selected newspapers produced and circulated in Nigeria within the period of study. The newspapers are *The Sun*, *The Punch* and *Vanguard.* The choice of these national dailies was informed by the fact that they are among the leading newspapers in Nigeria in terms of reach and national outlook. The total population is 1,095.

Sample Size

The impracticability of studying all the population necessitated a sample size of the three national dailies, *The Sun, Vanguard* and *The Punch*. Uzoagulu (1998), cited in Chinedu, Nwamaka and Aanu (2017), states that the sample size represents the population when the entire population cannot be studied. A total of 4 editions of *The Sun, Vanguard* and *The Punch* made up the sample size for this research.

Sampling Method

The multi stage sampling method was used for this research. Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekhaeafor and Okpanachi (2012) state that "multi-stage sampling requires the researcher to choose his samples in stages until he gets the needed sample" (p.190). At the first sampling stage, purposive sampling method was adopted to select three national dailies in Nigeria to represent all newspapers produced in the country. They include *The Sun, The Punch* and *Vanguard*.

Secondly, the researchers used the simple random sampling technique to select one continuous and constructed week out of the 52 weeks of the year 2019. This helps to avoid bias in sampling and therefore increases representativeness of the population, by allowing every unit of the population an equal chance of being selected. From the 52 weeks of the year 2019, a week was picked and studied from Sunday to Saturday, through simple balloting. This produced 7 issues for each newspaper selected for the study. For constructed week, 52 weeks were also written on a piece of paper, wrapped and shuffled in a container. Each number represents a week. Then the researchers randomly picked the numbers from the bag for seven times, representing seven days of the week. The first number picked, represents Sunday, the second number represents Monday and so on culminating in Saturday. Therefore, 42 issues were studied for the period of one year.

Content Categories/Data Analysis Method

The content categories used in this research included straight news, features, editorials, photographs, opinions and letters to the editor

while data was analysed using simple percentage method.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in the agenda-setting theory first propounded by McCombs and Shaw in 1972, which Izuogu (2009) cited in Amannah, Onyebuchi, Obayi and Anorue (2016) referred to as the "media's capacity to cause an issue to be elevated in importance in the mind of the public through repeated focus or coverage". The theory has its roots in the understanding that the mass media may not be successful in telling us what to think but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about (Izuogu, 2009 in Amannah et al., 2016).

The relevance of this theory to the study is that the media can focus on events or phenomenon with the intention of giving it prominence. With the level of prominence given to a story, readers are more likely to think in that direction. Rape cases in Nigeria can also be given prominence on the pages of newspapers in order to raise people's consciousness in that direction.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Volume Distribution of Selected Newspaper Coverage of Sexual Violence

Media outfit	Number of stories on sexual violence reported	Percentage
The Punch	12	21.0%
The Sun	27	47.3%
Vanguard	18	32%
Total	57	100%

From the table above, the sample editions of the newspapers studied reported 57 stories on sexual violence. *The Punch* reported 12 stories representing 21.0% of the total number of stories reported on sexual violence of the three newspapers. *The Sun* had 27 stories which gave a percentage of 47.3% while *Vanguard* reported a total of 18 stories on sexual violence accounting for 32%.

From the table, *The Sun* had the highest stories on sexual violence while *The Punch* has the lowest.

Table 2: Prominence of Reportage

Media outfit	Sexual violence stories	Other stories	Percentage
The Punch	6	207	27.2%
The Sun	9	256	41%
Vanguard	7	244	32%
Total	22	707	100%

The table 2 above shows the sampled newspapers studied as regards placement of sexual violence stories. A total of 22 stories on sexual violence were on the front pages of the selected newspapers, while the number of other stories is 707.

The Sun placed 9 stories on sexual violence on its front pages in the period studied. While it had 256 other stories on the front pages. *Vanguard* placed 7 sexual violence stories on its front pages and 244 other stories on front pages. *The Punch* placed 6 sexual violence stories on its front pages, but 207 other stories appeared on its front pages. It can also be noted that the front page placement of sexual violence stories by *The Sun* amounts to 41%, *The Punch,* 27.2% and *Vanguard,* 32%.

Distribution of Rape Cases According to Content Categories

Story types	The Punch	The Sun	Vanguard	Total	Percentage
News	8	12	9	29	28%
Pictures	5	8	5	18	17%
Editorial	0	0	0	0	0%
Opinions	2	7	3	12	11%
Interviews	3	6	4	13	12%
Letters to the editor	0	0	0	0	0
Feature	8	15	10	33	31%
Cartoons	0	0	0	0	0%
Total	26	48	31	105	100%

As could be seen from the table above, there were no editorials, and cartoons. Feature stories were the most used and this was followed by news story formats.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the result gotten from the study, the researchers made efforts to provide answers to the research objectives.

Research Objective One: ***To ascertain the volume of stories on rape as a gender-based domestic violence reported by the selected newspapers.***

Table one was used to achieve this objective. Out of the 57 issues analysed, *The Sun* newspaper topped highest with the total of 27 (47.3%) published stories; *Vanguard* followed with 18 (32%) published items; *The Punch* newspaper came last with the total of 12 published items representing 21%. It is obvious that *The Sun* outweighs *Vanguard* and *The Punch* newspapers in the reportage of rape cases in Nigeria within the period of study as it carried 47.3% of the total 57 rape cases against 53% of *The Punch* and *Vanguard*. It shows that out of the volume of news stories and other editorial matters published in newspapers everyday, the amount of reports on rape cases was poor and not encouraging. The result of this study is in line with the findings of Chijioke (2011) which showed that there was poor coverage of rape issues and that the coverage was not significant compared to other stories like politics, economy, sports, and adverts.

Due to the nature of news which thrives more on crime such as rape, it was expected that the newspapers should have given rape cases adequate coverage. But this situation could be as a result of the predominance of private ownership in Nigerian print media. Private media are known for placing priority on profit; therefore, issues that have no high financial impact are not given attention. It could also be as a result of the philosophies of the newspapers. The media are regarded as agenda-setters and platforms for fighting all forms of domestic violence, and as such, they should endeavour to cover issues relating to social marginalisation.

Research Objective Two: ***To determine the prominence of selected newspapers reportage of rape cases as gender-based violence in Nigeria.***

The findings revealed that the rape stories were given low prominence (see table 2). Newspapers accord prominence to a story by placing it on the front page, among other things. Front page placement of a story is not only an indication of adjudged importance of the story by the newspaper, which invariably influences peoples' perception of such story or issue as being important, but it also makes the story strategic for audience attention. But Nigerian newspapers' front page placement of sexual violence is disappointing. Front pages of the sampled newspapers were dominated by stories on politics, economy, sports, corruption, and adverts. Also, Nigerian newspapers sadly do not utilise the back pages for placement of sexual violence stories. None of the newspapers studied placed any rape case story on its back page, despite the fact that back page stories catch readers' attention.

The findings confirmed that of Chidi (2018) in which he concluded that rape cases were given less prominence. This is because, according to his findings, most of the stories on rape were on the inside pages. This is similar to that of Nwabueze and Oduah (2015) who found that newspapers do not give prominence to stories on rape cases.

The implication of this is that the newspapers studied did not properly set agenda on the problem of increasing rape cases in Nigeria with a view to finding lasting remedies.

Research Objective Three: ***Identify the cases of sexual violence in Nigeria reported by the chosen newspapers according to content categories.***

Table three answered this research objective. Findings show that though the selected newspapers did show some efforts in reporting rape cases using the feature format which has the highest (see table 3), their efforts were not enough compared to other issues like sports, economy, politics, etc. that

dominated most of their pages. Ample use of features which entails not only reporting the fact, but also analysing and possibly injecting emotional slant into it, would make the message stronger so as to precipitate societal condemnation of sexual violence. Editorials which are official opinions or positions of newspapers on issues were not used to condemn rape cases. This demonstrates the newspapers' poor interest in reporting sexual violence.

Furthermore, the newspapers studied did not publish any letters to the editor on rape as sexual violence. From this, one can assume that the inadequate interest of Nigerian newspapers in sexual violence coverage is as a result of male dominance in the print media industry, and so male superiority and solidarity to male perpetrators of sexual violence underline the attitude of male reporters and editors to sexual violence incidents and stories.

Also, ideological effects of patriarchal cultural/social constructs of the Nigerian society, which suggests that it is proper for men to have their way over women in everything, could explain why members of the public fail to cry out against sexual violence against women and children through letters to the editors. This is evident in table 3 where no letters to the editor on sexual violence against women and children in the newspapers studied was indicated.

Conclusion

The prominence given to the reportage of Gender-based violence issues by *The Sun, Vanguard* and *The Punch* newspapers cannot help in ameliorating the trend, thus the print media need to dedicate enough print space for the coverage of GBV issues in Nigeria. Many years ago, gender issues drew little or no attention from scholars, researchers, the mass media and even the society at large, but with industrial revolution and explosion in population, gender-based realities have dawned on humanity and have crept into every facet of human life, thus the need for greater newspaper coverage of GBV issues in Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. Nigerian newspapers need to wake up from slumber to play a leading role in stemming the tide of sexual violence against women and children by giving prominence to sexual violence stories.
2. Women should set up newspaper organisations through which they can expose sexual violence against them.

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