

PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF NIGERIAN PRESS COVERAGE OF CHILD RIGHT ISSUES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This work is focused on the public perception of Nigerian press coverage of child right issues in Nigeria. In conducting this work, four objectives were raised. Among this objectives are: to ascertain the extent of exposure to press reports on child right issues; to ascertain the public perception of how child right issues are been reported in the press; to identify how the media coverage of child right issues affect the public attitude and to identify how the media coverage of child right issues affect the public behavior. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The total population of the study is 301657 according to 2012 projected National Census and the sample size of 400 was gotten using the Taro Yamane Formula. Cluster and Stratified Techniques were used in the distribution of the questionnaire. Relevant materials were reviewed and the theory of social responsibility and agenda setting were used as the theoretical framework for this research. After the analysis, findings showed that 78% believes that the media do not prioritize child right issues in Nigerian. They do not live up to their responsibilities of creating and sustaining awareness about child right issues in the society and the children are reported negatively in the media. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the media should devote more attention to child right protection issues and reports should be placed in more prominent positions, the government should push for the implementation of child right act as adopted by the country in 2003 as this will help in dishing out uniform sanction to culprits of child abuse. Government should invest in education and provide alternative economic opportunities for the children and also help the abused children find the right path in the society to reduce the rates of child depression and anxiety and the media should put more attention in the fight against child right issues because many families and children are dependent on the media to inform and educate them about the danger of child right issues.

Keywords: Child rights, Media coverage, Perception, Child protection.

Introduction

The role of the media in advocating the right of individuals in the society cannot be overemphasized. Among the media roles in championing and sustaining developmental goals in the society is the task of raising people's awareness on the various ills in the society and sensitizing members of the society on their various rights to an ill-free society. Children are not exempted from this very beneficial role of the media as it is one of the responsibilities of media practitioners to uncover through various media genres the various abuses and exploitations meted-out on them on daily basis by the adult members of the society; as well

as advocating and educating members of the society on the rights of children who are integral part of the society (Abubakar, 2019).

Over the years, children all over the world have known to suffer various forms and degree of abuses and exploitation, ranging from child labour, sexual abuses, emotional abuses, neglect, child trafficking and so on.

According to Nsude (2021), an average child must have suffered from one abuse or the other at one time in their life before the age of 18 years. This implies that the children are the most vulnerable members of the society and as such, it is believed that other members of institution and agencies in the society should defend and protect these crucial yet vulnerable members of the society. Among the various institutions that should be at the forefront of the crusade against child abuse of any kind is the media.

The media issues related to children's rights have been a world focus since the year 1979, which United Nations designated as the International Year of the Child (IYC). Since then, International bodies have called for more information to be given to children— both through the media and at school — so they can protect themselves on the dangers and risks associated with child exploitation. For instance the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which was passed on November 20th 1989, enshrines children's right to freedom of expression (Article 13); to protection of privacy and against attacks on his/her honour and reputation (Article 16); and also calls on the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child (Article 17). Articles 34 and 36 commit governments to protecting children from all forms of exploitation, including pornography. How far the media is meeting with this responsibility is a question of concern.

Even in Africa, the Organization of Africa Unity (OAU) in 1990 adopted a Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child. The Charter had specified that the situation of most African Children, remains critical due to the unique factors of their socioeconomic, cultural, traditional and developmental circumstances, natural disasters, armed conflicts, exploitation and hunger and on account of the child's physical and mental immaturity, he/she needs special safeguards and care (Awosala & Omoera, 2008).

Despite these provisions in the United Nations Convention and the Nigerian constitution, children in Nigeria suffer cruelty, abuses, inhuman and degrading treatment, child labour and some are forced into prostitution (Itat, 1999). Ambrose (2001,p.8) defines child abuse as the deliberate and willful injury of a child by a guardian either by hitting, beating with belt, cord, or other implement, slamming against a wall, burning with cigarettes, scalding with hot water, locking in a dungeon, torturing, sexually abusing and even killing. It involves active and hostile aggressive physical treatment.

Ebigbo (2003,p.3) states that child abuse includes:

Child Labour: This includes street hawking, begging, children working as domestic helpers, making children carry heavy loads and over working them.

Sexual Abuse: Child prostitution, sexual harassment, rape incest, child marriage and child (female) circumcisions.

Social/Institutional Abuse: This includes child battering, corporal punishment both in school and at home using children for drug trafficking, over exposure to Street and accident, child slavery, child stealing, indoctrinating kids into negative ethics example religious or political violence, withdrawal of kids from school, ritual killing of children, consistence

verbal suppression of a child, emotional and psychological abuse of children in the school, child imprisonment with adults and illegal fostering.

Child abuse is a serious social problem that goes back to the beginning of history. It has existed in almost every known human society either as a response to the demands of the gods or as an answer to the burden of the child bearing and rearing. The consequences of child abuse can be devastating and far reaching. Physical injuries can range from bruises, scrapes and burns to the brain damage, permanent disabilities and death, the psychological effects of abuse can last a life time and may include a lowered sense of self-worth, an inability to relate to peers, reduce attention span and learning disorders.

Furthermore, Adidu (2005,p.55) stresses that abuse may result in psychiatric disorders like depression, excessive, anxiety or disassociate identity disorder, as well as increased risk of suicide. Baran (2005,p.55) posits that child trafficking exposes them to different types of abuse, violence and juvenile crime which often cause behaviour problems among the children.

Child labour and trafficking are essentially understood as encompassing monetary or non-monetary activities which are mentally physically, morally and socially hazardous for children below 15 years of age (UNICEF, 2005). Child trafficking, on the other hand, is the illegal movement of children, typically for the purpose of forced labour or sexual exploitation. According to wikipedia.com, child trafficking is defined as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring and / or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation”, though the statistics regarding the magnitude of child trafficking are difficult to obtain. Children can be sold either in kind or cash for the purpose of forced labour, sexual abuse or for armed forces a including militancy.

Child marriage has evolved to become one of the fundamental developmental challenges of the new global order (Nour, 2006). The marriage of girl’s below the age of 18 years old is prevalent worldwide and affects millions of young girls. This despite the existence of international agreements and national laws. Child marriage is a violation of human rights and it robs girls of their childhood, prevents them from acquiring education or vocational skills, enjoying good health, bonding with other children of their age, attaining full age of maturity and ultimately choosing their life partners (UNICEF, 2014). The imposition of a marriage partner on children means that childhood is cut short and their fundamental human rights are compromised as they are denied their right to be children (Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls, 2011).

For most parents, the desire to marry off their young daughters is supported by their belief that early marriage helps in securing financial and social future for their girls. Even though, early marriages are often associated with poor social and physical outcomes, evidence shows that girls who marry at a young age attain lower levels of education have less reproductive control and encounter higher rates of mortality (UNHR, 2014; Ford Foundation, 2013). Such outcomes suggest a high impact on larger society, including high population growth, a more rapid spread of diseases and a higher number of uneducated women (UNICEF, 2005).

Cultural practice, religion and economic hardship are some other intertwining factors that have been engaged in explaining or justifying why most parents marry off their young girls. While culture and tradition push to maintain family and societal status quo, the intersection of poverty and lack of education also influence the practice (Seeger, 2013). Lack of

educational opportunity combined with poverty often limits girls' potentials and makes child marriage an enduring reality (Otoo-O and Pobi, 2013). Even in situations where there is a help to alleviate poverty, and where education and economic opportunities become more accessible, communities where religious and cultural justifications for child marriage are deeply entrenched barely appreciate the importance of education for the girl child since marriage is more valuable than education in their reckoning.

Understanding of child trafficking, child labour and child- marriage with respect to the media coverage of the menace in Enugu is enormous and effective. The public have acknowledged the fact that any form of child abuse is inimical and should always support mass media campaigns against maltreatment of children in the name of child labour, marriage and trafficking.

The public perceive media coverage of child abuse as a serious issue through Ebonyi Broadcasting Service (ESBS) radio between 2000 and 2005 (Nwambe 2009, p.9). He argued that "people of Abakaliki had benefited from the sonorous programme anchored by the late Ogbonnaya Abba, adding that "children who were exposed to hazardous child labour were saved from servitudes, and converted them into education". Nwamba also stressed that the public saw the programme as an effective one that deviated children in the society into being responsible and conscious of their rights in the society.

During pre-independence era, child labour, trafficking and marriage was a lucrative trend among the Igbos, particularly in Enugu, the eastern heartland. According to, Adidu (2005,p.55) this was the most booming business in the eastern handwork and business trip on settlement basis. The notion that children by so doing shall become rich contributed in child abuse. He also argued that victims of such abuse were denied basic education.

The act of keeping house maid among residents still looms inspite of mass media campaign against child abuse. Adidu (2005,p.55) stressed that many children work under exploitative conditions for their masters/ladies with many being denied the right to proper education. They observed that some children under exploitative condition in Enugu are seen hawking groundnuts, banana, moi-moi, etc. for hours, in the bid to make gains for their unsatisfied guardians. The fact that the public is not fully aware of adverse effect of child labour is noted by the researcher among Enugu residents.

Statement of the Study

Whichever be the case, it implies that the media are not living up to their expectations in making sure that the rights of every child are constantly spelt out and made to resonate at all times in the minds of every member of the society by continually giving the issue a pride of place on media agenda.

In other words, the study dwelt on the challenges that impede Journalist efforts and desire to keep child right issues afloat on the media agenda and also profound solutions to the problems of under and negative reportage of these issues.

Research Questions

The following questions shall be addressed in relation to the above objectives.

1. To what extent of exposure do press reports on child right issues in Nigeria?
2. What are the public perceptions of how child right issues are been reported in the press?
3. How does media coverage of child right issues affect public attitude?

4. How does media coverage of child right issues affect the behavior of the public?

Literature Review

Media and Child trafficking in other countries

The media handled child trafficking in India by producing a well research documentary titled the day my God died. The title of the documentary was taken from a Quote by one of the girls kidnapped at a village fair in NEPAL, drugged and trafficked across the border to brothels in the largest red light district in the world, Bombay, India. The girl says, "The day that I was sold was the day that my God died" there are on average fifteen Nepalese girls trafficked daily. Their average age is 14, but some are seven – eight years olds. They are sold into sexual slavery for 50,000 rupees and brutalized into submission (Adidu 2005,p.55)

Child trafficking is growing rapidly in India; there is no reliable data available on the issue in India. According to figures provided by the National crime records Bureau in 2004, as many as 2,265 cases of Kidnapping and abduction of children qualified as forms of trafficking and were reported to the police. Of these, 1,593 cases were of kidnapping for marriage 1,414 were for illicit sex, 92 for unlawful activity, 101 for prostitution and the rest for various other things like slavery, beggary and even selling body parts. According to Agbaegbu (2008), most of these children (72 percent) were between sixteen and eighteen years of age. Twenty-five percent were children aged eleven to fifteen years. Trafficking of children from the North – Eastern states of India and the bordering countries in the north east is a serious issue but has so far not drawn public attention. Children are trafficked for several reasons including sexual exploitation, adoption, entertainment, drug peddling and smuggling.

Malawi, like other developing countries, faces a growing problem of child trafficking. The full extent of child trafficking in Malawi is not widely known, but in recent years increasing awareness has resulted in better reporting and understanding of the problem. Reports of child trafficking by the media, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and government departments such as the Police, Social Welfare and Labour have been increasing in recent years.

In 2007, the Government of Malawi through the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, with funding from ILO, UNICEF and the Human Rights Resource Centre, commissioned the Millennium Centre for Research and Development (MCRD) to conduct a study in order to assess the nature and magnitude of child trafficking and to review the current legal and policy frameworks on child trafficking in Malawi, before making preliminary recommendations.

This study employed several methods in order to establish the nature and scale of child trafficking in Malawi, including the use of key informant interviews, case studies and literature review. The research team also collected and collated information and data using a structured questionnaire from 12 police stations, 12 district labour offices, 12 district social welfare offices, 6 border and immigration offices and 32 non-governmental organisations.

The study found that although Malawi is a party to various Conventions and International Instruments that provide against child trafficking, current domestic law aimed at addressing child trafficking is lacking in many respects. The Government of Malawi currently prohibits all forms of trafficking through existing laws, including sections 135 to 147 and 257 to 269 of the penal code, Chapter 7:01. However, a lack of specific anti-trafficking legislation makes

prosecution more challenging and allows a limited range of punishments to be meted out to convicted traffickers.

Further, there is no law or policy aimed at providing legal assistance or information to presumed victims of child trafficking. Indeed, there is no law or policy specifically relating to the status or treatment of victims of trafficking. The Malawi Law Commission is currently in the process of drafting a bill on Human Trafficking in general. According to the existing draft, provision has been made for an internationally accepted definition of trafficking, which includes all induced transit of children for labour, regardless of apparent consent.

The study also found that there is need for better identification of trafficked children in order to better recognize and more deeply understand the problem. There is a need for greater awareness of child trafficking, both in theory and in practical terms. The study also highlights the lack of unified data collection and storage systems among the different stakeholders working in the area of child protection (Ebigbo, 2003,p.3)

There is thus a need to periodically update all the relevant information and data collection on child trafficking using the National Statistical Office and other stakeholders. A national child trafficking database with a standardized entry system for all stakeholders would be desirable. There is a great need to improve awareness and coordination among the different organisations involved. The National Committee on Child Protection could play a crucial role in coordinating between different agencies at national, regional, district and local levels.

Although the magnitude of child trafficking cannot be accurately verified, because of the hidden nature of the problem, ignorance about child trafficking among law enforcement officers and communities actually worsens the situation. The study found at least 77 cases of child trafficking that have been handled by the different NGOs and government departments in the 12 districts visited in this study. The study established that there is a seasonal element to child trafficking, especially with regard to children trafficked to work in tobacco estates and girls employed as commercial sex workers and in restaurants. Most of the male children trafficked internally are intended for livestock herding or agricultural labour; female children are mainly trafficked for domestic service or to work in restaurants and bars, particularly during the crop marketing season.

Child trafficking in Malawi – particularly internal trafficking for exploitative labour – is fueled by poverty, illiteracy, lack of awareness, lack of resources and weak policies. Children as young as 10 – mostly school drop outs and orphans – are trafficked in particular from Thyolo, Mulanje, Dedza, Ntcheu, Salima and Nsanje districts. The main destinations include major cities, district headquarters and estates in Mchinji, Kasungu and Mzimba.

Trafficked children are subjected to intolerable and inhuman activities including being forced to walk long distances without food and sleep in appalling conditions. The conditions are exceptionally bad during the rainy season. This study revealed that this was also the period that most victims decide to run away and seek to be returned to their homes. Apart from those working within the domestic sector, most trafficked children are not paid regularly or in cash. The majority only have verbal annual contracts that are rarely honored.

The study also established that cross border trafficking occurs, with Zambia the most frequent destination, followed by Mozambique. Porous borders with these two neighbouring countries make it difficult to address this problem in the absence of meaningful international collaboration. However, this study did not find evidence of long distance external trafficking, although there is a perception that some children are trafficked to Europe.

Parents, children and local leaders are almost ignorant about child trafficking and its risks. In Dedza for instance, young girls are trafficked for prostitution. In some cases communities know the traffickers, but regard them as philanthropic society members, thus hindering attempts to stop or prosecute perpetrators.

Government departments in some districts provide vital services like community support, child counseling, rehabilitation and repatriation and training to the victims of trafficking. Non-governmental Organisations undertake similar activities and are often more active, as they are better resourced than government departments. The major handicap of NGOs, especially small ones, is that they usually have limited impact areas. They therefore usually refer cases or liaise with government departments in other districts. This could be the basis for good practice, but needs government coordination and clear, consistent guidelines.

Empirical Review

Dessy and Pallage (2002) are the first papers to attempt a theoretical exploration of the economics of child trafficking. Using a model of parental investment in child's education, Dessy and Pallage (2002), show that when a country is very poor, in order for a ban on the worst forms of child labour to bring a parent – improvement, appropriate mechanisms must be designed to mitigate the decline in child labour wages caused by a ban – induced reduction in employment options for children.

Ume Ezeoke (2003,p.17) who carried a survey studies on child trafficking reported that many children are trafficked in the country from Togo, Benin, Mali, Burkina Faso and Ghana for the purpose of forced or cheap labour in Nigeria and the trafficking of children into Nigeria is a real problem. According to UNICEF 2004 study, one third of the trafficked of children from within Nigeria end up in forced labour and another third in domestic work. In 2003, several child slaves' camps were discovered in the western states of Nigeria (Ogun, Oyo and Osun). Many of them are used as slaves to crush granites and stores at Quarry sites.

Nnadi (2007) in Daily Sun Newspaper reported that the police at the zone 9 headquarters in Umuahia, Abia State arrested two suspected human traffickers and their accomplices. According to him, one of them was caught with two day old twin babies, with their umbilical cords still intact. The other suspect was nabbed with thirty-seven children whom the police suspect were sold for rituals. The reality of combating trafficking is often messy: the government, law enforcement, and criminal justice system all have the potential to be corrupting, uninformed, or lack the motivation/pressure from the public, the media, or the international spotlight to make any real impact. There are certainly many skilled, well-intentioned individuals working within bogged-down government and law enforcement agencies (and also non-governmental organizations of course) that do want to make a difference, but may not know. But the situation is far from being all fire and brimstone.

Chizoba (2017) investigated the trafficking in children which is always a problem continues to be a subject of considerable media coverage in Nigeria. Most victims are abducted or leave home with the traffickers who promise educational opportunities or other incentives. They are taken to places in foreign and local countries. The press has an imperatives role to play in reporting child trafficking as the fourth estate of the realm, the watch dog of the society and agenda setting machinery. The main objective was to critically examine the performance of the newspapers toward adequate coverage of child trafficking. The study made use of social responsibility theory and agenda theory to find out how the

media create awareness on the ills of child trafficking. The study set out primarily at content analyzing issues of Daily Sun and Vanguard newspapers on child trafficking in Nigeria for period of twelve months. Based on a system sampling technique, a sample size of 118 newspapers was selected for over period of one year which runs two respective years of reportage (September 2007 – August 2008). Based on the findings from the content analyzed newspapers, it was discovered that the selected newspapers did not fare well in their coverage of child trafficking. Both newspapers did not give prominence to the stories reported as almost all were buried in the inside pages. Recommendations were made based on the findings (Dessy, S & Pallage 2001).

Kwame (2011) cited in Olusegun, and Idowu (2016) investigated on child abuse is an infringement on the rights of the child. The frequency of its occurrence has made it not only a national, but a global concern. The main objective of the study was the identification of cultural practices that expose the child to various abuses in Kaduna State. The study was a survey. Four research questions and null hypotheses were drawn to guide the study.

The target population included and teachers of Local Government Schools in six Local Government Areas of the three Senatorial Districts of Kaduna State. The age range of the respondents was between 11 and 45 years. The Local Government Areas include Sabon-Gari, Zaria, Kaduna South, Chukun, Kauru and Jama'a. A total of 510 teachers and 781 pupils' respondents were drawn from a population of 8,587 and 273,163, respectively. The sample size represented 20% and 1% of the total population of teachers and pupils respectively, in Kaduna State. The study findings indicated that excessive domestic child labour, early girl child marriage, begging by children, hawking, and preference for particular sex of child. The cultural practices in Kaduna State that exposed the child to child abuse included polygamy, early girl marriages, and preference for particular sex of the child. Other causes of child abuse other than cultural practices but aid child abuses were that children voluntarily make themselves available as domestic servants for food, child hawking, high level of illiteracy, ready market for child labour, ignorance of associated dangers of hawking and begging, and the less expensiveness of child labour compared to hired adult labour. Others causes of child abuses included easy tameness of children compared to adult, high level of poverty, selective application of the Child Right Act, fear of victimization, and corruption in prosecuting offender of child abuse by the legal agencies. Drawn from these findings, it was concluded that if the situation is not checked more children will fall victim to child abuse. This will ultimately affect the leadership quality of our tomorrow's society. To forestall this problem, it was recommended that an alternative employment, and free education be provided for these street beggars and hawkers; more awareness on the disadvantages and dangers of early girl child marriage be publicized to discourage people from going into it; and finally, the issue of poverty and illiteracy level should be addressed by the government and society at large to reduce hawking and begging.

Olusegun, and Idowu (2016) investigated Child abuse in Nigeria negatively affects the future of children and destroys the image of the country. Children suffer from various forms of abuse such as child marriages, molestation, child labour, kidnapping, and neglect, among other forms. Many laws and policies were put into place with the purpose of protecting children from abuse. However, they have not been effective for many reasons including poor enforcement mechanisms, poverty, corruption, lack of rehabilitation of sexual offenders,

negative attitude of parents, and inefficient judicial processes. This paper examines the concepts and various forms of child abuse which exist in Nigeria. It appraises the different factors responsible for child abuse in Nigeria, identifies the laws and institutions that protect children from abuse, evaluates the effectiveness of these various laws and institutions, and facilitates further information on workable steps to curb all forms of child abuse in Nigeria (Awosola & Omoera, 2008).

Theoretical Framework

As the study focuses on the evolution of public feeling understanding and perception of media message with respect to its campaign against child labour, trafficking and marriage, adoption of selective perception theory, social responsibility and agenda setting were used as the theoretical framework for this research. is preferred as the theoretical framework (Folarin, 2005).

Research Design

The study employs quantitative and survey research design. Due to the nature of the study, the researchers used quantitative methods to observe situations or events relating to people's thoughts and opinions.

The population of study consists of people who expose themselves to the broadcast media in Enugu Metropolis. Enugu Metropolis is made up of sub-cities in Enugu which includes: Obiagu, New-Haven, Achara Layout, Agbani Road, Abakpa, Independence Layout, etc. According to the 2012 projected National census figure, the total population of Enugu Metropolis is 301657.

Sample Size and Sample size Technique

Taro Yamane Formula was used to determine the sample size of 400. The sampling technique used in this research is the Stratified Sampling and Cluster Sampling Techniques. This is because the area and population of the study is vast and Cluster Sampling will be the ideal and suitable way for selecting a Representative Sample.

Data Presentation and Analyzes Based on Research Questions

Research Question 1: To what extent of exposure do press reports on child right issues in Nigeria?

Table 1: Frequency of the extent of exposure the press reports on child right issues in Nigeria

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Very high extent	62	16.0
High extent	84	21.8
Low extent	130	33.7
Very low extent	110	28.5
Total	386	100

The table above shows that out of 386 respondents only 16% respondents agreed that the extent of exposure the that is to a high extent, 33.7% of the respondents disagreed that is to a low extent while 28.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed that is to a very low extent.

Research Question 2: What are the public perceptions of how child right issues are reported in the press?

Table 2: Frequency of the public perceptions of media coverage of child right issues in the press

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
The press reports the issues in the best interest of the child	50	13.0
The rights of the child is protected	90	23.3
The child image is secured	120	31.1
Government act in the best interest of the child	126	32.6
Total	386	100

The table above shows that out of 386 respondents only 13.0% agreed that the press reports the issues in the best interest of the child, 23.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that the rights of the child is protected, 31.1% disagreed that the image of the child is secured while 32.6% of the respondents strongly disagreed that the Government act in the best interest of the child.

Research Question 3: How does media coverage of child right issues affect public attitude?

Table 3: Frequency of how the media coverage affect public attitude

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
It creates awareness about child right issues	190	49.2
It affect them in a negative way	160	41.5
It helps realize the need to report any usual character found on the child	20	5.2
The exploitation of children is rarely revealed	16	4.1
Total	386	109

The table above shows that out of 386 respondents only 49.2% agree that it creates awareness about child right issues, 41.5% strongly agree that it affect them in a negative way, 5.2% disagree that it helps realize the need to report any usual character found on the child while 4.1% strongly disagree that the exploitation of children is rarely revealed.

Research Question 4: How does media coverage of child right issues affect the behaviour of the public?

Table 4: Frequency of how media coverage affect the behaviour of the public

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Those that provide the information prefer their anonymity been preserved	80	20.7
They do not give out the identity of the child	70	18.1
They ask salient question before divulging information on about the child	116	30.1
They protect the image of the child	120	31.1
Total	386	100

The table above shows that 20.7% of the respondents agreed that those that provide the information prefer their anonymity been preserved, 18.1% of the respondents strongly agree that they do not give out the identity of the child, 30.1% disagree that they salient question before divulging information on about the child while 31.1% strongly disagree that they protect the image of the child.

Discussion of Findings

As evident from the findings of the study, 78% believes that the media do not prioritize child right issues in Nigeria media and as such do not live up to their responsibilities of creating and sustaining awareness about child right issues in the society. This study equally found out that the little coverage the media allocate to child right issues, the major themes of these coverage is that of the victims and delinquents.

In other words, children are of ten times portrayed negatively in the media. This gives credence to the study by Raheemat (2015) that children are mostly portrayed as victims of crimes, accidents, natural disaster among others and scarcely as achievers and change agents.

Summary

Ruminating on the factors that constitute challenges to proper media representation of children and child right issues, the respondents pointed out several factors which includes:

1. Lack of media policies that provides the allocation of ample time and space to accommodate child right issues - This implies that the media owners do not see child right issues to be important enough to make headlines in the media space.
2. Cultural and Religious Constraints – According to the respondents, the media is sometimes compelled to ditch reporting child right issues especially when it seems to go against the religious and cultural inclinations or dictates of the community. This is usually evident when it comes to the issues of child marriage or early marriage and child labour.
3. News Values – According to the respondents, the media should create consistent programmes that focus on the fight against child abuse.
4. Lack of Funds – For children programmes that can raise awareness of child right issues but because children issues are not rewarded as important, most media houses find it difficult to get sponsors for such children programmes and media content.

According to the respondents, the Nigeria press has a lot of roles to play in curbing these challenges. First off, the media irrespective of the ownership pattern should as a matter of responsibility prioritize child right issues.

Conclusion

Children are the future generation and the leaders of tomorrow. The way they are treated reflects the level of development of a particular country. Child abuse has to be tackled quickly before its consequences become too difficult to handle. While much has been done over the years through implementation of law, policies and education. More effort needs to be made to protect children from child marriages, female genital mutilation, kidnapping, child labour, molestation, neglect, and any other form of abuse.

Laws put in place to protect children in Nigeria are not effective because so many factors exist which inhibit their effective implementation. To ensure effectiveness of these laws and to decrease the prevalence of child abuse, issues such as poverty, cultural attitudes, corruption, lack of implementation of laws and attitude of parents needs to be addressed. Laws and policies despite their importance cannot eliminate child abuse solely their own.

Public awareness is key; people need to be aware of the laws on child abuse, its consequences and requirements of compliance. Laws encouraging child abuse in anyway should be amended to set strong foundations for the fight against child abuse in Nigeria.

The media are known to be a strong, efficacious and veritable instrument in shaping and ordering social dynamics. It is expected to inform both the public and the government, create a particular view in the minds of the people, educate, sensitize and mobilize the people for actions and campaign against child right issues.

Recommendation

Relatedly, the researcher recommends the following:

1. The media should devote more attention to child protection issues and reports should be placed in more prominent positions. They should also put children programmes on sponsor activities to ensure adequate sponsorship of child right related programmes.
2. The government should push for the implementation of the child right act as adopted by the country in 2003 as this will help in dishing out uniform sanction to the culprits of child abuse.
3. Governments should invest in education and provide alternative economic opportunities for the children and also help the abused children find the right path in the society to reduce the rates of child depression and anxiety.
4. The media should put more attention in the fight against child right issues because many families and children are dependent on the media to inform and educate them about the danger of child right issues. Open discussion on child protection issue by civil society and media engagement can change attitudes that condone child right issues, also raising awareness on the effect of child right issues on health and education of the child will help alleviate children's vulnerability to child right issues.

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