

There is No Financial Gain in Reporting Child's Right: A Narrative of Journalists' Perception of Child's Rights Coverage in Nigerian Media

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Abstract

The work sets out to examine the factors responsible for the current inadequate coverage of child's rights issue in the media. To this end, the following research questions guide the study: Are journalists adequately equipped for reporting child's rights issues? What is the journalists' degree of knowledge on child's rights? Do journalists consider other issues more viable than child's rights issues? Survey research method was employed in the study with the aid of questionnaire administered to the respondents. The findings revealed that most journalists are not adequately employed to report Child's rights issues; most journalists prefer reporting politics and other issues to Child's rights issues; most journalists lack the knowledge of the necessary instrument for reporting the child. The study recommended that Child's rights reporting should be part of journalism training curriculum in Nigeria. Training and re-training workshop should be organized for journalists and journalism teachers on reporting children. A certain percentage of media content should be statutorily dedicated to Child's rights issues.

Keywords: *.Survival .Development .Protection .Participation .Domestication*

INTRODUCTION

More than a decade after the ratification and domestication of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989 by Nigeria with the enactment of the Child's Rights Act (CRA) in 2003 and its adaption and adoption by 24 out of the 36 states of the federation, empirical findings and media reports still indicate a high prevalence of child's rights violations in various parts of the country. The states that are yet to adopt the law in Nigeria are Adamawa, Bauchi, Bornu, Enugu, Gombe, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kano, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara states. According to UNICEF (2007,p.2) the structure of the (CRA) was "informed by the mandate to provide a legislation which incorporates all the rights and responsibilities of children and which consolidates all laws relating to children into one single legislation, as well as specifying the duties and obligations of government, parents, and other authorities, organisation and bodies". Hence, the CRA by virtue of section 274 has an overriding effect over any other law relating to children's issues or rights including such issues as adoption, guardianship, wardship, fostering, and remand homes, among other issues that concern children. With this, it is clear from the spirit and letters of the CRA that child's rights are adequately covered by Nigerian laws and as such, inadequate legislation may not be responsible for the wide spread violations of children's rights in Nigeria.

Nigerian media are no doubt, inundated with an avalanche of reports on child's rights violations. Chukwuma in Odeh (2013, p.17) noted that "though there is no national statistics on rape and sexual abuse in Nigeria, there seems to be an epidemic as hardly any day goes by that there is no one reported case of rape or the other in the media". Adeyemo (2013, p.13) similarly observed that, "the Nigerian society harbours within its closed doors many evils, yet it seems not much is being done to significantly protect children from the viciousness and perverseness of adults who are meant to protect them. He explained that, "everyday in our

national dailies, we read all sorts. Step fathers having carnal knowledge of their step children, teachers defiling their wards, pastors and their sexual escapades all in the name of exorcism or deliverance. In extreme case, a grandfather defiled his eight month old granddaughter". Nigeria is also said to be grappling with the problem of children living in the streets, children threatened by hunger, children affected by communal conflict, drug abuse, and human trafficking, among others. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2011 main report indicates a persistence of early marriage, child violence, and female genital mutilation among others in Nigeria.

Amidst all these, it is important to note that Nigeria is known for its active and vibrant press. The press fought and dethroned military dictatorship and enthroned democracy in Nigeria. It is expected that the same press can enthrone a child's rights friendly environment in Nigeria. This is especially so against the backdrop of 20th November, 1999 Oslo Challenge which assigned the following responsibilities to media professionals at all level and in all media :

- To raise awareness in the media profession about the rights of children and how they can be protected and promoted by good professional practices or harmed through inappropriate policies and action;
- To work ethically and professionally according to sound media practice and to develop and promote media codes of ethics in order to avoid sensationalism stereotyping (including gender) or understanding of children and their rights;
- To resist commercial pressures that lead to children's issues and the rights of children to freedom of expression, fair coverage and protection from exploitation, including as consumers, being given low priority;
- To work to enhance the relationship between children and the media so that both grow and improve in understanding of the positive and negative power and potential of the relationship.

In view of the aforementioned child's rights situation in Nigeria, it could be argued that the Nigerian press is yet to imbibe the spirit of the Oslo challenge. Geldof and Jempson (2005, p.3) rightly noted that "media professionals are well-placed to keep children's rights on the news agenda, by scrutinizing efforts to protect those rights, and challenging those who fail to meet their commitments to children". They explained that, media professionals can remind the public that children deserve to be respected as individual human beings. They emphasized that the way in which the media represent or even ignore children can influence decisions taken on their behalf and how the rest of the society regard them.

Problem Statement

Child's rights violations are still prevalent in Nigeria eleven years after the domestication of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989 with the enactment of the Child's Rights Act (2003) and its adoption by most states in the country since it is within the concurrent legislative list. Instructively, empirical evidences show that child's rights issues are comparatively under reported in Nigeria media. However, the factors responsible for this situation are not known. It is important to note that child's rights are also not different from human rights and as such national development cannot be attained where child's rights issues and concerns are relegated to the background by the media. It is therefore pertinent to examine and understand the factors behind the present inadequate coverage of child's rights issues by the media.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study.

1. Are journalists adequately equipped for reporting child's rights issues?
2. Do journalists consider other issues more viable than child's rights issues?
3. At what frequency do journalists report Child's right issues?
4. What is the journalists' degree of knowledge of child's rights?
5. Are journalists adequately equipped for reporting child's right issues?
6. Do journalists consider other issues more viable than child's right issues?
7. At what frequency do journalists report child's right issues?

8. What is the journalists' degree of knowledge on child's right issues?

Scope of the Study

The study is limited to journalists in Enugu State who work in public and private media organizations (broadcast and print).

Theoretical Framework

Social Responsibility Theory

This theory is the outcome of the Robert Hutchins Commission of 1947. The Commission was set up by the United States government to examine the failure of the media to meet the needs of the society and make recommendations. According to Mcquail (2005, p.171) the Commission criticized the press for its frequent failings and for the limited access granted to voices outside the circle of a privileged and powerful minority. Against the backdrop of the objectives and findings of the Commission, Mcquail summarized the principles of the theory as follows:

- The media have obligations to society, and media ownership is a public trust
- News media should be truthful, accurate, fair, objective and relevant
- The media should be free, but self-regulated

The foregoing clearly indicates that the media owe the society the obligation of promoting and protecting child's rights just like human rights in general. Therefore, issues that concern children should not be relegated to the background. This is in tandem with Art.17 of CRC 1989 which mandates state parties to ensure the accessibility to children of information and material from a diverse of sources and to encourage the mass media to disseminate information which is of social and cultural benefit to the child, and to take steps to protect him or her from harmful materials.

Framing theory

Framing essentially involves selection and salience. Balnaves, Donald and Shoemith (2009, p.68) explained that, framing makes certain information in a news story salient and depresses the importance of other information. According to Bryant and Thompson (2002, p.309) frames are abstract notions that media professionals use to present news in a particular way. Hague and Harrop (2007, p.130) explained that, the journalists' words, as much as the camera operators' images help to frame a story, providing a narrative which encourages a particular reaction from the viewer. Hence, Scheufele (1999, p.107) noted that, the framing and presentation of events and news in the mass media can systematically affect how recipients of the news come to understand these events. Thus, Entman (1993, p.52) had explained that, a frame can promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Rights of a Child

A child is seen as any human being below the age of 18 years. As such, child's rights should be viewed in the context of human rights since a child is a human being. The rights of a child are recognized under statutes such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, African Charter on the Right and Welfare of the Child; locally it recognized the Child Rights Act 2003. Under the law, the right of a child is broadly grouped into four baskets or groups of rights, namely: Survival right, Development rights, Protection rights and Participation rights.

The CRC establishes the principles of the best of interest of the child and this should be central in all discussions and active that may affect a child. Warritary (2004,p.85) writes that, principles should go hand in hand with the child's level of development and growth. He emphasized that, it should take into account the child's expressed wishes and feelings, as well as the resources available to support the child's Survival, Development, Protection and Participation. Also established in the CRC is the principle of non- discrimination. Here, according to Warritary (2004,p.85), "all children, irrespective of gender, status or class, or specific need, must be entitled to human rights because they are universally appeared". The third principle in the CRC is the right to life, survival and development. This Warritary

(2004,p.85), says seeks to ensure that basic services are provided to all children. He observed that the implication is that every child should have equal opportunity and access to basic social service to enable the child realize his or her full potential. According to him, "Nigeria is faced with significant challenges not only in ensuring that services are adequately provided but that traditional practices and negative cultural norms do not impede the child's right to attain such services."

The fourth human right principle established in the CRC is the need to respect the views of the child and his/her right to participate. Here, Warritay explained that, the views and voices of children must be heard as we collectively become involved in development work. He emphasized that, the principle establishes the need to respect the opinion of children and to take them into account in national planning and decision that are likely to affect their lives in a manner that is equal to the stage of their development and growth. Such active involvement and recognition of the child he noted, will affect his/her development and its changing capacities.

Here are some of the basic principles of children's rights in Nigeria as contained in the "Nigerian: The Rights of the child" published by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and some development in 1995:

1. Every child has the right to life and be allowed to survive and develop.
2. Every child is entitled to a name, family and nationality.
3. Every child is free to belong to any association or assembly according to the law.
4. Every child has the right to express opinion and freely communicate them on any issue, subject to restriction under the law.

As with every rights, the child is also expected to carry out certain duties or responsibilities as contained in Section 19 of the Child Right Act 2003 as follows:

1. Every child has responsibilities towards his family and society, the Federal Republic of Nigeria and other legally recognised communities, nationally and internationally.
2. A child shall, subject to his age and ability and such other limitations as may be contain in the CRA 2003 and any other law, to:
 - a. Work towards the cohesion of his family and community;
 - b. Respect his parents, superiors and elders at all times and assist them in case of need;
 - c. Serve the Federal Republic of Nigeria by placing his physical and intellectual abilities at his service;
 - d. Contribute to the moral well-being of the society;
 - e. Preserve and strengthen social and national solidarity;
 - f. Preserve and strengthen the independence and integrity of Federal Republic of Nigeria.
 - g. Respect the ideals of democracy, freedom, equality, humaneness, honesty and justice for all persons;

Child rights are a wide range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights/entitlements, based on four human rights principles; University, indivisibility accountability and interdependence/inter-relatedness.

The Role of the Media in Child's Rights

Journalists are champions of human rights. They act as the eyes, ears and voices of the public, drawing attention to abuses of power and human rights, often at considerable personal risk. Through their work, they can encourage governments and civil society organisations to effect changes that will improve the quality of people's lives. Journalists, photographers and programme-makers frequently expose the plight of children caught up in circumstances beyond their control, or abused or exploited by adults. However, it is equally important to consider the 'children's angle' in more conventional news coverage. A good way of testing the value of changes in the law or fiscal policy, for example, is to consider the extent to which children will benefit or suffer as a consequence. The way in which the media represents, or even ignores, children can influence decisions taken on their behalf, and how the rest of society regards them. The media often depicts children merely as silent 'victims' or charming 'innocents'. By providing children and young people with opportunities to speak for

themselves - about their hopes and fears, their achievements, and the impact of adult behaviour on their lives - media professionals can remind the public that children deserve to be respected as individual human beings.

According to UNICEF, using a rights-based approach to reporting, the media has the responsibilities in the pursuit of children's rights to:

- Set the agenda for the realization of children's rights in society.
- Advocate for more investments in the education of the child.
- Protect the child from harmful or unnecessary exposure/publicity;
- Respect the privacy of the child;
- Protect the child from harassment.
- Provide information needed by the child for his/her orderly development;

Media Coverage of Child's Rights

Studies have shown that right issues are not given adequate coverage by the Nigerian media. Nwodu and Ezeoka (2013, p.48) found that; out of the 322 editions of the newspapers studied, 119 (27%) editions covered issues relating to women and children's right while 203 (63%) did not cover these issues. They further observed that, "even within the 119 editions of the newspapers that covered the issues, the frequency of mentions of the issues of interest was found to be low as 1-2 mentions dominated with 87.4%; 3-4 mentions were 12.6% while none was found within 5 mentions and above". Similarly, Oyero (2010) in a content analysis of two Nigerian newspapers found that children rights issues are underreported and usually buried inside pages. This, was corroborated by Nwosu and Ezeoke (2013, p.48) in a content analysis of Nigerian newspapers which showed that "87.4% of the stories on women and children's rights were found in the inside pages of the newspapers leaving insignificant 9.2% and 3.4% respectively for the front and back pages". Adeniran *et al* (2015, p.165), cited a study carried out on children and media in Serbia which showed that children were used as a means for drawing attention or attaching importance to other themes. A study in South Africa in (2004) involving different media revealed that children only received prime coverage in the country's media when they feature in negative reports such as crime, disasters or accidents, child abuse and war, conflict or violence. Adeniran, (2015, p.173) in a content analysis of Nigerian print news media found out "over 95% of the stories published on children were buried inside pages. Less than four percent (3.6%) made front page headline, while five (5) editorials representing just one percent (1.3%) of the stories published within the study period.

METHODOLOGY

Survey research method was adopted in this study. This method was employed to ensure that the respondents were studied in their natural setting. The measuring instrument for the study was the questionnaire which was used to generate quantitative data.

Registered journalists in Enugu State formed the population of the study. From the figure made available by the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) Enugu State chapter, there are 320 registered journalists in Enugu State. From this population, a sample of 105 was drawn using Wimmer and Dominick Online sample size calculator. Systematic random sampling method was used to select journalists for questionnaire administration. This was done in order to give all the respondents an equal chance of being selected.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

In this section, quantitative data generated through the questionnaire were analyzed in table using SPSS software version 21. Of the 105 copies of questionnaire administered, 92 copies were validly collected and used.

Table 1: Why reporter prefer the kind of beats they cover

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	It is interesting	32	34.8	34.8	34.8
	Economically viable	8	8.7	8.7	43.5
	Because of my in-depth knowledge	24	26.1	26.1	69.6
	It has high opportunity for stories	28	30.4	30.4	100.0
	Total	92	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 sought to find out why journalists prefer the kinds of beats they cover. The results show that 34.8 percent of the respondents prefer to cover beats they found interesting, 8.7 percent prefer beats that are economically viable, 26.1 percent prefer beats they have in depth knowledge of, 30.4 percent prefer beats with high opportunity for stories. This implies that for most journalists the primary determinant of preferred beat to cover is his/her area of interest.

Table 2: The beats reporters presently cover

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Business/economy	8	8.7	8.7	8.7
	Sports	10	10.9	10.9	19.6
	Politics	26	28.3	28.3	47.8
	NGO	6	6.5	6.5	54.3
	Children issues	6	6.5	6.5	60.9
	Any other	36	39.1	39.1	100.0
	Total	92	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 above revealed that 39.1 percent of the respondents presently cover beats apart from Business/Economy, Sports, Politics, NGO and Children issues. 28.3 percent presently cover Politics, 10.9 percent cover Sports, 8.7 percent cover Business/Economy, 6 percent cover NGOs, 6 percent report Children issues. This implies that most journalists presently cover politics while very few report on Children issues and NGOs.

Table 3: The beats reporters would have preferred to cover if given the opportunity

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Business/economy	8	8.7	8.7	8.7
	Sports	10	10.9	10.9	19.6
	Security	9	9.8	9.8	29.3
	Politics	32	34.8	34.8	64.1
	NGO	4	4.3	4.3	68.5

Children issues	8	8.7	8.7	77.2
Foreign issues	8	8.7	8.7	85.9
Rural issues	13	14.1	14.1	100.0
Total	92	100.0	100.0	

Data in table 3 above show the beats reporters would have preferred to cover if given the opportunity to choose. 8.7 percent would prefer Business/Economy, 10 percent would prefer Sports, 9 percent would prefer Security, 32 percent would prefer politics, 4 percent would prefer NGOs, 8 percent would prefer Children issues, 8 percent would prefer Foreign issues, 13 percent would prefer Rural issues. This implies that most journalists would prefer reporting politics while very few would prefer reporting Children issues.

Table 4: Whether reporters have ever been instructed to pay special attention to children issues

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	32	34.8	34.8	34.8
	No	46	50.0	50.0	84.8
	can't say	14	15.2	15.2	100.0
	Total	92	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 sought to find out whether reporters have ever received instruction from management to pay special attention to children issues. The data show that 34.8 percent of the respondents have ever been instructed to pay special attention to Children issues, 46.50 percent of the respondents have never been instructed to pay special attention to Children issues. 16.2 percent cannot say whether they have received such instruction. This means that most reporters have not been given instruction to devote special attention to Children issues.

Table 5: Ability of reporters to mention legal instruments in reporting child right issues

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	10	10.9	10.9	10.9
	Very good	8	8.7	8.7	19.6
	Good	14	15.2	15.2	34.8
	Poor	2	2.2	2.2	37.0
	Fail	58	63.0	63.0	100.0
	Total	92	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 sought to ascertain the reporters' knowledge of the necessary legal instruments that would aid in reporting the child. Data show that 10.9 percent of the respondents have excellence knowledge of the instruments, 8.7 percent have very good knowledge of the instruments, 14 percent have good knowledge of the instruments, 2 percent have poor knowledge of the instruments while 58 percent failed in the knowledge of the instruments. This means that most journalists do not know the necessary legal instruments that would aid child rights reporting.

Table 6: Whether reporters have received any training on how to report child's right issues

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	22	23.9	23.9	23.9
	No	70	76.1	76.1	100.0
	Total	92	100.0	100.0	

The data in table 6 above show whether reporters have received any training on how to report child's rights issues. 23.9 percent have received training while 76.1 percent of the respondents have not received any such training. This means that most journalists have not received training on reporting child rights issues.

Table 7: The frequency at which reporters report child's right issues

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	4	4.3	4.3	4.3
	Sometimes	19	20.7	20.7	25.0
	Rarely	39	42.4	42.4	67.4
	Not at all	24	26.1	26.1	93.5
	No opinion	6	6.5	6.5	100.0
	Total	92	100.0	100.0	

Table 7 shows that 4.3 percent of the respondents always report child right issues, 20.7 percent report child right issues, 42.4 percent rarely report child right issues, 26.1 percent do not report child right issues at all, 6 percent expressed no opinion. This implies that most reporters rarely report child right issues, and very few report always.

Table 8: Reasons why reporter do not write on child right issues

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid lack of interest	2	2.2	2.2	2.2
Lack of knowledge on the issue	4	4.3	4.3	6.5
Poor commercial/economic value	36	39.1	39.1	45.7
Not had opportunity to report such issues	46	50.0	50.0	95.7
Any other	4	4.3	4.3	100.0
Total	92	100.0	100.0	

The above data in table 8 show why reporters do not report child rights issues. 2.2 percent do not have interest in such reports, 4.3 percent lack knowledge of the issue, 39.1 percent believe it has poor commercial/economic value, 50 percent never had the opportunity to report such issues. 4.3 percent had other reasons apart from the ones stated above. This means that most reporters do not report child rights issues because they had not the opportunity. This could be safely linked to their poor knowledge of such issues and lack of interest.

Discussion of Findings

The findings in this study generated the following discussions. It showed that most journalists, 34.8 percent, would prefer to cover beats that interests them while 30.4 percent would go for beats that will yield more stories. This means that most journalists would ordinary avoid beats that do not interest them or will not yield enough stories.

The foregoing may explain why most of the respondents, 34.8 percent, would prefer reporting politics as against Child right issues which about 39.1 percent of the respondents consider to have poor commercial/economic value. This also explains the poor positions earned by children issues in the media as shown by the available literature. Added to the above revelation is the fact that media managers do not instruct reporters to pay special attention to children issues. This is probably for economic value. 50 percent of the respondents never received instruction to give special attention to children issues from the management.

Related to the above is the reporters' poor knowledge of the necessary instruments for reporting Child rights. 63 percent of the respondents do not have the knowledge at all. This could be attributed to the fact that journalism training curriculum in the country presently does not include Child rights reporting. It is therefore logical that one will not have interest in reporting what one has no knowledge of. So that lack of knowledge could be attributed to the lack of interest in reporting the child. The situation is further complicated by the fact that most journalists, about 76.1 percent of the respondents, have not received any form of training in reporting the child. Hence, about 42.4 percent of the respondents rarely report Child's right issues. 26.1 percent never reported it at all while 20.7 percent reported it sometimes. Only 4 percent reported it always.

The above situation among journalists could explain the prevalence of Child's rights infraction in Nigeria today. There is a strong need for massive awareness creation about Child rights in the country.

Summary of Findings

The study came up with the following findings:

- Most journalists are not adequately equipped to report Child's rights issues.
- Most journalists prefer reporting politics and other issues to reporting Child's rights because of financial gains.
- Most journalists rarely report Child's right issues.
- Most journalists lack knowledge of the necessary instruments for reporting Child's rights.

Conclusion

Most journalists are not well equipped to report Child rights issues. They lack the necessary knowledge to engage in such reporting. In addition, they perceive Child's rights reporting as economically unviable. As such, they prefer reporting politics and rarely reports Child's rights issues.

Recommendations

- Child's rights reporting should be made a part of journalism training curriculum in Nigeria.
- There should be a legislation on compulsory child right reporting.
- A certain percentage of Child's rights issues should be made mandatory media content by the legislature.
- Training and re-training workshop should be organized for journalists on reporting children.

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