

ANALYSIS AND MEDIA REPORTAGE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN NIGERIA

AKINWALERE, IFEDAYO

Department of Mass Communication
Olabisi Onabanjo University
Ago Iwoye, Ogun State

ABIODUN-BADA, ONOME OLUWABUNMI

Department of Mass Communication
Olabisi Onabanjo University
Ago Iwoye, Ogun State

Abstract

The study content analysed The Punch and The Guardian newspapers' coverage of sexual harassment in the news. Social responsibility theory and agenda-setting theory served as the study's foundations. Results showed that The Punch newspaper reported 54.2% more sexual harassment stories than The Guardian, which recorded 45.8%. The layout of the pieces suggested that the chosen newspapers place a greater emphasis on straightforward news than other types of news reports. Furthermore, story prominence revealed that, with 43.7% of the front and 56.3% of the inside pages of the chosen newspapers, sexual harassment articles were prominently covered. It was found that the victims themselves were the source of 37.5% of sexual harassment tales, followed by their family members and friends with 8.4%, security personnel with 16.6%, and eyewitnesses with 10.4%. 14.6% and 12.5%, respectively, of the reports emanated from non-governmental organizations and social media. Therefore, the study recommended that the media pay attention to news on sexual harassment by doing in-depth investigations on each issue. Additionally, a thorough investigation should be made, lectures should be performed, and citizens should be informed and guided about the risk of sexual harassment at all levels, from the personal to the governmental.

Keywords: Harassment, Media, Newspaper, Reportage, Sexual

Introduction

It is impossible to overestimate the impact of the media on society as a powerful tool that controls the world. In addition to merely transmitting information, it has the power to influence and transform

society. Through the media, the public has access to enough international news. Through the media, both good and bad people can be educated. Nothing can undo the media's power because it has an impact on the mind, ears and eyes all at once. The occurrence of sexual assault in Nigeria has raised serious concerns; it is now a threat to families and, most concerning, to young children. Statistics show an alarming rise in recorded cases of sexual assault in various parts of the country, despite the fact that this heinous act is penalized in Nigeria by life in prison and other harsh penalties. According to statistics, rape is the most common type of sexual assault in Nigeria. For instance, the State Command of the Nigerian Police documented approximately 678 incidences of rape within the State between March 2012 and March 2013 whereas the Lagos State Ministry of Justice registered approximately 427 rape cases in 2012 (Ogbo, 2013).

In addition, between March 2013 and mid-October 2013, more than 80 rape crimes were reported in the capital of Edo State, southwest of Nigeria, while approximately 100 rape cases were reported in Kano State, north of the country (*The Nation Newspaper*, 2014). 76 victims of sexual assault were hospitalised to the Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital in Ile-Ife, Osun State, between January 2007 and December 2011, according to a retrospective review. Although the majority of the victims were under 16, all 76 survivors, who ranged in age from 4 to 50, were female (Badejoko, Anyabolu and Adejuyigbe, 2014).

Sexual assault is a crime against humanity and an act of violence that, like a canker worm, is slowly but gradually destroying civilisation on a global scale. It is frequently driven by the desire to dominate and degrade the victim while engaging in inappropriate and obscene sexual behaviour. When someone is coerced into engaging in various sexual behaviours, this is known as sexual assault, which is a kind of sexual abuse. In any setting, including but not limited to the victim's home or place of employment, sexual assault is defined by the World Health Organisation (2012:2) as "Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, acts to traffic or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality using coercion." By doing this, WHO emphasises that sexual assault isn't just physical involvement in sexual activity but also any kind of unwanted verbal sexual advances

and exposure to sexual imagery. So any sort of sexual exploitation, including but not limited to: verbal abuse, unwelcome sexual contact (touching or grabbing), rape, attempted rape, sexual harassment, and child molestation, to name a few, is considered sexual assault.

As many of these cases go unreported by the press, those that are reported are often not given the proper prominence in the media, and information about cases that have been successfully prosecuted and adjudicated in court of law is not made available to the public, one would notice that this devilish and self-demeaning act has had a significant negative impact on the moral fabric of society. The public expects the press, which serves as the fourth estate of the realm, to inform, educate, and amuse them. Therefore, the fundamental query is: to what extent has sexual harassment been covered and reported by the press?

Problem Statement

Through the efforts of feminist activists and writers, the issue of violence against women was brought to public attention in the 1970s. Despite the fact that there is less proof for sexual harassment, the problem has attracted scholarly and public attention. In order to address violence against women, international human rights organizations have created policies with a significant emphasis on prevention (Afolabi, 2020).

A directive to establish permanent committees on sexual harassment was sent out in 1989 by the minister of education to the leaders of all educational institutions. Victims especially students have been left to handle the problem on their own. Sexual harassment occurs outside of just institutions. In the workplace, sexual harassment also affects its victims. A potential victim of sexual harassment at work is typically coerced into complying in order to obtain benefits like employment, promotions, and other possibilities. Sexual harassment at work is frequently committed either openly or covertly. Employment, promotion, and other decisions impacting the individual will be contingent on the individual's acceptance or rejection. The media is crucial for educating, sensitizing and alerting the public about societal ills like sexual harassment. People will be aware of what to do if they come across sexual harassment and if they are educated and well-informed. As a result, the study looked at how *The Guardian* and *The*

Punch newspapers reported sexual harassment in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

1. To determine the frequency of the reportage of sexual harassment issues in Nigeria by *The Punch and The Guardian* newspapers.
2. To examine the prominence attached to sexual harassment stories by *The Punch and The Guardian* Newspapers.
3. To examine the format of presentation of sexual assaults stories by *The Punch and The Guardian* newspapers.
4. To determine the sources of sexual harassment stories reported by *The Punch and The Guardian* Newspapers.

Literature Review

There is seldom a day that goes by when we do not see a new wave of sexual harassment charges being made against individuals ranging from politicians to well-known (and now infamous) Hollywood producers, directors and actors. Sexual harassment is the term used to describe persistent, unwanted sexual advances where the victim may suffer negative outcomes if she refuses. Although every person's experience is unique, the circumstances share unsettlingly similar traits. Typically, they involve a supremely powerful person in a position of authority who abuses his position and status to subject others most often women but occasionally men as well to degrading and unacceptable behaviour (Abudu, 2017).

Afolabi (2020) examines "Press reports of sexual harassment in Nigerian universities. The study found that 58% of the items about sexual harassment in the newspapers were news stories, with no editorials, and that 16% of them were features, 23% of them were opinion pieces, and 3% were advertorials or special reports. The focus of media discourse is determined by the journalistic genre. What is stated and how it is said in reporting stories will largely depend on the genre chosen (Afolabi, 2020). Accordingly, the newspaper do not highlight sexual harassment in Nigeria. For instance, the outcome of the editorial reveals that no editorial consistently aims to arouse awareness regarding the subject. The most common format of reporting was plain news. These outcome continue to demonstrate that sexual harassment incidents in Nigeria are not widely reported. In Nigeria, there are many

occurrences of rape and gang rape, but few of these cases are reported to the authorities, and those that are are either not pursued by the police or the victim is advised to remain silent or let free so as not to embarrass her family (Okafo-Vanni, 2013).

The most important stories of the day are featured on the front page of newspapers. The least important stories are those that appear inside the pages; back page articles are of medium importance. 2018 (Guanah). Daniel, Nwala, Oyinalayefa & Oruwari (2021) used *The Guardian*, *The Nation* and *The Punch* as its case studies to conduct a study on the importance given to stories about rape in Nigerian newspapers. Out of 331 rape incidents reported in the selected newspapers throughout the study period, 85% rape stories were located on the inside pages, while 7% appeared on the front page and 3% did so on the back page. In comparison, 5% were discovered on newspaper center spread pages. Because the majority of the rape stories were published on the inside page, these data continue to demonstrate the low importance given to rape stories. Another study conducted by Afolabi (2020) utilising *The Guardian*, *This Sun* and *This Day* Newspaper discovered that 37% were published on the front pages, 55% were located on the interior pages, and the back pages had 8% coverage. *The Sun* newspaper gave attention to sexual harassment stories with 35%, *This Day* newspaper gave significance to stories with 43% (22), and *The Guardian* newspaper gave prominence to stories with 22% (11).

Family members or friends of the rape victims report the incident. It can be the victims' parents, siblings, or other family members. An such may be seen in the rape case saga of well-known Nollywood actor Baba Ijesha; *The Guardian* of the Minor brought the issue to light (Onu, 2021).

Sometimes, sexual harassment case was brought to public notice by Security Agents and in Nigeria. That is, the police, civil defence, Army, Naval officers. An eye witness, or someone there at the time or location where the crime was committed, will occasionally describe a story. Nwabueze & Oduah (2014). Examine rape in Nigerian newspapers.

According to the study, out of the fifty-seven (57) rape incidents that were recorded between June 2013 and May 2014, thirteen (13) of the cases, were made public by the victims themselves. According to the survey, the police (4), witnesses (0), the court (5), and non-governmental

organizations are other sources of rape-related stories (3). According to this report, family members are the most significant sources (Nwabueze & Oduah, 2014). According to a study by Daniel, Nwala, Oyinalayefa and Oruwari (2021), out of 331 rape stories discovered in the Nigerian newspapers, 129 (39%), were published by non-governmental organisations; 91 (28%) of the stories were published by victims; 39 (12%) were published by parents; 41 (12%) were eye witnesses; 7 (2%) were published by courts; and 5 stories, or 1%, were published by the police. Non-Governmental organisations were the main source. The two studies reveal that victims are less inclined to report their abuse because they are afraid of being victimized and receiving threats from the abuser.

Daniel, Nwala, Oyinalayefa & Oruwari (2021) content analyse *The Guardian, The Nation and The Punch* on rape Cases in Nigeria. According to the study, rape crimes were not highlighted in the understudied newspapers in 2020. Many of the rape stories that were reported were contained in quarter pages, where they had few to no facts and just served as the authors' subjective criticism. Adaja, Talabi and Ogundeji (2017) investigate into how rape-related stories are covered in the chosen Newspapers. The study discovered that rape incidents in 2017 received insufficient coverage and importance in the understudied Newspapers. Ernest-Onuiri, Bolaji and Omolayo (2015) investigate the growing problem of sexual assault in Nigeria. A content analysis of 51 representative stories was used in the study. The goal of the study was to ascertain how prominently and broadly *The Punch* newspaper covered sexual assault in 2015. Rape was identified by the survey as the most often reported kind of sexual assault. In 2015, *The Punch* covered sexual assault at an inadequate degree of prominence, with only 17.6% of those stories appearing on the cover page. Additionally, the majority of the stories (72.6%) were straightforward news reports on sexual assault incidents, whereas only 17.8% of the stories were focused on advocacy. The report suggests that sexual assault be covered more extensively, particularly when it comes to victim advocacy and counseling.

Odu, Falana and Olotu (2014) investigate into the frequency of violent sexual assaults on South-West Nigerian girls. The study looked at the etiological and causative variables that lead to sexual assault, the situations in which it occurs, the features of men who are sexually

assaulted, and the triggers for sexual assault. The study examined all of the South-West Nigeria's vulnerable female girls using a descriptive study design of the survey type. The survey discovered that almost all media outlets reported on sexual attacks of females every day by friends, acquaintances, teachers, and family members.

Egbo (2012) did a content analysis of how sexual assault of women and children was covered in a few Nigerian media. The survey found that few stories on sexual assault made the newspaper's front pages, with 77% of the 183 pieces examined appearing inside page.

Theoretical Framework

Agenda-Setting Theory

The agenda-setting theory, first put forth by McCombs and Shaw in 1972, postulated that the media shapes the public agenda by drawing readers' attention to particular articles, stories, narratives, or concepts. McCombs and Shaw (1972) demonstrate that editors, newsroom workers, and broadcasters play a significant role in influencing political reality through the selection and presentation of news. The amount of information in a news piece and its position teach readers not only about a particular subject but also how much priority to assign to it. The mass media may well choose the crucial subjects by reflecting what politicians say during a campaign; in other words, the media may establish the "agenda" of the campaign.

By using the news media to raise public knowledge and concern about significant topics, agendas are created. Agenda-setting also refers to how the media tries to sway viewers and create a hierarchy of news importance. The press and the media do not represent reality; rather, they filter and mold it. This is one of the two fundamental tenets of agenda setting theory. Further more, the public perceives certain issues as being more important than others due to the media's focus on a small number of topics and issues.

Setting the agenda helps to reduce sexual harassment in Nigeria, which affects the working class and university students. We now examine how the media produces news for its audience as we discuss agenda-setting theory in mass communication. A complicated issue like sexual harassment cannot be miraculously solved by the media. However, taking into consideration the prevalence of sexual harassment.

The media can concentrate on the reasons and the remedy in order to fulfill their moral obligation to educate the public about sexual harassment. By educating and informing the public about these issues, it can also give direction and serve as the cause's advocate in the fight against sexual harassment.

Social Responsibility Theory

F.S. Siebert, T.B. Paterson, and W. Schramm proposed the Social Responsibility Media idea in 1956. The fundamental tenet of the argument is that freedom has associated costs, and that the press, which is granted special privileges by the government, has a duty to society to perform some crucial mass communication tasks.

The media must adhere to professional standards of accuracy, honesty, and objectivity when disseminating information in order to fulfill their legal requirement of social responsibility to society. This means that the media is responsible to the public and should work to disseminate critical information accurately and without bias regarding topics of public concern. The theory's central tenet is that the media must disseminate information responsibly and impartially in order to serve society's interests. As members of society have a right to receive high standards of information, performance, and accountability from the media, the social responsibility thesis suggests that the media has a legal commitment to the society in order to prevent social problems, crime, and violence. To ensure that the general public is aware, press professionals should make every effort to inform and enlighten society about the causes, facts, and repercussions of sexual harassment. This knowledge is being spread objectively and subjectively. By disseminating knowledge, the media shapes attitudes, gauges public opinion, and even inspires the government to act to advance equality and safety in society.

The role and objective of the press (mass media) include serving as the society's watchdog, and through surveillance, the media disseminate information to assist in identifying what is newsworthy. In other words, the media has a responsibility to increase public awareness of sexual harassment by prominently and frequently covering such stories. Therefore, the public's societal attitudes and psychological make-up will be influenced by the exposure of sexual

harassment concerns and how the media covers it. According to Chandra (2015), "when the media fails in its social responsibility on sexual harassment by misrepresenting the facts or providing inadequate coverage, it hinders and harms advocacy and activism in terms of what the general public believes about sexual harassment." When such instances are highlighted, the media should offer a forum where they may be discussed; this would give the victims, in particular, a sense of community.

Methodology

The study content analysed *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers coverage of sexual harassment in Nigeria. The sampling frame of the study consists of editions of the selected newspapers published in Nigeria within the January 1, 2022 - April 31, 2022- That equals an estimated 120 editions for each Newspaper and 240 editions for both newspapers. The study adopted the stratified sampling technique for the selection of newspapers. Stratified sampling technique was applied. According to Pandey and Pandey (2015), stratified sampling is applied to obtain a representative sample from a population using stratas that are more individually homogenous. The stratas were purposively formed on the basis of common features of the items put in each stratum.

In line with the stipulations of the stratified sampling technique, splits its sampling frame of 240 editions into four stratas. The first stratum, Stratum A, representing the month of January, 2022 covers 62 editions. Stratum B, representing the month of February, 2022 covers 56 editions. Stratum C, representing the month of March, 2022 covers 62 editions while Stratum D, representing the month of April, 2022 covers 60 editions.

A sample of 48 editions was drawn from the four stratas to form the sample size of the study. Proportional allocation guided how the sample size was allocated. Proportional allocation stipulates that the sizes of samples drawn from the stratas that make up a population must be kept proportional to the sizes of the strata (Asenahabi, 2019). Represented mathematically, proportional allocation stipulates that if $P(i)$ represents the proportion of the population included in stratum(i) and n represents the total sample size, the number of elements selected

from stratum(i) is $n.P(i)$ (Asenahabi, 2019).

For the study, a sample size of $n = 48$ was drawn from the population of $P = 240$ which is divided into four strata of $P(A) = 62$, $P(B) = 56$, $P(C) = 62$, $P(D) = 60$. Adopting a proportional allocation, the sample sizes are as allocated below for the different strata.

Strata A = 62. Therefore, $P(A) = 62/240$. Using $n.P(A)$, $48(62/240)$. $P(A) = 12.4$.

Strata B = 56. Therefore, $P(B) = 56/240$. Using $n.P(B)$, $48(56/240)$. $P(B) = 11.2$.

Strata C = 62. Therefore, $P(C) = 62/240$. Using $n.P(C)$, $48(62/240)$. $P(C) = 12.4$.

Strata D = 60. Therefore, $P(D) = 60/240$. Using $n.P(D)$, $48(60/240)$. $P(D) = 12$.

$P(A) + P(B) + P(C) + P(D) = 48$. Thus, using proportional allocation, the sample size for the different strata are 12.4, 11.2, 12.4, and 12 respectively which is in proportion to the sizes of the strata viz: 62: 56: 62: 60

Data Analysis and Presentation

Table 1: Frequency of Sexual Harassment Stories Published by *The Punch* and *The Guardian* Newspapers

Newspaper	Frequency	Percentage(%)
The Punch	26	54.2
The Guardian	22	45.8
Total	48	100%

Source: Field Work Analysis, 2022

Table 1 revealed that *The Punch* Newspaper published 54.2% of the total stories while *The Guardian* Newspaper published 45.8% of sexual harassment within the January 1, 2022 and April 31, 2022 timeframe. This shows that *The Punch* Newspaper published the majority of sexual harassment stories.

Table 2: Prominence Attached to Sexual Harassment Stories by *The Punch* and *The Guardian* Newspapers

Variable	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Front page	10	11	21	43.7
Inside page	16	11	27	56.3
Back page	--	--	-	--
Total	26	22	48	100%

Source: Field Work Analysis, 2022

Table 2 indicated that 56.3% of the sexual harassment stories were published on the inside pages, 43.7% of the sexual harassment stories

were published on the front page. This shows that majority of sexual harassment stories were published on the inside pages.

Table 3: Format of Presentation Employed by *The Punch* and *The Guardian* Newspapers in Publishing Sexual Harassment Stories

Variable	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Straight News	24	14	38	79.2
Feature	1	5	6	12.5
Editorials	1	--	1	2
Opinions/Columns	--	3	3	6.3
Others	--	--	--	--
Total	26	22	48	100%

Source: *Field Work Analysis, 2022*

Table 3 showed that 79.2% of the sexual harassment stories were disseminated in straight news, 12.5% were in features, 6.3% were in opinions and columns while 2% were in editorials formats. This shows that majority of the sexual harassment stories published by *The Punch* and *The Guardian* Newspapers were straight news.

Table 4: Sources of Sexual Harassment Stories Published by *The Punch* and *The Guardian* Newspapers

Variable	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Victim (s)	12	6	18	37.5
Family/Acquaintances	2	2	4	8.4
Security Agents	2	6	8	16.6
Witnesses	5	--	5	10.4
N.G.O.s	2	5	7	14.6
Social Media	3	3	6	12.5
TOTAL	26	22	48	100%

Source: *Field Work Analysis, 2022*

Table 4 indicated that 37.5% of the stories were sourced from the victims of sexual harassment, 16.6% of the stories were sourced from security agents, 14.6% of the stories were sourced from Non-governmental organisations, 12.5% of the stories were sourced from the social media, and 10.4% of the stories were sourced from witnesses of sexual harassment. This shows that victims of sexual harassment and security

agents sourced majority of the sexual harassment stories published by *The Punch* and *The Guardian* Newspapers.

Discussion of Findings

In line with the objectives of the study as well as the results of analysed data, it was found that sexual harassment is a frequently reported vice. This is evident as *The Punch* and *The Guardian* Newspapers were both able to supply all 48 stories that made up the sample of the study. Comparatively, *The Punch* Newspaper published more sexual harassment stories (54.2%) than *The Guardian* Newspaper (45.8%). The finding contradicts Okafo-Vanni (2013) and Nwabueze & Oduah (2014) finding that sexual harassment is under-reported in Nigeria.

Also, it was found that *The Punch* and *The Guardian* Newspapers attached an appreciable level of prominence to the reportage of sexual harassment as a huge chunk of sexual harassment stories (43.7%) were published on the front pages while 56.3% were on the inside pages. Comparatively, *The Guardian Newspaper* gave more prominence to sexual harassment than *The Punch Newspaper*. *The Guardian Newspaper* published 50% of its sexual harassment stories on the front pages compared with 38% by *The Punch Newspaper*. This finding contradicts that of Afolabi (2020) and Daniel, Nwala, Oyinalayefa & Oruwari (2021) that states that the reportage of sexual harassment by Nigerian newspapers suffer low prominence.

Another finding drawn from analysed data is that the vice of sexual harassment is largely reported as straight news. This is apparent as 79.2% of the sexual harassment stories published by *The Punch* and *The Guardian* Newspapers were pieces of straight news. Only meagre amounts of sexual harassment stories were published as features (12.5%), editorials (2%), and opinions and columns (6.3%). This finding also syncs with the assertion of Okafo-Vanni (2013) and Afolabi (2020) that sexual harassment stories are mostly reported as straight news.

It was also found that victims of sexual harassment gave out more stories than other sources. This is apparent as *The Punch* and *The Guardian* Newspapers sourced most of their sexual harassment stories (37.5%) from the victims of sexual harassment. Following victims of sexual harassment as sources of sexual harassment stories were security agents (16.6%), non-governmental organisations (14.6%), the social media (12.5%), witnesses (10.4%), and family or acquaintances of

sexual harassment victims ranking last with 8.4%. The finding agrees that of Nwabueze and Oduah (2014) and Daniel, Nwala, Oyinalayefa & Oruwari (2021) that state that victims of sexual harassment are likely to report their stories.

Conclusions

From the data collected and analysed, it was found that sexual harassment is a frequently reported by *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers. Also, it was found that *The Punch* and *The Guardian* attached an appreciable level of prominence to the reportage of sexual harassment as a huge chunk of sexual harassment stories, 43.7% precisely, were published on the front pages while 56.3% were published on the inside pages. It was also found that the vice of sexual harassment is largely reported as straight news as 79.2% of the sexual harassment stories published by *The Punch* and *The Guardian* Newspapers were pieces of straight news.

It was also found that *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers sourced most of their sexual harassment stories from the victims of sexual harassment. It could also be concluded that the mass media attach a premium of prominence to the reportage of sexual harassment stories. The mass media heavily leverages the human angle in reporting sexual harassment, screaming blue murder about the vice of sexual harassment on front pages.

In addition, there is a dearth of in-depth and quality reporting on sexual harassment. Quality reporting formats like editorials, features, and signed opinions on the vice of sexual harassment are sparse. The huge chunk of straight news used in reporting sexual harassment underscores the lack of to the conventional fire brigade approach of the mass media.

It could also be concluded that victims of sexual harassment are not reporting or speaking up against the vice of sexual harassment enough. The mass media sources its sexual harassment stories largely from victims of sexual harassment but the percentage is meagre (37.5%). This underscores the fact that the makeup of the Nigerian society suppresses the report of sexual harassment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and the conclusions drawn, it is recommended that:

1. The mass media should ensure that there be a correlation between the frequency of reporting sexual harassment and the level of quality and in-depth reporting on sexual harassment as it would be impossible for the mass media to set agendas against sexual harassment with ordinary mentions or reportages.
2. Viable mechanisms of reporting sexual harassment be fashioned out. As perpetrators of sexual harassment try to hide their tracks and to stop victims from reporting the vice, societal arms like security agents and non-governmental organisations need to fashion a means of helping victims speak out more. That way, witnesses of sexual harassment cases will be aided to speak out against sexual harassment in the case of minors and the more vulnerable members of society.
3. The mass media should revisit the core news values and reporting ethos that guides the reportage of vices like sexual harassment to forestall the sensationalisation and merchandisement of sexual harassment.
4. The attention of the media is needed by the less privileged and oppressed. The media should be a friend of the public and stand for what is right. The support of the media is needed to curb sexual harassment in Nigeria.

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