

Press Coverage of Child Labour Issues in Nigeria (2010-2014)

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Abstract

The press beyond being the 'watchdog' of society holds the responsibility of whistleblowing on societal anomalies like child labour related issues. Studies have shown that press coverage of child labour (CL) is not sufficient to bring the issue to light. The study adopted content analysis method. Three newspapers were selected- The Punch, The Guardian and The Sun from 2010 to 2014. The sample was made up of 420 editions of the newspapers. The newspapers were purposively selected for reasons of regularity of publication and wide circulation while the editions were selected using the multistage sampling technique. Findings revealed that out of 420 editions studied, only 94 (22.3%) stories were found on child labour related issues meaning that the coverage was not sufficient. Straight news took 74.5% of the total coverage. In conclusion, the press did not give sufficient coverage to CL and did not fulfil the interpretative role by discussing issues comprehensively. It is recommended that the press should give prominence to child-related issues to encourage the government for implementation and strict enforcement of policies; CL issues should be reported looking at the bigger picture bringing the problem to public perspective thus creating opportunity for broader discussion of the issue.

Keywords: Agenda Setting, Child Labour, Child Rights, Framing, Newspaper, Press Coverage.

Introduction

The United Nations in 1989 adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which spells out an array of rights for children such as the economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. This convention has been ratified by member countries including Nigeria. Nigeria has also domesticated the UNCRC and instituted a comprehensive legislation in respect of child's rights in Nigeria called 'The Child Rights' Act 2003. Different legislations like the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990), Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and some state laws have been instituted to address the problems that children face, yet child labour remains a major problem in the country and comprises street hawking, domestic service, bus conducting, trafficking and street begging among other activities.

The threat of poverty, high rate of unemployment, diseases, violence and war makes children face commercial exploitations by adults who deny them the privilege of protection. Based on the Child Rights Act, children like adults have several rights which must not only be recognized, but enforced, upheld and protected; yet, today in Nigeria, children still walk the streets hawking and begging even when they should be in school.

Failure on the part of government to strictly enforce this Act has not only done the damage of entrenching boldness in those who use children for labour but has increased the different forms of abuse society impose on the children. Nwiro (2010), reports that 15 million children under the age of 14 are working across Nigeria. This ill unfortunately will linger in our society until appropriate measures are taken to rescue the future of the country.

According to Valenzuela and McCombs (2009), the mass media help us to learn about the world beyond our reach. The media serve as the chief information source for most people; what most individuals know today is as a result of the pictures created for them by the mass media. The media can raise awareness on the need for parents to stop giving out their children for cheap labour and also sending them out to hawk or beg; they can also sensitise children on some of their rights as stipulated in the Child's Rights Act and the UNCRC.

Aminu (2013) posits that there is need for intensified reportage from the media on the causes and dangers of child labour and that the media should bring the issue to the front burner. Uwom (2012, p. 3) explains that the media "have the responsibility of advocacy, sensitising and conscientising policy makers for development of friendly policies and decisions." Media reports can also sensitise the government on the need for appropriate policies to be put in place to address the issue of poverty and uneven distribution of resources which could lead to child labour and also to make policies guiding the use of children and enforce punishment where necessary.

The aim of this study therefore is to evaluate the extent of coverage the media has given to the problem of child labour and how the media is bringing the problem to focus to get people's attention.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of child labour and reasons some parents or guardians force their children into labour can be traced to a harsh economic environment, poor quality of life, unemployment, lack of social services at home, inadequate food and health care service (Okojie, 1987; Ebigbo, 2003 as cited by Dada 2013). At the end of work on any day, children go home and deliver the proceeds of the day to the parents/guardians who are happy to receive the money which in some cases are vital to the family survival (Ebigbo, 1988 as cited by Dada, 2013). Thus, it can be said that children are the heads of some households because they augment the family income with the proceeds of their daily activities on the streets.

However, the risks such as motor accident, rape, kidnapping, extortion, sexual molestation among others outweigh the gains. Child labour could result in sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies, the risk of ritual killers looking for children to abduct, and psychological problems, which could further strengthen the poverty cycle.

While the media creates awareness on the problem of child labour, awareness and sensitisation alone is not enough to prevent families from sending their children to work under hazardous conditions, there is need to rally the government through their reportage to address the problem of poverty, some other cultural factors and other problems that make it inevitable for children to work. Unfortunately, political issues receive far greater attention in the Nigerian mass media than some other important issues like health, education, environment, social issues and so on.

The media can dig deeper and through incisive reports, they can show the public the dangers inherent in subjecting children to work such as health dangers, psychological problems and also physical challenges. Past studies that have looked at media coverage of children issues have concluded that the media have not given enough coverage to issues affecting children (Oyero, 2011; Nwodu and Ezeoke, 2013). Furthermore, scholars believe the media can perform the role of advocating for the rights of children when reported in the proper context (Goddard and Saunders, 2001; Kunkel, Smith, Suding and Biely, 2002; Arthur 2012; Jabeen, 2014). The aim of this study therefore is to find out the extent of coverage that the Nigerian media especially newspapers have given to address the menace of child labour.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Find out the major genre of coverage of child labour issues by *The Guardian*, *The Punch* and *The Sun* newspapers.
2. Ascertain the dominant child labour issue covered by the newspapers under study.
3. Find out the level of prominence and depth of coverage accorded to child labour issues by the selected newspapers.
4. Ascertain the direction of framing of child labour issues in the selected newspapers

Theoretical Considerations

The study will be theoretically linked with Agenda-setting theory and Framing theory.

Agenda-Setting Theory

Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw during the 1968 U.S. Presidential elections sought to find out “if there is a relationship between the priority issues of the mass media and the priority issues of the public” (Valenzuela and McCombs, 2009, p. 91 citing McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Ekeanyanwu (2007, p. 89) citing McCombs and Shaw (1974), posits that “the media emphasis on an issue influences the audience to also view the issue as important”. Greenberg and Salwen (2009) agree as they posit that when topics are less emphasized in the media then they are of less importance to the public because the media confer status on issues.

Freyenberger (2013) further explains that news media can increase the importance of a news story by the amount of time spent reporting on the issue. Dominick (2002) explains that the media have an impact on Agenda-Setting, when “they have the ability to choose and emphasize certain topics, thereby causing the public to perceive these issues as important (p.492).” Griffin (2006) says that with the salience of issues in the media, people pay greater attention to them and regard them as important.

This goes to show that the more media reports in the form of news, features, editorials and other editorial contents on child labour issues and the more prominence, the more the audience will learn about the issue and thus take a stand. In addition, by bringing attention to specific child labour issues through the agenda-setting function, the media sets agenda for the public and for policy makers. Child labour may not be eradicated completely but it can be controlled with the media being active in the advocacy for policies to guide children and to a great extent stem the problem of child labour in Nigeria.

Framing Theory

Griffin (2006) defines framing as the “central organising idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of *selection*, *emphasis*, *exclusion* and *elaboration*.” Citing Iyengar (1990), Hemphill, Culotta and Heston (2013 p.6) assert that the “repeated exposure to a frame

makes it more readily available in memory, so frames that are used frequently and by many people are likely the most effective at influencing public opinion". Freyemberger (2013) further adds that the news media often reframe an event by emphasizing different attributes of the event, in order to keep the story alive and fresh.

Siraj (2008, p. 7) citing Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad, (2000) assert that "framing is unavoidable in the course of news construction. It is the stage at which journalists identify problems, analyze reasons and make moral judgments." Boydston, Gross, Resnik, and Smith (2013) explained that to frame a story is to select some aspect of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (p.2).

Iyengar (1991) identified two categories of frames: Episodic and Thematic frames. He asserts that episodic framing is when the media present issues in individual terms and on a short-term basis while thematic framing is when the media present issues from a collective angle and on a long-term basis. FrameWorks Institute (2002 p.3) in explaining episodic frame asserts that it "reduces life to a series of disconnected episodes, random events or case studies". On the other hand, "thematic frame provides details about trends, not just individuals; they identify shortcomings at the community or systems level that have contributed to the problem."

Episodic framing has to do with highlighting the issue from the individual's angle, that is, like attributing the blame of the problem to the victim. In using episodic frames, the issue is depicted as a particular person's problem, a specific incident or a special case- for example, a child begging on the street as a result of poverty, a child running errands for criminal gangs and not looking at the situation(s) that led to the child being in the reach of such gang, attributing the problem of child labour to the poor who give their children up to augment the family income rather than the society. Thematic frame on the other hand has to do with viewing the problem from a general or societal context, for example, discussing some of the causes of child labour and highlighting poverty as a major cause that can only be addressed when there is a fair distribution of resources across the citizenry. The way a journalist reports a story highlighting the problem and some of the causes can go a long way in putting the issue on people's minds. The report can come from the angle of dangers of the child on the street or from what the government can do to help the child maybe by distributing resources across the citizens to alleviate the sufferings of those who are less privileged.

Literature Review

Media Reporting of Children Issues

Internews Europe (2014 p.8) studied the role of the media in protecting child rights in Brazil, India and Kenya and highlighted some factors that inhibit the media reporting on child labour issues as follows:

Lack of children's voices: A patronising attitude towards children and youth severely limits the space that children get in the mainstream media, and all but excludes their voices from the public debate on child rights.

Lack of coverage: There is an absence of meaningful, realistic and socially relevant media coverage or information flow on child rights issues.

Lack of professionalism: Reporting on child rights and children's issues is not widely recognised as a specialised field, and this means not many journalists are motivated or even capable of producing in-depth coverage of children issues. This neglect Internews Europe (2014) states starts right from journalism school and extends to almost all newsrooms.

Lack of media-Civil Society Organization (CSO) cooperation: Internews Europe discovered from their study that there is a high level of mistrust between the media and child rights advocates such as Non-governmental organisations or Civil Society Organizations. Both sides do not really understand each other's needs and expectations, and find it hard to work together constructively.

Lack of rules: Ethical guidelines on reporting child rights are little known and poorly implemented. This situation is also true in Nigeria; the media hardly give coverage to children issues probably because they do not see children as an important group in the society. There is lack of children voices in media reports; and this is evident in Oyero (2010); Nwodu and Ezeoke (2013). This situation is however unfortunate and is not in accordance with the social responsibility theory that posits that the media should be used for public good and become a voice of all the people not just elite groups or groups that had dominated national, regional or local culture (Baran and Davis, 2003 p.109). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasises participations rights of the child but unfortunately this is not adhered to except in rare cases on days like Children's Day (May 27) or International Children's Day of Broadcasting (2nd Sunday of December).

Empirical Studies on Media and Child Labour Issues

Goddard and Saunders (2001) discussed the role of the media in relation to child abuse and child protection and argue that the media have been essential to the task of putting the problem of child abuse to the public agenda and also on the political agenda. The authors' content analysed some news reports and the use of language in the reports as the media is the main source of information for most people. Citing some past works, they assert that the coverage of issues affecting children places journalists in the role of advocate. Some of the languages used were against children as they were regarded as victims, then as burden. Goddard and Saunders (2001) conclude that in addition to the role of the media in highlighting specific childhood concerns, journalists are to exert powerful influence on social and political responses to all children and are thus in a prime position to advocate for children in society.

Kunkel, Smith, Suding and Biely (2002) studied the coverage of five child related topics- child abuse and neglect, child care, child health insurance, teen child bearing and youth crime and violence to ascertain the frequency and also the depth of the media reports in these areas. They found out that youth crime, violence, and child abuse and neglect accounted for majority of news coverage; they also found out that only 11% of child maltreatment stories used thematic frame while majority were reported using episodic frame, that is, reported as individual incidents or legal actions taken against perpetrators. They suggested that the media must strive to put stories in context regarding how children live and the public policy climate for children issues; this they say will help the reader place the incident in a broader context.

In another study, Oyero (2010) studied how the coverage of child rights is influenced by media ownership. Using the content analysis method, two national newspapers *Daily Times* (government-owned) and *The Guardian* (privately-owned) newspaper were selected. Covering a period of 5 years- from 1999 to 2003, the sample constituted 600 issues for both newspapers using the simple random sampling technique. The findings showed that a total of 193 stories were covered on the issues. *The Daily Times* gave more coverage to the issue than *The Guardian*. Years 2002 and 2003 recorded high reportage and the Child Right's Act was passed by the National Assembly in 2003. This shows that there is a connection between media agenda, public agenda and policy agenda in the sense that the issue was highlighted in the media to the point that it got the attention of the people and the policy makers and thus led to the passing of the Child Rights Act. It could be that the media merely reported news associated with the child rights bill and not general issues that concern children. The straight news format was used most in the reportage meaning the reports were not comprehensive enough. Opinion articles were low and this shows that there was low engagement of the public on the subject of child rights. The author concludes that there is need for continued sustenance of newspapers to report development issues. He adds that because of the commercial interests of privately-owned papers; they pay more attention to reports that are of economic interest. The

research recommends that the papers should devote more attention to development issues and support the coverage of child rights issues.

Oyero (2011) in another sought to examine how Nigerian and Ghanaian newspapers gave attention to issues concerning children. The Social Responsibility and Development Journalism theories were employed in this study. Content analysis design was adopted and the study was between 1999 and 2003. Using stratified sampling, the newspapers were separated along the line of ownership- for Nigeria, *The Daily Times* (government-owned) and *The Guardian* (privately-owned) newspapers were chosen and for Ghana, *Daily Graphic* (government-owned) and *Daily Guide* (privately-owned) were chosen. 300 issues were selected from each of the papers totalling 1,200 issues. Findings show that a total of 448 stories were covered. Ghanaian newspapers gave greater prominence with 56.9% while Nigerian newspapers had 43.1%. 60% of the stories were covered by both government-owned newspapers' while the privately-owned newspapers' had 40%. The author concludes that children seemed to be invisible in the newspapers' content. The level of prominence given to the reports was also low as most reports were buried inside the pages of the newspapers showing that child rights stories had weak newsworthiness. Government officials were the most quoted sources in Ghanaian newspapers while in Nigerian newspapers Child Right's Advocates and NGOs were the predominant voices followed by government officials and agents. This shows that the press can only support a government that is making progress in bringing about development. The newspapers also covered the reports predominantly as straight news. The author recommends that the newspapers should give more prominence to child rights issues by placing stories on more important pages. He also recommends that stories should be presented in feature format to give background information to the report. Also, there should be opinion articles and letters to the editor to allow for divergent views and help policy makers understand the public perspectives on the issue.

Arthur (2012) conducted a study titled 'Framing Child Neglect: A Content Analysis of National and Regional U.S. Newspaper Coverage' to contribute to the knowledge base on media coverage of child welfare-related issues to identify ways to improve coverage and, eventually, improve public understanding to increase support for societal-level interventions to address the issue. The research employed a quantitative content analysis method where four newspapers were selected- *New York Times* and *Washington Post* with national spread and *San Jose Mercury News* and *Houston Chronicle* with regional focus. Findings showed that majority of the coverage were reported as straight news with 78.0% of all articles. It was also discovered that most news articles were episodically framed while most of the lengthier feature stories and opinions/editorials were thematically framed. It was asserted by the researcher that this was expected since features, opinions/editorials are less focused strictly on news and allow for greater detail and context about larger systemic issues. Arthur (2012) concluded by affirming the importance of using thematic frames in the news as such frames help the reader understand the issue from a larger societal context and thereby encourage community-level action to prevent maltreatment and minimise its impact when it occurs.

Ortum (2013) in an investigation into the extent of children content in Kenyan media explains that child related issues require adequate publicity to get the attention of policy makers. Two newspapers were studied: *The Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers. The focus of the study were to identify the amount of coverage given to children issues, the nature of children programs covered by the newspapers' and the level of prominence accorded such reports. The study analysed the contents of the two selected newspapers from January 2013 to June 2013. The editions analysed were chosen based on availability and presence of children issues. A total of 240 editions were selected, 120 from each newspaper. Findings show that 121 articles were on children issues out of the 240 analysed. On the type of article, news accounted for the most reports and majority came as news briefs; based on placement, majority of the stories were in the middle pages and only few were in a prominent position like the front page. The researcher recommends that the newspaper organizations expand coverage on children issues by devoting specific pages to issues concerning children so readers can go to such pages when seeking information on children.

Nwodu and Ezeoke (2013) evaluated the coverage of children and women's rights by the Nigerian press with the aim of contributing to public knowledge of the importance of protecting the twin rights in Nigeria. Content analysis of three newspapers, *The Champion*, *The Punch* and *The Guardian* using the random sampling without replacement was adopted. 120 editions of each of the papers' were selected totalling 360 editions within 2011. The researchers found that there were 119 reports on women and children's rights showing that the frequency of mentions was low. Findings further showed that majority of the stories were found in the inside pages of the newspapers. Non-governmental and Civil based organisations were the major sources of news and the leading advocates of the twin rights. In sum, results showed that the coverage of the twin rights was poorly covered and not given due prominence by the Nigerian media. The authors recommended that there should be a more elaborate research to find out the correlation between press coverage of the issues and the audience perception-cum-attitude to the issues.

Jabeen (2014) focused on media coverage of child protection issues in Pakistan to analyse how child protection problems are treated in Pakistan. Using the content analysis method, two newspapers were studied from 1990 to 2010, *Jang* and *Dawn* newspaper. It was discovered that the newspapers gave some coverage to child protection issues covering themes such as crimes against children like rape, killing, and also children as victims of traffic accidents, negligence of public departments and agencies. Jabeen concluded that the coverage by the newspapers highlighted the nature and scale of violence, abuse and exploitation against children in Pakistan and some of these are linked to broader structural and institutional factors. The researcher concludes that newspapers can actually be a veritable tool to record child protection issues in Pakistan.

In the study Newspaper coverage of Child Labour, Kudjonu (2016) content analysed the Daily Graphic newspaper to examine the frequency of coverage of child labour issues in Ghana. Some objectives of the study were to identify the forms of child labour, nature of coverage of child labour issues, and type of story as covered by the Daily Graphic to establish if the coverage helps to expand or constrain public understanding of child labour issues. The study was anchored on the social responsibility theory of the press. Editions of the government-owned Daily Graphic newspaper from June 2014 to June 2015 were selected. Out of the 78 editions of the newspaper and 600 stories analysed, only 37 stories were found on child labour. Child trafficking was the highest form of child labour covered, while most of the reports were in straight news format. It was also discovered that the dominant voice in the reports was by government officials followed by advocacy groups. The study recommended that as a government-owned newspaper, the Daily Graphic could start a column in the newspaper on child labour; in addition, the journalists should give more in-depth reports to cover various forms of child labour issues.

Methods

This study adopted the content analysis method. Macnamara (2005 p.1) citing Neuendorf (2002) describes content analysis as "the primary message- centred methodology." Child labour is an issue on a national scale and as such the newspapers for this study were selected based on spread and readership.

Three newspapers were chosen for this study: *The Punch*, *The Guardian* and *The Sun*. The period of study was from 2010 to 2014. The 5-year period is also to determine the consistency in coverage and the depth. The criteria for selecting these publications are for reasons of availability and accessibility, regularity of publication, national circulation and publication of various contents (Batta 2012; Batta, Ashong and Bashir, 2013). They also bear the content needed for analysis.

This study adopted the multistage sampling technique. Wimmer and Dominick (2011) propose that most content analyses in mass media involve multistage sampling. For the first stage, each year was divided into four quarters; the next stage was the selection of one month from each quarter totalling 4 months of study for each year. Further selection was done to pick the days that were sampled using a constructed week

sampling method. Luke, Caburnay, and Cohen (2011 p.78) cite some studies on the use of constructed week sampling thus:

Constructed week sampling is a type of stratified random sampling (SRS) technique popular in media studies in which the final sample represents all seven days of the week to account for cyclic variation of news content (Jones and Carter, 1959; Stempel III, 1952) and (Riffe, Aust and Lacy, 1993) as cited by Luke, Caburnay, and Cohen (2011 p.78).

Wimmer and Dominick (2011) call this sampling stratification by week of the month and by day of the week. The rule here states that no more than two days from one week can be chosen as a way to ensure a balanced distribution across the month. Luke, Caburnay, and Cohen (2011 p.78) further explains how a constructed week sampling can be done: constructing one week from a month involves selecting one Sunday from all four Sundays in the month, one Monday from all Mondays in that month and continuously till all days of the week are represented in the final sample.

Thus, to get the editions that were sampled for this study, seven days of the week were chosen from each of the months. This means that in each month there were seven days and for each year, there were 28 editions (days). In each year, 84 editions were sampled for the three newspapers and 140 editions each were studied for the five years per newspaper. The total number of editions studied was 420 editions of the three newspapers.

This study made use of secondary data that is, the newspaper reports on child labour. The research instrument that was used for this study was a Coding schedule containing the different variables to answer the research questions.

The analysis was done by one of the researchers and two research assistants who served as the second and third coders. The study applied Cohen Kappa's intercoder reliability test to test for reliability amongst the coders. Reliability between coders 1 and 3 had a reliability score of $Kappa=0.833$ with $p<0.001$, 95% CI) while reliability between coder 2 and 3 had a score of ($Kappa=0.992$ with $p<0.001$, 95% CI). This shows that all three coders were in perfect agreement as the scores were significantly different from 0 showing that the different coders perceived a piece of content in the same way and coded it accordingly.

The Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) version 21 was used to analyse the data. The analysis was descriptive in nature. The descriptive statistics made use of simple frequency counts and percentages. The major content categories for this study were: Prominence, Genre/Forms of coverage, Frame type, Child labour type.

- Prominence: this was measured by the location or position of the story and the space allotted to the story. Griffin (2006) from the point of view of McCombs and Shaw establishes that position and length of story are the two main criterion of prominence.
- Story placement/positioning i.e. front page (FP), inside pages (IPs), back page (BP), Opinion/Editorial page (Op-Ed).
- Space/Depth of coverage- Full page, half page, over full page, less than half page.
- Genre/Forms of coverage: this has to do with some of the editorial contents of the newspaper like straight news story, editorial, features, opinion articles/columns, letters, photo news.
- Child labour issue type: This would be perusing the stories/reports to determine the type of child labour: - child street hawking, child street begging, head-load carriers, child domestic servants, child trafficking, child scavenger, commercial sexual exploitation, child industrial work, etc.
- Frame type: the way the media frames some issues can affect how those issues will be perceived. Based on some studies on issues of human rights violation, two major frames have been used to trace the cause of an occurrence and the possible solution. These frames are- episodic and thematic frames. Episodic framing of an issue is when the report focuses heavily on individuals and or when it has to do

with a specific case. Thematic frame on the other hand is when the report discusses the larger systemic/societal issues in relation to the problem.

Results and Discussion

Ninety four (94) stories were discovered and analysed across the selected newspapers. *The Punch* newspaper had 43.6% of the total reports, *The Guardian* had 20.2% and *The Sun* had 36.2% of the total reports.

The researchers implemented descriptive analytical procedure in which percentages were utilized for data classification in order to determine how the tabular analyses answer the research questions.

Research Question one: What is the most dominant journalistic genre in which child labour issues are presented in *The Guardian*, *The Punch* and *The Sun* newspapers?

Table 1: Journalistic genre

| Newspaper | Journalistic genre | | | | | | Total |
|---------------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| | Straight news story | Editorial | Features | Opinion articles/column | Letters | Photo | |
| <i>The Punch</i> | 31(75.6%) | 1(2.4%) | 5(12.2%) | 2(4.9%) | 1(2.4%) | 1(2.4%) | 41 |
| <i>The Guardian</i> | 12(63.2%) | 2(10.5%) | 3(15.8%) | 2(10.5%) | 0 | 0 | 19 |
| <i>The Sun</i> | 27(79.4%) | 0 | 6(17.6%) | 0 | 0 | 1(2.9%) | 34 |
| Total | 70(74.5%) | 3(3.2%) | 14(14.9%) | 4(4.3%) | 1(1.1%) | 2(2.1%) | 94(100%) |

The major genre of coverage or type of report given to child labour issues was *Straight News story* (74.5%), Feature articles accounted for (14.9%), *Opinion articles/column* (4.3%) and *Editorials* accounted for just 3.2%. This means that the newspapers reported the issues as they unfolded and probably did not do extensive research on the problem. The reporters only performed the informational role and gave only the superficial aspect of the occurrence because news only gives details and hardly gives in-depth analysis.

The implication of this is that the reports did not allow for much interpretation by the reporters. Having reports in more news format also means that the tenets of the framing theory were not applied by the press as messages were not framed to activate the readers thoughts to make inferences based on the issue, define the problem and thus proffer solutions as the reports were just informational. News only contains information of what happened and the way it happened without any interpretations. In *The Punch* newspaper, most of the news reports were crime stories for instance, ‘Couple arrested for dumping day-old baby inside bush’ (December 10, 2012), ‘Man kills son, mutilates wife over alleged infidelity’ (April 20, 2012), *Saturday Punch*, February 1, 2014 ‘Couple arraigned for abandoning child’.

In related findings, Nwodu and Ezeoke (2013) in their study also observed that media reports were more of straight news stories. In similar vein, Arthur (2012) in her study found out that majority of the coverage given to child neglect stories were reported as straight news with more than half of the total number of stories found in the study; editorial and features accounted for less. Oyero (2010) also reported in his findings that straight news format was used most in the reportage. This means that the reports were not comprehensive enough.

Internews Europe (2014) in a study of three countries found out specifically from Kenya that straight news accounted for greater coverage while there were low levels of opinion, editorial and feature articles. They assert that without genres like features, editorials and opinion articles ‘there is lack of in-depth, thoughtful, well-discussed reporting’ (Internews Europe, 2014).

Oyero (2010) said the trend of having more reports in straight news format could be attributed to the commercial interests of the newspapers so they pay more attention to reports that have economic interest. Jempson (1997) asserts that children are not considered ‘hot topics’ for the media, except they are involved in some shocking data or statistics or figure in a scandalous story. The journalists, editors and also publisher, determine what is newsworthy and what should get to the public domain in terms of importance of issues.

The editorials and some feature articles were published on commemorative days like Children’s day. In a report by *The Guardian* (May 27, 2010), the headline of an editorial was ‘Children’s Day’. There was also a feature story which sprang up as a result of an investigation by a reporter who had to go undercover as published in *Saturday Sun* (February 19, 2011), the headline read- “Girls for Sale: Inside Home where Kids, Teenagers on sale”. Internews Europe (2014) further add that “without editorial and opinion news items, there is a void of credible voices and authority figures on the issue of child rights.”

Features are in-depth and well researched piece of writing that also give a background to an issue. It is important that newspapers give balanced attention to news and features so that while some issues are reported as news, it can further be discussed to give a better background to the problem. Editorials are meant to provide background and analyses of events, provoke thought and discussion and critical thinking; in addition, editorials should influence public opinion and also public officials, and suggest a cause of action on an issue. Editorials provide critical interpretation of an issue or events to not only inform but to educate, persuade and influence a course of action. Opinion articles and columns are also important to the newspaper in the sense that they provide knowledgeable perspectives to issues and this means that when child labour issues are discussed by columnists especially as most are from outside the organisation, it could offer different angles to view the issue.

Research Question two: What is the dominant child labour issue covered by the newspapers under study?

Table 2: Child Labour Issue

| Newspaper | Child Labour Issue | | | | | | | Total |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| | Child street hawking | Child street begging | Child domestic servants | Child trafficking | Commercial sexual exploitation | Child abuse | General child rights | |
| <i>The Punch</i> | 1(2.4%) | 0 | 3(7.3%) | 2(4.9%) | 0 | 35(85.4%) | 0 | 41 |
| <i>The Guardian</i> | 0 | 0 | 2(10.5%) | 1(5.3%) | 1(5.3%) | 11(57.9%) | 4(21.1%) | 19 |
| <i>The Sun</i> | 1(2.9%) | 2(2.9%) | 1(2.9%) | 7(20.6%) | 0 | 22(64.7%) | 1(2.9%) | 34 |
| Total | 2(2.13%) | 2(2.13%) | 6(6.38%) | 10(10.6%) | 1(1.06%) | 68(72.3%) | 5(5.32%) | 94(100%) |

The most dominant child labour issue covered by the newspapers was *Child abuse* (*The Punch*=85.4%, *The Guardian*= 57.9%, *The Sun*=64.7%). Furthermore, *Child trafficking* was covered most by *The Sun* (20.6%) while *General Child rights* was covered most by *The Guardian* (21.1%). Six child labour issues including general child rights were raised for this study. *The Guardian* looked at general child rights issues while making reference to some specific types. Such stories which made reference to child rights violation generally and made some allusions to some types of child labour were categorised under the general child rights section. Child domestic service was partially significant; while other important child labour issues such as child street begging, Child Street hawking, and commercial sexual exploitation were overlooked by the newspapers.

Child abuse is an issue that some people still find hard to understand in the sense that some people do not know that between discipline and child abuse is a thin line. This could be why child abuse issues gained more coverage because while some parents/guardians were trying to enforce discipline, they ended up inflicting pain on the child/children and some led to death of the child. Kunkel, Smith, Suding and Biely

(2002) did a study on coverage of five child related topics- child abuse and neglect, child care, child health insurance, teen child bearing and youth crime and violence. It was discovered that child abuse and neglect accounted for majority of the coverage after youth crime and violence.

Research Question Three: What is the level of prominence and depth of treatment of child labour issues in selected newspapers?

Table 3: Position of Story

| Newspaper | Position of story | | | | Total |
|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|-----------|
| | Front page lead story | Other front page | OP-ED page | Inside pages | |
| <i>The Punch</i> | 0 | 4(9.8%) | 2(4.9%) | 35(85.4%) | 41 |
| <i>The Guardian</i> | 0 | 0 | 3(15.8%) | 16(84.2%) | 19 |
| <i>The Sun</i> | 4(11.8%) | 0 | 0 | 30(88.2%) | 34 |
| Total | 4(4.3%) | 4(4.3%) | 5(5.3%) | 81(86.2%) | 94 |

Prominence here was measured using position or placement of story and space/depth of coverage. Findings show that issues on child labour were placed in less prominent positions, particularly, the stories appeared more frequently on the *Inside* pages of the newspapers and rarely on the front page or back page of the newspaper. 81 of the stories were on the *Inside* pages. *The Punch* (85.4%), *The Guardian* (84.2%) and *The Sun* (88.2%) to a very large extent reported child labour issues on the *Inside pages* of their publications.

Only 4 stories were on the Front page and this means the newspapers seemed not to attach enough importance to child labour issues. Stories that appear on the front page and secondly on the back page are often considered important and should attract the audience's attention even without picking up the papers. This could be attributed to the fact that children are not considered as very important topics as compared to political and economic issues. Jempson (1997) also stated that, "children aren't considered 'hot topics' for the media, not unless children figure in a scandalous or heart-rending story or in some shocking data or statistics." Two studies (Nwodu and Ezeoke, 2013; Oyer, 2011) also corroborates this finding as they report that most stories on children and women alike are buried inside the pages of the newspaper probably showing they lack newsworthiness.

Table 4: Space/Depth of Coverage

| Newspaper | Space/Depth of coverage | | | | Less than half |
|---------------------|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------|------------------|
| | Full page | Half page | Combined Two pages | More than half | |
| <i>The Punch</i> | 1(2.4%) | 6(14.6%) | 3(7.3%) | 2(4.9%) | 29(70.7%) |
| <i>The Guardian</i> | 2(10.5%) | 5(26.3%) | 0 | 3(15.8%) | 9(47.4%) |
| <i>The Sun</i> | 7(20.6%) | 7(20.6%) | 1(2.9%) | 0 | 19(55.9%) |
| Total | 10(10.6%) | 18(19.1%) | 4(4.3%) | 5(5.3%) | 57(60.6%) |

Further findings of this study also show that the newspapers did not seem to give ample space to reports on child labour issues as 57 (60.0%) stories out of the 94 stories were covered in Less than Half Page. While some of the reports were extensive and balanced in terms of the voices in the reports, not enough space was given to the issues of discussion.

The agenda-setting theory asserts that when the media gives salience to issues in terms of story placement and space allotted to the reports, then the public will perceive such issue as important for discussion and the constant discussion of such issue at different fora could lead to the policy makers considering such issue as

important. The finding of this study shows that the tenets of this theory are not being applied by the media in issues concerning children.

Research Question Four: What is the direction of framing of child labour issues in the selected newspapers?

Table 5: Frame Type

| Newspaper | Frame Type | | Total |
|---------------------|------------|----------|-------|
| | Episodic | Thematic | |
| <i>The Punch</i> | 25 | 16 | 41 |
| <i>The Guardian</i> | 2 | 17 | 19 |
| <i>The Sun</i> | 25 | 9 | 34 |
| Total | 52 | 42 | 94 |

Child labour stories were episodically framed more in *The Punch* and *The Sun* while they were thematically framed more in *The Guardian*. This shows that though the reports on child labour issues from *The Guardian* newspaper were not much as compared to the total, most of the reports were thematically framed that is giving the stories a broader context and societal angle. *The Punch* had the highest number of reports but more than half were episodically framed, most of the stories gathered were seen on the Crime page, this means that the stories were reported looking at the crime the individual committed without further discussing some of the underlying causes that led to that problem. More than half of the stories reported in *The Sun* were also episodically framed.

The frame types were also measured against the child labour issues to find out if certain child labour issues are prone to being framed episodically or thematically. The child labour issue with the highest number of reports was child abuse and more than half of the total number of stories on child abuse was framed episodically. This means that most of the reports were covered looking at individual episodes or crimes perpetrated by individuals and for some the prosecution of such individuals.

Furthermore, frame types were also compared to the forms of coverage given to stories on child labour issues. There were more straight news stories from the study and more than half were episodically framed while longer articles like features and editorials/opinion were thematically framed and the stories given a broader context. The only three (3) editorials seen in the study were framed thematically and this could be because editorials look at issues generally even though it could be prompted by an individual occurrence. Straight news does not allow for greater detail about an issue unlike features and editorial which allows for greater detail and issues can be discussed more in-depth and in broader context. The implication of this trend is that the newspapers did not take advantage of the opportunity to explain the implications and possible consequences of the issue to the readers to bring about appropriate action.

The study by Kunkel, Smith, Suding and Biely (2002), found that stories on child maltreatment were framed episodically instead of putting the issues in broader context. The distinction of these frames is important because while episodic frame focuses on the individual, thematic frame focuses on the issue.

Internews Europe (2014) asserts that, the media landscape is a series of one-off news items, more likely to focus on single incidents or violations without context and depth of discussion. Arthur (2012) in her study discovered that the lengthier stories like features were framed thematically while shorter ones like news were framed episodically. This, the author said could be because features and also editorials allow for greater detail about larger systemic issues. The implication of this is that the type of frame used for child labour reports used will explain who is responsible for the problem and also who is responsible for the solution.

Wallack and his colleagues in 1993 as cited by Mastin, Choi, Barboza, and Post (2007) argue that the mass media through framing help to reinforce the idea that social problems are individual problems and this

pervades the society and tend to make audiences see such issues as individual issues dissociated from broader social systems. This is not totally ideal because when an issue is seen as an individual problem, it calls for individual solution but when the issue is approached from a broader perspective as a societal problem then it will call for a societal solution with the institution of policies.

On reasons why the media cover issues in an episodic way, Mastin et al. (2007) asserts that this happens because “of the nature of news cycles and space limitations.” Mastin et al. (2007) further states that when coverage favours newsroom convenience at the expense of portraying the reality of a pressing societal issue, it behoves advocacy groups to increase their efforts to work with the media for the purpose of ensuring they have the information that will enable them to present their audiences with a more balanced picture of the issue, that is child labour issue.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that the newspapers did not give sufficient coverage to child labour issues. The most emphasized child labour issue was Child abuse; this means that there was a high occurrence of child abuse cases that gained media attention during the period of the study. Since majority of the stories were in straight news format it means the newspapers did not perform much of the correlational role of the media by giving enough analysis of child labour issues but performed more of the information role.

It was also discovered that child labour issues are reported more using episodic frames. This means that the angle given to a report will determine the focus the audience will have. Child labour is a problem that is occurring in the social, cultural, religious and even the political system and looking at the issue from an individual angle alone will lead to proffering flawed solutions.

Based on these findings, this study recommends the following: The media are termed voice of the voiceless, conscience of the society, mirror of the society among others; these titles underscore the role the media can and should play. The media through incisive editorials and feature articles can be advocates of the people by lobbying the government for good policies and proper implementation of such policies/programmes as regards the welfare of children. Newspapers should devote more attention to child labour issues which also should be placed in more prominent positions with ample space. Reporters are to liaise with NGOs/CSOs as major social actors in fighting child labour to understand how best to report children issues. They should not only be sources of information but partners in progress.

Realising that children need somebody to speak for them as their voices cannot be heard because of fear of whoever they are working for; it is pertinent that the media should be involved in investigative reporting and assure the children of confidentiality and not to put them in harm's way through the reports. This study recommends that reporters should endeavour to do more research and give the stories a broader angle so that societal solutions can be given to the problem and not just looking at the issue as a problem of an individual. Government participation and commitment is crucial for providing adequate enforcement of all laws and international standards that protect children from child labour.

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