



Patterns of Newspapers Coverage of Rape Cases in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined patterns of newspapers coverage of rape cases in Nigeria. To achieve the purpose of the study, the researcher developed three (3) objectives of the study and research questions that guided the study. The research design used for the study was a content analysis. The population of the study was 1,098. This was derived from three (3) national dailies. The Guardians, The Punch, and The Daily Sun. The population comprised all editions of the three newspapers from October, 2019 to September 2020. The sample size of the study was 285. Simple random sampling technique was adopted. The study adopted Krejcie & Morgan (1970) sample size determination table to determine the sample size. The instrument for data collection was coding sheet and guide. The data gathered were analyzed using frequency distributing tables and simple percentages. Based on the analysis, the findings of the study revealed that there is less space and frequency in the manifestation of follow up stories on rape. Above all, newspaper gives low prominence to rape stories in Nigeria. However, the study recommends that newspapers should concentrate more features, investigative and interpretative reporting of rape and newspapers organizations or reporters should improve its reports on the outcome of rape.

Key Words: Patterns, newspapers, coverage, rape, frequency, prominence.

INTRODUCTION

Communication plays a central role in our lives. It is communication that makes human existence, co-existence and cooperation possible (Nweke, 2016). Communication is central to every human activity and is the backbone of existence of man in any society. Because it is the driving force behind society, communication has been defined as the exchange of information, ideas, experiences and data of all sorts that ensure the normal and organized existence of people in the society.

According to Nwabueze (2014), it is through communication that the society is informed, entertained, educated, socialized, mobilized, motivated, integrated and sensitized. Communication is concerned with the dissemination of news, information, entertainment and advertising through various media platforms including newspapers, magazines, new media, television, film and radio. The coverage of crime has become a great and complex concern for the media especially in this era of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Undoubtedly, the global nature of our new communication technologies has brought about easy and quick access to information.

Crime is one of the human security problems confronting humanity across the world. Nations have grappled to contain the rising incidence of homicide, armed robbery, and kidnap, drug trafficking, sex trafficking, illegal gun running and a host of others. The increasing incidence of case in Nigeria has become a source of worry to the Nigerians of goodwill. This social problem, apart from constituting a problem on the moral standard of the Nigerian state, has raised concerns on the human rights ratings of the country. Also worrisome is the fact that this crime takes place in violation of extant laws. Crime Report is a written account of an incident observed from one or more sources. It can also be defined as the communication of information arranged in an accurate, concise, clear and complete manner, which then becomes a record of a given incidents to an interested party for decision to be made.

Newspaper is a set of large printed sheets of folded paper containing news, articles, and other information, usually published every day (Williams and Kevin, 2019). There are two main types of newspaper, the quality or broadsheet newspapers that generally deal with serious news issues, and the tabloid newspapers that deal more with subjects such as sport, television actors, and shocking crime stories. Newspaper is a periodical publication containing written information about current events and is often typed in black ink with a white or gray background. Newspapers can cover a wide variety of fields such as politics, business, sports and art, and often include materials such as opinion columns, weather forecasts, reviews of local services, obituaries, birth notices, crosswords, editorial cartoons, comic strips, and advice columns. Among crime stories covered by newspapers are rape. Rape is a hurdle to economic development, a public health problem, and a violation of women's fundamental human rights.

Rape victims tend to be silent as a result of humiliation and intimidation by the police, as well as the "embarrassment" of public acknowledgement. Rape is pervasive in Nigeria and is likely going to worsen if no steps are taken immediately to end this scourge. It is very worrisome that Many Nigerian

females now lose their virginity through rape. Rape is the act of forcefully having sex with someone without the consent of the victim. Rape has become a social phenomenon of epidemic proportions and not an isolated criminal act affecting just a few women and girls in Nigeria. According to Chiedu (2012), there are several cases, which are very irritating. Now and then, it is reported that a teacher has raped a student, a religious leader has raped his flock, robbers have raped a victim, a man has raped a sister-in-law or daughter-in-law, a master has raped a housemaid, a security man has raped his master's wife, a boss has raped his staff, a father has raped his daughter, a young man has raped a grandmother, a minor has raped a fellow minor, a traditional ruler has raped a subject, and an 80-year-old man has raped an 8-year-old girl.

According to Punch Newspaper of 11th April, 2012, page 4, the Office of the Public Defender (OPD), a department under the Lagos State Ministry of Justice, raised the alarm over the increase in cases of child abuse and rape in the state. The Director, Mrs. Omotola Rotimi, stated that on a daily basis, cases of defilement of children by people who are sometimes very close to their families are received by her office. She lamented the inability of OPD to secure high number of convictions for perpetrators of rape, because of the unwillingness of victims to report such cases, largely due to the perceived social stigma that such a step would attract. In another edition at the same paper, a 22 year old man was arraigned before a Magistrate Court in Ogun State, for defiling his 10 year-old step-daughter.

The Nation Newspaper of Friday, October 5, 2012, reported that a 70-year old man was banished for defiling a 3-year old child in Utulu, Oru West Local Government Area of Imo State. Yet in another headline in the Punch Newspaper of 30th January, 2012, Mr. Innocent Francis, father of 8-year old Endurance, who was raped and murdered, alleged that his life 'as being threatened for reporting the plight of his daughter to the police. Ekiti State Police command arrested an 85-year old man, Samuel Oladipupo, for raping a 12-year old J.S.S 1 pupil (Punch, 29th November, 2012).

In 2012, there were hundreds of reported rape cases across Nigeria. The Daily Sun of October 5th, 2012, told the story of a 20-year-old lady who was allegedly raped and had her lip chopped off by two men. It was followed by similar report by the same paper of October 16th, 2012, where the case of a father who raped his 12-year-old daughter was equally told. There was also the story of one Temitope Alo, who defiled eight minors. The girls were between eight and 15 years. The incident took place around Koloba area, Ayobo, a Lagos suburb. In October 2012, the Police in Bayelsa State had to contend with rising cases of rape in relief camps set up for persons displaced by floods. About five of such cases were recorded at the camps situated at the sport complex in Yenagoa. Similarly not too long ago, a Corp member was gang-raped by four men in a classroom, at noon, in Kano.

The above report by Saturday Sun of March 2014 is one of such worrisome cases of rape reported by the press. Oduah (2014) stressed that "the rate at which rapes occur in our society today is becoming alarming and outrageous". Musbau (2013,) reports that "687 cases of rape were recorded" in 2012, which is an average of two cases per day, 100 cases of rape in Kano writes in 2013 out of which 40 offenders were convicted". In Anambra State, Guardian Newspaper of Friday 7, 2014 reports that there were with 115 rape incidents and complaints only 12 cases taken up by the police.

These were not the only rape cases reported in 2014. On January 10, 2014, a similar incident was reported by Daily Sun Newspaper. In this case, a seventeen year-old girl was gang raped by three men on her way back from school. On June 6th 2013, Guardian, Newspaper had it that Msonterlyanga of Akwabo street raped a young girl. Vanguard Newspapers of 25th October 2013 reported that a 50 years-old pastor of Choice Bible church allegedly raped three girls aged nine, seven and eight years. Also, Daily sun of October 31st 2013 had it that a virgin school girl at Ikorodu Lagos state was gang raped by these men to coma. As if all these cases were not enough, Daily Sun of 19th December 2013 reported that a seven-year-old girl was gang raped by three men. The quest to fill these gaps informed this study. It is against this backdrop that this work examines the issue of rape and suggests actions that could be taken to tame this menace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Newspaper

Newspapers attempt to provide the facts and analysis that allows informed citizens to make effective and responsible decision in a complex, information-saturated society. The role of newspapers has evolved in response to the changing needs of their readers and is currently going through a softening of news in reaction to other media's coverage of lifestyle, entertainment and so on. Newspapers are becoming like news magazines, offering lengthy analyses of evolving events of the world and featuring newsworthy people, corporations, and social trends, and at the same time displaying layouts that increasingly prioritize photographs (Franklin, 2018). Where they cannot compete with online news media on the basis of speed, newspapers are distinguishing themselves by beefing up the depth of information, analysis, and coverage of trends that are not published elsewhere (Usher, 2010). Newspapers are not only becoming more feature-and analytically-oriented but also printing fewer articles on the front page, accompanied by the growing practice of carrying a large display photo, attesting to the growing feature orientation of the newspaper design, which, combined with good, readable text, provides readers with "experience".

The newspaper need to provide basic information that would aid the public to understand the happening including rape cases. In fact, Igyuve and Agaka (2017) maintain that the media exist to service the information of the public. They have duties to report thoroughly and accurately what the contestants stand for. This informs why Asemah (2011) posit that political news reporting calls for fact. It is like reporting conflicts where all shades of opinion should be reflected, and doctrine of fairness adhered to strictly. Crime reporters should project the victims and rapists by giving them ample coverage both by frequency and depth of the reports. This will not only inform the public but also enable the victim gain justice. This is in line with the position of Santas and Ogoshi (2017) when enlisting the vital role of media in setting agenda on the political, social and other public issues influence the people and they learn more about their society.

Nevertheless, a newspaper is a paper printed daily, weekly, bi-weekly containing news, features, advertisement, cartoons and editorials. Okunna and Omenugha (2012) see newspaper as an unbound, printed publication issued at regular intervals, which presents information in words, often supplemented with pictures. Yusuf and Daniel (2015) opine that newspaper is a fundamental institution of democracy and public awareness. They are powerful means of communicating and good source of knowledge and information. Yusuf and Daniel further explained that newspapers cater for the needs of various sections of the society. They shape public opinion and influence government policies and decision. Nigeria newspapers published detail report on various issues of national interest, including crime such as rape. Besides, Nwokeocha (2012) accuses the fourth Estate of the Realm the media, which function as agenda setter and watch dog of the society, to have not lived up to expectation

The media are supposed to clearly explain to the public the crimes or conflicts that bedevil the society. Ndolo (2011) maintains that: Proper education of citizens will prepare them to facing challenges to ensure a positive future for all, creating in the people an open or liberal frame of mind that recognizes and finds solutions to problems. Produced a citizenry that is aware of and is concerned about citizens' knowledge, attitude, and motive collectively towards solutions of current problems and prevention of future ones especially on the immediate environment.

The importance of information and the media in any democratic and election processes is further elaborated in Asemah (2011), the media have a critical role to play in every democratic process. The media help increase the level of awareness and mobilization of population and an active participation in the shaping democratic values, through public enlightenment.

Functions of newspaper

'The four basic functions of a newspaper are:

1. To inform: Newspapers provide facts that readers must have in order to be informed citizens and to make decisions. Ask students to find an example of a newspaper that informs readers and write its headline.
2. To interpret the news: Newspaper stories interpret or explain the meaning of news to us. These stories often have opinions of the writer. Ask students to find an example of a newspaper article that interprets the news and write its headline.
3. To provide a service to readers: Newspapers provide information that helps readers solve their business, home, recreation and daily living problems. Advertising assists in informing readers about products and services. Have students find an example of a story that provides a service to the reader and write its headline. Now ask them to find an advertisement that informs readers. What is the produce or service being offered?
4. To entertain: Some sections of the newspaper are designed to amuse or give enjoyment to readers. Have students find a puzzle or game in the newspaper and write its name

Crime and newspaper coverage

Crime is like other concepts in social sciences, which have no generally accepted definition. According to Oxford Dictionary of Sociology (2009), "a crime is held to be an offence, which goes beyond the personal and into the public sphere, breaking prohibitory rules or laws, to which legitimate punishments or sanctions are attached, and which requires the intervention of a public authority.., for crime to be known as such, it must come to the notice of and be processed through, an administrative system or enforcement agency. It must be reported and recorded by the police.

The prevalence of crime in the world today is a cause for serious concern for all and sundry. It undermines the social fabric by eroding the sense of safety and security. Crime impacts on society in a variety of ways according to the nature and extent of crime committed. It constitutes a problem when its incidence is as rampant in the society as to constitute a threat to the security of persons and property, as well as social order and solidarity (Onoge, 2018). Crime is a threat to the economic, political and social security of a nation and a major factor associated with underdevelopment; because it discourages both local and foreign investments, reduces the quality of life, destroys human and social capital, damages relationship between citizens and the states, thus undermining democracy, rule of law and the ability of the country to promote development.

Crime rate in Nigeria has assumed a worrisome dimension. In the light of the worsening crime situation, and the ineffectiveness of the crime control apparatuses, Nigeria can be deemed to have a crime problem. Nigeria is among the developing countries of the world, and is experiencing a prevalence of rising crime waves, criminal intentions and varying degree of delinquencies. Nigeria has been on the global crime map since 1980s.

The nature of these crimes includes armed robbery, murder, rape, car theft, burglary, fraud, bribery and corruption, food and drug adulteration, gambling, smuggling, human trafficking, kidnapping, drug trafficking, money laundering, internet scam, advanced fee fraud (419) and other illegal activities.

A report revealed a "training school" for jobless youths as armed robbers at Ajegunle area of Lagos. The said training school according to that report includes planning strategies of co-operation, launching an attack and escaping with loots. Their ages range between eighteen and twenty eight years. The training school' also conducts interview for the recruit. It was also revealed that the training school is where the bandits prepare programmes on which area to raid and plan how to operate different types of fire arms and ammunition. Suspects were nabbed during their morning training session where they were working out modalities on a number of houses to be raided for the week. Sadly, there are reports of crimes committed mostly by the youths at virtually every corner of the country. Criminality has become an integral part of the nation's daily life.

Rape and what it Communicates

The evolution of rape is traced to the Renaissance in Italy where people created the perception that middle ages were a dark period. They metaphorically used the dark period to describe rape. Women/girls were seen as integral part of entire human, so raping a woman/girl would not only have been an assault against her but also against the community around her. According to KilPatrick (2010) the incidences of rape began to spread across every country of the world including America. The increase of rape cases around the 1970s led America to establish anti-rape movement in San Francisco and Washington D. C.

In Nigeria however, different cultural norms, value systems and laws of rape have not given a clear cut position of punishment to what rape is or not. For instance, in most Nigerian traditional cultures, sexual infidelity is viewed as a serious infraction against the established community norm of morality. This according to Ndolo (2011), the offenders are severely punished. The punishment favours the male while the female victims are stigmatized forever with the possible consequences of being socially branded, divorced or neglected by the husband where she is married.

This has made the authorities of government to propagate laws to contain the increase and incidences of rape. For example, 36 Governors across Nigeria have declared a state of emergency over rape and other gender-based violence against women and children (CNN, 2020). Again, Section 357 of the Nigerian Criminal Code applicable to the Southern Nigeria, defines rape as any person who has unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or girl without her consent if the consent is obtained by force or by means of threats or intimidation of any kind or by fear of harm or by means of force and fraudulent representation as to the nature of the act or in the case of a married by personating her husband is guilty of An offense which is called rape.

In the Northern part of Nigeria, rape is seen under section 282 of the penal Code as: a man has committed rape with a woman in the following circumstances: (a) Against her will (b) Obtained by putting her in fear of death or of hurt; (c) With her consent when the man knows that he is not her husband and that her consent is given because she believes that he is the man to whom she is or between herself to be lawfully married (d) Without her consent when she is under fourteen years of age or unsound mind. A sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife is not considered as rape if she has attained to puberty.

In spite of these laws, the incidences of rape have continued to increase on daily bases especially in 2020. From March to July, 2020, Nigeria has recorded 3,600 cases of rape across the country (Iroanusi, 2020). The rape and eventual death of 100-level Microbiology student of the University of Benin which took place in a church in Benin City, Edo state is very fresh in people's mind. Anagor (2020) also posits that another rape and murder of Baraket Bello, a 19-year-old student of the Institute of Agriculture, Research and Training, Ibadan, Oyo state in her father's house remains a wonder to everybody. Again, Joy Adoku, a 400-level student of Department of Management, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers state, who was raped, murdered and buried in a shallow grave has not been forgotten. The rape and murder of one Queen Igbineho, the pregnant wife of a politician in Benin City, Edo state and the pain of Tina Ezekwe rape from Jigawa state within 2020 are unbelievable.

Over the years, there have been incidences of rape in Nigeria, the data retrieved from Nigerian Force (NPF) indicates that rape cases in Nigeria have been on the rise. In 2015

according to National Bureau of Statistics (2019), the percentage of increase of rape increase to 63.04%, it increased again to 72.13% in 2016, but decrease to 69.33% in 2017 and 2018 respectively. Though, Oduah (2014) had argued that the percentage of sexual violence is difficult to establish because of the variation on how data source that defines it is gathered.

Rape as a concept has a cultural connotation that gives impetus to the way it is socially perceived. In most Nigerian traditional cultures, sexual infidelity is viewed as a serious infraction against the established community norm of morality. Hence, offenders are severely punished. Unfortunately though, the punishment often prescribed is skewed in favour of the male offender. Rape is the act of forcefully having sex with someone against their will. Others have defined rape as a sexual penetration by one person against another person without the consent of the victim. The word rape derives from the Latin verb rapere, which means 'to seize or take by force'. It is a forced, unwanted sexual intercourse; it is sometimes also called sexual assault, which can happen to both men and women of any age. Many people believe that rape is a sexual act. Although rape involves sexual acts, it is motivated by the desire for power and control over another person, rather than by sexual attraction or the desire for sexual gratification. In other words, rape is a crime of violence.

Rape also occurs when someone forces or tricks another person into unwanted sexual activity, even if actual physical violence is not involved. Rape is a form of social deviancy which varies from one country to another; it changes overtime. Bourke (2011) argues that there is nothing timeless or random about rape, it is not a metaphor for the ruin of a city or nation, it is not an environmental disaster, and it is the embodied violation of another person. Bourke further describes rape as a felony in which a person is forced to have sexual intercourse without giving consent (2001). According to Chiedu (2012), rape is an act of sexual violence that involves intercourse without consent or against someone being unwilling to engage in the act.

Rape is also seen as sexual intercourse with a woman by a man without her consent and chiefly by force or deception. However, there are many rumoured or even reported cases of men who have been raped in contemporary societies, including Nigeria. The concept of rape, both as abduction and in the sexual sense made its first historical appearance in early religious texts. Rape culture is a concept of unknown origin and of uncertain definition; yet it has made its way into everyday vocabulary and is assumed to be commonly understood.

Types of Rape

Forcible date rape: The term 'acquaintance rape' or 'date rape' refers to rape or nonconsensual sexual activity between people who are already acquainted, friends, acquaintances, people on a date, or even people in an existing romantic relationship where consent for sexual activity is not given, or

is given under duress. The vast majority of rapes are committed by people who already know the victim. Franklin (2018) however notes that the label 'date rape' is a very general term.

Drug-facilitated date rape: Various drugs are used by rapists to render their victims unconscious, some also cause memory loss. This also means that the victim may be unable to resist, what some may consider as consensual sex. Date rape drug refers to any drug that can be used to assist in the commission of a sexual assault (date rape).

Blitz rape: This is also known as stranger rape. It occurs when the rapist assaults the victim on the street with no prior contact. Generally, the suspect "comes out of nowhere".

Spousal rape: Also known as spouse rape, marital rape, wife rape, husband rape, partner rape or intimate partner sexual assault (IPSA), is rape between a married or de facto couple. The African culture does not regard a forceful sexual intercourse between a woman and her husband as an act of rape. Spousal rape is non-consensual sexual assault in which the perpetrator is the victim's spouse. It is often assumed that spousal rape is less traumatic than that from a stranger. Research reveals that victims of marital/partner rape suffer longer lasting trauma than victims of stranger rape, possibly because of a lack of social validation that prevents a victim from getting access to support. Different countries have different rape laws. In many countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Malawi to mention a few, it is not possible to commit the crime of rape against one's own wife or husband.

College campus rape: A study carried out by Elegbeleye (2010) indicates a particular problem with rape on college campuses. It is sad that accurate records of sexual violence on campuses in Nigerian higher institutions are not available because most incidents go unreported. And when reported at all, perpetrators are not prosecuted for fear that it would inflict a permanent social scar on the victim to the extent of robbing him/her the gains of education. However, since rape is a universal experience, some records obtained from the Western world are here spotlighted to deepen the essence of this review.

Group rape: Group rape (also known as 'gang,' 'gang bang', 'run a train' or 'pack' rape) occurs when a group of people participate in the rape of a single victim. Ten to twenty percent involve more than one attacker. It is far more damaging to the victim, and in some jurisdictions, is punished more severely than rape by a single person. Usher (2010) states that the term 'gang bang' was a synonym for gang rape when public discussion of sexual activity in general was taboo; in the advent of the pornography industry and relaxed sexual tensions, that term is now often used as a slang term for consensual group sex.

Incidents of Reported Rape Scourge in Nigeria

Incidences of rape are on the increase in Nigeria. The Mass Media is replete with catalogue of cases of rape. Rape has become a social phenomenon of epidemic proportions and not an isolated criminal act affecting just a few women and girls in Nigeria.

It has become a common feature in Nigeria for children, less than twelve years to be victims of sexual assault. Adolescent and young adult women are in high risk range. In Nigeria, even old women are not spared this assault. According to Chiedu (2012), there are several cases, which are very irritating. Now and then, it is reported that a teacher has raped a student, a religious leader has raped his flock, robbers have raped a victim, a man has raped a sister-in-law or daughter-in-law, a master has raped a housemaid, a security man has raped his master's wife, a boss has raped his staff; a father has raped his daughter, a young man has raped a grandmother, a minor has raped a fellow minor, a traditional ruler has raped a subject, and an 80-year-old man has raped an 8-year-old girl.

From this lengthy assertion, it is quite glaring that rape cases are a shocking reality in the Nigerian society today. It appears that everyday girls and boys, women and men are sexually being abused, even by persons known to the victims, who perhaps shamelessly take undue advantage of such familiarity.

According to Punch Newspaper, of 11th April, 2012, page 4, the Office of the Public Defender, a department under the Lagos State Ministry of Justice, raised the alarm over the increase in cases of child abuse and rape in the state. The Director, OPD Mrs. Omotola Rotimi stated that on a daily basis, cases of defilement of children by people who are sometimes very close to their families are received by her office. She lamented the inability of OPD to secure high number of convictions for perpetrators of rape, because of the unwillingness of victims to report such cases, largely due to the perceived social stigma that such a step would attract. In another edition of the same paper, a 62 year old man was arraigned before a Magistrate Court in Ogun State, for defiling his 10 year-old step-daughter.

The Nation Newspaper of Friday, October 5, 2012, reported that a 70-year old man was banished for defiling a 3-year old child in Utulu, Oru West Local Government Area of Imo State. Yet in another headline in the Punch Newspaper of 30th January, 2012, Mr. Innocent Francis, father of 8-year old Endurance, who was raped and murdered, alleged that his life was being threatened for reporting the plight of his daughter to the police. Ekiti State Police command arrested an 85-year old man, Samuel Oladipupo, for raping a 12-year old J.S.S I pupil (Punch, 29th November, 2012). It is not only Nigeria that is witnessing an upsurge in rape cases, it is a phenomenon that is wrecking untold damage in other parts of the world, too.

In Nigeria, the trend is at alarming levels. According to Dr. Omolara Smith, President, Zonta Club II, Ibadan, the figures have shot up from 12.5 percent to about 84 percent in recent months (Sunday, Sun, January 6th, 2013). She feared that this figure could rise if adequate measures are not taken to arrest the development.

Media Under-Reportage of Rape Cases

Rape is one of the most underreported of all serious crimes in Nigeria and in other countries as well. When we try to get a true picture of the enormity of its incidence, we find the issue complicated by the lack of reliable rape statistics. A major problem encountered when dealing with this issue of rape is

that most victims simply refuse to come forward and report to the authorities incidences of sexual violence. For many rape victims, a sense of shame or guilt or self-blame about their role in the rape assaults may be enough to prevent them from coming forward and pressing charges. In many instances, the public often, seems willing to blame the victim for the assault rather than the rapist. There are a number of barriers preventing the victims of sexual assault from coming forward; hence rape continues to be one of the most underreported crimes. For example, a young girl "Folake" was jailed after she accused a man of rape.

A domestic worker, she said her employer's husband had forced her into his bedroom and made her watch a pornographic film before forcing her to have sex. A medical examination supported her allegation. Yet she was the one brought to court, charged with slander for making the accusation and remanded in prison. Most crimes of rape are not reported for reasons such as the social stigma attached to the victim, the fear of being ostracized from the family and community, and also the fact that the police may be unwilling to make an official report due to insufficient evidence.

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

In Nigeria, Lagos state Police Command recorded 678 rape cases between March 2012 and March 2013 alone. Despite these statistics, few are convicted while many withdraw their cases. Making up for the unrecorded and unreported are the media through their coverage of rape cases. A few examples of such will suffice here: a 55-year-old man was reported to have abducted and raped a 14-year-old girl for 4 days. Also a pastor was reported to have raped his neighbors' daughter aged 12 after luring her with biscuits and money. Equally, a 15 year old girl was also raped by a tricycle rider after which he gave her. Similarly, a teacher was arrested after he defiled his 3 year old student (Oduah, 2014). Also at least 100 cases of rape were also reported in court in Kano in 2013, in which only about 40 offenders were convicted. Similarly, in Anambra state, about 155 incidences and complaints on rape were recorded by some NGOs that worked on sexual violence in the state. However, only 12 out of the 155 cases were taken up by the police and surprisingly none of them was successfully prosecuted.

While rape statistics are crucial to showcase the enormity of rape, it nonetheless, does not capture the social reality of rape in those countries. This is because victims of rape or sexual violence as it is called elsewhere often do not report and therefore do not get captured in criminal statistics. A number of studies attest to the fact that police statistics never capture the magnitude of rape reality. Furthermore, statistics are figures which do not capture narratives of perpetrators and victims. Existing data do not show such vital demographics which can be used in characterizing victims and their offenders. In other words, figures hide actualities and the "flesh" of the phenomenon needed for qualitative analysis. It is in this light that we add to existing body of researches on rape by filling this gap.

Oduah (2014) gave the following as factors that may lead to or be the cause of increase in rape cases in the Nigerian society, they are; gaps that are embedded in the laws of the country and the strict adherence by the law court for the provision of burden of proof by the victim and the prosecutors; delays in the judicial system; corruption of the judiciary; stigmatization; family ties (in situations where rape! child rape was committed by people who are close relatives of the victims as a result the family settles the case among themselves and therefore not report these crimes to the police for prosecution); fear of attacks and intimidation (in the sense that the victims most times are afraid that if they report, the perpetrator or rapist may re-attack them and in some cases these rapists are deadly and cruel) immoral dressing on the part of the girls and inadequate parental care. It is however important to note that in a situation where the victim fails to provide the above proof of rape, the accused then has the privilege to walk free even if the act was indeed committed. Rape offenders are having a jolly ride because the burden of proof lies with the victim.

Acts of rape is widespread elsewhere in Africa. For instance, rape is ubiquitous in South

Africa (SA). In terms of statistics, SA recorded a total of 39,828 cases of rape (under the sexual offenses categorization of crime) between 2016 and 2017. In another African country, Zimbabwe, at least one woman is raped every 90 mm while 500 women are sexually abused monthly. This means that at least 16 women get raped da y. Elsewhere in East Africa, Kenya recorded a total of 2648 rape cases as at 2015.

Media construction of rape has produced different consequences in other climes. Nagar stressed the factors underlying social construction of rape in India. He notes that the importation of "loan" words by the media in constructing rape marginalizes other sufferers other than the middle class or upwardly mobile women. Using loan words, media outlets depict class categories of victims by underscoring gender norms as well as the barriers facing raped women in India. In other words, rape construction is affected by the social-cultural contexts and ideological prisms of reporters. Furthermore, Nagar questions the deification of rape victims in India which suppresses their victimhood and suffering. It follows that victims of rape or sexual violence in India are mythically characterized. We argue therefore that the portrayals of rape stories by the media more often than not, reflect power relationship in headline casting and story narration.

Scholars note that media depiction of rape victims devotes much attention to the victims and overlooks the rapist thereby presenting the victim as lacking agency and powerless. In reporting violence against women, the media are also accused of justifying the myths of sexual violence. This becomes clearer when one activates' notion of gender performativity and the consequences of failing to execute assigned gender roles of being submissive. Thus, it is believed that women cause rape by failing to submit their bodies. Further to this, researchers notes that the way a South African newspaper reports rape

perpetuates gender and racial stereotyping. While not all rape catches media attention, those in the media sustains rape myths. In the United States, where it was found that local media reporting “on sexual assault might directly reinforce some of the commonly known rape myths.” Meanwhile, rape myths can also discourage reportage. The perpetuation of rapemyths in the media coverage of rape can engender negative attitude towards the victims or complete violence against women. This may further the suffering of victims of rape by refusing to report when violated.

Writing on the consequences of rape for return migration, witnesses reports that due to the permissive rape culture of girls and women in India, Indians in Diaspora, particularly those with girl-child are discouraged to return to their homeland. Indians in Diaspora view the rape culture as an expression of Indian patriarchy. This may be true depending on the perspective of the reporters of the story and whether she/he is from within the social cultural context or from without. Expatiating on this point, scholars aver that writers within cultural context of rape are more likely to understand rape than the use of colonial lens in reporting rape by the western media. In deploying such colonial lens, western media are accused of privileging urban and middle class victims while marginalizing rural, poor and male victims in their reportage. They argue that the colonial view of rape constructed from western media narrowly captured the victims and perpetrators of rape in India.

On the nature, patterns and dynamics of rape and sexual assault, a research that was carried out by the National Crime Victim Survey (NCVS) on the Rape in America Study and The Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Rape Victimization discovered that: non-stranger or acquaintance rape was more common than stranger rape. Statistics from their findings showed that 78% of rapes/sexual assaults were perpetrated by someone known to the victims. Further investigation of perpetrator/victim relationship from their study showed that 9% of victims were raped by husbands or ex-husbands, 11% by fathers or step fathers, 10% by boyfriends or ex-boyfriends, 16% by other relatives and 29% by other non-relatives such as friends and neighbors. Their findings also showed that few rapes/sexual assaults involve the use of weapon. Only about 4% of rapes/sexual assault involved the presence of fire arm and only 2% involved the use of knife. The finding suggested that rapists are more likely to gain control of their victims through deception, manipulation and betrayal of their victim’s trust. The report also further revealed that it was even rare for rape victims to sustain any visible physical injuries in addition to the rape and the report also stated that majority of rape go unreported as only 16% of rape was reported to the police. In recent times, these figures are increasing at a geometrical rate. On perpetrators of rape, it was discovered that males constituted 99% of the offenders.

Statement of the Problem

Newspapers, like some other channels of mass communication, engage in surveillance of society. Among various spheres of life, the surveillance is very pronounced in politics, crime, sports and on. In the area of crime, the issue of rape has been a reoccurring decimal in our society with out-pouring of public condemnations in the media. The newspaper like other media in Nigeria has been reporting cases of rape. The nature and magnitude of such reports may attract public attention, legislation, strict enforcement of the law against it and the application of justice. So, how the media, particularly newspapers with their unique features of reader control, exposure and permanence, cover the incidence is an issue of interest to researchers.

A cursory observation of newspaper reports shows that rape cases dot our dailies, but what is not known is the manner of such reportage. It will be interesting to find out what newspapers give preference and how they manifest the preference in the selection of rape cases. Is it cases of pedophiles, gang raping, advocacy, justice system, enforcement and many more? From what source are they reported? This is with a view to identifying patterns of reportage adopted by newspapers in order to point out aspects that are well under-reported, how they are emphasized or de-emphasized and the nature of the sources. This is coming at the heel of simmering criticism of the press for flawed coverage of some aspects of rape reports by some society groups, such as civil liberty organization (CLO).

Although such studies have been conducted on coverage of politics, health matters, terrorism, anomy, science and technology including crime, but not much has been done on rape, if ever. Even if it has been conducted, it may not have been on pattern or manner of coverage, particularly, in the newspapers under study. Therefore, the crux of the study is what are the patterns of reporting rape in The Guardian, Punch and Daily Sun.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine Patterns of Newspaper Coverage of rape. Specifically the objectives are to:

1. find out the frequency of stories on rape reported in the selected Nigerian newspapers
2. ascertain the Prominence given to rape cases in the selected Nigeria Newspaper.
3. determine the aspect of rape stories reported by the Newspapers.

Research Questions

This study sought answers to the following questions

1. What are the frequencies of stories on rape reported in the selected Nigeria Newspapers?
2. How do the select newspapers give prominence to rape stories?
3. What are the aspects of rape stories used in the selected Nigeria Newspapers?

METHODOLOGY

The research design that was used in this study was the content analysis. Content analysis as a research design was found appropriate and suitable for this study because the method involves the assessment and evaluation of newspaper coverage of rape cases in Nigeria. The population of the study is 1,098. The researcher focused on three national dailies: The Guardian, The Punch and The Daily Sun because of their credibility, wide coverage, geographical locations and their ability to cover national issues such as rape that has become a reoccurring decimal around world. So, the population comprised all editions of the three newspapers from October, 2019 to September 2020 Hence, the population is 366 multiplied by three (the three newspapers under study) which amount to 1,098 editions/issues (366 x 3 = 1,098). The study adopts Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table. Given 1,098 as the population of the study, the corresponding value is 285. The sample size is 285. The sampling technique adopted in the study is simple random sampling technique. This enables the researcher to select a true representative sample of the newspaper under study. For equal participation and selection of the entire element in the study, the researcher divided the editions/issues by the number week in a year, that is 285 divided by the 50 which constitute the numbers of weeks from October 2019 to September 2020 which gives 6 (285/50 = 6). Each news newspaper therefore, gets two editions per week. The hat-and-draw method also known as lucky deep or balloting is used here. This was carefully done week by week in order to give all edition equal chance of being selected. It is done systematically for each month under study. The unit of analysis in this study are news and feature stories. The instrument of data collection in this is coding sheet and guide. The validity and reliability of the instrument are two important forms of assessing instrument replicability, consistency and accuracy in social research variables. This section describes how the data generated from field was analyzed. Frequency distributing tables and simple percentages was used by the researcher in analyzing the data collated from the questionnaire.

Discussion of Findings

The study found that news stories published the highest reports on crime in the select Nigeria newspapers within the period of the study. Out of the 431 crime cases reported in the select newspapers, 227 representing 53% stories were published on rape cases, 78 (18%) were published on armed robbery, 59 (13%) were on murder cases, 34 (5.1%) were published on human trafficking, 34 (8%) was published on drug trafficking 21(3%) were on other. The finding answers research question I of the study: (What are the frequencies of stories on rape in select Nigeria newspapers?) The result is similar to the finding of Nwabueze and Oduah (2014) investigated media-re-victimization of rape victims in a shame culture:

Exploring the framing and representation of rape case in Nigeria dailies and found that the dominant frame of rape stories in the select newspapers was innocent frame that portrayed victim of rape as innocent of the crime rather than re-victimization frame whose portrayed victims as responsible for accident. The result is however, contracts the finding of Nwabueze and Oduah (2014). It was also found that there was less frequency in the manifestation of follow-up stories on rape. What this means is that the newspapers examined did not care much in ensuring that rape cases are followed-up until the victims get justice. This result is consistent with that of Egbo (2011) who reported that newspapers do not provide enough information on follow-up stories. This is a negative manifestation as it implies that the newspapers examined did not substantially provide thematic information on rape report, rather, their reports were episodic.

To answer research question two (How do the newspapers give prominence to rape stories in the select Nigeria newspapers?) The study found that crime stories particularly rape were given prominence since some of the stories were placed on front pages, back and centre spread of the select newspapers. This result contradicts the finding of Nweke (2016) who examine the Press reportage of Rape in Nigeria and found that the under studied Newspapers did not give adequate reportage and prominence to rape cases in 2017. Nwabueze and Oduah (2014) had found that newspapers do not give prominence to stories on rape cases. The few stories on rape cases reported were buried in inside pages of the newspapers thereby giving them little or no prominence (Oduah, 2014). What this result means is that the newspapers studied set agenda on the problem of increasing cases of rape in Nigeria. The study found out that most Nigerian newspapers report cases of rape in straight news form.

The implication of this is that investigative and explanatory stories on rape incidents presented in feature story format are represented in these newspapers. This gives reports on rape a unpredictable pattern. According to Franklin (2018), mainstream media coverage of rape over the past quarter of a century has generally conformed to a predictable pattern: long spells of routine reports regularly, if randomly, culled from police handouts, broken by brief periods of intensive and extensive coverage catalyzed by one or more cases that happen to grab the imagination of the media and the public - usually in that order. Feature story stories would provide opportunity for in-depth coverage of rape cases, with details presentation of facts, how the victims were attacked, the news behind the news, interpretation of such incidents, and what law enforcement agents are doing. The provides platform for informative story contents beyond the skeletal straight news presentation of rape cases. On the Nigerian newspaper placement of rape cases, the study found out that considering the front, back and inside pages of Nigerian newspapers, most Nigerian newspapers as typified by the three selected Nigerian newspapers - The Guardian, Punch and Daily Sun newspapers, place most of their rape related cases or report inside the pages of their newspapers, thus, denying them prominence. This agrees with the position of Agaba (2013) who posit that the increase in the rate of rape cases in Nigeria may not be unconnected with the culture of "brotherliness, spirit of forgiveness and non-placement of priority and prominence" in the reportage of rape cases.

The study confirms that among the aspects of rape stories; paedophile, gang raping, process of court, enforcement, and advocacy reported in the select newspapers within the period of study, aspect of advocacy were given more concern. This answers research question three (What are the aspect of rape stories in the select Nigeria newspapers?) The result is similar to findings of Nwokeocha (2012). Nwokeocha (2012) had that victims of rape would rather wish to nurse their wounds alone instead of reporting their ordeals and end up being stigmatized by the same society that ought to come to their rescue. Thus, many victims of rape do not report or divulge these rape incidents committed against them. This observation was supported by results from interview

with rape victims which revealed that most of the victims' cases were reported to the police by the victims' relations. This also confirms similar finding of Chiedu (2012) which revealed that women who had been sexually assaulted were the least likely to seek help. The unwillingness of rape victims to report such incidents buttresses the existence of a shame culture which stigmatizes these victims in most societies across the globe. Culture-specific reasons could explain why a woman might feel ashamed or guilt-ridden, but the violation of the body ranks as one of the most common. The finding is related to the social responsibility theory used in this study; newspaper owes the society obligation and responsibility such that a society would develop in the process.

Conclusion

The research investigated the patterns of newspapers coverage given to rape cases in The Guardian, Punch and Daily Sun newspapers within October, 2019 and September, 2020. The study confirmed that within the study period, stories on rape cases were more than other crime stories like murder, armed robbery, drug trafficking, human trafficking among others. This status awareness will make spirited individuals and government help victims in the Nigerian society thereby rejecting myth of rape which generated discourse and impacted on the understanding that women are inferior. The rape myth combperception of the women and shield them from acknowledging or interpreting sexual violence from their romantic partners as rape. The select newspapers gave prominence to crime stories and this helped the readers and the general public to attach importance to stories on rape that dominated based media agenda. This reflects the agenda setting theory used in this study.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. Newspapers should concentrate more feature, investigative and interpretative reporting of rape and other crime cases and not to dwell on news stories mostly.
- 2 Newspapers organizations/reporters should improve its reports on the outcome of rapes, court process and the enforcement of laws against rape rather concentrating on advocacy, this will help to draw the attention of the authorities on the matter.
- 3There is need for Nigeria newspapers to always consider all sides of rape cases before reporting, this will help them provide enough follow-up stories to ensure that cases of rape are follow-up to a logical conclusion.

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