

AN EVALUATION OF HOW RAPE CASES ARE FRAMED AND PRESENTED IN NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

Jeremiah Enaholo Kadiri *

*Department of Mass Communication, Edo State University Uzairue

Abstract

This study examined how rape cases in Nigeria were framed and depicted in the Print media. The objectives are to establish the frequency of rape stories appearing in Nigerian Dailies, to identify the sources of and from which rape cases that are reported, and to identify the dominant frame that are published there. Four research questions were developed to serve as a study director based on the investigation's goals. The researcher chose Agenda Setting Theory as the best theoretical foundation for this investigation. The research design, content analysis, was chosen. In the study, content analysis of the Daily Sun, Guardian, and Vanguard was done to examine how rape cases are framed and portrayed in the media, particularly the print media. The study discovered that the primary framing of rape tales in newspapers was innocence, which presented rape victims as not guilty of the crime, as opposed to re-victimisation, which portrayed victims as accountable for the deed. The study suggests that the print media cover and report on occurrences of rape more frequently to raise the necessary awareness to stop the nasty trend.

Keywords: Framing, Coverage, Newspaper, Representation and Rape.

Declaration of conflicting interests: The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

1. INTRODUCTION

The world is quickly devolving into crimes and crimes-related acts, according to a casual inspection of the events and developments around us. Men abusing women sexually and having uninvited sexual relations with girls and women are one of these crimes. For instance, in recent years, India has witnessed not only individual incidences of rape but also gang rape committed by rapists on weak, defenseless, and innocent girls or young women, and the issue has become more chronic and demonic (Ogbu, 2021, p.2).

The Nigerian media, particularly the print media, is weighed down daily with a library of incidents and stories of women and girls being sexually assaulted, tortured, and — most horrifyingly—descended upon and raped without

recourse to morals, leaving these poor victims wallowing in physical and psychological suffering in the face of laws that should be obvious enablers against such reprehensible and inhumane behaviour. Instances of senseless rape are reported frequently in Nigerian media, particularly in newspapers. For instance, Mrs. Ngozi Ugwu said that three men—Kazeem Mohammed (40), Tobi Daramola (19), and James Anieskin—raped her seven-year-old niece (19). (Daily Sun Newspaper, May 2020, Thursday, page 27). Similarly, a group of three men kidnapped a seventeen-year-old student in Benin, Edo State, as she was leaving for home. They imprisoned her in their room and alternated between raping her (Daily Sun Newspaper, January 10 May 2021, p.12). The general overseer of the Choice Bible Church, Emmanuel Mathew, 50, is accused of raping three

students, two of whom were seven years old and one of whom was nine.

Worryingly, a virgin student in Ikorodu Lagos was forced to strip naked in front of a group of three men, who then raped her till she passed out in the room (Daily Sun Newspaper, Thursday October 31 May 2020, p.25). After raping a two-year-old girl, Nigerian police corporal Anthony Onoja was let go (Daily Sun Newspaper, Wednesday, November 6 2011, p.14). Masonter Iyange, 29, was charged with armed robbery and rape in front of a Makurdi chief magistrate court. He is from Akwabo Street in Zaki-Biam, Benue State (The Guardian Newspaper, June 6 2020, p.12). The aforementioned occurrences are devastating, and the issue—which has been labeled as a persistent problem across the nation—is worrisome and getting worse by the day. (Guardian Newspaper editorial, Thursday June 6 2004, p.12). The question at hand is whether rape victims experience re-victimisation in the reports of the media based on the terminology used to describe the sexual incidents. Re-victimisation of rape victims sometimes result to violation, which frequently happens when the treatment by her perpetrator is treated with an attitude very similar to that of the victim (Campbell &Raja, 2017, p.142). The victim might feel that this unfair treatment hurts just as the rape itself due to it (Campbell et al., 2017, P847-858). An ongoing pattern of sexual victimisation is known as sexual re-victimisation. How are rape episodes framed in Nigerian media, especially in newspapers? Are the words chosen when writing about rape re-victimising the victims? Is there a connection between rape victims' reluctance to report the crimes against them to the police together with other legal authorities and their fear of being re-victimised? The core of this study project, exploring media framing and representation of rape cases in Nigerian Newspapers, includes these and other factors.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Rape-related incidents have increased in frequency in Nigerian society over time (Agaba 2020, p. 3), and the issue seems to worsen by the day (Okunzua May 2021, p.6). As a result, many individuals are worried. Ifeacho (2017, p. 4) points out that while some of these rape and sexual assaults are not reported by the offenders or are kept a secret by the families of the victims out of fear of stigmatization, others are publicized by the media. There is a growing danger that rape victims would be portrayed in the media as being accountable for the sex assaults that their attackers committed against them. The media's coverage of rape cases in Nigeria is less well understood despite substantial research on physical abuse (Campbell

&Raja, 2016; Classen, Palesh, and Aggarwal, 2016; Steyn, 2016). This work was motivated by the need to close these gaps.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of this investigation:

1. To determine how frequently rape-related complaints or stories appear in Nigerian publications.
2. To look for rape-related articles that predominate in Nigerian publications.
3. To find out where Nigerian newspapers get their information about rape cases.
4. To identify the publications most frequently used frame in Nigerian publications in rape case reporting.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How frequently are rape-related news stories published in Nigerian newspapers?
2. Which rape case reporting story types predominate in Nigerian newspapers?
3. Where do rape cases publicised in Nigerian publications come from?
4. What frame does the reporting of rape cases in Nigerian newspapers typically use?

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

Media, Media Framing and Representation

Media representation and its subjects are increasingly becoming what appears to be full siblings. For the readers to understand the narrative from the angle of the media covering it, an event must be framed. Enman's interpretation of framing, which is the selection of some aspects of a perceived reality and elevating them in a communication text in order to promote a specific problem definition, casual interpretation, moral assessment, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described, supports this point of view (Enman 2017, p. 291). Enman claims that selection and salient are all that are required for effective framing. Media framing and representation, then, refer to the art and practice of the media—whether print, electronic, or even social media—giving importance to a problem or personality

by selecting and emphasizing such issue or personality, thus attracting and guiding people's attention to the issue or personality's direction. Iyengar and Kinder (nd), describing this viewpoint, claimed that the media emphasize certain facets of political life at the expense of others by giving one issue extensive news coverage while ignoring others. He asserted that issues emphasised in the media became politicised as a result. According to Dearing & Rogers (2016, p.63), who approach framing from the perspective of issue framing, issue framing is the subtly deliberate choosing of specific components of a problem by the media to make them more relevant and hence, stress a particular cause of some phenomenon. In light of the preceding, it follows that how much attention and prominence events, issues, or phenomena receive in the media will significantly impact on how much the public is aware of them and what they think about them. Therefore, how prominently, extensively, or where rape cases are reported in the newspaper would impact how the general public and Nigerian society feel about rape and its repercussions.

An Overview of Rape Incidents in Nigeria

In our society, rape happens more frequently than is shocking and reasonable. Statistics show 678 rape incidents, or an average of two per day were reported in Lagos alone in 2012. (Musbau, 2020, p. 53). Kano courts recorded 100 rape cases in May 2020, but only 40 offenders were found guilty. Only 12 of the 115 rape incidents and complaints in Anambra were followed up by the police. None of them was successfully prosecuted, according to various NGOs working on sexual assault (Guardian Newspaper, Friday February 7, May 2021, page 20). The recent incestuous rape of a 60-year-old woman in Ado-Ekiti's Ajabamidele area by 21-year-old son, Akintumde Omotehinde, was possibly the most horrifying rape. At this point, one could wonder why there is a rise in rape incidents in Nigerian society today. Among the factors cited by Oduah (2021, p. 10) as contributing to an increase in rape are inadequacies in the nation's laws, a high burden of proof placed on victims and prosecutors, stigmatisation, unnecessarily drawn-out court cases, corruption at the judiciary level, and family ties (when cases of child rape and rape are committed against victims by close relatives, family members frequently decide not to report these crimes to the police. It is critical to remember that, even if the crime had been committed, the accused would be freed if any of the mentioned rape components were not proven. The fact that the burden of proof rests entirely with the victims of rape gives the offenders a field day. The bed sheet that was used to rape the woman belongs to her. Even if

it is certain that there will be a delay in receiving and presenting the results of medical tests due to the nature of our health facilities, she must wear her pants and refrain from washing herself before going to the police station and hospital.

Theoretical Framework: The agenda-Setting hypothesis of the press serves as the foundation for this study.

Agenda Setting Theory

The primary tenet of the agenda-setting hypothesis is that the mass media shape public opinion and discussion (Nwabueze, 2018, p.44). It is consistent with previous statements made by a significant number of communication academics who believe that the Agenda-setting theory is characterized by the idea that the media are largely responsible for the images we hold in our hands and do not tell us what to think, but rather what to think about. According to the agenda-setting idea, people bring up a subject in discussion when it is prominently discussed and covered by the media (Nwabueze, 2021, p. 44). It refers to the acceptance of such issues, events, and people as significant by media viewers.

The agenda-setting hypothesis is pertinent to this study because the prominence or priority that the media, whether print or electronic, accords to a story or incident like rape will significantly affect how the general public views or values the event, narrative, or circumstance.

6. RESEARCH METHOD

Interviews and content analysis were both used in this study. This research work made use of content analysis as its research method because it requires examining and assessing coverage of rape cases in Nigeria by Newspapers.

The study's population consists of copies of Vanguard Newspapers, Daily Sun and The Guardian publications from June 2020 to May 2021, 12 months. To account for the three newspapers included in this study, multiply the number of days or editions of the dailies in a year by three to determine the population of this study. The editions of The Guardian, Daily Sun, and Vanguard newspapers released between June 2020 and May 2021—a year—make up the population of interest for this study. The number of days or editions in a year is multiplied by three to accommodate for the three newspapers included in this study. One thousand and ninety five editions were, therefore, the population of this investigation. Taro Yamane's formula was used to establish the sample size for this investigation. Since the study's population was previously known, the Taro

Yamane formula was used to calculate the sample size. The following is the formula developed by Taro Yamane for calculating sample size if population is known:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where n = Sample size
 N = Given the population
 e = Margin of error
 1 = Constant

Using the procedure above, a sample size of issues of the three newspapers was determined. To select samples of the newspapers under study, systematic sampling was also performed in addition to the methods already indicated. The months of the year were listed using the staggering list order, and six months were systematically chosen using a window of every two months starting in June 2020. On purpose, three days of the week—Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday—were chosen.

Result

7. DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents and analyses the data acquired from content analysis of the three newspapers, The Guardian, Vanguard, and the Daily Sun.

Table 1 lists the frequency with which the Guardian, Vanguard, and Daily Sun reported rape cases in Nigerian media between June 2020 and May 2021.

Newspaper	June	Aug	Oct	Dec	Feb	Apri	Total
Guardian	2	0	1	2	1	2	8
Vanguard	4	3	4	2	1	2	16
Daily Sun	4	5	8	8	3	5	33
Total	10	8	13	12	5	9	57

Table 1 above shows the frequency of reports of rape incidents in Nigerian periodicals as reported by the Guardian, Vanguard, and Sun newspapers. The chart reveals that the three chosen newspapers covered rape cases fifty-seven (57) times between June 2020 and April 2021. There were ten (10) reported occurrences of rape in all, according to the three Nigerian newspapers that were chosen in June 2020. Eight (8) separate rape instances were reported in the three Nigerian newspapers chosen in August 2020. A total of thirteen (13) reports of rape were found in the three Nigerian newspapers chosen in October May 2020. Twelve (12) rape instances were reported in the three chosen

Nigerian newspapers in December May 2020. In February May 2020, a total of five (5) rape cases were published in the three chosen Nigerian newspapers. Finally, in April May 2020, the three selected Nigerian newspapers had nine (9) reported occurrences of rape. It indicates that throughout the study period, the Daily Sun newspaper reported rape cases more frequently than the other selected newspapers, but the Guardian reported rape cases the least frequently.

Table 2: The Guardian, Vanguard, and Daily Sun presentations of rape cases in Nigerian media from June 2020 to May 2021.

Newspaper	Straight	Editorials	Features	Opinion Article	Cartoons	Others	Total
Guardian	3	1	2	1	0	1	8
Vanguard	11	1	2	2	0	1	16
Daily Sun	23	2	3	3	1	1	33
Total	37	4	7	6	1	3	57

The format of rape case coverage in Nigerian newspapers from June 2020 to May 2021 is shown in Table 2 above. It demonstrates that out of the fifty-seven (57) recorded rape instances, 37 were made known to the public via traditional news media. The Guardian, Vanguard, and Daily Sun newspapers each reported three (3), eleven (11) and twenty-three (23) of the thirty-seven (37) reported incidences of rape in straight news forms, respectively. Again, the three chosen Nigerian newspapers reported four (4) rape instances in editorial form. The ratio was one (1), two (2), and three (3), respectively, in The Guardian, Vanguard, and Daily Sun (2). The three Nigerian newspapers covered seven rape-related feature stories throughout the period under consideration (7). The Daily Sun published rape cases in feature form three (3) times, while the Guardian and Vanguard newspapers each reported rape cases in feature form twice. The table above also demonstrates that, throughout the review period, there were a total of six (6) rape-related incidents expressed in opinion articles, with one (1), two (2), and three (3) cases appearing in the Guardian, Vanguard, and Daily Sun publications, respectively. Only one rape-related cartoon instance was published in the Daily Sun newspaper during the time period under consideration. The outcome shown above demonstrates that most of rape incidents as published

by the three Nigerian newspapers, Guardian, Vanguard, and Daily Sun, take the form of straight news stories. The results indicate that cartoons are either not used or are only occasionally utilised by Nigerian publications to report on rape incidents.

Table 3: From June 2020 to May 2021, the Guardian, Vanguard, and Daily Sun newspapers published a story source of rape instances that had been reported in Nigerian newspapers.

Newspaper	Victim	Family Members	Police	Eye Witness	Court	NGO's	Total
Guardian	2	4	1	0	1	0	8
Vanguard	5	8	1	0	1	1	16
Daily Sun	6	20	2	0	3	2	33
Total	13	32	4	0	5	3	57

The sources of rape cases reported in Nigerian newspapers between June 2020 and May 2021 are displayed in Table 3 above. In other words, the table lists the people who made the public aware of the rape instances. According to the study, out of the fifty-seven (57) rape instances that were reported between June 2020 and May 2021, thirteen (13) were made public by the victims themselves, while thirty-two (32) were reported by the victims' families. According to the study, the police (4), eyewitnesses (0), courts (5), and non-governmental organisations are other sources of rape-related stories (3). As a result, the majority of rape cases published in Nigerian media originate from the victims' relatives, such as the victims' parents, aunts, and uncles, among others.

Table 4: Framing of rape cases and stories as they were published in the Guardian, Vanguard, and Daily Sun newspapers in Nigeria between June 2020 and May 2021

Newspaper	Responsibility /Blame Frame	Innocence Frame	Neutral Frame	Avoidance Frame	Intimidation Frame	Total
Guardian	0	3	2	1	2	8
Vanguard	1	9	2	2	2	16
Daily Sun	2	20	5	3	3	33
Total	3	32	9	6	7	57

From fifty-seven (57) reported rape instances, as shown in the table above, thirty-two (32) stories were written utilising the innocence frame by the newspapers employed in this study. The neutral frame comes next, which contains nine (9) of the fifty-seven (57) reported rape instances. The intimidation frame (7), avoidance frame (6), and the responsibility/blame frame are among the others (3). As a result, The Guardian,

Vanguard, and Daily Sun newspapers serve as prime examples of how Nigerian newspapers most frequently use the innocence frame while reporting on rape cases. On the other hand, the accountability frame or viewpoint is the one that Nigerian newspapers utilise the least when reporting on rape cases.

8. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The Guardian, Vanguard, and Daily Sun were the particular Nigerian periodicals examined in the current study to see how rape cases were framed and shown. The study's foundational ideas were agenda framing and social responsibility. Six research questions were posed, and the following are the analysis findings: In response to study question one, it was found that rape incidents are rarely mentioned in most Nigerian publications.

But when it comes to reporting on rape cases among Nigerian publications, The Daily Sun newspaper comes out on top. Out of fifty-seven (57) recorded rape incidents throughout the study period, there were thirty-three (33) instances. It supports research by Musbau (2017) that discovered there are typically two rape instances each day in Lagos, Nigeria. As a result, the logical conclusion that just fifty-seven (57) rape cases—out of an average of two per day in Lagos, Nigeria—are recorded in the study's sample year illustrates the low level of rape case reporting in Nigerian newspapers. However, as corroborated by the interviews with rape victims conducted as part of this study, this might be because victims of rape are reluctant to report such occurrences to security officers or the media. Many rapes and gang rape incidents in Nigeria go unreported, according to Okafo-Vanni (2016), and those few that are reported to the police are either not investigated or the victim is pressured to keep quiet for fear of embarrassing her family. This study's interview section discovered that most rape events are reported to the police by the victims' families. Even though the family of these victims resisted calling the police, they were compelled to save the victims from physical assault. Interviews with rape victims revealed that social stigma and prejudice prevented rape cases from becoming a public problem. Most Nigerian newspapers publish rape incidents in straight news format, which is in response to research question two on the prevalent story or manner of coverage in that country. It has the inference that there aren't enough investigative and elucidative feature stories on rape incidents in these newspapers. As a result, rape accusations follow a typical pattern. According to Joseph (2018, p. 262), mainstream media coverage of rape over the past 25 years has largely

followed a predictable pattern: lengthy stretches of routine reporting gleaned from police handouts, punctuated by brief stretches of intensive and extensive coverage sparked by one or more cases that happen to catch the attention of the media and the public - typically in that order. (p.262). Feature stories would enable in-depth coverage of rape cases, including the facts, how the victims were assaulted, the news behind the news, the interpretation of such incidents, and what law enforcement officials are doing. The platform offers a venue for informative story materials and the sparse straight news broadcast of rape cases. The study found that most Nigerian media, as seen by the three selected Nigerian newspapers, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, and *Daily Sun*, tend to ignore rape-related incidences or reports by burying them deep inside their publications. This supports Agaba's (2020) claim that a culture of brotherliness, the attitude of forgiveness, and non-placement of importance and prominence in rape case reporting may be responsible for Nigeria's rising rape caseload. Most rape cases recorded in Nigerian newspapers had their origin or source from the victim's family, including the victim's parents, aunts, uncles, and so on. This study examined the source of rape cases reported in Nigerian media. The content analysis and the interview components of the study confirmed. As a result, a lot of rape victims choose not to disclose or report the rapes that have been committed against them. This fact was reinforced by the results of interviews with rape victims, which showed that the majority of the victims' cases were reported to the police by the victims' relatives. It indisputably backs up the findings of Ifeicho (2017), who discovered that rape victims would rather heal in solitude than expose their experiences and risk being stigmatised by the very society that should be supporting them. It supports a related finding from a research on violence against women conducted in Nepal that suggested sexual assault victims. In most countries shame culture stigmatises rape victims, supported by the victims' refusal to report such crimes. A woman may experience shame or guilt for cultural reasons, but one of the most frequent is body shaming (Benedict, 2016; Thapan, 2017). The innocence frame is the most frequently employed form of rape case reporting in Nigeria, according to this study's findings, since the victims of rape are portrayed or seen to be innocent of the crime perpetrated against them. This study also discovered that, although it happens infrequently, the Nigerian media frequently re-victimizes rape victims when they cover rape cases. These victims are portrayed as being at fault for their ordeals because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time or were wearing the incorrect

clothing. Such accounts back up Gqola's (2016) assertion that the media commonly uses the notion that a woman shouldn't have been strolling alone or wearing suggestive attire at a certain time and place to re-victimise rape victims, even though the re-victimisation framing was unusual (only three stories out of the 57 examined). Rao (2021) discovered that all the journalists he spoke to in India agreed that the television news media both disputed and promoted the idea that rape victims were embarrassed women. While some journalists criticized politicians in India, religious leaders as well as bureaucrats for their recurrent victim shaming, others claimed that by focusing on the victim rather than the culprits, the news media continued to cast shame upon the victim. In a culture where rape and sexual violence are prevalent and where prevailing attitudes, conventions, societal practices, and even the media normalise, justify, and condone rape and sexual violence, Okafor-Vanni (2020) notes that everyday people make decisions that perpetuate the culture of rape. She makes a specific reference to Nigeria in her analysis.

9. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that Nigerian media cover rape cases; however, the three selected Nigerian newspapers only provide moderate coverage, particularly when compared to the *Guardian* newspaper. Even while the majority of the reported cases were covered in pure news reporting in the three selected newspapers—the *Guardian*, *Vanguard*, and *Daily Sun*—the majority of the news articles on rape were placed inside the publications rather than at the front or back pages. Sometimes, rape victims are given new life in the media by being blamed for or made to appear to be responsible for their suffering. The majority of rape victims, according to the survey, do not speak out about the crimes committed against them.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher therefore, advises the following as parts of the study's recommendations;

1. Nigerian publications should strive to cover and expose rape incidents in a way that raises awareness of the problem and leads to a long-term solution.
2. To end the problem, Nigerian publications should publish more editorials on rape incidents.
3. Rape cases should be highlighted on the front pages of Nigerian newspapers given the gravity

and sensitivity of such acts to draw in more readers (as most people only read the cover pages of newspapers).

4. Nigerian newspapers should write stories professionally to avoid re-victimising rape victims.

References

5. Agaba, A. O. (2020). Prosecuting rape cases in the Nigeria legal system. In Afolabi S.O. (ed) *Justice system in Nigeria: An X-ray*. Ibadan: Standard publishers.
6. Agbanu, V.N. (May 2020). *Mass communication, introduction, techniques and issues*. Enugu: Rhyce Kerex publishers.
7. Akakwandu, C. (2012). *Mass communication theories/models*. Ekwulobia. Chinonso global press limited.
8. Asemah, E.S. (2011). *Selected mass media themes*. Jos: Jos University.
9. Benedict, H. (2016). *Virgin and vamp: How the press covers sex crime*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
10. Campbell, R. & Raja, S. (2017). Secondary victimisation of rape victims: insights from mental health professionals who treat survivors of violence. *Violence and Victims*, 14(3): 261-275.
11. Campbell, R., Self, T., Barnes, H.E., Ahrens, C.E., Wasco, S.M. & Zaragoza Diesfeld, Y. (2017). Community services for rape survivors: enhancing psychological well-being or increasing trauma? *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 67(6): 847-858.
12. Dearing, J.W. & Rogers, E.M. (2016). AIDS and the media agenda. In T. Edgar M. FitzPatrick & V. Freimuth (Eds) *AIDS: A communication perspective*, Hillsdale, N.J. Lawrence Erlbaum.
13. Entman, R.M. (2017). Framing: Towards clarification of a fractured paradigm. In McQuail, D. (ed) *Reader in mass communication theory*. London: Sage.
14. Ezeaka, N.B. (2021). *An evaluation of newspaper coverage of women's participation in Nigerian politics: 2007-2011*. A masters degree thesis submitted to the department of mass communication, Anambra state university, unpublished.
15. Gambo, S & Lenshie, N.E. (2021). The mass media, women and politics. In Emman-Owums Owuamalam & Angela Nwammuo (eds) *Mass media review: An international journal of mass communication*, Vol. 1, No 4, January May 2021, Enugu: FABA communication (Nig).
16. Government of Nepal (2012). A study on gender-based violence was conducted in selected rural districts of Nepal. Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers, Sigha Durbar, Kathmandu, Nepal.
17. Hasan, S. (2020). *Mass communication, principles and concepts (2nd ed)*. New Delhi. CBS publishers.
18. Ifeacho, C.V. (2017). *Criminal justice system in Nigeria*. Enugu: Oblong publications.
19. Iyengar, S. & Kinder, D.R. (nd). *News that matters: Television and American opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
20. Iyengar, S. & Reeves, R. (nd). *Do the media govern? Politicians, voters and reporters in America*. Sage publications Inc, Thousand Oaks, California.