

INFLUENCE OF BROADCAST MEDIA FRAMING OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE ON VIEWERS: A STUDY OF ITV, BENIN, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of broadcast media framing of gender-based violence on viewers of ITV, Benin, Nigeria. The study focused on understanding the influence that broadcast media framing of gender-based violence has on the viewers, using ITV, Benin viewers as respondents. The issue of gender-based violence is a concern in Nigeria, and the effects of the media framing of the issue on viewers become necessary to investigate. This study adopted the survey research method, and the questionnaire was used as an instrument of data collection. The Agenda-Setting theory was used as theoretical frameworks for this study. The Taro Yamani sampling procedure was employed to get a representative sample of 400 for the study. Specifically, ITV viewers in the Edo North Senatorial District were used as respondents. The data obtained from the field were presented and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The research found that ITV framing of gender-based violence has a limited influence on public perception towards gender-based violence and that the media is not effective in addressing and preventing issues related to gender-based violence. Based on the findings, the study recommended that broadcast media should reconsider their framing strategies regarding gender-based violence and collaborate more closely with experts in the field of gender-based violence in order to enhance their role in the campaign against gender-based violence.

Keywords: Broadcast Media, Framing, Gender-Based Violence and Viewers

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Introduction

Gender-based violence is a major problem that affects cultures all around the world, including Nigeria. Public perceptions of gender-based violence are greatly influenced by broadcast media outlets. Gender-based violence, also known as GBV, is a complicated and intricate phenomenon that has deep origins and is present in all communities around the world (Miranda, 2020). It affects people of all ages, races, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds, cutting across national borders and socio-cultural situations. Gender-based violence is a significant concern in Nigeria, a nation known for its complex social dynamics and rich cultural variety (Ahmed et al., 2020).

With a population that is both large and diverse, Nigeria serves as a microcosm of the GBV problem worldwide. It has the same difficulties that many other countries experience, but it also has to deal with

particular social, cultural, and economic issues that add to the complexity of the issue. The media is a potent institution that is crucial in influencing public attitudes, actions, and perceptions in this complex social environment. Television and radio are examples of broadcast media, which are powerful information sources that may either make the issue of GBV worse or work as change agents (Adedayo & Aborisade, 2018).

International organizations and human rights groups have described gender-based violence as a wide variety of damaging acts committed against persons based on their gender or perceived gender. According to Omega (2015), it includes psychological abuse, which frequently takes the form of coercion and emotional manipulation, physical violence like physical assault and domestic abuse, sexual violence like rape, and economic abuse where people are economically excluded because of their gender. It is

quite distressing to see how common gender-based violence is in Nigeria. GBV has been documented to impact men, women, and children in both urban and rural environments (Harries & Bird, 2005). GBV has far-reaching effects that go beyond short-term physical and mental injury. These consist of emotional scars, long-lasting trauma, and societal shame. These repercussions not only harm the person but also impede society's general growth and well-being (Nwabuzor & Gever, 2015).

The media has a critical role in influencing public opinion and legislation on gender-based violence (Harries & Bird, 2005). This study attempts to investigate how broadcast media portrays and frames GBV incidents within this intricate dynamic. The aim of this study is to acquire a more profound comprehension of how these representations impact social attitudes and reactions towards gender-based violence.

In order to address the issue of GBV and advance interventions and policies that have the potential to significantly alter the situation, it is imperative that these processes be understood. The goal of this research is to shed light on the complex web of factors that impacts public knowledge and reactions by delving into the intricacies and complexity surrounding the representation of GBV in broadcast media.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, despite significant attempts to prevent it, gender-based violence has been a persistent problem. It is still a serious and pervasive problem. Like many other nations, Nigeria is plagued with a large and complicated GBV problem that calls for a multipronged response that includes support services, legislation, and public education. The media, especially broadcast media, is crucial in this respect (Lengel et al., 2023).

The way that issues of gender-based violence are portrayed and framed in the media has the power to significantly impact how the general public views and comprehends this problem. The media is often used as a prism through which society perceives and understands the issue of GBV (Chika, 2012).

According to Iliyasu et al. (2011), the media's power is found in its capacity to dehumanize or humanize the victims, sensationalize or minimize the tragedies, and elicit empathy or indifference from the viewership. Although it is clear that media portrayals have a substantial impact on the public's perception of GBV, there is a critical knowledge gap regarding the specific ways that broadcast media, particularly television, presents these incidents and the ways in which these portrayals influence societal reactions and policy development. This information is essential for

creating GBV prevention strategies and putting into practice programs and policies that may actually impact real change.

By analyzing how broadcast media influences public opinion and policy about gender-based violence in Nigeria, this study seeks to close this gap in knowledge. The research aims to clarify the complex ways in which media discourses influence the public's perception of the problem by looking at how broadcast media presents these instances.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Assess the effect of TV framing on public perceptions towards gender-based violence.
2. Investigate the effectiveness of media interventions in addressing and preventing gender-based violence in Nigeria.

Research Questions

To guide this study, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What is the effect of TV framing on public perception towards gender-based violence?
2. What is the effectiveness of media interventions in addressing and preventing gender-based violence in Nigeria?

Review of Related Literature

Broadcast Media Framing of Gender Based Violence

D'Angelo (2017) defines media framing as the process by which media organizations create and present content in order to influence how the general audience perceives and understands a certain topic. The approach by which media sources choose, highlight, and convey particular facets of a problem, event, or narrative in order to shape public opinion and comprehension is referred to as media framing. It entails the use of certain frames or viewpoints that have the power to influence how viewers understand and interpret information (D'Angelo 2017). Selecting certain features of a problem, highlighting particulars, and offering a particular context or viewpoint are all part of media framing, which frames the audience's understanding (Van-Hulst & Yanow, 2016). Media representations of problems or events can center on placing blame or accountability on certain persons or organizations. Frames have the power to shape an audience's conception of good and evil by highlighting the moral or ethical components of a topic. Referring to a situation as a crisis or dilemma might imply that immediate action is required, along with support for

certain solutions. In order to elicit strong feelings and audience participation, media outlets may concentrate on telling intimate tales and narratives. A story's controversies or opposing points of view might be highlighted by the media to emphasize disputes and disagreements (Van-Hulst & Yanow, 2016).

According to Wanta (2023), media framing shapes public perception of issues and themes, directing attention, and establishing the importance of certain concerns. By affecting viewers' perceptions and understanding of a topic, effective framing may influence public opinion and frequently match it with the goal or bias of the media outlet. By affecting public opinion and policy discussions, media framing has the power to influence public policy and ultimately shape actions and choices. By influencing the prevailing knowledge and portrayal of events and topics, media framing has an influence on social and cultural narratives. The prejudices, attitudes, and motives of media organizations can impact media framing, which may result in subjective or biased information displays. Framing has the ability to oversimplify complicated problems or occurrences, which might result in a narrow understanding and perhaps misunderstanding of the subject (Wanta, 2023). According to Van-Hulst and Yanow (2016), there are others who contend that media framing may be employed as a tool for manipulating public opinion in order to further certain agendas or interests.

Media framing, according to Cacciatore et al. (2016), is the process by which media organizations choose which information to highlight and show in order to influence the public's perception and comprehension. It has a profound impact on cultural narratives, public opinion, agenda-setting, and policy-making. But media framing is not without biases and constraints, and a critical assessment of its impact on communication and comprehension requires close examination (Cacciatore et al., 2016).

Media framing, as it relates to gender-based violence in Nigeria, is the process by which broadcast media outlets present and frame violent episodes, as well as the victims, offenders, and the general story involving these occurrences (D'Angelo, 2017). The way that gender-based violence is framed in the media greatly affects how the general public views it. Stereotypes and conventions are frequently reinforced by media coverage of gender-based violence, which contributes to victim-blaming behaviors and downplays the gravity of the problem. Media frames have the unintentional ability to transfer blame from the offenders to the casualties by emphasizing the victims' appearance, actions, or personalities (D'Angelo, 2017).

Furthermore, media framing can contribute to

the normalization of violence and the reinforcement of harmful social norms. Through the portrayal of toxic masculinity and patriarchal norms, the media can imply that violence against women is an acceptable form of control or punishment. This framing can shape societal attitudes and perpetuate a cycle of violence in relationships (D'Angelo, 2017).

The way that gender-based violence is framed in broadcast media has important policy ramifications as well (Lawlor & Tolley, 2017). Policymakers can be swayed by ethical and responsible reporting that emphasizes the gravity of the problem, tackles underlying causes, and advances viable solutions. Media framing can aid in the creation and execution of policies meant to combat gender-based violence in Nigeria by emphasizing systemic issues (Lawlor & Tolley, 2017).

The Role of the Media in Preventing Gender-Based Violence

Lecheler and De-Vreese (2019) assert that media, in all its variations, involving broadcast media like radio and television, is crucial in the fight against gender-based violence (GBV). They advocate the role of the media in the prevention of gender-based violence as follow:

Raising Awareness: Media sources can raise public awareness of GBV by exposing its frequently concealed elements through news coverage, documentaries, and investigative reporting (Bakare et al., 2010). The media has the power to personalize the problem and spur action by elevating the voices of survivors (Fawole et al., 2018).

Public Education: The media is a vehicle for educating the public on the many forms of gender-based violence (GBV), its root causes, and the effects it has on survivors and the society as a whole. It can be simpler for people to identify and handle GBV if they have access to useful information and resources from talk shows, radio programs, and educational segments (Fawole et al., 2018).

Challenging Stereotypes: The media has the ability to dispel negative stereotypes and false beliefs that support gender-based violence. It can challenge deeply established gender conventions by presenting men and women in a variety of unconventional situations. Consequently, there may be a decrease in the societal tolerance of violence against women.

Giving Survivors a Platform: Media organizations may provide survivors a place to talk about their experiences and tales. These stories not only give

survivors a voice, but they also encourage others to get support and end the perpetuation of gender-based violence. Additionally, survivor narratives might promote the need for legislative and assistance program modifications.

Advocacy and Social Campaigns: In the fight to eradicate GBV, the media may be a very effective instrument for advocacy and social campaigns. Public service announcements, social media campaigns, and advertisements can all help to organize the public and encourage people to take action against gender-based violence (GBV) (Titilayo et al., 2014).

Support for Legal and Policy Reforms: The media has the power to shape public opinion, which in turn may put pressure on decision-makers to address gender-based violence (GBV) by reshaping the law and allocating funds for support services. Discussions and proposals for policy reforms might arise from highly publicized reports of GBV incidents.

Media Ethics and Training: Educating journalists and other media practitioners on how to ethically and sensitively report on GBV will help guarantee truthful and impartial coverage. Media organizations may be guided in their portrayal of GBV by establishing and upholding codes of ethics that place a priority on truthful coverage, respect for victims, and the advancement of equality.

Community Involvement and Advocacy: Through roundtable discussions, talk programs, and interactive platforms, the media may promote community conversations and debates around GBV. The media has the power to spur public action and increase awareness of preventative initiatives by elevating the voices of activists, experts, and survivors. It's critical to understand that the media must prioritize victim experiences and consent, avoid re-victimization, and address the prevention of GBV with compassion. The media may influence societal change, question damaging practices, and advance gender equality by actively avoiding GBV (Kamaya, 2018). The media may influence societal change, question damaging practices, and advance gender equality by actively avoiding GBV (Kamaya, 2018). The media has to portray the accountability and repercussions of violence towards women, as well as the fact that those who commit these crimes will face punishment. Viewers can better comprehend the seriousness of violence and be discouraged from accepting it by supporting realistic and responsible narratives. By presenting strong, independent women, television could dispel outdated gender stereotypes and represent a varied range of inspiring female characters (Kamaya, 2018).

Viewers Perception of Media Coverage of Gender-Based Violence

Numerous studies and analyses have been conducted on the complicated and diverse topic of how gender-based violence is perceived in the media (Kate, 2018). Kate points out that a widespread and deeply ingrained social issue is gender-based violence, which includes a variety of violent acts committed against an individual on the basis of their gender. As a strong and ubiquitous force, the media is vital in determining how the general public views, feels about, and reacts to gender-based violence. It has been discovered that how gender-based violence is portrayed in the media significantly affects society attitudes and actions as well as the upholding of negative gender norms and stereotypes (Kate, 2018).

Studies have demonstrated that media representations may have an impact on society views and actions by normalizing and accepting violence against women (Sinko et al., 2021). For example, media portrayals of male-female relationships frequently uphold conventional norms and legitimize violence against women. Research has indicated that being exposed to media depictions of sexual violence is associated with increased acceptance or tolerance for violent behavior (Sinko et al., 2021). Moreover, it has been observed that the representation of significant violence against women in a variety of media, such as television, movies, and music videos, desensitizes viewers to the unacceptable nature of force and cruelty among people. Social views and reactions to gender-based violence may suffer as a result of the media's normalizing of violence against women (Sinko et al., 2021).

Gender stereotypes and objectification are also promoted by the media, which can lead to the normalization of violence against women and the continuation of gender-based violence (Amankavičiūtė & Žalnieriūtė, 2024). Gender-based violence can be sustained and negative gender norms reinforced by the representation of women in advertising and media content in hypersexualized and stereotyped roles. Another factor contributing to this phenomenon is the underrepresentation of women in positions of decision-making within the media sector. Moreover, it has been discovered that sensationalistic media coverage of violence against women leads to the maintenance of negative stereotypes and numbs the public to the gravity and intolerance of gender-based violence (Amankavičiūtė & Žalnieriūtė, 2024).

Furthermore, research suggests that the media frequently fails to offer gender-sensitive and all-encompassing reporting on problems linked to violence against women, which has put the media's

position in covering gender-based violence under criticism (Mishra, 2023). The sensationalistic reporting of assault against women and the presentation of women as helpless and victims can both contribute to the institutionalization of gender-based violence and the maintenance of negative stereotypes. The public's views and reactions to gender-based violence, as well as the maintenance of damaging gender norms and stereotypes, may suffer as a result of the media's inability to report on gender-based violence in a gender-sensitive manner (Mishra, 2023).

The way in which gender-based violence is portrayed in the media clearly influences how the general public views, feels, and reacts to this type of violence (Enaifoghe & Idowu, 2021). The acceptance of violence against women, the maintenance of negative gender stereotypes, and the absence of gender-sensitive coverage on gender-based violence can all have a negative impact on the attitudes and actions of society. Consequently, it is essential that the media take a gender-transformative stance when covering gender-based violence. This entails creating gender-transformative material as well as developing reporting techniques that are sensitive to gender. By opposing damaging gender norms and stereotypes, advancing gender equality, and upholding women's rights, this strategy can help prevent and stop gender-based violence (Enaifoghe & Idowu, 2021).

In order to guarantee that reporting procedures are inclusive and gender-sensitive, the media's reporting on gender-based violence should additionally be subjected to monitoring and assessment systems (Sharma, 2022). The media may make a significant contribution to the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence as well as the advancement of equal treatment of women and respect for the rights of females by taking a gender-transformative stance while covering gender-based violence.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Agenda-Setting theory.

Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda-setting theory states that by deciding which subjects get greater attention, the media may influence public opinion (Blasco-Duatis, 2019). The notion of agenda-setting was created to describe how the media shapes public perceptions and priorities by drawing attention to particular topics and occasions. According to McCombs and Valenzuela (2020), the public's opinion of the relative significance of various issues is directly influenced by their presence in the news media.

According to the agenda-setting idea, the media chooses which stories are given significant placement

and publicity, functioning as gatekeepers. Wanta (2023) observes that agenda-setting occurs at two levels, namely:

First level: Assesses the importance of issues by looking at how frequently and prominently they appear in the news.

Second level: Centers on how viewers should interpret and consider the issues that are being presented.

In the case of the study on the effects of broadcast media framing of gender-based violence on ITV viewers in Benin, Nigeria, the Agenda Setting Theory provides insights into how the portrayal of gender-based violence in the media, particularly on ITV, shapes viewers' perceptions, attitudes, and responses to this issue. The theory helps us understand how media decisions about what to cover and how to frame GBV incidents can impact what society deems as important and what policy responses are prioritized (Nwabuzor & Gever, 2015).

For example, if ITV consistently frames gender-based violence as a prevalent and urgent social problem, viewers may be more likely to perceive it as such and prioritize it as an issue needing attention in their community or society. Conversely, if ITV downplays or neglects to cover gender-based violence, viewers may not perceive it as a significant issue or may not recognize its severity.

Furthermore, the Agenda Setting Theory could also shed light on how media framing influences the public discourse surrounding gender-based violence. If ITV frames gender-based violence in a way that emphasizes the need for societal change, viewers may be more inclined to engage in discussions, advocacy, or activism aimed at addressing the root causes of gender-based violence and promoting gender equality.

Overall, the Agenda Setting Theory provides a framework for understanding the role of broadcast media, such as ITV, in shaping viewers' perceptions and attitudes towards gender-based violence and how media framing can influence the public agenda on this important issue.

Research Methodology

This research utilized the survey method, which involved gathering and analyzing samples from both large and small populations to understand the prevalence of certain phenomena and the relationships between variables (Mahohoma & Agbenyegah, 2020). The population for this study consists of individuals who are viewers of ITV, Benin. According to Willington Akodeja, the News Editor of ITV, "the current population of ITV viewers in Edo State stands at 5,800,000" (Personal Communication, January 12,

2024). The sample size for this study is 400 respondents, determined by using the Taro Yamane sampling technique.

The questionnaire served as the instrument of data collection for this study. The multistage sampling technique was used for this study. The purposive sampling technique was first used to select Edo North Senatorial District. The purposive sampling technique was also used to select the headquarters of the six Local Government Area in Edo north which are Auchi, Fugar, Igarra, Agenebode, Sabongida-Ora and Afuze. The accidental sampling technique was employed to distribute the questionnaires to respondents in the chosen towns.

Out of the 400 questionnaires, 67 were administered to Auchi respondents, 67 to Fugar respondents, 67 to Agenebode respondents, 67 to Igarra respondents, 66 to Sabongida-Ora and 66 to Afuze respondents. The respondents were first asked if they are ITV viewers before the questionnaires were administered to them to fill.

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 24) was used in analysis the data obtained from the questionnaires. In doing this, the most common response was accepted as the established reality.

Data Presentation, Interpretation and Analysis

Table 1: Analysis of Questionnaire Distribution

Number of Questionnaire Distributed	400
Number of Questionnaire Returned and analyzable	395
Number of Copies not returned	5
Percentage of Questionnaire Returned	98.8%

Source: (Field Survey, 2024)

As indicated in Table 1, four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to respondents in Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. Five of the 400 questionnaires that were issued to respondents were not returned, while 395 of the 400 questionnaires that were returned were filled out correctly. This gave rise to a great response rate of 98.8% of the questionnaires that were returned and used for this study.

Table 2: To what extent does ITV framing influence your perception towards gender-based violence?

	Freque	Perce	Valid Percen	Cumulati Percent
Valid Very large extent	69	17.5	17.5	17.5
Large exten	88	22.3	22.3	39.7
Not sure	17	4.3	4.3	44.1
Some exten	172	43.5	43.5	87.6
Not at all	49	12.4	12.4	100.0
Total	395	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 shows that ITV framing has limited influence on respondents' perceptions towards gender-based violence, as indicated by 172 majority of the respondents, representing 43.5%. Respondents whose perceptions towards gender-based violence are largely and very largely influenced by ITV framing make up 88, representing 22.3%, and 69, representing 17.5%, respectively. Respondents who were not sure of the influence of ITV numbered 17, representing 4.3%, while respondents whose perceptions were not influenced at all by ITV framing of gender-based violence totaled 49, responsible for 12.4%.

	Freque	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulativ Percent
Valid Very much	68	17.2	17.2	17.2
Much	79	20.0	20.0	37.2
Not sure	30	7.6	7.6	44.8
Not much	168	42.5	42.5	87.3
Not at all	50	12.7	12.7	100.0
Total	395	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The data in table 3 indicates that ITV intervention in addressing and preventing gender-based violence is not very effective, as confirmed by 168 respondents, representing 42.5%. Respondents, who were not sure of their answer numbered 30, representing 7.6%, while those who considered ITV intervention as not effective at all numbered 50, responsible for 12.7%. However, respondents that felt that ITV intervention in addressing and preventing gender-based violence is very much and much effective were 68, responsible for 17.2%, and 79, responsible for 20%, respectively.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: What is the effect of TV framing on public perception towards gender-based violence?

It is proven by the findings of this study that TV framing of gender-based violence has limited effect on the issue. This is proven in table 2 which shows that ITV framing has limited influence on respondents' perceptions towards gender-based violence, as indicated by 172 majorities of the respondents, representing 43.5%.

This finding challenges the notion that TV framing alone dictates public attitudes towards gender-based violence. The finding contrasted the belief of Wanta (2023) that media framing shapes public perception of issues and themes, directing attention, and establishing the importance of certain concerns. He noted that by affecting viewers'

perceptions and understanding of a topic, effective framing may influence public opinion and frequently match it with the goal or bias of the media outlet. He went further to say that by affecting public opinion and policy discussions, media framing has the power to influence public policy and ultimately shape actions and choices. But in the finding of this study, media framing has limited effect on gender-based violence.

According to Fairbairn (2020), while media representations undoubtedly contribute to societal perceptions, other factors such as personal experiences, cultural norms, and educational background also play pivotal roles. This finding is also consistent with the Agenda Setting Theory, which holds that although the media may establish the agenda for public conversation, it has no control on what people will think or say in response to such an agenda (Guo & Zhang, 2020). In this wise, viewers may get information on gender-based violence from television, but such information may not have any effect on them based on a number of dispositions.

It also resonates with the findings of Martins and Werna (2017), indicating that media companies lack the ability to sway readers or mold public opinion. They contend that a variety of intricate and conditional media impacts exist, depending on individual circumstances and predispositions. People usually have strong opinions, thus they are prone to reject or ignore information that goes against their ideas. People can be impacted by a multitude of things, including their personal beliefs and ideals that align with media content, emotional responses, insecurity, and media reliance.

Research Question 2: What is the effectiveness of media interventions in addressing and preventing gender-based violence in Nigeria?

The finding, as depicted in table 3, reveals that media interventions are perceived as ineffective in addressing and preventing gender-based violence. This conclusion is drawn from the responses of 168 out of the total respondents, constituting 42.5% of the sample.

In support of this finding is Mshelia (2021) who opines that media interventions, including ITV programs, often lack comprehensive strategies to effectively address the complex socio-cultural factors contributing to GBV in Nigeria. They may focus more on superficial awareness-raising campaigns rather than addressing root causes or providing actionable solutions. Olaseinde and Ogwuche (2022) also notes that while television remains a popular medium in Nigeria, the effectiveness of television interventions in addressing GBV may be hampered by low audience engagement or retention. He observed that without

active audience participation and dialogue, the impact of these interventions on attitudes and behaviors related to GBV prevention could be limited.

Contrary to this finding, Chima et al. (2023) argue that well-designed media interventions, including those aired on television have the potential to influence attitudes and behaviors related to GBV prevention. These interventions, when tailored to the local context and employing evidence-based strategies, can lead to positive outcomes such as increased awareness, attitude change, and help-seeking behaviors among viewers. Kung'u and Kamau (2023) notes that serial dramas aired on television in addressing social issues, including GBV, by engaging audiences through compelling narratives and relatable characters can also be effective. These programs, according to him, have been shown to spark discussions, challenge harmful norms, and empower viewers to take action against GBV.

While the finding indicates that media interventions are not perceived as effective in addressing and preventing gender-based violence in Nigeria, it is crucial to consider a range of perspectives from existing literature. Further research exploring the specific characteristics and implementation strategies of media interventions, along with their impact on GBV outcomes, could provide valuable insights for designing more effective interventions in the future.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Given the limited effect of TV framing on public perception towards gender-based violence, it is essential for television stations to reassess their framing strategies. They should collaborate with experts in GBV prevention to develop more comprehensive approaches that consider the socio-cultural context of Nigeria.
2. In light of the perceived ineffectiveness of media interventions in addressing and preventing GBV, television stations should enhance their intervention strategies. This involves tailoring interventions to the grassroots context, and actively engaging with audiences to increase their effectiveness.

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