

COVERAGE PATTERNS OF RAPE MYTH ACCEPTANCE BY NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS REGARDING CHILD DEFILEMENT

¹Okoji, Chukwudinma Taiwo (PHD), ²Oladipupo, A. Akinola (PHD), ³Okoji, Morenikeji Chukwufumnaya, ³Olanihun, Sunday Zechariah, ³Daniel, Henry Amos and ³Olawuwo, Gift Oluwasayo

¹Department of Mass Communication, Federal, Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria.

²Department of Mass Communication, Federal Polytechnic, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria.

³Department of Mass Communication, Redeemers University, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria.

Corresponding Author: Olanihun Sunday Zechariah (Olanihunzechariah@gmail.com)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13304529>

Abstract: This paper examined the coverage pattern of rape myth acceptance of child defilement in selected Nigerian newspapers. The objective was to determine the level of portrayal of rape myths and the pattern of coverage of child defilement stories by selected newspapers. The research method was content analysis, and three national and three local newspapers (*The Nigerian Tribune, The Punch and The Vanguard, Osun Defender, PM News and Hope Newspaper*) published in 2023 were purposively selected. 4-month editions (February, April, July and November) were randomly selected. In total, 714 editions of 102 news items were analyzed across the six selected newspapers. Findings revealed that 10 (9.8%) stories were based on the belief that victims/their parents are to be fully or partially blamed for the assault, while 92 (90.2%) stories stated that the victims/their parents are not to be blamed for the assault. Newspapers failed to give priority to child defilement stories, as most of the stories were reported on the inside pages, with 99 stories (in both inside page major and minor) standing at 97.1%, or over 100% of the combined stories. On frequency, findings showed that there were 102 stories about on child defilement across the 4 months. *The Punch* Newspaper had the highest frequency (25 stories), followed by *The Nigerian Tribune* Newspaper with 21 stories and *The Vanguard* Newspaper with 19 stories, while *Osun Defender* had the least (9 stories). This paper concludes that Nigerian newspapers' continued coverage of child defilement can stem its occurrence and shape perceptions of rape myth acceptance. The paper recommends that Nigerian newspapers should give much space, especially through editorials and articles, condemning any traces of rape myths that exist in different cultures in Nigeria so as to positively affect people's attitudes toward reducing to the barest minimum occurrences of child defilement.

Keywords: Rape myth, Coverage pattern, Child defilement, Nigerian Newspapers, Nigerian Child

Introduction

Child defilement is essentially a crime under the Offenses Act, 2006 in the Nigerian constitution, as it is defined as any sexual intercourse with a child under the age of 18 years with or without the child's consent. The definition of sexual abuse with children is when an older person, a youth, or an adult uses a child for sexual purposes. This kind of violation includes all sorts of activities, from rape of any orifice on the child, to fondling the genitals of the child, to forcing the child to fondle or touch the abuser's genitals, to forcing the child to perceive sexually explicit acts in any form (Bejide, 2014).

In the past, the care of children was shared among neighbors, relatives, and friends, even in the absence of biological parents. This arrangement was characterized by a sense of trust and safety for children. However, there has been a disturbing increase in cases of child defilement across Nigeria. This alarming trend has prompted the Inspector General (IG) of Police to emphasize the urgent need for action. According to the IGP, between January and May 2020 alone, the Nigerian Police recorded 717 rape cases, leading to the arrest of 799 suspects, investigation and charging of 631 cases to court, with ongoing investigations in 52 cases (Omoniyi, 2020). Furthermore, Bello (2020) reported 42 rape cases in Kano state between January and June 2020.

Abdulaziz, Umar, Musa, Musa, Oyeniyi, Ayoola-Williams, and Okeniyi (2018) highlighted that child sexual abuse is a global health and human rights issue, particularly underreported and understudied in sub-Saharan Africa. Factors contributing to this phenomenon include unsubstantiated beliefs such as money rituals, age elongation, and the misconception that children's genital organs enhance sexual pleasure and rape myth acceptance, which is embedded in prejudicial and stereotyped beliefs toward victims of defilement as being instrumental to their defilement.

It is affirmed that media discourse plays a crucial role in shaping public perception and influencing policy decisions. Anneke (2015) argued that media coverage can bring issues like child defilement to the forefront of government agendas and shape societal attitudes toward victims. Not only do people acquire factual information about public affairs from the news media, such as cases of child defilement, readers also learn how important it is to attach to a topic on the basis of the emphasis placed on it in the news and how newspapers entrench or downplay popular beliefs that perhaps are prejudicial toward the victims of defilement and their parents as the ones to be blamed for the menace (Rape myth acceptance).

Statement of the problem

Although it is generally acknowledged that sexual abuse is in existence in all countries worldwide, available statistics concerning the prevalence of child sexual abuse in Sub-Saharan Africa are very limited (Bejide, 2014). Few studies have been conducted from a media salience perspective on the issue of child defilement cases in Nigeria, as most stem from the sociological and psychological background (Bakare, & Oyero, 2017; Kayode, Adeniran, 2016). Essentially, findings revealed that most studies on child sexual abuse or defilement were done mostly in Europe and America and Asia, with concerns on protecting victims' identities in press coverage of child victimization, how media represent sexual predator victims and offenders, and how such narratives affect people's perceptions (Finkelhor and Beckwith, 2010; Sara, Yarina and Denise, 2013; Rebecca, 2018 & Christina and Ryan, 2014). In addition, some of the studies conducted in developed countries examined the pattern of frames used for child defilement cases, with most of the studies affirming that individual, episodic

focus of the media on child defilement cases remained the same (Jane,2013; Pamela, Andrew & Lori,2012) & Annex, 2010).

Findings also revealed that much research has been conducted by scholars on child sexual abuse from the medical, sociological, and psychological perspectives (Olumodeji, 2008; Bickley and Beech, 2009; Kendall-Tackett, Williams and Finkelhor, 2003; & Kevin, 2004), but not much has been done on the media salience of child defilement cases in Nigeria in particular. In addition, there are many news reports that justified its occurrence in the country, but there are not many quantitative studies conducted in Nigeria that documented the rate of defilement among children. Therefore, this study investigated the extent to which Nigerian newspapers highlighted child defilement cases through a pattern of coverage, especially as it concerns acceptance of rape myths.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. To assess the level of portrayal of rape myths in child defilement stories by Nigerian newspapers.
2. To investigate the pattern of coverage by Nigerian newspapers of cases of child defilement in Nigeria.

Research questions

1. What is the level of portrayal of rape myths in Nigerian children's defilement stories?
2. What is the pattern of coverage given by Nigerian newspapers regarding the defilement of children in Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Child Defilement

Child defilement is a pervasive global public health concern that inflicts significant harm on victims, their families, and communities at large (Laila, 2015). Despite having been a topic of considerable discourse for over three decades, with attention from legislative and professional bodies, many aspects of the issue remain shrouded in mystery, ambiguity, or contention (Laila, 2015).

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2012) defines child defilement as sexual activity between a child and an adult or another child who, due to age or development, holds a position of responsibility, trust, or power over the child, with the intention of solely satisfying the sexual needs of the perpetrator. This definition emphasizes the importance of consent, unlike the definition provided by ANPPCAN, which focuses on penetration.

It is important to recognize that boys and girls can be victims of defilement, highlighting the fact that male children can also fall prey to adult perpetrators. However, defilement disproportionately affects girls, often resulting in physical pain and lasting emotional trauma, with visible injuries to the child's private parts (Lolloid, 2016).

Perpetrators of child defilement, commonly referred to as pedophiles, engage in pedophilic behavior (Banda, 2016). Pedophilia involves sexual attraction to children and the exploitation of their innocence through coercion or force. Banda noted that while fathers who engage in incest may exhibit pedophilic tendencies, the term "pedophile" is typically reserved for individuals who abuse children outside their family circle.

The type of Child Sexual Abuse

Child Sexual Abuse, as noted by Crosso-Tower (2012), can be categorized into types based on the identity of the perpetrator. Similarly, Bolen (2011) emphasized that understanding the abuser's modus operandi is crucial for classifying child sexual abuse, which poses challenges in definitively identifying victims. This study explores two primary types of Child Sexual Abuse, as supported by scholars (Bolen, 2011; Crosso-Tower, 2012; Fridell, 2008; Mather & Debye, 2014; Shovelar, 2013): Intrafamilial child sexual abuse and extrafamilial child sexual abuse.

Intrafamilial sexual abuse or incest, as described by Fridell (2009), involves the perpetrator being a relative of the child, either by blood or by marriage. Mather and Debye (2014) defined incest as sexual abuse perpetrated by a family member or someone in a kinship relationship with the child. Shovelar (2013) further characterized incest as intimate or close sexual contact among relatives. Perpetrators of incest can include individuals within the nuclear or extended family, such as fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts, siblings, or stepfamily members, and the abuse can take various forms, including father-daughter, mother-daughter, father-son, mother-son, stepfather-daughter, sibling incest, and grandfather-granddaughter relationships (Shovelar, 2013).

In contrast, extrafamilial abuse refers to sexual abuse by individuals outside the family circle (Shovelar, 2003). While much attention has been given to intrafamilial abuse, particularly father-daughter incest, limited information is available on specific types of extrafamilial abuse (Rebecca, 2002). Extrafamilial child sexual abuse, according to Fridell (2009), occurs when the perpetrator is someone unrelated to the child's family. These perpetrators may include family friends and neighbors, professionals such as teachers and medical personnel, caregivers, and church or community leaders, with only a small percentage being strangers (Faller, 2009).

Causes of Child Defilement

Child defilement as a threat to the world's children's population, as opined by the World Health Organization (WHO), is caused by sexual perversity (Banda, 2016). Sexual perversity, according to Miliambo (2015), refers to the situation whereby defilers have no control over their sexual desires and urges; as such, they predate and take advantage of children within their reach. Essentially, the majority of defilement cases are connected to sexual perversity (Miliambo, 2015).

This belief of having sex with minors to cure HIV/AIDS, according to Miliambo (2016), was campaigned against by HIV/AIDS activities in media of communication such as billboard, radio, and television. Apart from this, superstitious beliefs also exist that sleeping with minors boosts business prosperity, increases chances of promotion at work, and enhances other spiritual powers. These beliefs, according to Miliambo (2016), are based on the work of witch doctors and traditional healers.

Surprisingly, this belief that sexual intercourse with children can cure sexual diseases was also found in developed countries. According to de Cause, (1974, p. 49), "this belief has its parallels in 19th century Europe, when it was thought that venereal diseases could be cured "by means of sexual intercourse with children". Similarly, Weinburg (1955), as cited in Renvoize (1993), reported that, there were groups in 20th century America who still believed that, just as one can catch venereal disease from an infected partner, one can also 'catch' purity and cure such infection by having intercourse with one's pre-pubertal daughter.

In Nigeria, these beliefs, as held in Malawi and Zimbabwe, are unconnected with the reasons adults engage in defiling children (Bejide, 2014). Different unscientific factors had been adduced as reasons, such as; money rituals, age elongation, sexual belief that children's genital organs are still 'tight' which will increase sexual pleasure and demonic possession for such obsessions. However, this study acknowledged that this body of evidence was only anecdotal and that further research in this area is required.

Nundwe (2003) also highlighted a lack of parental care as a factor causing child defilement. According to Nundwe (2003), some parents left home very early in the morning when their children were sleeping and returned late at night when they went to bed. This lack of parental care, as noted by Philip (2016), manifested in many forms; from denial of scholastic materials and lack of care at home, which mainly exposes children to abuse.

Rape myth

Rape myth acceptance, which is prevalent in many societies, perpetuates harmful beliefs about sexual violence, victims, and perpetrators. Defined as "attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women" (Burt, 1980), these myths contribute to victim-blaming, stigma, and a culture of silence surrounding sexual assault. Despite advancements in awareness and advocacy, rape myths continue to influence public perceptions of sexual violence, judicial outcomes, and policy responses.

One prevalent myth is the notion that victims provoke or "ask for" rape based on their behavior, attire, or sexual history. This victim-blaming attitude reinforces harmful stereotypes and undermines the credibility of survivors, discourages them from seeking justice or support. Additionally, myths surrounding the "stranger danger" narrative often overshadow the reality that most sexual assaults are perpetrated by individuals known to the victim, such as acquaintances, partners, or family members (Sable, Danis, Mauzy, & Gallagher, 2006).

Challenging rape myth acceptance requires multifaceted efforts that encompass education, advocacy, and policy reform. Education campaigns aimed at debunking myths and promoting consent, respect, and healthy relationships are crucial in shifting societal attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, media representation and discourse play a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions, underscoring the importance of responsible and accurate reporting on sexual violence issues (Edwards, Bradshaw, & Hinsz, 2014).

Additionally, the portrayal of sexual violence in entertainment media often reinforces stereotypes about gender and sexuality. Films, television shows, and music lyrics frequently depict sexual violence as either titillating or glamorous, contributing to the normalization of rape culture (Edwards et al., 2014). By glamorizing or trivializing sexual assault, the media can desensitize audiences to the seriousness of the issue and perpetuate harmful attitudes and behaviors.

However, the media also has the power to challenge and debunk rape myths through responsible reporting, accurate representation, and advocacy efforts (Ahrens, 2006). Journalists and media professionals can play critical roles in raising awareness about sexual violence, promoting survivor-centered narratives, and holding perpetrators and institutions accountable. By amplifying the voices of survivors, providing accurate information about sexual assault, and advocating for policy changes, the media can help shift societal attitudes and beliefs toward greater empathy, understanding, and support for survivors of sexual violence.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Agenda-setting theory

The agenda-setting theory of mass communication elucidates how the media consciously and subconsciously determine what issues, events, or topics are deemed worthy of consideration through their programs and content. According to this theory, the media sets the public agenda by focusing attention on salient issues through their coverage, thereby influencing public perception and discourse. While the media does not dictate what individuals should think about, they shape what individuals are thinking about.

McCombs and Shaw coined the term "agenda setting" in 1972 to describe this phenomenon, particularly in the context of the mass media's role in election campaigns (McQuail, 2004). The theory posits that the media, through their coverage, signal to the public what the main issues of the day are, thereby influencing the public's perception of these issues. The media's active role in highlighting certain topics as important to society has led individuals to attach significance to these issues over others (Martinesi, 2012).

Newspaper reports and coverage of child defilement exemplify the application of agenda setting because they outline and emphasize the importance of addressing this issue. Consistent and sustained coverage of child defilement by Nigerian newspapers has not only raised awareness but also contributed to advocacy efforts and policy formulations aimed at combating this issue (Anneke, 2015). The media attention to this problem has prompted increased awareness and action among Nigerians, underscoring the influential role of the media in shaping societal responses to pressing issues.

In essence, the Agenda Setting Theory is highly relevant to this study as it provides a framework for understanding how mass media, particularly Nigerian newspapers (the focus of this study), wield their agenda-setting power to highlight and prioritize issues related to child protection, specifically child defilement. This theory enables us to examine how newspapers have leveraged their influence to bring the issue of child defilement to the forefront of public attention through responsible and ethical reporting practices.

METHODOLOGY

This study analyzes the coverage pattern of rape myth acceptance in child defilement cases by Nigerian newspapers, employing content analysis as the most suitable research method for the stated objective.

The population under scrutiny encompasses all National Dailies in Nigeria published in 2023. A purposive selection method was used to select six newspapers, considering their strong circulation and extensive coverage of child sexual abuse issues in West Nigeria. This selection comprised three national newspapers (The Nigerian Tribune, The Punch, and The Vanguard) and three local newspapers (Osun Defender, PM News in Lagos, and Hope Newspaper in Ondo). The study population included a total of 2,202 editions across these newspapers published in 2023.

A sample size of 714 editions was selected for analysis, with 102 news items analyzed for the six selected newspapers. Sampling was conducted in specific months—February, April, July, and November—comprising 357 editions each from national and local newspapers. The units of analysis included Straight news, Editorial, Features, Pictures/Caricatures, and Opinion/Letter to the Editor. Content categories encompass responsibility, conflict, human interest, economic consequence, and morality.

**Okoji, Chukwudinma Taiwo, Oladipupo, A. Akinola, Okoji, Morenikeji
Chukwufumnaya, Olanihun, Sunday Zechariah, Daniel, Henry Amos and Olawuwo, Gift
Oluwasayo (2024)**

Data collection instruments used in this study consisted of a coding Manual (Guide) and Coding sheet (coding scheme). Descriptive analysis was employed for data analysis to shed light on the coverage patterns surrounding rape myth acceptance in child defilement cases as portrayed by Nigerian newspapers.

Data analysis

Table 1: Rape Myths and Defilement Stories in Children

Newspapers	Present	Absent	Total
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
The Punch	3 (2.9)	22 (21.6)	25 (24.4)
Nigerian Tribune	2 (2)	19 (18.6)	21 (20.6)
The Vanguard	1 (1)	16 (15.7)	17 (16.7)
Osun Defender	1 (1)	8 (7.8)	9 (8.8)
PM News	1 (1)	15 (14.7)	16 (15.7)
Hope Newspaper	2 (2)	12 (11.7)	14 (13.7)
Total	10 9.9	92 90.1	102 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 1 presents the status of Rape Myth Acceptance from the 102 stories sampled from the six newspapers within the study period. With the analysis, 10 (9.8%) stories were based on the belief that victims/their parents are to be fully or partially blamed for the assault, while 92 (90.2%) of the stories stated that the victims/their parents are not to be blamed for the assault.

Out of the 102 stories featured, *Punch Newspaper* had the highest number of stories that did not accept rape myths (22 stories, 21.6%) with just 3 stories (2.9%) accepting rape myths. This is followed by *The Nigerian Tribune*, which has 19 stories (18.6%) that did not report on rape myth acceptance with 2 stories (2%) reporting on rape myth acceptance. *Vanguard Newspaper* has 16 stories (15.7%) that were not reported on accepting rape myth with 1 story (1%) accepting it, *PM News* has 15 stories (14.7%) which were not reported as accepting rape myth with 1 story (1%) story accepting it. *Hope Newspaper* has 12 stories (11.7%) that were not reported toward acceptance of rape myth with 1 story (1%) accepting it, while *Osun Defender* has the least (8, 7.8%) of stories that were not reported toward rape myth acceptance with just 1 story (1%) accepting it. The analysis established that Nigerian newspapers did not accept the rape myth.

Table 2: Prominence Level (Placement of Stories on Child Defilement)

Placement of Stories	Front Page major	Front page minor	Inside Page major	Inside Page minor	Back Page Major	Back Page Minor	Total
Newspapers	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %
The Punch	0 (0)	0 (0)	11 (10.8)	14 (13.7)	0 (0)	0 (0)	25 (24.4)
The Nigerian Tribune,	0 (0)	0 (0)	8 (7.8)	12 (11.8)	0 (0)	1 (1)	21 (20.6)
The Vanguard	0 (0)	0 (0)	12 (11.8)	5 (4.9)	0 (0)	0 (0)	17 (16.7)
Osun Defender	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (3.9)	5 (4.9)	0 (0)	0 (0)	9 (8.8)
PM News	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (5.8)	9 (8.9)	0 (0)	1 (1)	16 (15.7)
Hope Newspaper	0 (0)	1 (1)	2 (1.9)	11 (10.8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	14 (13.7)
Total	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	43 (42%)	56 (55%)	0 (0%)	2 (2%)	102 (100)

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 2 indicates the arrangement of stories covered by the six (6) newspapers from the front page to the back page. In the table, the front-page major had 0%, front page minor had 1 (1%), inside page major had 43 (42%), inside page minor had 56 (55%) and the back page minor had 2 (2%).

Based on this analysis, it is adduced that the selected newspapers attached little or no importance to child defilement stories, as many of the stories were on inside page minor, with the highest number of 56 stories at 55%. According to Reisner (1992), the front page of the newspaper is the most important page of the publication, highlighting the day’s most prominent stories, followed by the back page and then the inside page. Essentially, the selected newspapers did not give much prominence to child defilement stories as the result showed that most of the stories on child defilement were usually reported on the inside pages, with 99 stories of both inside page major and minor standing at 97%, all over 100% of the combined stories. Only *Hope*

**Okoji, Chukwudinma Taiwo, Oladipupo, A. Akinola, Okoji, Morenikeji
Chukwufumnaya, Olanihun, Sunday Zechariah, Daniel, Henry Amos and Olawuwo, Gift
Oluwasayo (2024)**

Newspaper had just 1 news story on child defilement (1%) on the minor’s front page within the period under study.

Table 3: Frequency Level of Stories on Child Defilement.

Months	February	April	July	November	Total
Newspapers	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %
The Punch	8 (7.8)	3 (2.9)	8 (7.8)	6 (5.8)	25 (24.4)
The Nigerian Tribune,	2 (2)	9 (9)	4 (3.9)	6 (5.8)	21 (20.6)
The Vanguard	2 (2)	4 (3.9)	4 (3.9)	7 (7)	17 (16.7)
Osun Defender	2 (2)	2 (2)	1 (0.9)	4 (3.9)	9 (8.8)
PM News	3 (2.9)	3 (2.9)	7 (7)	3 (2.9)	16 (15.7)
Hope Newspaper	3 (2.9)	5 (4.9)	4 (3.9)	2 (2)	14 (13.7)
Total	20 (19.6%)	26 (25.6%)	28 (27.4%)	28 (27.4%)	102 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 3 shows the frequency of stories on child defilement in *The Punch*, *The Nigerian Tribune*, *The Vanguard*, *Osun Defender*, *PM News*, and *Hope* in February, April, July, and November 2021. The most frequent child defilement stories were in July (28 times, 27.5%) and November (28 times, 27.5%), while the frequency of child defilement stories in February and April was 20 (19.5%) and 26 (25.5%) times, respectively.

In February, *The Punch Newspaper* had the highest frequency (8 times), followed by *the PM Newspaper* and *the Hope Newspaper* (3 times), while the other newspapers (*The Vanguard*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *Osun Defender*) featured defilement stories 2 times each in February.

In April, the *Nigerian Tribune* had the highest frequency of child defilement stories (9 times), followed by *the Hope Newspaper* (5 times), *Vanguard Newspaper* (4 times), *The Punch Newspaper*, and *PM Newspaper* (3 times each), while the *Osun Defender* had the least frequency (2 times).

In July, *The Punch Newspaper* had the highest frequency (8 times), followed by *PM Newspaper* (7 times), while *The Vanguard*, *Nigerian Tribune*, and *Hope Newspaper* had child defilement stories four times. *The Osun Defender* provided the least representation (once).

In November, *The Vanguard Newspaper* had the highest frequency (7 times), followed by *Punch Newspaper* and *Nigerian Tribune* (6 times each), *Osun Defender* and *Hope Newspaper* (3 times each), and *Hope Newspaper* had the least (once).

Discussion

Findings from the content analysis of the national dailies showed that 89 out of the 714 editions of the newspapers analyzed across the six newspapers had child defilement stories. In all, 102 stories across the 89 editions were analyzed. From this finding, the coverage level of child defilement was 12.5% of the total 714 (100%) editions. The percentage of this coverage level is lower than the coverage level given to other stories. This finding is contrary to the findings of Kayode and Adeniran (2016) who determined that case of child sexual offenses was dominant during their study period.

Findings on the coverage of rape myth acceptance revealed that Nigerian newspapers did not entrench the negative belief of stereotyping victims and parents of child defilement as being responsible for the assault. This shows a high level of professionalism on the part of Nigerian newspapers in exhibiting high social responsibility and playing a significant role as a major stakeholder in stemming the tide of child defilement in the country. This finding corroborates the assertion of Edwards et al. (2014) asserted that the media has the power to challenge and debunk rape myths through responsible reporting, accurate representation, and advocacy efforts.

On the level of prominence, it is noteworthy to state, according to Reisner (1992), that the front page of a newspaper is the most prominent, followed by the back page before the inside pages. However, findings showed that selected newspapers attached little or no importance to child defilement stories as just 1 story was published by *Hope Newspaper* (a local newspaper in Ondo state), while the other two selected local newspapers, including the three selected dailies with national spread, did not have a single story either on the front page or the back page. Most of the stories published on child defilement were on page minor (56 stories at 54.9%). This showed that the selected newspapers failed to give priority to child defilement stories as the results showed that most of the stories on child defilement cases were usually reported on the inside pages, with 99 stories (in both inside page major and minor) standing at 97.1%, which is more than 100% of the combined stories. This finding relates to the findings of Pearson (2016) that child defilement stories were not given enough prominence in the news, even when media covered them. Contrarily, this finding does not agree with that of Lori, Pamela, Andrew and Priscilla (2011) that child sexual abuse appeared regularly in the news coverage with much prominence given to the intervention focused on the treatment of the cases after the facts emerged.

On the frequency level the findings showed that there were 102 stories on child defilement published across the 4 months as featured in the selected newspapers. Out of the selected newspapers, *Punch* had the highest frequency (25 stories), followed by *The Nigerian Tribune Newspaper* with 21 stories and *The Vanguard Newspaper* with 19 stories, while *Osun Defender* had the least (9 stories). A further breakdown of the frequency revealed that the months of April and November featured the most stories. This finding implies that most of the stories published during the study period were reactionary not proactively featured. This finding agrees with that of Ogunniyi (2018), who found that stories of child sexual abuse were more frequent than expected and were not published until a case occurred. In opposition to this finding, Lori Pamela, Andrew, and Priscilla (2011) found in their study that stories of child sexual abuse were published during their study period at an average of once per week.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study and for Nigeria to be respected in the comity of nations pertaining to the protection of child rights, Nigerian newspapers' continued coverage of child defilement can possibly stem its occurrence and shape the perception of people about rape myth acceptance, which is a huge stereotype affecting the narrative around the menace in different cultures in Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. Stories on child defilement should be given enough prominence on the prominent pages of the newspapers (front and back pages including the editorial) to increase the speed of the campaign against defilement as contained in the various national, regional, and international frameworks on the protection of children.
2. Nigerian newspapers should give much space, especially through editorials and articles, condemning any traces of rape myths that exist in different cultures in Nigeria so as to positively affect people's attitudes toward reducing to the barest minimum occurrences of child defilement.
3. Stories on the dangers of child defilement, ways to avoid such menace, and punishments for such dastardly acts should be pushed into the mainstream agenda on a frequent basis and not just be abandoned until perpetrators strike (media should be proactive rather than being reactive).

References

- Abdulkadir, I., Umar, I. W., Musa, H. H., Musa, S., Oyeniyi, O. A., Ayoola-Williams, O. M., and Okeniyi, L. (2018). Child sexual abuse: A review of cases reported at the General Hospital Sulea, Niger State. *Annals of Nigerian Medicine*, 5(1), 15-29.
- Ahrens, C. E. (2006). Being silenced: The impact of negative social reactions on the disclosure of rape. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 38(3-4), 263-274.
- Anneke, M. (2015). Evil monsters and cunning perverts: Representing and regulating the dangerous pedophile. *Popular Culture, Crime and Social Control. Sociology of Crime, Law and Deviance*, 12(11), 195–217.
- Backare, Y., & Otero, O. (2017). Parents' perception of media reports on child sexual abuse: A study of Ota, Ogun state. *CUCEN*, 9(5), 430-441.
- Banda, P. (2016). Child defilement in ecclesial contexts in Zambia: A pastoral perspective. (Unpublished PhD Thesis), Theological Department, University of Pretoria: Pretoria.
- Bejide, F. (2014). Male child victims of sexual abuse in Nigeria. *Journal of Frontiers of Legal Research*, 2(1), 112-120.
- Bello, B. (2020, June 19) Forty two42 rape cases recorded in 6 months in Kano- Police. *Vanguard*. Retrieved from www.vanguardngr.com

**Okoji, Chukwudinma Taiwo, Oladipupo, A. Akinola, Okoji, Morenikeji
Chukwufumnaya, Olanihun, Sunday Zechariah, Daniel, Henry Amos and Olawuwo, Gift
Oluwasayo (2024)**

- Bickley, J., & Beech, A. R. (2009). Classifying child abusers: Its relevance to theory and clinical practice. *Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 45(12), 51-69.
- Bolen, R. (2011). *Child sexual abuse: Its scope and our future*. New York: Kluker Academic Plenum Publishers.
- Burt, M. R. (1980). Cultural myths and supports for rape. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 38(2), 217-230.
- Christina, M., and S. Ryan (2014). Notes on a (sex crime) scandal: The impact of Catholic media coverage on sexual abuse in the Catholic church on public opinion. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 42(2), 221-232.
- Crosson-Tower, C. (2012). *Understanding child abuse and neglect*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Edwards, K. M., Bradshaw, K. A., & Hins, V. B. (2014). Denying rape but endorsing forceful intercourse: Exploring differences among responders. *Violence Against Women*, 20(8), 934-954.
- Faller, K. (2009). *Child sexual abuse: Intervention and treatment issues*. New York: Department of Health and Human Services.
- Fridell, L. (2008). Decision making by the district attorney: Diverting or prosecuting interfamilial sexual abuse offenders. *Criminal Justice Review*, 4(3), 249.
- Jane, L. (2012). Framing child sexual abuse: A longitudinal content analysis of newspaper and television coverage 2002–2012. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 26(1), 3-22.
- Kayode, O. and Adeniran, R. (2016). Nigerian press coverage of children as victims and perpetrators of crimes. *Journalism*, 12(4), 84-103.
- Kashaf, M. (2019). Role of media in the society. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/role-of-media-in-society>
- Kevin, L. (2004). Child Sexual Abuse in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Literature Review. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 28(4), 439-460.
- Lolloid, F. (2016). Child sexual abuse and the implications. *Journal of Health Communication*, 23(12), 95-123.
- Lori, D., M. Pamela, C. Andrew, C., & Priscilla, G. (2011). Case by case: News coverage of child sexual abuse, *Berkeley Media Studies*, 12(9), 342-355.
- Martinelli, D. (2012). The U.S. media's failure to set the agenda for covering sex trafficking. *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, 3(2), 45-60.

**Okoji, Chukwudinma Taiwo, Oladipupo, A. Akinola, Okoji, Morenikeji
Chukwufumnaya, Olanihun, Sunday Zechariah, Daniel, Henry Amos and Olawuwo, Gift
Oluwasayo (2024)**

- Mather, C., & Debye, K. (2014). *How long does it take? Guides to recovering from incest and sexual abuse for teenagers, their friends, their families*. San Francisco: Jessy-Bass.
- McQuail, D. (2004). *McQuail's theory of mass communication*. London: SAGE.
- Milambo, M. (2015). *Communication strategies used to address child defilement: A case study of the operations of the Department of Child Development in Chisanga Village, Kasama District (Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis)*. University of Zambia, Zambia.
- Morhe, R., and E. Morhe (2013). Law on defilement in Ghana and challenges in its implementation at the Ejisu–Juabeng Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit of the Ghana Police service. *Journal of Law, Policy, and Globalization*, 16(11), 23–29.
- Nundwe, R. (2003). Implications of child's exposure to defilement. *Journal of Health Sciences*, 22(9), 23-45.
- Ogunniyi, D. (2018). Challenges in domesticating children's rights treaties in Nigeria and alternative legal avenues for protecting children. *Journal of African Law*, 62(3), 34-51.
- Olumodeji, E. O. (2008). Theoretical issues in child's rights. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(11), 41-49.
- Omoniyi, T. (2020, June 7). Nigerians call for stiffer punishments as rape cases increase. *Premium times*. Retrieved from Premiumtimes.com.
- Pamela, M., Andrew, C. and Lori, D. (2012). News coverage of child sexual abuse and prevention, 2007–2009. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 21(4), 470-487.
- Pearson, B. (2016). *Child defilement in the ecclesiastical context in Zambia: A pastoral perspective*. (Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis). University of Pretoria, South Africa.
- Philip, H. (2016). Implications of child defilement. *African Studies*, 23(10), 68-89.
- Rebecca, A. (2018). Ideal victims and monstrous offenders: How the news media represents sexual predators. *Journal of Communication*, 12(8), 75-82. doi.org/10.1177/2378023118802512
- Rebecca, M. B. (2002). *Child sexual abuse: Its scope and our failure*. New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Renvoice, J. (1993). *Innocence destroyed: A study of child sexual abuse*. London: Rutledge.
- Sable, M. R., Danis, F., Mauzy, D.L. and Gallagher, S. K. (2006). Barriers to reporting sexual assault in women and men: Perspectives of college students. *Journal of American College Health*, 55(3), 157-162.

**Okoji, Chukwudinma Taiwo, Oladipupo, A. Akinola, Okoji, Morenikeji
Chukwufumnaya, Olanihun, Sunday Zechariah, Daniel, Henry Amos and Olawuwo, Gift
Oluwasayo (2024)**

Sara, N., Yarina, A. and Denise, C. (2013). The 'social tsunami': Media coverage of child abuse in Malaysia's English-language newspapers in 2010. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443713483796>.

Sholever, M. (2013). Textbook of family and couple therapy: Clinical applications. London: John Hopkins Press.

World Health Organization. (2012). Guidelines for the medical care of sexual violence victims. Retrieved from <http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/924154628x.pdf>