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**REPORTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN  
NIGERIA: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF  
NEWSWATCH AND TELL NEWSMAGAZINES  
(1995- 2004)**

OMEGO, CHRISTIE U.

Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies

University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Phone: +2348033504741

E- mail: [omegochristie @ yahoo.com](mailto:omegochristie@yahoo.com)

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**Abstract**

*Violence against women has become an issue of major concern the world over and the Nigerian mass media have been accused of under reporting cases of such violations of human right. Therefore, this study was designed to investigate the coverage of violence against women in Newswatch and Tell newsmagazines over a ten-year period in Nigeria. To carry out this study, the researcher content-analyzed data obtained from a sample of 104 issues of two popular Nigerian newsmagazines-Newswatch and Tell which were sampled through purposive sampling method. Subsequently, violence against women*

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*was analyzed based on five criteria, viz: frequency of reports, prominence accorded such reports, depth of coverage, magnitude of report and display. Six research questions were content-analyzed using simple percentages. The result of the investigation revealed that the two leading Nigerian news magazines investigated actually reported issues on violence against women and the depth of such coverage were fair enough to generate awareness, but it was found out that the incidents were not frequently reported given the seriousness of the incidents in Nigeria. Based on these findings, the researcher recommended that Nigerian journalists should be more committed to social responsibility and they should report more of cases of violence against women more frequently.*

**Key Words:** Violence, Women, Mass Media, Print Media, Frequency/ Regularity, Prominence

### **Background to the Study**

A culture of violence prevails the world over. We see this in armed robbery, ritual killings, dangerous driving on our roads, killings in the name of religion, to name but these. Some scholars argue that the propensity for violence or killing has been inborn in humans. Supporters of evolution, for instance, maintain that we came from wild animals and have simply inherited their violent characteristics (*Awake* 2003 p.6).

Generally speaking, women like men have shown that they can be predisposed to violent acts. But, despite this predisposition, women are known to have exhibited low-level of violent acts as against that which most men exhibit. Both men and women reported aggression against their partners also reveals that in terms of seriousness, women were more likely to commit low-level of violence, whereas men were more likely than women to engage in serious violence.

The unfortunate thing is that acts of violence when carried out by men against women are sometimes considered as one of those abnormal, but permissible attitudes in the society. This unfortunate

development is deemed contrary to expected norm and against women's collective rights and aspiration.

Violence against women is a prevalent harm to the basic right, freedom, health and welfare of women. Atsenuwa (1995, p.25) sees violence against women as any violation of women's personhood, mental or physical integrity or freedom of movement. Most violence against women, according to Owasonoye (1999 p.19), are designed to control, dominate and express authority.

BonVillian (2001) notes that although women participate in labour, they remain marginalized in the industrial sector. Distinctions of work and responsibilities between men and women are generally not necessitated by physical abilities. They were instead arbitrary and artificial reflections of gender stereotypes that insisted on differentiation of women and men. The process did not merely attribute distinctions between the genders; it assigned men more valued roles than women and rewarded both accordingly (p.161).

In the northern part of Nigeria, specifically, young women are still flogged till date for alleged fornication, but as Ugwulebo and Anele (1998, p.59) observe, in African societies, if a man is caught with another woman, it is not an offence. He can even claim that he is dating such a lady for marriage as his wife. This keeps the woman on the edge and in a precarious position and to battle with how best to stop her husband from such a move and at the same time retain his love and affection. On the other hand, if the woman is caught with another man, she is sent packing. It is even a taboo for a married woman to be caught with another man. This is enough to terminate her matrimonial relationship and paint her the most shining colour of shame. This culture is unfair to the female gender as it prescribes different standards for different sexes. The case of Amina Lawal who was to be stoned to death in Northern Nigeria for allegedly having a baby out of wedlock by the Kastina State Islamic *Shariah* court in 2002 is a typical example. The law did not condemn or punish the man who had the baby with her.

The issue of how to curb violence against women has been the concern of many countries of the world including Nigeria. In a bid to achieve this, in 1995, the United Nations (UN) held a World Conference in Geneva where member states agreed to eliminate all laws that discriminate against women. The aim was to engender a sense of gender equality. But in spite of this effort, gender-based violence seems to be on the increase going by world reports (*Awake*, 2000, p.4).

The call to end all forms of violence against women also came up during the anniversary of the International Conference held in Beijing, China which set out to ensure that women's rights were protected around the globe. It was during this Conference that the one hundred and eighty-nine (189) governments that were present pledged to revoke any remaining laws that discriminate on the basis of sex. In 1999, the General Assembly of the United Nations declared November 25 as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women with the view to raising public awareness of violence against women. In 2000, that is five years after the Beijing Declaration in 1995, the governments present reiterated their commitments to eradicate discriminating laws by 2005. Despite these declarations, agreements, conventions and the commitments of the various governments aimed at putting an end to all sorts of violence and discrimination on the basis of sex, cases of discrimination and violence against the female folk seem not to have died in Nigeria. During the recent celebration of the United Nations' International Women's Day, the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki Moon, acknowledged that the progress in narrowing the gap is slow (*Awake*, 2008.p.3).

In Nigeria society where practices such as gender inequality and gender violence thrive, if such practices are reported frequently in the mass media, it will go a long way in reorganizing conflicting norms in the society, changing value systems and refining traditional systems and practices. Media messages can, thus, be used to mould the minds of the masses and influence their decisions and actions. Hence, this

study was designed to investigate the coverage of violence against women in *Newswatch* and *Tell* newsmagazines over a ten-year period in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There have been cases of gender-based violence both on the domestic and international fronts, and women have been the major victims of these cases of violations (of human rights). The problem which necessitated this study had been that in spite of the commitments of various governments aimed at putting an end to all sorts of violence and discrimination on the basis of sex and the provisions of some legal framework of empowerment aimed at eliminating violence against women, incidents of violence against the female folk in Nigeria persist. This critical issue seems not to have received the considerable attention it deserves in Nigerian newsmagazines given the serious nature of the problem. It is in the light of the above that this research was conducted to ascertain the level of press coverage of violence against women in Nigerian newsmagazines.

### **The Purpose of Study**

The purpose of the study was to find out the extent of reporting of violence against women in Nigerian newsmagazines, i.e. to ascertain whether the print media (newsmagazines) coverage of violence against women is proportionate to the seriousness of the incidence in Nigeria. Already, the mass media have been accused of under-reporting cases of violence against women and not giving prominence to such critical issues by the way and manner they present their reports. This study, therefore, confirms whether these doubts are justified or not.

In order to achieve this purpose, the following specific objectives of the study were looked into:

- a. to identify all issues pertaining to women as reported in *Newswatch* and *Tell* newsmagazines;

- b. to find out whether *Newswatch* and *Tell* newsmagazines satisfactorily covered issues on violence against women
- c. to find out the depth of report on violence against women published in *Newswatch* and *Tell* newsmagazines
- d. to ascertain the frequency or regularity of reports on violence against women in *Newswatch* and *Tell* newsmagazines;
- e. to determine the prominence accorded reports on violence against women in *Newswatch* and *Tell* newsmagazine

### **Research Questions**

To achieve the aims and objectives of this study, the following questions were posed:

- i. What issues about women were reported in *Newswatch* and *Tell* newsmagazines?
- ii. To what extent is violence against women satisfactorily covered in *Newswatch* and *Tell* newsmagazines?
- iii. What is the depth of coverage of violence against women reported in *Newswatch* and *Tell* newsmagazines?
- iv. How often are issues of violence against women reported in *Newswatch* and *Tell* newsmagazines?
- v. What prominence is given to issues of violence against women as reported in *Newswatch* and *Tell* newsmagazines?

### **Scope of the Study**

This study content-analyzed select Nigerian newsmagazines namely: *Newswatch* and *Tell*. The period of survey was from January 1, 1995 to December 31, 2004. The study covered the reportage and prominence given to issues of violence against women. It also paid attention to how frequently such women issues were covered, and the depth of coverage of reports on violence against women in Nigeria. The content scope of the study was restricted to the print medium

particularly, *Newswatch* and *Tell* newsmagazines. Geographically, the scope was restricted to Nigeria. This study did not, therefore, cover media reportage of violence against women in any other part of the world.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The two theories that were reviewed and found relevant to this study because of their theoretical applications are:

- i. The Social Responsibility Theory, and
- ii. The Agenda-setting Theory.

#### **Social Responsibility Theory**

This theory enables us to understand better the roles of the mass media in development issues such as illiteracy, religious crises, violence against women, etc. Udeagha (2004) explains that Social responsibility principles demand that the mass media should act responsibly by realizing that they have certain obligations to the public. Nwodo and Fab-Ukozor (2003) emphasize that the Social responsibility philosophy seems to be a more realistic and dynamic concept because it assigns responsibility to members of the society, government and media professionals.

What this implies is that the mass media professionals must be responsible to the society by being objective in their reporting and by publishing what is in the interest of the society rather than their own individual interests. The issue of violence against women is one of the development problems of Nigeria as a society and should, therefore, be of interest to the journalists who should frequently report such issues in their newsmagazines. The social responsibility theory is, thus, an appropriate guide to this study because its principles act as a watch dog.

#### **The Agenda-Setting Theory**

The term *Agenda-Setting* was first introduced by Lipmann (1921) and popularized by McCombs and Shaw (1972) in their research into the

1968 election in America. The findings of their research revealed that the amount of coverage on event received from the mass media would affect people's perception of the story as important regardless of what is being said about the event. McCombs and Shaw believed that the members of the audience will not only learn about public issues through the media, they will also learn how much importance to attach to an issue or topic from the emphasis the mass media place upon it. This gate-keeping function of the reporter ensures that only what is deemed important gets to public's knowledge. The agenda-setting theory, thus, posits that the media determine the issues and their importance to the public. Media scholars believe that by giving a particular topic a prominent treatment in their agenda over a period of time, the mass media would have succeeded in making the audience believe that the issue is indeed important.

The implication of this statement is that the mass media can make an issue a matter of everyday discourse by focusing attention on the issue. In applying the agenda-setting theory to this research, we argue that if the print media (newsmagazines) focus or emphasize on the issue of violence against women, it will make the public accord importance and understanding to such issues which will lead to attitudinal change.

### **Empirical Review**

Many cases of violence against women in Nigeria have been documented. These cases range from battering, sexual abuse, acid bath, marital rape, and dowry-related violence, female genital mutilation, sexual harassment and intimidation at work; in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution, child marriage, etc. Several cases of these have been reported in Nigeria.

In 1990, Charity Agbakuru, a beauty queen in Port Harcourt was, indeed, the first case of acid attack on a lady in Nigeria (Nkwocha 2000, p. 28). Another case of violence against women was Tina Isiekwe's, a widow and staff of the Registry Department of First

Bank, Marina, Lagos whose husband's younger brother poured concentrated acid on her during the burial ceremony of her late husband in a village in Delta State, Nigeria. Tina died as a result of the third degree burn she sustained. Another instance of violence against women in Nigeria is the case of a Police Sergeant, Mr. Mike Iorhemba, attached to Owner-Occupier Police Post in Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria who was dismissed by the Commissioner of Police in the State, Mr. Ibe Aganya, for raping a 3-year old girl while on duty at the Police Post (Daily *Sun*, 2006).

### **Research Methodology**

This study adopted content analysis as the research design. Content analysis is a method of studying and analyzing contents of communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables (Kerlinger, 1973). In content analysis, therefore, a researcher interprets and analyzes text-based materials more explicitly and meaningfully to make it easily understood. Hence, it is seen as a form of library research.

### **The Population of Study**

The population of this study comprised all issues of *Newswatch* and *Tell*-newsmagazines published from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1995 to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2004. This gave a total of 1,040 copies of the two newsmagazines (i.e.520 copies of each of the newsmagazines) for a ten - year period (a decade). The population, according to Wimmer and Dominick (2000, p.81), is a group or class or sub-set, variables, concepts or phenomena. By this definition, the population must not necessarily refer to human beings (subjects). Newsmagazines such as *Newswatch* and *Tell* can as well form the population of a study.

### **Justification for the Choice of Publications and Period**

The two newsmagazines, *Newswatch* and *Tell*, were chosen because they enjoy national circulation or readership in Nigeria and are readily available. Other characteristics that endeared the researcher to these

newsmagazines were the consistency of the publications and the in-depth reportage and analyses of issues.

The researcher also found it necessary to concentrate on the period (1995 -2004) because the decade marked the peak of the period when there were moves to eradicate all forms of violence and discrimination against women world-wide. The consciousness was, thus, created in the eve of Beijing Women Conference in 1995. During the Conference, there was a clarion call to end violence and all forms of discrimination against women.

### **Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

A sample, according to Wimmer and Dominick (2000, p.81), is a subset of the population that is representative of the entire population. To qualify as a good sample, the portion of the population selected must be as nearly representative as possible.

Since it would have been an enormous, but unnecessary task to content-analyze all the 1,040 editions of the newsmagazine published within the ten-year period under study, a sample size of 104 editions representing ten percent (10%) of the entire edition published within the study period was selected. This gave a total of 52 editions of each of the newsmagazines under study for the analysis. For the two newsmagazines, therefore, we have a total of 104 editions. This sample size is adequate for this study because following Kerlinger (1973) and Wimmer and Dominick's (2000) recommendation, a sampling rate of 10 percent or 20 percent is acceptable for the study of this nature. This sample size will enable the researcher save time and money.

To select the sample, the researcher adopted the systematic sampling technique. To achieve this, the researcher had all the editions of the newsmagazines published within the ten years. Using 10 as the sampling interval, the 104 copies that were used for the study were selected.

### **Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis is critical to successful content analysis because the entire exercise concerns placing the individual units about which or whom descriptive and explanatory statements are made. The units of analysis in written content-analysis might be a single word or symbol or an entire story.

In this study, every news-story, feature article, editorial that is relevant to the study constituted the unit of analysis. This study was necessarily guided by the following units of analysis outlined by Ohaja (2003, p.15):

- (a) Frequency of coverage/regularity;
- (b) Magnitude/depth;
- (c) Prominence of display and
- (d) Direction of coverage

The researcher decided to use these categories because, as some scholars have observed, they simplify the task of the researcher.

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

To enable the researcher carry out this research, the code sheet was used as part of the instrument for collecting data. It was used to examine the newsmagazines page by page in order to identify feature articles, editorial comments, news-stories, opinion articles, etc. The researcher further classified the pages as follows: front page/editorial, back page/centre spread and inside.

### **Method of Data Collection**

Using the units of analysis, the researcher coded the contents of the newsmagazine selected for the study and recorded them on a coding sheet. Women issues were separated from other issues and the coding was based on the following units of analysis:

- (a) Frequency of coverage.

- (b) Prominence of display
- (c) Direction of coverage
- (d) Magnitude

### **Method of Data Analysis**

Data collected were analyzed using simple percentages. Using this approach, the researcher collected data and tabulated them under the following headings: frequency of coverage, magnitude, prominence and direction of coverage to aid in answering the research questions. The responses obtained were tabulated and presented accordingly. The simple statistical method of analysis employed was percentages and frequencies. The percentage is a useful statistics for describing information about people, events or situations.

### **Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings**

Data collected for the study are presented and the research questions posed in section one are also answered in this section.

**Research Question One:** *What Issues about Women are reported in Newswatch and Tell Newsmagazines?*

To provide answer to this question, the issues relating to women and the female folk were grouped into six categories. They are: politics, education/career, economy, society/ fashion, violence/ discrimination and health. The data obtained for the ten-year period, (1995-2004) under study, are shown on Table 1 below:

**Table 1: Issues about Women Reported in *Newswatch* and *Tell* Newsmagazines.**

S/N	Category	Year & Number of Reports										Total
		1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	
1	Politics	3(37.5%)		1(20%)	-	-	-	1(12.5%)	1(20%)	1(12.5%)	-	7(11.1%)
2	Education / Career	3(37.5%)		2(40%)	2(28.6%)	1(20%)	1(14.2%)	-	1(100%)	1(12.5%)	1(14.2%)	12(19%)
3	Economy	1(12.5%)		-	-	-	2(28.6%)	-	1(100%)	-	1(14.2%)	5(7.9%)
4	Society Fashion	1(12.5%)	2(66.7%)	-	2(28.6%)	-	2(28.6%)	3(37.5%)	1(100%)	2(25%)	1(14.2%)	14=22.2%
5	Violence/ Discrimination	-	1(33.3%)	2(40%)	2(28.6%)	3(60%)	2(28.6%)	1(12.5%)	-	2(25%)	2(28.6%)	15=23.8%
6	Health	-		-	1(14.2%)	1(20%)	-	3(37.5%)	1(100%)	2(25%)	2(28.6%)	10=15.4%
	Total	8=(100%)	3=(100%)	5=(100%)	7=(100%)	5=(100%)	7=(100%)	8=(100%)	5=100%	8=100%	7=100%	63=100%

Taking the issues pertaining to women year by year, as obtained from the selected copies of the newsmagazines, it was obvious from Table 1 that only eight (8) issues about women were reported by *Newswatch* and *Tell* newsmagazines in 1995. Out of the eight news reports, politics and education/ careers dominated the reports with three reports each, while stories about the economy and society and fashion received a report each. Nothing was reported about violence, discrimination and health as they concern women and the female children.

In 1996, only three reports about the female folk were carried by the newsmagazines; while two dealt with issues concerning society and fashion, one deliberated on issue of violence and discrimination against women. There were no reports on politics, education and career, economy and health.

The year 1997 had five stories covered about women in the selected newsmagazines. Out of this number, issues concerning violence and discrimination received two reports. The same went for matters regarding education and career as there were two reports. However, political matters were reported only once. Issues pertaining to health, society and fashion and the economy did not receive any report from the publications.

An improvement on reports about women in the newsmagazines was noticed in the year 1998 with seven. Of this number, stories about education and career, society and fashion and violence against women received two reports each, while health issues were reported just once. Invariably, there were no reports about politics and economy.

The year 1999, witnessed a drop in the number of reports about issues relating to women carried in the two newsmagazines. The data show that there were only five reports out of which stories on violence and discrimination against women dominated with three reports. The other issues that received the attention of the newsmagazines were education with one report and health which also got reported once.

With the dawn of the new millennium in 2000, stories on topics concerning women got seven reports *Newswatch* and *Tell* newsmagazines. A breakdown of the number shows that while issues concerning the economy, society, fashion, violence and discrimination received two reports each, education/career issue got only one (14.2%) report for the year. Issues such as politics and health did not receive any attention from the newsmagazines. In 2001, there was a slight increase in the number of issues about women reported in the two newsmagazines. There were eight reported stories out of which society and fashion, and health dominated with three reports (37.5%) each. Stories concerning politics and violence/ discrimination received a report each, while there were no reports on education and career and the economy.

For 2002, there were only five reports on women issues. The reports were shared equally among five categories of issues with each category having a report each. The issues that got the attention of the newsmagazines were politics, education and career, the economy, society and fashion and health. It is important to note that there were no reports on violence and discrimination from the selected newsmagazines.

There were eight reported issues about women in 2003. While society and fashion, violence and discrimination, and health issues received two news reports each, politics and education/career got a report each. Economy did not receive any report at all.

Finally, seven issues pertaining to women were covered by the newsmagazines in 2004. Out of this number, two each pertained to violence/discrimination and health, while education/career, economy and society/fashion had one report each.

An analysis of the data presented above indicates that a total of 63 issues regarding women were reported by *Newswatch* and *Tell* newsmagazines between 1995 and 2004, a period of ten years. Out of this number, five concerned issues related to the economy, seven dealt with politics, while ten were reports about health issues. Moreover,

education and career-related matters attracted twelve reports within the period, while society and fashion garnered fourteen stories. The category that received the highest report from the two newsmagazines was violence/discrimination with fifteen reports.

It is instructive to note that the year 1996 received the lowest number of report about women-related issues with just three reports. This was followed by 1997, 1999 and 2002 which had five coverages on women issues respectively. Within the period under review, 1998, 2000 and 2004 garnered seven women-related reports each, while 1995, 2001 and 2003 attracted eight reports on women and related topics.

Invariably, the issues about women that were covered in the two newsmagazines within the ten-year period studied indicated the following:

1. Women and Political participation;
2. Education/ Career attainment of women;
3. Women and Economic development;
4. Society, Fashion and style;
5. Women and health-related issues and
6. Violence and discrimination against the female folk

In the light of the above discoveries, the first research question which sought to identify the issues about women covered by the two newsmagazines selected for the study was adequately addressed.

**Research Question Two:** *Are Issues related to Violence against Women Satisfactorily Covered by Newswatch and Tell Newsmagazines?*

The data presented in Table 2 represent the attention given to matters pertaining to Violence against women as portrayed or reported by *Newswatch* and *Tell* newsmagazines.

**Table 2: Issues of Violence against Women Covered by *Newswatch* and *Tell* newsmagazines**

S/N	Total Coverage of Violence	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Total
1			1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	8=53.4%
2				1	1	1	1			1	1	6=40%
3						1						1=6.6%
4												
			-	1=66%	2=13.3%	2=13.3%	3=20%	2=13.3%	1=66%	-	2=13.3%	2=13.3%

As the Table depicts, there were a total of fifteen reports of violence against women in the selected editions of the two newsmagazines. A year-by-year presentation of the reports shows that there were no reports in the year 1995. Available data indicate that issues of violence against women received only one report from the newsmagazines in 1996, while the year 1997 recorded two reports. In the same vein, 1998 got two reports of violence against women from the selected newsmagazines.

There was a marked improvement in the reports in 1999 with three published news reports of violence against the female folk. However, a decline in the reports was noticed in 2000 with two reports. This declining trend continued in the year 2001 when only one reported case of violence against women was published. The year 2002, like 1995, did not receive any report of violence against women in the publications. In 2003 and 2004, there were four reports with each year having two published reports.

An analysis of the data presented on Table 2 above explains two obvious issues. One, that although there were reports of violence against women in the newsmagazines, they were not consistent, and two, that the reports were not regular as can be seen in the number of reports for each year. Secondly, some years did not receive any reports of discrimination against women at all, especially 1995 and 2002.

What appears a bit surprising is the fact that in spite of the Beijing Women Conference in 1995 which was attended by the then first Lady, Mrs. Miriam Abacha, and a retinue of women representatives, there was no report on violence that year. In the final analysis, however, there were reports of violence in the two newsmagazines. Therefore, the research question two was positively addressed.

**Research Question 3:** What is the depth of Coverage of Violence against Women in *Newswatch* and *Tell* Newsmagazines?

This is shown on Table 3 below:

**Table 3: Depth of Coverage of Violence against Women in *Newswatch* and *Tell* Newsmagazines**

Pages	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Total
Six			1		1						2=13.3%
Four		1		1		1			1	1	5=33.4%
Three				1			1			1	3=20%
Two			1		1	1					3=20%
One					1				1		2=13.3%
Half											
Total		1	2	2	3	2	1	-	2	2	15=100%

As can be observed from the Table above, the depth of coverage of issues of violence against women is indicated by the number of pages given to each story. Invariably, there were two stories that got six-page treatment within the ten years under investigation. These years were 1997 and 1999 and they accounted for 13.3% of all the coverage for the period. A total of five stories got four-page coverage, while three-page publications were three. Also, two-page coverage were three and one-page stories were two.

An analysis of the data presented in the preceding paragraph revealed an average of three pages per coverage of stories of violence against women. To this extent, it may be safe to say that the depth of coverage of stories of violence against the female folk was fair enough to generate awareness about the right of women and the various forms of violence and discriminations they were faced with in the society.

**Research Question Four:** *How often are Issues of Violence against Women reported in Newswatch and Tell newsmagazines?*

This question sought to ascertain the frequency of coverage of matters of violence against women in *Newswatch* and *Tell newsmagazines*. To answer this research question, the data were categorized into four distinct groups namely: annually, biannually, quarterly, and monthly. This categorization was borne out of the fact that the newsmagazines are published weekly and this makes it impossible for an issue to appear frequently in the magazines. From the data obtained from the two newsmagazines within the ten-year period covered by this investigation, it was clear that issues of violence against women were not frequently covered by the newsmagazines. Table four provides an illustration of the frequency of coverage.

**Table 4: Frequency of Coverage of Violence against Women between 1995 and 2004**

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
	1	1	1	1	1			1	1
		1	1	1	1			1	1
				1					
	1=annual	2=biannual	2=biannual	3=quarterly	2=biannual	1=annual		2=biannual	2=biannual

As indicated in Table Four, it is obvious that in 1996 and 2001, only one report relating to violence against women was carried by the two newsmagazines. This is an indication that the newsmagazines gave an annual coverage of issues of violence against women in these years.

Moreover, in 1997, there were only two reports which implied that the newsmagazines carried biannual reports each. This trend of biannual coverage of violence against women continued in 1998, 2000, 2003 and 2004 respectively, as there were just two coverage for each of the years. What appeared to be an improvement in coverage of issues of violence against women was recorded in 1999, with three stories. This represents a quarterly reportage of stories on violence against women given the fact that we are analyzing two newsmagazines.

The inferences that can be drawn from the data presented for research question four are: that whereas there were no publications of issues of violence against women in 1995 and 2002, two years garnered an annual coverage respectively; and that only one year got a quarterly publication, Moreover, biannual coverage were recorded for five years. On the average, issues of violence against women received a single coverage for each year, given the ten-year period under study. Invariably, this denotes paucity in coverage frequency and so, adequately addresses the research question.

**Research Question Five:** *What Prominence is given to Issues of Violence against Women in Newswatch and Tell Newsmagazines?*

To answer this research question which pertained to the placement of the stories on issues of violence against women, we categorized the placement into five, as Table 5 illustrates:

**Table 5: Placement of Stories of Violence against Women**

S/N	Category	Year										Total
		1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	
1	Cover story		1	1		2						4=26.6%
2	Special report			-	1		1			1	1	4=26.6%
3	Opinion			1		1	1					3=20%
4	Feature				1			1			1	3=20%
5	News stories							1				1=6.8%
	<b>Total</b>		1	2	2	3	2	2		1	2	15=100%

As the Table indicates, stories about violence against women got four cover story reports within the ten years. The years 1996 and 1997 got one cover story each, 1999 received two cover stories. In a similar vein, there were four special reports on violence against women and these were carried in 1998, the millennium year, 2000, 2003 and 2004. Out of the 15 stories on violence against women, three were opinion articles which appeared in 1997, 1999 and 2000. Feature treatments were given to a total of three coverages which appeared in 1998, 2001 and 2004. The number of stories that was accorded news story status was one and this was published in 2001.

From the data above, it can be observed that cover stories and special reports accounted for more than half of the coverage given to violence against women, while opinion features and news stories accounted for less than half of the coverage. In this light, it could be inferred that coverage of issues of violence against women was given prime positions in the newsmagazines. This evidently portrays the prominence accorded such reports by the newsmagazines.

## **Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **Summary**

Issues of violence against women and the female child have been on the rise in spite of all the Charters, Covenants and Conventions that sought to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against the female folk. It is perceived in Nigeria that issues of violence against women are not adequately reported in the news media. In this connection, this investigation was undertaken to, among others things, find out the issues about women that are covered; determine the frequency and depth of coverage of violence against women; and determine the placement or prominence given to issues of violence against the female gender in the reportage of such issues.

To achieve the set objectives, the content analysis research method was adopted. And since it was practically impossible to content-analyze all the print media published in Nigeria, two prominent newsmagazines *Tell* and *Newswatch* were used for the study. A total of 104 editions of the newsmagazines were selected for the study which covered a ten-year period, 1995 – 2004.

An analysis of the data collected for the study indicated that the major issues concerning the female folk that received coverage in the studied media include women in politics, women and education, economic empowerment and development of women, fashion, health and related issues and violence/discrimination against women.

The data also revealed that although the length of the reports represented in the study as the depth of coverage was long enough, the

frequency of coverage were very sparse and irregular. However, issues of violence against women were given prime positions in the newsmagazines as they were mostly given cover-page treatment or covered as special reports.

### **Conclusion**

From the synthesis of the findings of this investigation, we conclude that though issues of violence were given prime placements in cover and special reports, which depict the seriousness the issues deserved; and even though the depth of coverage represented by the number of pages devoted to each report was fair and detailed enough, these could not generate the type of response from the audience that could bring about a change because the reports were very sparse and irregular. Perhaps this is why incidents of violence have continued to occur because the mass media have not devoted enough attention to the issue in their agenda to make it an issue of concern to the public in keeping with the agenda – setting function of the media.

### **Recommendations**

1. In the first place, reporters should devote more time to investigative reporting so that they can uncover incidents of discrimination and violence against women and the girl child and bring same to public knowledge.
2. Media reportage of incidents of violence against women can also improve if victims are encouraged to speak out and expose the perpetrators of violence against them. Cases of violence, especially domestic violence should not be treated as family matters, but reported to law enforcement agencies and elaborately covered by the media to deter other violators of women's rights.
3. The frequency of coverage of issues of violence against women which by extension would give the issues the exposure that is commensurate to their occurrences can be increased if media organizations, most especially

newsmagazines send their correspondents to major towns, cities and villages, rather than depending on reports from state capitals and head offices of the media organizations.

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