

**Coverage of Child Rights and Protection Issues:  
Analysis of Selected Broadcast Media in Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

Since the media inform and create public awareness on development issues of any nation, children who constitute the future leaders should at all times be informed and reminded of their basic rights while issues affecting them should form a major part of media agenda. Given the backdrop that print media coverage of child related issues has been inadequate, this study attempts to investigate the extent the Nigerian broadcast media give prominence to child related issues, with particular emphasis on child rights and protections. Six broadcast stations (three radio and three television stations) were monitored for a period of three months. The overall results showed that in all the stations, only six issues were reported on children by ABS radio, Purity Fm, Silverbird TV,

and NTA, with just three related to child's right and protections. The implication is that child rights and protections as well as child related issues are not salient in Nigerian broadcast media despite the important part that children occupy in any nation. The study recommends that the media should intensify efforts to raise awareness and mobilize public opinion on issues pertaining to child's right and protections in the country.

**Keywords:** Children, Broadcast Media, Child's Right, Abuse, Broadcast Programmes

## **Introduction**

Given the role of the media at raising public awareness and determining issues for public debates and discussions, there is need for all media genres to adequately communicate child related information and contribute towards the protection of rights of the child who are deemed the societal future leaders and very vulnerable section of the public. Hence, the ways the media portray children has a profound impact on society's attitude and behaviours towards them as well as on the ways the children could perceive themselves. It becomes a problem when the media do not adequately project stories of children, their lives, their rights, and protection while several cases relating to them in terms of abuse, labour, mortality, neglect, trafficking, prostitution, and so on still abound in the country. These many cases of the exploitation of children are rarely revealed and most times the people who provide the media with such information desire their anonymity preserved.

On the contrary, the media should regard violation of the

rights of children and issues related to children's safety, privacy, security, their education, health and social welfare and all forms of exploitation as important questions for investigations and should be highlighted for public debates. When the rights of children are observed and respected, it is presumed that they will grow to become better citizens and contribute meaningfully to societal developments. If the reverse be the case, it is better imagined what such society will eventually turn into in the future. The argument here is that since the media is effective at sensitizing and informing the public, child related issues, especially issues relating to their rights and protection should be visible enough, such that the public would recognize and observe them. This will help reduce the incessant child related exploitative cases in the Nigerian society.

Issues related to children's rights have been a world focus since the year 1979, which United Nations designated as the International Year of the Child (IYC). Since then International bodies have called for more information to be given to children — both through the media and at school — so they can protect themselves about the dangers and risks associated with child exploitation. For instance the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which was passed on November 20th 1989, enshrines children's right to freedom of expression (Article 13); to protection of privacy and against attacks on his/her honour and reputation (Article 16); and also calls on the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child (Article 17). Articles 34 and 36 commit governments to protecting children from all forms of exploitation, including pornography. How far the media is meeting with this responsibility is a question of concern.

Even in Africa, the Organization of Africa Unity (OAU) in 1990 adopted a Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child. The Charter had specified that the situation of most African Children, remains critical due to the unique factors of their socio-economic, cultural, traditional and developmental circumstances,

natural disasters, armed conflicts, exploitation and hunger and on account of the child's physical and mental immaturity, he/she needs special safeguards and care (as cited in **Awosala & Omoera, 2008**). In this context, the media need to always set the child right issues as one of its major agendas, given that they possess the power to raise public awareness on issues. Thus, journalists are therefore charged with the responsibility of recognizing the basic rights of children and giving them salience.

Apart from the media reporting children fairly, child's right and protections issues should be frequently aired. On the other hand, children generally are seen and heard from a distance, reflecting a weakness that resonates through any discussion on media and the rights of children. Jempson (1997) reiterates that children aren't considered "hot topics" for the media, not unless children feature in a scandalous or heart-rending story or in some shocking data or statistics. Hence, this paper attempts to monitor the child rights and protection issues covered by selected Nigerian broadcast media, with the target to discover their level of coverage of such child related issues.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Given the continued increase in the number of Nigerian broadcast media, with diverse multiplicity of programmes running on daily basis, there is need for proportionate and fair reportage of child related issues especially as they affect their rights and protections. Having also understood that the future of any nation lies in the well-being and improved living standards of children, there is need for adequate coverage and reportage of their issues such that effective actions could be taken to strategically address such, since they invariably affect the future of the larger society. The question is 'what is the future of the Nigerian nation when children are often being neglected and unfairly reported with their rights being violated'? It is against this backdrop that the researchers interrogate the coverage of child rights and protection issues by the Nigerian broadcast media.

### **Research Objectives**

The primary aim of this study is to ascertain broadcast media coverage of child rights and protections issues. To this end, these specific objectives guided the study:

1. To ascertain the level of broadcast media coverage of child related issues.
2. To identify the issues (themes) that are reported on children.
3. To establish the extent of media coverage given to child rights and protection issues

### **Research Questions**

In line with the above objectives, the following research questions shall be addressed:

1. What is the level of the Nigerian broadcast media coverage of child related issues?
2. What child related issues (themes) are prominently reported by the Nigerian broadcast media?
3. To what extent do the Nigerian broadcast media cover child rights and protections issues?

### **Literature Review**

Nwodu & Ezeoke (2012) studied the Press Coverage of Children's and Women's Rights in Nigeria aimed at ascertaining the nature, frequency, and volume of coverage given to issues relating to women and children's rights in the Nigerian news media. The results showed that issues relating to the rights of women and children were poorly covered and denied prominent positioning in the Nigerian press.

Furthermore, Cheit (2003) examined the amount and content of all media coverage of child molestation defendants in one Rhode Island newspaper over five years. Among Cheit's results, he found over 50 percent of the defendants' cases not

covered by the media at all, and he identified a few key aspects of the case he thought were likely to be covered: first-degree or multiple charges; multiple victims; additional violence; and long prison sentences. However, Cheit found coverage of the cases was minimal and were rarely detailed.

Kunkel, Smith, Suding, and Biely (2002) looked at the coverage of five child-related topics: child abuse and neglect, childcare, child health insurance, teen childbearing, and youth crime and violence. The study's goals were to determine not just how frequently, but how thoroughly the media reported on these topics. The authors found although child abuse and neglect and youth crime/violence together accounted for the majority of all coverage, only 11 percent of child maltreatment stories used a thematic frame. The vast majority of child maltreatment stories simply reported individual incidents and legal actions being taken against the perpetrator. Among the other findings in stories about child abuse and neglect:

1. Only 5 percent of the stories offered any contextual information, and parents and children were used as sources less than half the time
2. Statistics and public policy concerns were mentioned only 9 and 17 percent of the time, respectively
3. Almost none (2 percent) of the information was determined to be useful to parents (e.g., parenting tips, sources of support)

Kunkel *et al* (2002) also concluded that the media must strive to reduce the number of stories published on children's issues in isolation and rather suggested reporters should put the stories in context regarding the communities in which families live and the public policy climate for children's issues—doing so will help the reader place the incident within broader patterns and trends.

Oyero (2009), while analyzing the **children's rights'**

**issues in both Nigerian and Ghanaian newspapers**, found similar results. In content analyzing two newspapers each from Nigeria and Ghana, the findings showed that the presentation of children by the two countries' newspapers did not deliver the expected understanding of child rights' issues, due to underreportage of children and that children's issues are not given extensive treatment by the media, rather presented as not newsworthy, with children's voices poorly represented in issues affecting them.

It is in light of this that Oyero (2009) surmises the challenge to media professionals at all levels and in all media as: to raise awareness in the media professions about the rights of children and how they can be protected and promoted by good professional practices or harmed through inappropriate policies or actions. The other is to work ethically and professionally according to sound media practices and to develop and promote media codes of ethics in order to avoid sensationalism, stereotyping (including by gender) or undervaluing of children and their rights.

More so, other obstacles to reporting children includes: to resist commercial pressures that lead to children's issues and the rights of children to freedom of expression, fair coverage and protection from exploitation, including as consumers, being given low priority; to work to enhance the relationship between children and the media so that both grow and improve in understanding of the positive and negative power and potential of the relationship (Oyero, 2009).

Similarly, in a 2010 study titled: *Children: as Invisible and Voiceless as Ever in the Nigerian News Media* by Olusola Oyero, two Nigerian dailies were investigated for frequency of coverage, prominence given to the reports concerning children in terms of newspaper page placements, and people quoted as regards individuals that were contacted as news sources in the report. The findings of the study revealed that children seemed to be invisible

in the newspapers' content due to inadequate attention that has not been given to children's issues (Oyero, 2010).

A research conducted by Internews Europe in Brazil, Kenya and India in 2013 to assess the current role played by the media in protecting and promoting child rights observed that in these countries, hundreds of millions of children live in hunger, homelessness and illiteracy and suffer sexual violence, physical abuse, forced labour and often varied and complex risks. The report of the study further indicated that the number of children in these countries is staggering; nearly 300 million children are living where their basic rights are violated.

In November 2003, *MediaWise* studied three British broadsheet and tabloid Sunday papers. The results show that in a total of 32 items about children, only two were positive. In three articles, parents' rights were championed over those of their children.

Porro and Banjac (2012) studied the frequency and manner in which children are portrayed in South African media, the study shows that coverage of children in 2011 continues to be low compared to the overall percentage of children in South Africa's population. In the study, 14 of South Africa's major English newspapers were monitored for content on children excluding letters and advertorials of ten months (from January – October 2011). Out of a total of 87,389 counted stories, 10,263 (11.74 percent of all news stories) dealt with children.

Media Monitoring Project (MMP) in 2003 investigated the representation of children's rights in South African news media. Findings show that children were under-represented in the news media since, children featured in only 6% of news items according to adult monitors, while the child monitors found that only 26% of their monitored stories contained children.

In contrast, Awosola, & Omoera (2008) discovered that television has been able to raise awareness regarding child rights through its various programmes, geared towards raising



awareness on child rights and other issues relating to child development. They also found that this awareness does not reflect in the attitudes of residents towards children in the locality.

### **Brief Review of Child Rights and Protection Issues in Nigeria**

Children have been accorded little, if any, status in the society. They have been deprived of their rights and are perceived as the property of their parents or guardians, thus children are often treated any way their 'owners' saw fit. Nigeria has been unable to deal with several issues hindering the protection rights of children such as children living on the streets, children affected by communal conflict, drug abuse, human trafficking, and the weaknesses of the juvenile justice system amongst others.

The first global attempt to bring issues affecting children to the fore was the 1924 Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child, followed by the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the declaration of 1979 as the International Year of the Child by the United Nations (Oyero: 2009). It was also gathered that the most notable event connected to children's rights is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted and ratified in November 20, 1989 which effect from September 2, 1990.

Likewise, the Asian Summit on Child Rights and the Media (1996) and the Oslo Workshop (1999) were both held in struggle of child rights. Part of the Summit's resolutions is that media content aimed at children should be of high quality, made specifically for children, should not exploit them but support their mental, social, moral and spiritual developments. The Challenge is a call to action with the aim of ensuring that overwhelming power of the media is encouraged in the lives of children, while potentially harmful effects will be reduced. The Oslo Challenge also assigns media practitioners the crucial role of acting as catalysts for the realization of children's dreams.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Convention on the Rights

of the Child (UNCRC) outlines what governments and individuals should do to promote and protect the rights of children. Adopted by the General Assembly on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1989, and ratified by all the world's governments (except Somalia and the United States of America), the Convention commits governments to ensure that children can grow up in safe conditions, with access to good education, health care, and standard of living. By signing up to the convention, governments agree to protect children from discrimination, sexual and commercial exploitation, violence, and take care of orphans and young refugees.

This first legally binding international instrument, covering a full range of political, economic, social, and cultural rights, has its objective to protect children from discrimination, neglect, and abuse. It also serves as both a rallying point and a useful tool for civil societies and people who work to protect and promote children's rights. The convention also defines a child as any human being under the age of eighteen, unless the age of majority is attained earlier under a state owned legislation. One of the child rights by the Convention is the right for children to form their own views and freely express them. Therefore, Article 12 of the Convention states that, parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Still, in Article 13 children were given the right of expression, and the right of access to media. It states that, the child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice. Then, **in terms of privacy**, countries are enjoined to put into legislation, the privacy of children and protect them from

slander and libel. Article 16 stipulates, “No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence, or to unlawful attacks on his or her honour and reputation”.

Generally, the convention sees the role of the media as a positive one in child development. Under Article 17, States Parties recognize the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual, and moral well-being and physical and mental health.

To this end, States parties shall: Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child; Encourage international co-operation in the production, exchange and dissemination of information and material from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources; Encourage the production and dissemination of children's books; Encourage the mass media to pay attention to the language needs of the child who belongs to a minority group; and Encourage the development of guidelines for protecting children from material 'injurious to his or her well-being',

Meanwhile, Nations that ratify the convention are said to bind to it by international law, with their compliance monitored by the United Nations committee on the rights of the child. The child shall enjoy the benefits of child security and shall grow and develop in good health while special care and protection shall be provided both to the child and his mother including adequate pre natal and post natal care. The child shall also reserve the rights to adequate nutrition, housing, recreation and medical services.

Certain guidelines were also suggested by journalists at the world's first International Consultative Conference on Journalism and Child Rights held in Recife, Brazil, on May 2nd 1998. After regional conferences and workshops, the suggestions were finally adopted at the Congress of the International Federation of

Journalists in Seoul in 2001. As specified in the guidelines;

All journalists and media professionals have a duty to maintain the highest ethical and professional standards; should promote within the industry the widest possible dissemination of information about the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and its implications for the exercise of independent journalism. Media organizations should regard violation of the rights of children and issues related to children's safety, privacy, security, their education, health and social welfare and all forms of exploitation as important questions for investigations and public debate. Children have an absolute right to privacy, the only exceptions being those explicitly set out in these guidelines. Journalistic activity, which touches on the lives and welfare of children, should always be carried out with appreciation of the vulnerable situation of children. Journalists and media organizations shall strive to maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct in reporting children's affairs.

In 2002, the Child News-Code of Conduct, formulated by the Nepal Press Council, has the following six postulations: Media should not promote the information that hinders and make negative impact on children development; Children should be motivated to speak truth without giving pressure and lure; News of the survivor child should be presented, not to further their agony; News supporting child exploitation should not be published; Advertisement and news should not be published and disseminated that violate the child rights and; National and International Laws should be observed while publishing and disseminating children related issues.

It is in view of these that the researchers interrogate the Nigeria broadcast media coverage of these child rights and protections in order to establish the level at which child rights and issues are being given prominence, since previous studies on print, show a gross underreportage of children.

### **Place of the Media in the Coverage of Child's Right and Protections**

The media play a significant role in forming and influencing people's attitudes and behaviour. Thus Brawley (1995) opines that understanding media influences, and how to use the media constructively, may be an essential tool for those who advocate for children, young people, and their families. The media is also important for offering children the possibility of expressing themselves. This can be achieved through high quality media content and public debates that are inclusive of child voices, experts, and advocates and that explains policy issues that can contribute to wider efforts to improve the environment for protecting and promoting the rights of children.

Media coverage of the abuse and neglect of children perform an important and significant role in placing issues such as child abuse on the public and political agenda. Lindsey (1994) maintains that: "Media has a central role in mediating information

and forming public opinion. The media casts an eye on events that few of us directly experience and renders remote happenings observable and meaningful". Similarly, Wurtele and Miller-Perrin (1993) have observed, media coverage of child sexual assault has contributed to demystifying and reducing the secrecy that has characteristically surrounded its occurrence. The media are empowered to provide valid, credible and realistic information that will educate citizens across the society on the rights of children as full and protected members of the society. This will generate understanding of appropriate standard for treating and protecting children. It will also bring about pressure on the government to improve the legal framework for protecting children. Individuals in the society will also internalize these frameworks and practice them in their daily life thus radically improving the protection of human rights of children in the society.

However, the reality of achieving this is not so simple due to some factors that inhibit the media. Some of the factors identified by Internews Europe (2014) include:

1. Lack of children voices: A patronizing attitude towards children and youths severely limit the space that children get in the mainstream media and all but excludes their voices from public debate on child rights.
2. Lack of coverage: there is absence of meaningful, realistic and socially relevant media coverage or information flow on issues pertaining to child's right and protection.
3. Lack of professionalism: reporting on children issues and child's right is not widely recognized as a specialized field and this means that many journalists are not motivated or even capable of producing in depth coverage of children issues. This neglect starts from journalism schools and extends to almost all newsroom.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical foundation of this study is Agenda setting theory, which was developed by McCombs and Shaw in 1972. It posits that audience members not only learn about public issues through the media but also attach importance to such issues, from the emphasis the media place upon it. Hence, the media influence the salience of topics on the public by attaching prominence and frequency to the coverage of issues. It also involves the media's ability to control the topics the public perceives as important (McCombs, 2004; McLeod, Kosicki, & McLeod, 2009). According to the theory, the frequency with which the media cover certain topics causes the audience to care more about those topics or believe they are more salient in their lives. Consequently, the more salient a news issue is, in terms of frequency and prominence, the more important the audience will regard the issue to be.

McQuail (2010, p. 515) outlined the agenda setting hypothesis as follows: Public debate is represented by a set of salient issues; The agenda originates from public opinion and proposals from political interests; Competing interests seek to promote the salience of their issues; Mass media news select issues for more or less attention depending on pressure, especially those from interested elites, public opinion and real world events; The outcome in media both gives public recognition to the current agenda and has further effects on the public and evaluation of the political scene; and Agenda effects are peripheral and short term.

Likewise, Severin & Tankard (1997) viewed agenda setting process as the media's capability, through repeated news coverage, of raising the importance of an issue in the public's mind. This equally suggests that media content has an influence on public perception of the importance of issues. Research over the past four decades has equally confirmed that the media nonetheless continue to have an effect on what topics the public deems important (McLeod *et al.*, 2009). Since there is poor and unfair treatment of children's rights by the public, the media, through the

agenda setting process, can change these negative treatments into positive ones. Buttressing the idea underlying this theory, Folarin (2005) specifically gave four elements involved in agenda setting as follows: The quantity or frequency of reporting by the media; Prominence given to the reporting; The degree of the conflict generated in the reports; and Cumulative media-specific effects over time.

Similarly, Lang and Lang (1983) had introduced agenda building with the following five steps: The press highlights some events or activities and makes them stand out; Different kinds of issues require different kinds and amounts of news coverage to gain attention; The events and activities in the focus of attention must be 'framed', or given a field of meanings within which they can be understood; The language used by the media can affect perception of the importance of an issue; The media link the activities or events that have become the focus of attention to secondary symbols whose location on the political landscape is easily recognized; and Agenda building is accelerated when well-known and credible individuals begin to speak out on an issue.

Perhaps, 'agenda building' introduced here seems to suggest that the process of putting an issue on the public's agenda takes time and passes through several stages, given that the media frame issues for more or less attention through the emphasis they make on such issues. In order to situate this theory to the present study, the agenda setting theory, espousing the power of the media to determine issues for public debates, provides the basis for examining how the Nigeria broadcast media have been able to set agenda for the rights of children and child related issues by attaching prominence to them through the frequency of and depth of coverage given to such issues. Since the public do not have the power to decide which issues comes to them, the media's choices influence which topics on the "public agenda".



## **Methodology**

In studying the coverage of child rights and protections among the Nigerian broadcast media, content analysis was employed. Kerlinger (1986) defined this as a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for measuring variables (cited in Wimmer and Dominick, 2003, p. 141). This study is specifically centred on Nigerian broadcast media. The population for this study comprised all licensed broadcast stations operational in Anambra state, Nigeria, which totalled 12 stations (four television and eight radio stations). With the use of stratification, the broadcast stations were stratified based on ownership. In Anambra state, there are only four government stations against eight privately owned ones. Out of these twelve stations, six stations were purposively selected for the study. The stations selected were both government (federal and state) and privately owned stations. Since programme schedules were produced on a quarterly basis, the researchers used the schedule of the second quarter of each of the stations under study. The programme schedule of any broadcast station generally contains uniform programming contents for each day of the week and for each broadcasting quarter with little or no variation. The time frame for monitoring the programmes was a period of one quarter.

## **Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis comprised all programmes on child issues in the form of news reports, documentaries, advertisements, commentaries, other programmes, etc. Using simple descriptive statistics, the manifest data were examined for frequency and prominence of child related issues, with reference to their rights

<b>Radio</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Television</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
ABS Radio	1	25%	ABS TV	-	-
Rhythm FM	-	-	Silverbird TV	1	33%
Purity FM	3	75%	NTA	2	67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>100</b>

This Table reveals that in the three radio stations monitored; only

four programmes reported issues related to children. Three of these programmes came from Purity FM while only one programme related to children was aired on ABS radio. None came from rhythm FM. For the television stations, ABS TV did not cover any child related programme within the period of investigation while Silverbird television and NTA had one and two programmes respectively. The result of the frequency of coverage given to children issues in the various broadcast stations indicate that such child-related issues were poorly covered in the various broadcast stations studied. Further analysis of the issues reported on children show that , the story '**Commission Advises Proper Enrolment for Nomadic Education**' was reported by Silverbird TV, Purity FM radio and NTA while '**Commandant General Urges Youths to Embrace Skill Acquisition**' came

**Table 2: Nature of Stories (Genres) Reported on Children**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
News	5	83%
Commentary	-	-
Magazine Programme	1	17%
Advertorials	-	-
Other Programmes	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: broadcast Stations studied*

In terms of the nature of stories, Table 2 (above) show that majority 5 (83%) of the themes was reported as news programmes while 17% represented children magazine programme such as *Oge Umuaka* and Kiddies corner. This shows that child related issues were mostly reported as straight news.

**Table 3: Total Number of Children Issues Covered**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Issues on Child rights & Protection	3	50%
Other issues on Children	3	50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100</b>

In terms of the number of children issues covered by the media, Table 3 (above) shows that there is no difference in the level of coverage. The implication is that apart from children issues not given prominence, issues related to child's rights and protection were also not salient in Nigerian broadcast stations. The stories depicting child rights came with these titles 'New Child Labour Policy in Nigeria' And 'Lagos State Government Rescues 25 Children from Suspected Child Trafficker', which were both reported by the FRCN (Purity Fm). The third issue was contained in a children's magazine programme by Purity FM titled 'Uzo Esi Emegbu Umuaka' 'Children's Holiday Camping' also came from Anambra broadcasting service.

**Table 4: Total Number of Weekly Programmes by these Stations during the Period**

<b>Stations</b>	<b>Number of weekly programmes</b>	<b>Issues reported on children</b>	<b>Story type</b>
ABS Radio	Two hundred and seventy six (n=276)	1	News
Rhythm FM	Two hundred and fifty nine (n=259)	Nil	-
Purity FM	Two hundred and thirty nine (n=239)	4	News & Magazine prog.
ABS TV	One hundred and seventy nine (n=179)	Nil	-
Silverbird	Two hundred and five (n=205)	Nil	-
NTA	One hundred and ninety six (n=196)	1	News
<b>Total</b>	<b>(n=1146)</b>	<b>(n=6)</b>	

*Source; broadcast Stations studied*

Table 4 shows that out of one thousand, one hundred and forty six (1146) weekly programmes produced by the six different

broadcast stations chosen; only six issues were reported on children, some of the programmes in form of news stories earlier aired on FRCN were repeated in other stations such as NTA and Silverbird televisions. For instance, the story, '**Commission Advises Proper Enrolment for Nomadic Education**' was reported by Silverbird TV, Purity FM radio and NTA while '**Commandant General Urges Youths to Embrace Skill Acquisition**' came from Purity FM radio and NTA. This implies that apart from the repeat of some of the stories by the stations, children were largely invisible in the stations monitored, compared to multiplicity of programmes they produce on daily basis.

**Table 5: Prominence given to Child Related Issues**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
Among the headlines	1	17%
Inside stories	5	83%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source; broadcast Stations studied*

From Table 5 (above), it is evident that among all the stories covered, only one featured as a headline- The story “Lagos state government rescues 25 children from suspected child trafficker”. By implication, child related issues were not deemed important for public debate and discussions.

**Table 6: Depth of the Stories**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
1-5 minutes	5	83%
5 minutes and above	1	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source; broadcast Stations studied*

From the data generated in Table 6 (above), it is also

revealed that from all the stories covered within the period; only one was more than five (5) minutes and above while the rest were between one (1) to five (5) minutes. This shows that issues on children were not given an in-depth coverage.

## **Discussion**

Having monitored these stations for four consecutive weeks, findings of the study show that child's right and protection issues as well as other child related issues are not prominent in Nigerian broadcast media. The finding of this study supports the earlier findings by Nwodu & Ezeoke (2012) and Oyero (2009, 2010) on studies conducted in the print media. This is an indication that irrespective of the media whether print or broadcast, issues pertaining to children does not receive adequate coverage considering that children occupy an important place in the development of any nation. In all the stations monitored, only six issues were reported about children during the period, with only three, related to their rights and protections.

In as much as the frequency of reporting of children issues was low as observed in the study, one could infer that government owned broadcast stations covered more stories on children than privately owned stations. In terms of themes, the news stories depicting child rights came with these titles '**New Child Labour Policy in Nigeria**' And '**Lagos State Government Rescues 25 Children from Suspected Child Trafficker**'. The third issue was contained in a children's magazine programme by Purity FM titled '**Uzo Esi Emegbu Umuaka**' Other issues reported on children include: '**Commission Advises Proper Enrolment for Nomadic Education**' aired by Silverbird, FRCN and NTA, '**Commandant General Urges Youths to Embrace Skill Acquisition**' from FRCN and NTA and '**Children's Holiday Camping**' from Anambra Broadcasting Service. While only one of these stories featured as a headline, the rest were inside stories. Only one story were also reported in-depth which is the children's magazine program.

Furthermore, the children magazine programmes during the period were mainly targeted at promoting and encouraging child education. For instance, on Purity FM 'Oge Umuaka' handled **'Igu Aha'**(Naming) and **'Uzo esi emegbu Umuaka'** (**How children are maltreated**) which featured the kids from Girls' wisdom nursery and primary school Otolu Nnewi and 'St Michael's Nursery and Primary School, Umudim Nnewi'. In the programmes, the kids, in line with the topics in question, performed drama. 'Kiddies Corner' was also anchored by kids from St Gabriel Nursery and Primary School Umunnachi; Ark Angels International Nursery and Primary School Nkpor Onitsha; and Maria Regina International Nursery and Primary School, Awka. Issues handled include, drama, bible quotes, nursery rhymes, roundtable discussions, speeches, debates, wise sayings, short stories and inventions.

Similar results were found in other children's programmes produced by other stations. On NTA, 'Classic cartoons' comes on Mondays at 5:30pm while **'Nruritauka Umuaka'** comes on Wednesdays at 5:30pm. ABS radio, during the period had; **'Ntughariuche Umuaka'** on Wednesdays at 7:30 and **'Umuaka Nurianu'**, - a magazines programme on Mondays at 6pm. On ABS television, **'Busyhands'** comes on Thursdays at 4:30; **'School Drama'** at 5:30 same day while **'kiddies fun time'** comes at 4:30pm on Fridays. Still **'Children's bible club'** comes on Sundays at 3:30pm.

While Rhythm had no children's programmes at the period under study, Silverbird TV features **'Cartoons'** from Mondays to Fridays at 4:30pm. **'Fun zone'** on Saturdays at 8am, **'Young Scholars'** on wed at 3.30pm, **'Learning Points'** on Thursday at 5:30pm, and **'Fun Time'** on Saturdays at 4:30pm. It is surprising that most of these programmes were not geared towards addressing issues related to child's rights and protections.

In all the children magazine programmes during the

period, only one issue was related to child rights. In line with this finding, Poro and Banjac (2012) observe that coverage of children continues to be low compared to the overall percentage of children in South Africa's population. Out of a total of 87, 389 counted stories, 10, 263 (11.74 percent of all news stories) dealt with children. The topic on the magazine programme was '**Uzo esi emegbu Umuaka**' handled by kids from 'St Michael's Nursery and Primary School, Umudim Nnewi'. In the programmes, children at home were not only being educated but encouraged to inculcate good morals, and acquire certain useful skills. With the use of short stories, rhymes, discussions, debates, bible stories, poems, etc, children advise their fellow kids at home and even their wards on how to live a transparent and fulfilled life.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Although individuals and organizations work to eliminate all forms of child exploitation, this paper concludes that such efforts will only have a lasting impact if the media are able to raise awareness and mobilize public opinion to this end. Journalists should therefore place child rights' issues on their agenda by giving children fair representations, having established that coverage of children is very low in both the print and broadcast media in Nigeria. Since this study correlates with previous studies that child related issues especially their rights and issues of protection are not adequately represented in Nigerian media organizations, it is therefore recommended that:

1. The media should regularly incorporate these pertinent issues into their programmes.
2. Media outlets reconsider the appointment of 'children's correspondents', to improve a comprehensive report of all aspects of children's rights and protections.
3. Sensitization of journalists to regularly encourage the

protection of child's rights which would enable them to express the child's point of view.

4. New means of giving children access to the media as sources so they could tell their stories themselves.

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