

NEWSPAPER REPORTAGE AND EDITORIAL CONTENTS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN A PANDEMIC ERA

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Abstract

Apart from the health and socio-economic woes largely associated with Covid-19, the virus tended to have aggravated gender-based violence, especially against women and girls under lockdowns due to isolation. The media, represented by newspapers here, are expected to bring to the public knowledge the various violent acts against the female gender; however, it's assumed that since the pandemic broke, newspapers' reportage and editorial contents of gender-based violence is either lacking or inadequate. Therefore, this content analysis study, which was hinged on the Muted Group Theory (MGT), aimed to identify how many violent cases were reported; how many were gender-based against female, and the most common story type/genre used in reporting the gender-based violence stories in selected Nigerian online newspapers during the pandemic era. *Vanguard*, *This Day*, and *Leadership* newspapers were chosen for analysis. General violence and gender-based violence news articles were gleaned from the selected newspapers from April 2020 to July 2020, the period of the different phases of the lockdown and their gradual easing off in Nigeria. The findings showed that 231 stories were reported about violence by the three newspapers; 208 of this violence was against women and girls while the selected newspapers used more straight news stories in covering gender-based violence compared to other story types/genres. The study concluded that the fight against gender-based violence should be the prerogative of everyone, including human rights advocacy groups and the media. It recommended, among others, that all forms of gender-based violence should be discouraged, and measures should be put in place to protect women/girls' right to live free from violence.

Keywords: Gender, Lockdown, Media, Newspaper, Pandemic, Violence.

Introduction

When the corona virus (SARS-CoV-2), later referred to as Covid-19, first broke out in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China in December 2019, nobody envisaged it would become a worldwide pandemic that eventually affected all aspects of human endeavours. The sprouting nature of the menace of the disease brought about the restrictions of movements by land, sea, and air. Different nations went further by imposing lockdowns whereby people were

not allowed to move out of their houses, except those on essential duties. All these steps were taken, supposedly, to curb the spread of the disease. However, while the lockdowns were meant to save lives they were said to have brought about gender marginalisation.

The lockdowns in Nigeria were between March and July 2020. The residents of Lagos and Ogun States as well as the Federal Capital Territory were the first set of people restricted to their homes for an initial period of fourteen days (30th March to 13th April 2020). President Muhammadu Buhari later prolonged the lockdown for another two weeks, starting on Monday, April 13th, 2020. He also promised a "phased and progressive" relaxation of the lockdown, which began on May 4th. The relaxation of restrictions was phased in over two weeks, and included a nightly curfew, public face masks, and a prohibition on non-essential interstate travel. The president announced a four-week extension of the second phase, which will begin on June 30 and end on July 27 at midnight. The lockdown was eventually extended to all parts of Nigeria. It is reported that lockdown led to an increase in Violence against women and girls (VAWG) all over the world (Vanguard; Torinmo Salau; Maria-Noel Vaeza). The UN-Women refer to VAWG as the "shadow pandemic".

As of late March 2020 when the lockdown started, the Lagos State government's Domestic and Gender Abuse Response Team received 13 cases of allegations of sexual and domestic violence each day, which rose to 390 reports in March alone. According to data from the United Nations Nigeria on reported incidences of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) cases in Nigeria, based on preliminary evidence from 24 states, the total number of GBV events recorded in March 2020 was 346, but incident reports skyrocketed to 794 in the first half of April, depicting a 56 per cent increase in just two weeks of lockdown (4). According to Blessing Ejiofor, Mirabel Centre claims that the lockdown resulted in a more than 50% rise in the number of recorded incidences of sexual violence at their facility, with Ito Ezeanaba, Executive Director of Partnership for Justice, stating that up to 85% of those cases were involving minors. Pauline Tallen, Nigeria's Minister of Women Affairs, said that the number of complaints of domestic violence against women and children had increased as victims were stuck at home. Mohammed Adamu, the Inspector-General of Police, blamed it on Covid-19 restrictions. He verified the rise in rape and gender-based violence, stating that in the first five months of 2020, 717 rape occurrences were reported across the nation (Torinmo Salau). According to Isioma Kemakolam and Danielle Robertson, for every three months while lockdowns are in place, the UN Population Fund predicts an additional 15 million incidences of gender-based violence throughout the world.

The lockdowns were said to have exposed the female gender to a lot of violence by their male counterparts because it acted as a barrier to victims in seeking help and reporting their situations. Due to the lockdowns introduced, schools, offices, and marketplaces were shut, this made family members to be confined to their houses, and it forced family members and co-tenants to stay together unusually. This made them discover the flaws of one another that were hitherto overlooked, especially amongst couples. For those who were not matured enough to manage the situation, it led to irrational reactions and domestic violence against the weaker ones, women and girls being the major victims.

Domestic violence, as defined by Lawrence Ekweonu, refers to all forms of violence perpetrated in the domestic circle by one family member against another; it can take the form of stalking, physical, sexual, and emotional violence; and child abuse, which includes sexual, physical, emotional, and psychological abuse, as well as neglect. In Nigeria, damaging cultural practices, psychological violence, socioeconomic violence, and violence against non-combatant women in crisis settings are all frequent kinds of violence against women and girls. Spousal violence, landlord-tenant violence, neighbor-to-neighbour violence, and parent-child abuse were among the most prevalent gender-based violence allegations collected during the lockdowns, according to Akiode-Afolabi, the head of the Lagos-based Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre. Ejiro Umukoro states that Akiode-Afolabi also mentioned homeowner-house help violence, boyfriend-girlfriend violence, violence on widows, police-sex worker violence, police-citizen violence, visitor-caught-in-lock-down child rape. The global cost of violence against women is estimated at approximately \$1.5 trillion. That figure will only rise as violence increases in the aftermath of the pandemic (Maria-Noel Vaeza).

In situations like these, the media, hereby represented by newspapers, are expected to expose the dastardly acts of the men who violated women/girls during the lockdown, and report about the general issues that occurred during the lockdowns which may tend to impact women/girls now and in future. It is in this light that this study explored the domestic violence against women/girls during the lockdowns, focusing on how newspapers reported the abuses of women/ girls during the lockdowns. This study focused on newspapers because readers can have a reasonable control level over their news consumption since they can attend to news stories at any time (Jim Kuypers). *Vanguard*, *ThisDay*, and *Leadership* newspapers between April and July 2020 which dictates the different phases of the lockdowns and the easing in Nigeria were chosen based on their widespread readership, and their online popularity.

Gender-based violence against women/girls seems not to be abating. Even in the face of the difficulty women and/girls find themselves in the periods of natural disaster, war, pandemic, and displacements, they still experience sexual abuse, assault, and different types of domestic violence. The Director-General of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim, said that about 18 million women in Nigeria have one thing or the other to say regarding the issues of sexual and gender-based violence (*Vanguard*). The media, especially newspapers, are expected to raise awareness against continued violence and discrimination experienced by women/girls; but the question is: Are the media that are seen as society's wide institution of mobilisation and enlightenment living up to their expectations? Hence, this study endeavoured to look at the role the newspaper played during the lockdown periods in Nigeria due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Although there have been numerous studies on Covid-19 and the media, like that of Sanita Nwakpu, Okwudilichukwu Ezema, and Nwakpoke Ogbodo which examined newspaper framing of Covid-19; that of Anietie Effiong, Ime Nseobot, Efremfon Johnny, Umoh Mfreke, et al. which x-rayed broadcast media framing and reporting of Covid-19; and that of Corey Basch, Clarke Grace Hillyer, Meleo-Erwin Zoe, Jan Mohlman, Alison Cosgrove and Nasia Quinones; and Jude Ogbodo, Chike Onwe, Joseph Chukwu, Jude Nwasum et al. that analysed online media and coverage of Covid-19 pandemic and how patients can relate with health professionals. Nonetheless, there is a paucity of studies on gender-based violence during the lockdowns in Nigeria, and how newspapers reported them. Moreover, data on the number of reported cases of violence in newspapers in Nigeria during the lockdown is otherwise scarce, not least of gender-based violence which was mostly against women and girls. Therefore, this present paper endeavoured to identify how many stories of violence were reported during the lockdowns. It ascertained the number of gender-related violence cases reported during the lockdowns, and further determined the common story type/genre used in covering the gender-based violence stories in the selected Nigerian online newspapers during the pandemic era. There three objectives which is set propel this research are, identifying how many stories of violence were reported during the lockdowns; ascertaining how many were gender-related violence cases; and determining the common story type/genre used in covering the gender-based violence stories in the selected Nigerian online newspapers during the lockdown.

Theoretically, the arguments of the study were grounded on the Muted Group Theory (MGT) which can be traced back to two British social thropologists named Edwin Ardener and Shirley Ardener, who initially

proposed it in the field of cultural anthropology in 1975. The theory's foundation, which is based on group relationships, suggests that the dominant group makes the majority of contributions to the formulation of the language system, while members of the subordinate group merely need to become accustomed to the developed language and use it to communicate. However, there may be some communication issues along the road if the subordinate group finds some aspects of the language difficult to comprehend (Cheris Kramarae). The dominant group may decide to ignore the subordinate group's agitations, resulting in the subordinate group's eventual "muteness."

Peter Olusade Adebimpe (201) quotes Shirley Ardener as saying that the actual language of society had an intrinsic male bias, that men defined the meanings for a community, and that the feminine voice was suppressed or "muted." Women are unable to express themselves clearly in masculine jargon as a result of this silence. Shirley is claimed to have remarked that women's silence manifests in a variety of ways, particularly in public conversation. Edwin Ardener, on the other hand, discovered that the male point of view in society is dominant, whereas the female point of view is non-dominant and non-standard, after experimenting using the information in his essay "Belief and the Problem of Women," in which he studied the "problem" of women.

Although this theory was designed to analyse many difficulties involving men and women, it can also be applied to the way women are ill-treated in the society where women/girls' voices are "muted"; even though the concept of muted groups applies to both women and all other non-dominant groups in society (Mark Orbe, *African American Communication Research & Continuing the Legacy of Theorizing ...*63). The subject of gender-based violence is core in human rights discourse because it involves gender inequality and violence against women/girls. 'Mutedness' does not relate to the absence of voice per se, but to a form of distortion where "subordinate voices ... are allowed to speak but only within the constraints of the dominant communication system," writes Renee Cowan (4). It is observed that sometimes women find it difficult to have dissent voices from that of their male counterparts, or even complain, report or object to the views expressed by men, this may be attributed to the fact that the vast majority of them depend on the men for their living. Therefore, for the women/girls' voices not to be muted, they must strive to be independent as per generating financial income themselves. This theory is significant to this study because it can be applied to the issue of gender violence against women/girls (muted?) as perpetrated by men and the society (dominant?). When the pandemic started, there was quite much gender-based violence, but most of the victims kept mute due to the fear of Covid-19. Sometimes, it may be their disturbed state of mind after experiencing violence that made it problematic for them to speak out. The

woman/girl is not only muted when she is dictated to on how and when to speak but she is muted when the media and the society refuse to speak on her behalf or present and represent her well to the world. Therefore, if the media (newspapers) are not found to have largely reported the cases of domestic violence against women/girls, then they can be categorised as being muted too because the women/girls' voices they would have represented were silenced.

Lockdowns and Gender Violence

The Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) defines gender-based violence as a form of violence that excessively touches women. Some popular forms of gender-based violence are sexual violence, violence against women, domestic violence, and harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation. For the United Nations Nigeria, gender-based violence (GBV) also includes physical violence, emotional and psychological violence, child marriage, femicide, trafficking, rape, and socio-economic violence. Therefore, gender-based violence can be categorised as the various forms of domestic violence against women/girls. There was gender-based violence against women/girls even before the outbreak of Covid-19, domestic violence is a human rights violation. In April 2021, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women notes that in the previous 12 months, 243 million women and girls (aged 15-49) across the world were subjected to sexual or physical violence by an intimate partner (Ejiro Umukoro).

According to a survey commissioned by Nigeria's Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development and the United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA) Nigeria, with funding from the Norwegian government, 28% of Nigerian women aged 25-29 had suffered physical abuse since they were 15 years old (*Vanguard* 2). While mentioning that violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a prevalent issue, Maria-Noel Vaeza pointed out that one in every three women has been physically or sexually abused by an intimate partner or non-partner at some point in their lives. In addition, Maria-Noel Vaeza presents new worldwide statistics showing a rise in calls to VAWG helplines in countries like Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

Some Identified Causes of Abuse of Women/Girls

Many reasons have been attributed as the causes of violence against women/girls, both in and outside of the pandemic era. To some people, the lockdown periods were the first time that most family members stayed together indoors for many days after many years. This made them discover the "faults and weaknesses" of one another for the first time, and it resulted in

violent reactions most times. Also, the effects of the lockdown went a long way to increase the number of violence women/ girls experienced. Most Nigerians are self-employed, and they depend on what they rake in daily to run their families. Their socio-economic values dwindled during the lockdowns. These set of people are disposed to get stressed due to the lockdowns which prevented them from going out to fend for their families, especially when there was no palliative given to them in the periods they were at home; where few palliatives were provided, the distributions were poorly handled to the extent that only a few people got few things. A man in this situation may suffer depression and can get irritated by little things from the wife or children, especially when there is pressure to provide the basic needs at home. To have temporary relief, some may result in taking alcohol or drugs that are stimulants of aggression. This may lead to an aggressive response from the man, hence VAWG ensues. In their study, Aloysius Odii, Millicent Ngwu, Mmesoma Aniakor, Ifunanya Owelle, Maureen Aniagboso, Onyinye Uzuanwu attest that the lockdown of cities to control the spread of Covid-19 negatively affected the socio-economic and health wellbeing of the citizens, especially daily wage earners.

Equally, disrespect of the man by the woman/ girl can make the former raise his hands against the latter. Naturally and culturally, the African man expects “respect” from his wife, no matter how poor or small in stature he may be, and where and when he does not get this “respect”, he will want to enforce it by becoming violent against the wife. The case is worse if the man has low self-esteem and poor communication ability. Africa is a patriarchal society that adheres to tradition. In most cultures, particularly in Africa, the woman is expected to accord respect to the man, especially in marriage. A man may get aggressive and violently abuse the woman when he feels he is being robbed of his respect hence Samuel Laleye notes that the greatest thing you will ever take from a man that will cause the beast in him to come out is his respect. He asserts that inherent in every man is a king and a beast and that if the woman chooses to be a queen she will bring out the king in the man, but if she disrespects him, she will bring out the beast in him.

Also, some men are naturally wicked, heartless, and violent, and they get the women/ girl abused and violated at any little provocation or opportunity they have. They might have witnessed their fathers beat their mothers. Such men can unleash mayhem on women/ girls even when they were not provoked because they have temperament problems, and cannot control their anger. However, it must be mentioned that women/ girls, especially married women, do activate domestic violence against them sometimes. For instance, some of them nag too much. They also verbally abuse their husbands thereby making them experience mental torture. The mental

pain may linger so long with the man because the effects are not tangible. There have been cases where the men are moving away from the women to avoid confrontation, yet the women still go after them. When such men feel they have had enough, they react by manhandling the women.

Maria-Noel Vaeza concludes that VAWG was a pandemic long before the outbreak of Covid-19. The basic reasons, it was underlined, are not the virus per se or the resulting economic issues, but rather a power and control imbalance. The gender divide, biased attitudes and views, gender pigeonholes, social norms that condone and encourage violence and abuse, and societal systems that replicate unfairness and discrimination all contribute to this imbalance.

Media and Gender Issues

The mass media are the various avenues through which information is collected, collated, and disseminated to individuals and groups of people in diverse locations. Some of the popular ones are newspapers, magazines, television, radio, film, book, billboards, social media platforms etcetera. The fact that they are made up of many variants, makes it possible for varied ideas about social issues to be discussed and analysed. They are very important to the society vis-a-vis the roles they play which include creating awareness, dissemination of news, agenda-setting, advertising, and education in a democratic dispensation. This is in line with the thought of Jammy Guanah (*The role of the print media in resolving ...*) who observes that the Nigerian mass media, like in other parts of the world, is seen as the fourth estate of the realm, coming after the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary, with this, the mass media are saddled with enormous responsibilities in the society.

Though, the vital roles they play are sometimes not appreciated enough especially when such roles are considered to be short of their expectations, considering the potency of the media; for instance, not amplifying the cases of violence women face daily. The media can put a human face to the stories about abused women/girls and assure them that they will get help and justice from the appropriate quarters. Even though, while calling for a change of focus by the media, Hashim Suleiman observes that what permeates the current scholarship about media and gender is all about the negativities that media do to the female gender, yet the media cannot be exonerated when it comes to how it reports the female gender stories.

The mass media, especially the newspaper, which is supposed to accord all citizens equal rights and opportunities have been accused of encouraging gender imbalance (Jammy Guanah *Comparative study of Nigerian press...*128). It must be inadequacies like this that made Smith Wigglesworth declare that "If I read the newspaper, I come out dirtier than I went in. If I read my Bible, I

come out cleaner than I went in and I like being clean" (71). Chris Kwakpovwe reports Wigglesworth as saying that he never read newspapers, and if anyone went to his house with a newspaper in his hands, he would shout at such person before he passed through the door into the house to "Throw that filthy thing out of my house", because he did not want to be distracted by the wickedness and politics of his time and "be deformed by the information from the world" (71).

The media are expected to educate citizens about gender issues in society regularly as part of their civic obligation, and bring to the knowledge of the public any time there are cases of gender discrimination. Hence, Andrew Campbell submits that expanding community partnerships and spreading awareness about the importance of reporting incidents of abuse are crucial to reducing the number of such cases. Thus, it will not be out of place if the media engage in investigative journalism by engaging VAGW victims during the lockdowns to unearth the causes of the abuse they experienced. Media can successfully be used to mobilise the male gender to achieve a healthier and equal relationship to prevent an increase in VAWG cases. It is expected that newspapers should report more about the danger women/ girls are exposed to when violated, and such reports should be perpetual until the abuse against them is stopped, or drastically reduced. This research used content analysis to study newspapers' coverage of gender-based violence during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns. A content analysis emphasises an integrated view of speech/texts and their specific contexts (Yan Zhang & Barbara Wildemuth). Purposive sampling technique was used to select the online versions of *Vanguard*, *ThisDay*, and *Leadership* newspapers based on their widespread readership, the high circulation rate of their hardcopies versions, and their online popularity. The researcher reviewed the papers for 4 months (April-July 2020) being the period of the lockdowns in Nigeria.

The population of the study is the 231 straight news, features, opinions/columns, photographs, editorials, Advertorial, and Personality profiles that have to do with the violence that was published during the four months by these newspapers. The population was also used as the sample size because the number making up the population is small. It holds that, when an entire population is not very large, it doubles as both the population and the sample of the study. This decision is justified by many scholars, including Amaechi Ifeakor who endorses the use of the entire population as a sample if the population is small.

The instrument for data collection is coding sheet that contains the content categories identified below. The sheet was validated, piloted, improved, and used to ensure that it measured the issues: general violence, violence against women/ girls, and story type/genre during the lockdowns.

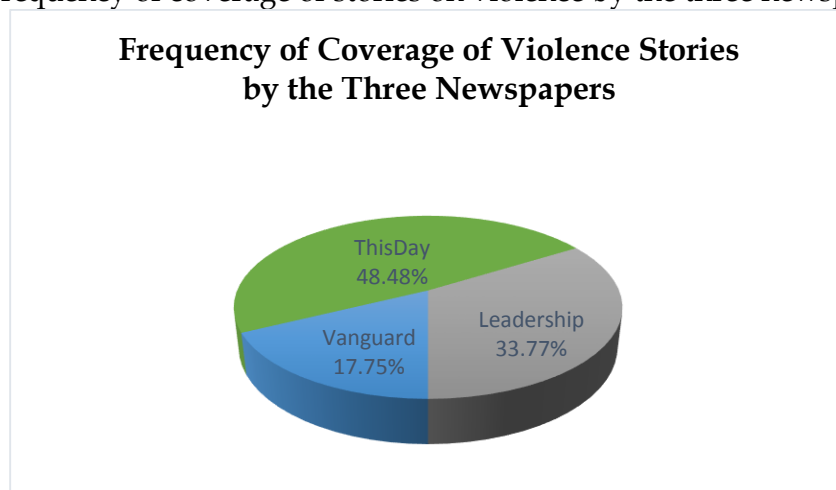
The test of validity conducted indicated Rho = 0.75 (strong positive correlations with) to 1 (perfect positive correlation). Such validity test results indicate the quality data herein (Patrick Biddix). Inter-coder reliability of 0.85 or 85% was achieved using Krippendorff's α Coincidence Matrix (Deen Freelon). This was arrived at using three categories from the six coded ones with the number of agreements at 9; disagreement at one; the number of cases was 10 and the number of decisions 20. Applying Krippendorff's

$$\alpha = \frac{(n-1)\Sigma o_{cc} - \Sigma n_c(n_c-1)}{n(n-1) - \Sigma n_c(n_c-1)}, \alpha = \frac{(20-1)(8+6+4) - [9(9-1) + 7(7-1) + 4(4-1)]}{20(20-1) - [9(9-1) + 7(7-1) + 4(4-1)]}, \alpha = 0.85 \text{ or } 85\%.$$

Analysis was done using the *Nvivo* research tool. The units of analysis for the study are the newspaper articles in the form of straight news, features, opinions/columns, photographs, editorials, Advertorial, and Personality profiles that have to do with violence during the lockdowns. The coverage of violence-related news was categorised into: i) general violence: which refers to the coverage of general violence stories by the newspapers; ii) gender-based violence: these are coverage of cases of violence meted out on women/girls, and iii) story type/genre: the class of the story that the violence stories were reported, that is, maybe they are in form of straight news, features, opinions/columns, photographs, editorials, Advertorial, or Personality profile.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Fig.1: Frequency of coverage of stories on violence by the three newspapers.

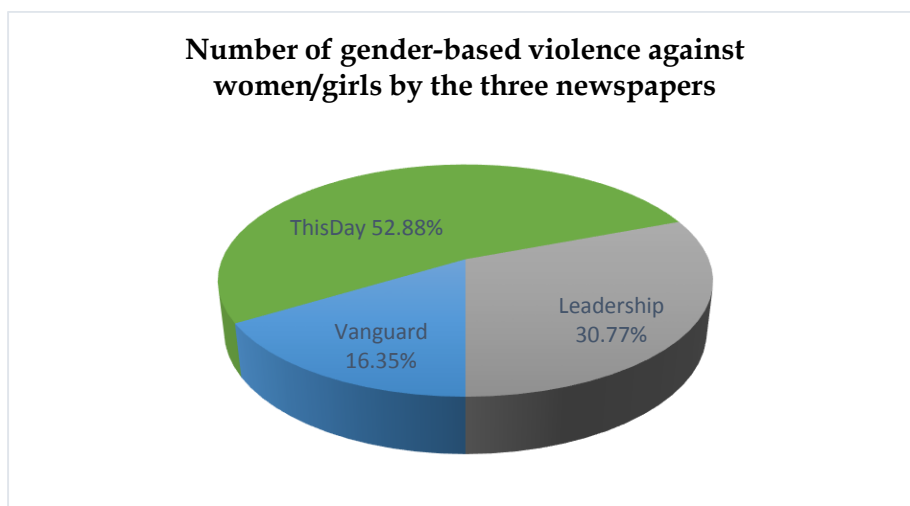


KEY: ■ Vanguard ■ ThisDay ■ Leadership

Source: Content Analysis, 2021.

Fig. 1 shows that Thisday newspaper had the highest number of reported violence incidences; it is followed by *Leadership* newspaper, then *Vanguard* newspaper.

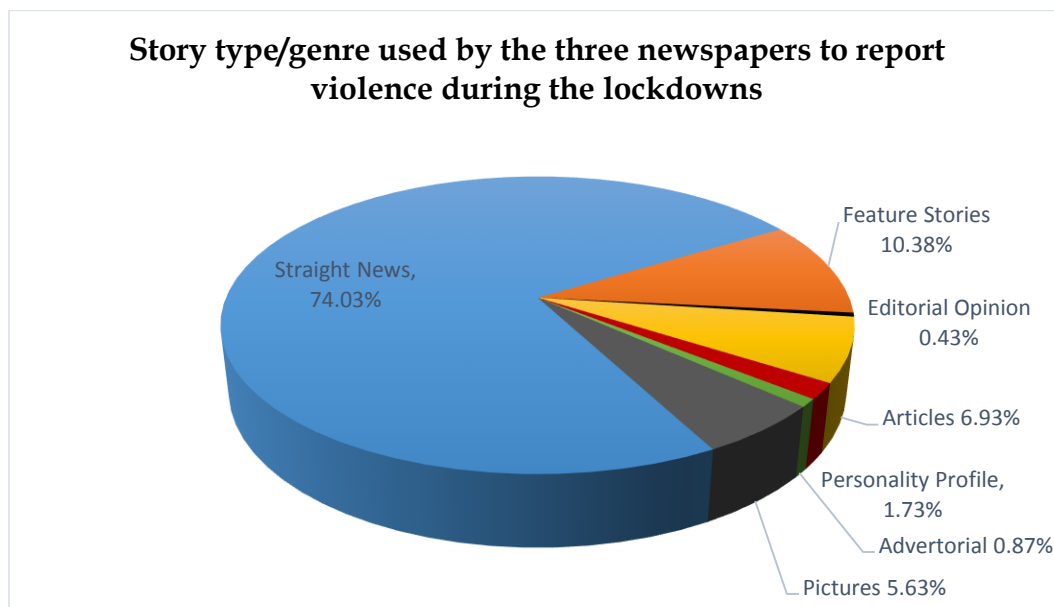
Fig. 2: Number of gender-based violence against women/girls by the three newspapers



KEY: ■ Vanguard ■ ThisDay ■ Leadership
Source: Content Analysis, 2021

Data gleaned from Fig. 2 show that 208 from the 231 reported cases of violence were gender-based (*Vanguard* - 16.35%; *ThisDay* - 52.88%; *Leadership* -30.77%). This signpost that the women/girls were the major victims of violence during the lockdowns.

Fig. 3: Story type/genre used by the three newspapers to report violence during the lockdowns



KEY: ■ Straight News ■ Feature Stories ■ Editorial Opinion ■ Articles
■ Personality Profile ■ Pictures ■ Advertorial

Source: Content Analysis, 2021

Fig. 3 infers that the majority of the stories on gender-based violence were reported in form of straight news more than any other story type/genre.

Discussion of Findings

The first objective of this study was to identify how many stories of violence were reported during the lockdowns. It was found that there were 231 stories. This high rate shows that the restriction of people’s movement which made them be confined to their homes exposed them to various degrees of violence. The further breakdown indicates that the rate of violence increased at the peak of the lockdowns in June, and reduced when the lockdowns were relaxed in July. It implies that violence would have continued to increase if the lockdowns had been sustained. This pinpoints the fact that the newspaper is still an inevitable partner in achieving a sane society in exposing and reporting

the various forms of violence taking place, even amid other media platforms like social media which tend to threaten the existence of the newspaper.

Though, both male and female sexes do face gender-based violence, this study however revealed that women and girls were the greater victims during the lockdowns. This shows that women/girls who were already suffering domestic violence before the Covid-19 pandemic, experienced more of this violence because there was no way they could escape from their abusers whom they were trapped with during the periods of the lockdowns. Oludayo Tade who reiterated that rape is not a strange criminal act globally, however, confirmed that rape took a threatening dimension as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic where both victims and sexual predators were trapped under lockdowns. Also, while addressing the alarming increase of gender-based violence (GBV) during the Covid-19 lockdown, Nthabiseng Moleko says reports globally show a link between pandemics, disasters, and gender-based violence.

The third finding revealed that the three newspapers used more straight news than other story genres. This finding conforms to that of Sanita Nwakpu, Okwudilichukwu Ezema and Nwakeup Ogbodo that content analysed newspaper framing of coronavirus and audience response and found that the coverage was dominated by straight news reports. Previously, Guanah (*Comparative study of Nigerian press...*) defines news (straight news) as new information about an event, incident, or happening. It is about something the hearer (listener or viewer) is hearing or seeing for the first time. That other person might have seen or heard such information before does not make it "non-news" (136).

However, Chinenye Nwabueze adds that straight news does not draw conclusions, offer any opinions, attempt to probe deeper than the surface happenings, provide elaborate background information, or examine claims made. When straight news fails to do the foregoing, readers may find it difficult to have a full grasp of what gender-based violence is all about. With other news genres like opinion and feature article options, experts that have to do with VAWG can write expository articles that can serve as an information base to readers as well as supporting statements to victims of this violence. It is inadequate for the newspapers that have reported most of their stories in form of straight news alone.

Conclusion

This study examined the number of violence cases that the selected newspapers reported during the lockdown periods in Nigeria; it went further to ascertain the number of gender-based violence cases, and against women and girls. It also identified straight news as the main news type/genre through

which the newspapers carried out their reports. Hence, this paper concludes that fight against gender-based violence should be the prerogative of everyone, including human rights advocacy groups and the media. The media, being effective tools of reporting cases like these must follow up the stories of abuse they have reported by ensuring that perpetrators are brought to book and persecuted.

Recommendations

- i. There should be implementations of laws that prohibit violence against all humans, especially against women/girls in public and private lives. Newspapers should continually clamour for this.
- ii. All forms of gender-based violence should be discouraged, and measures should be put in place to protect women/girls' rights to live free from violence.
- iii. Apart from the straight news/genre, newspapers should use other available story types and genres to report violence against women/girls, even beyond the pandemic era. They should also do a follow-up on cases of violence reported.

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