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REPORTING SEXUALITY ISSUES: CASES FROM THE NIGERIAN PRESS

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ABSTRACT

Sexuality issues continue to generate heated arguments whenever such issues are discussed. This is because of the nature of sexuality which often evokes emotional debates. Second, sexuality plays an important role in population politics of families and nations and most economic policies have been fashioned to suit sexuality and its consequences. Furthermore, religious laws and a whole range of taboos have been webbed around the subject of sexuality. Thus, sexuality has throughout history been subject to manipulation and control by individuals and societies for varying reasons. The study which this paper presents, therefore, examines the Nigerian print media coverage of sexuality issues with the intent of determining treatment, framing and relevance. The findings show that the Nigerian print media did not give adequate coverage to sexuality issues for the period under study although most of the stories reported were of high quality. Furthermore, the reported stories were not given the prominence they deserve. It is recommended therefore that the media should demystify the concept of human sexuality and enhance the right sexual attitude amongst individuals in the society by ensuring that majority of the stories on sexuality issues are sourced from specialists so as to enhance the quality of information disseminated to the public on the subject matter.

KEY WORDS: Sex, Sexual Health, Sexuality, Sexuality Education, Sexual Right, Nigerian Press

INTRODUCTION

Communication, as Schramm (1964) pointed out in Amienyi (1994), is the only thing that would "plant the seed of change" in citizens of developing nations that would enable them to "accept new goals, new customs and new responsibilities". Development entails making a better life for everyone. 'In the present context of a highly uneven world, a better life for most people means, essentially, meeting basic needs: sufficient food to maintain good health; a safe, healthy place in which to live; ... being treated with dignity and respect' (Peet and Hartwick, 2009).

Before we continue in this discourse there is need to explain some basic concepts that will help set the stage for this paper. First is the issue of development communication which health communication falls under. Development means different things to different people and professions. However, Wilson (2008) notes that no matter what meaning one ascribes to it,

development embraces the productive change from a state largely considered undesirable and unacceptable to a more desirable and acceptable one. Many scholars have argued that one critical and common factor in the conceptualization of development is that communication constitutes an important factor in the development process. Development communication is therefore conceptualized as the systematic, effective and efficient use of communication structures for development purposes (Ekeanyanwu, 2008) while Jayaweera (1987) cited in Soola (2003:118) views it as:

Systematic utilization of appropriate communication channels and techniques to increase people's participation in development and to inform, motivate, and train rural population mainly at the grassroots level.

Arising from the end point of development communication is social change which is viewed as advancement from a former situation to a situation of better standing and desirability. Social change as a sociological term is defined as, alterations in basic structures of a social group or society. Social change is an ever present phenomenon in social life, but has become especially intense in the modern era. Development has been viewed as a people's capacity to manage and induce change while development communication is the use of communication structures to achieve this change. In a unique way, social change may resemble development if considered in a very restrictive sense.

Sexuality, on the other hand, is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction (*World Health Organization [WHO]*). Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships...." (Ikpe, 2004, p.3). While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors.

Sexuality issues usually covered in the Nigerian press include three basic areas/categories- sexual health, sexual right and sex education- which encompass reproductive rights; adolescent and youth issues; HIV/AIDS; family planning; violence and abuse/female genital cutting/mutilation; infertility; maternal health; abortion and other related topics (i.e. marriage patterns in Nigeria, women and menopause, contraceptive technology, etc). Sexuality is not just about sex; "it incorporates values, how you feel about yourself and others, relationships, and even issues such as substance abuse, and the choices that can be made to illustrate the issues of peer pressure" ("*Region Watch*," 2005, p.10).

To speed up the understanding of sexuality in Nigeria and Africa at large, there is a need to undertake sexual education and/or studies in sexuality. "Sex education is the introduction of sexual topics within an educational context.... In some countries "age-appropriate" sex education often begins in pre-school, whereas other countries leave sex education to the teenage years and even the late teenage years" ("*Human Sexuality*", n.d.).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A major barrier to the effective coverage of sexuality issues in Nigeria specifically and Africa generally is the "ignorance of journalists and the unwillingness of healthcare providers to provide the necessary information..." (Ike, 2008, p.4). The media, for the purpose of demystifying the subject matter, is competent enough to, and can actually kick-start a debate on "sexuality issues". They are, as viewed by Njiru and Kinya (2006, p.31), as "a powerful influence on all aspects of

society. With this power comes a major responsibility to present the complexities of human sexuality at all stages of the life cycle in a way that is accurate, sensitive to diversity, and free of exploitation, sexual/gender-based violence, and dehumanizing sexual portrayals.”

This study aims at ascertaining whether the Nigerian print media disseminate information that enhance the understanding of ‘human sexuality’ in its complex forms/expressions thus fostering a safe, responsible, respectful, and pleasurable (not life threatening) sexual life amongst Nigerians. It looks at the Nigerian press with particular eye on the level of responsibility displayed in the coverage of sexuality issues, the depth of such coverage and to also find out if they have shirked their responsibilities to the Nigerian public in this regard or not.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims at achieving the following:

1. To determine what aspects of sexuality were frequently featured in the Nigerian press.
2. To determine which aspect of sexuality has the highest frequency of reportage.
3. To ascertain the prominence placed on Sexuality (S), Sexual Health (SH), and Sexual Rights (SR) issues reported in the Nigerian press.
4. To determine the slant given by the Nigerian press to issues regarding S/SH/SR.
5. To determine if the reportage of sexuality issues in the Nigerian print media is of high quality.
6. To ascertain whether the Nigerian print media identify the sources used in reporting sexuality issues.
7. To determine which type of report has the highest frequency of coverage.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

It is a well-known fact that sexuality “defines the very essence of one’s humanity including one’s self-image, and his/her definition of being female or male, physical looks and reproductive capacity. Sexuality therefore is a fundamental aspect of human existence” (Ikpe, 2004, p.2). Madunagu (2005) sees sexuality as a concept that is not peculiar to any specific group of individuals (male or female) or region but as an attribute all human beings possess. We are to concern ourselves with the negative antecedents in the chronology of sexuality so as to form a better tomorrow for future generations, especially in sexuality issues/matters.

The Sexuality Leadership Development Fellowship (SLDF, 2008) observes that sexuality, sexual rights and sexual well-being “all three are [potentially] positive and empowering concepts especially for young persons and women. Translating them into reality, into lived experience, i.e. realizing meaningful and positive sexuality has however remained a challenge for many individuals and institutions.” Another worrisome phenomenon is the mixing-up of sexuality with sex education; they are not the same. Sexuality encompasses our entire life, values, norms, culture, gender, how people perceive their bodies, sexual orientation and behaviours, reproduction and procreation processes (Garba, 2005).

At the heart of the millennium development goals Nigeria strives to achieve, are the issues of sexuality such as ‘poverty fuelling sexual health diseases, early marriages, limited access to quality information, sexual violence, and gender inequality....’ (Ike, 2008, p.1). The media, in past studies, most often emerges as the principal source of information on sexuality asides friends, sexual partners, schools and parents. They have been noted for conveying information concerning sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), outcomes of sexual relationships, sexual hygiene and puberty signs. Cross-fertilization and experience sharing on sexuality issues are achieved when the Sexuality Leadership Development Fellowship (SDLF) assembles young Africans (aged 35 or below) to advertise “core concerns in sexuality such as healthy and

empowering relationship, pleasure, love, intimacy, happiness and reproductive decision making" ("Sexuality, Rights and Well-Being," 2008).

Narrow Casting, a peer education and development communication concept/tool is said to be interactive/participatory; it is a format that employs entertainment as a means for informing and educating various target audiences on the health aspect of sexuality (i.e. sexual health issues). It is also said to combine "known advantages of television as a major source of information on sexuality issues for young people and the advantages of interpersonal communication" (Adelusi, 2005).

Improving the health of Nigerians, so as to make Nigeria among the first twenty (20) world economies by 2020, was part of the seven-point agenda of the Nigerian Government under the leadership of late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. This shows there is some magnitude of importance attached to issues pertaining to human sexuality, which the mass media ought to reflect in their coverage/reportage. It has also been observed that "the barriers to the effective reporting of reproductive and sexual health and rights also include miscommunication by healthcare personnel, perceptions of researchers to publicity, and research funding politics" (Ike, 2008).

The media, in past studies, are seen as potential leading sources of information on sexual health, sexual rights and sexuality. Overtime, the broadcast media and the internet have been blamed for disseminating messages containing "unrealistic, inaccurate, and misleading information that young people accept as fact" ("Sexuality, Contraception, and the Media," 2001). Brown (2002) has observed that as "people attend to and interpret sexual media content, they also evaluate and may or may not incorporate what they are seeing in their own developing sense of sexuality." The print media, therefore, have to present sexuality issues in all their publications responsibly to help individuals develop a positive sense of human sexuality.

Journalists can only report sexuality issues from an informed perspective when there is a connection between them and health establishments, where certain sexuality issues are understudied. The mass media should be engaged in the training and retraining of their personnel so that they would meet the required standards of reporting sexuality issues. Nigerians, in the absence of accurate theoretical framings resulting from insufficient sexuality research by the print media, may have their understanding/knowledge of sexuality constrained (and thereby distorted). It is a general claim that there have been surprising changes in media representations of sex and sexuality over a long period of time. It has become a necessity to study sexual media critically because of the double-edged sword form they take, disseminating both entertainment and harmful messages. The media is noted for their ability to "help break down the cultural taboos associated with sensitive sexual topics and bridge gaps on our sexual knowledge" ("Sexuality in the Mass Media," n.d).

Of relevance to this study are the message theory (which is concerned with the intrinsic form and content of what passes through the channels of mass communication), the gate-keeping theory, the social responsibility theory, the agenda-setting theory and the second-level agenda-setting theory, to mention a few. From the aforementioned theories, the social responsibility theory, the agenda-setting theory and the second-level agenda-setting theory, are critically significant to this study. These theories, as well as the connection with the subject matter are discussed below.

Bearing the social responsibility theory in mind, the Nigerian print media must assume their duty of covering sexuality, sexual health and sexual right as appropriate (i.e. reflecting informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance) so that matters arising from discussions

on human sexuality would be beneficial first to the target audience and then the general populace. It is expected that individuals see to it that the Nigerian print media do not avoid carrying out their duty as expected so that they are not found wanting.

Under the second-level agenda and object salience theory, what really matters is not whether sexuality issues are being covered by the Nigerian print media or not but how sexuality issues are projected in the Nigerian press while setting them as the agenda for the public. What are the ways and manners the Nigerian print media cover *human sexuality* that help them achieve the goal of making it a subject for society to think about?

The agenda-setting theory entails the predetermination of the public issues that are significant and those that are insignificant in the society at a stipulated period of time through the selection of particular news stories and other kinds of information for dissemination as well as the ascribing of importance or emphasis to such stories and information. The underlying assumption in this theory is that media agenda influence public agenda (i.e. what issues people discuss at a given time), and public agenda, in turn, influence policy agenda, i.e. the policy priorities of government. In relation to the subject matter (sexuality issues) being discussed, an application of this theory by media professionals implies that frequent selection and prominent display of stories on sexuality will provoke public discussion on it which may invariably influence government to align its policy priorities with the wishes and aspirations of the people.

The mass media should not only predetermine what issues are of national importance at the moment neither should they maintain a neutral or positive slant on any critical issue (i.e. sexuality issues), if they must be acknowledged socially responsible. Since the press is so powerful as to influence the perceptions of the public on a particular issue, then it behooves it, the task of ensuring that the society obtains a true and clearer picture of the sexuality concept. The press can only achieve this when it maintains a positive stand on topical issues as sexuality. It should be noted that the press must be responsible in handling facts about topical issues as human sexuality. The media no matter the facts and/or the level of objectivity involved must positively present every agenda. That is, no matter how objective the reporter wants to present the issue (i.e. sexuality) in the newspaper (in the case of print media), he must report the issue in such a manner that the public would not only think about the issue but also about the consequences/implications surrounding the issue. This will help to inform the decision(s) of the public towards addressing such issue (i.e. sexuality) positively.

When the Nigerian press consistently take a particular (positive) slant on a topical/national issue (i.e. sexuality) in its reportage, the audience will gradually and/or subconsciously align itself with the position of the media on such issue. The media's presentation of such an issue is the main factor that determines the opinion of the public concerning that issue. Based on the significance of this study, therefore, we noted that what really matters to agenda setting is not the quantity of media reporting per se but the quality. It would do us no good if the media just play up particular issues (perhaps for the fun of it) instead of addressing them properly i.e. positively. When the media present issues relating to sexuality to the public, for instance, they have to ensure they do not only lay emphasis on issues in isolation but also on strategic and practical steps the public needs to know and note (if possible adopt) towards demystifying sexuality issues as well as providing adequate enlightenment on them.

METHOD OF STUDY

Content analysis is the study design used in this study. Five newspapers and magazines- *Guardian, Punch, Tribune, Newswatch* and *Tell-* from over 50 Nigerian newspapers/magazines

were randomly selected for this study. Consequently, sexuality issues as reported in the Nigerian press for a period of six months are analyzed and presented in this study. The total issues published by the selected newspapers and news magazines were analyzed. This amounted to 30 or 31 issues per month per newspaper and news magazine, depending on the month in question. This method is known as "total enumeration" or "census method". The instrument of data collection used for this study was the coding sheet. The measurements/Units of Analysis are as presented below:

A. FREQUENCY OF COVERAGE: The researchers counted the titles of every report on sexuality issues as they appear in the selected newspapers and newsmagazines to determine the frequency of coverage.

B. ASPECTS: The aspects covered the major divisions/categorical classifications of sexuality issues (which are basically three) that concern this study. They are as given below:

01- S: Sexuality

02- SH: Sexual Health

03- SR: Sexual Right

C. PLACEMENT/PROMINENCE: This was basically used to determine prominence attached to a story or news. In the Nigerian media landscape, stories that appear on the front page of newspapers and newsmagazines are regarded as the most important stories of the day. This was further coded thus:

01- **Front page:** Very important sexuality issues published on the front page(s).

02- **Back page:** Sexuality issues next in importance published on the back page(s).

03- **Inside page:** Least important sexuality issues published on the inside page(s). For the Magazine category, any report that is featured in less than 10 column inches of the magazine is regarded as not important while those that are featured in more than 10 columns inches are regarded as important stories.

D. DIRECTION/TONE/SLANT: This coding category was used to determine the tone or slant the press took in its reportage of sexuality issues. The coding categories adapted for this study include:

01- **Favourable:** Sexuality issues that are presented in such a way that the reader(s) can view such issues in the right context and take a positive stand on related areas of concern.

02- **Neutral:** Sexuality issues that are given a balanced coverage without concentrating on either the negative or positive sides of such issues.

03- **Unfavourable:** The slant is considered negative when sexuality issues are presented in such a way that the reader(s) are forced to perceive such issues in a negative context and take a negative stand on related areas of concern.

E. QUALITY OF THE REPORTS: This was measured according to the level of materiality, clarity, balance and accuracy reflected in the reports on sexuality issues. Ekeanyanwu (2007) developed labels for the purpose of measuring the quality of issues reported and they are presented thus:

01- **Very High Reports:** are adjudged by the researchers as excellent in quality with regard to the content and the language of presentation of the reports. Such reports are also free of grammatical, syntax and other forms of errors usually found in most newspapers published in developing societies like Nigeria.

02- **High Reports:** are adjudged by the researchers to be very good in quality with regard to the content and the language of presentation of the reports. Such reports also have very few of grammatical, syntax and other forms of errors usually found in most newspapers published in developing societies like Nigeria.

03- **Very Low Reports:** are adjudged by the researchers to be very poor in quality with regard to the content and the language of presentation of the reports. Such reports are also full of

grammatical, syntax and other forms of errors usually found in most newspapers published in developing societies like Nigeria.

04- **Low Reports:** are adjudged by the researchers to be poor in quality with regard to the content and the language of presentation of the reports. Such reports also contain grammatical, syntax and other forms of errors usually found in most newspapers published in developing societies like Nigeria.

F. SOURCE: This category was used to determine the bylines attached to the stories:

01- **In-house/Local/Internal sources:** News sources comprising individuals/staff from within the Nigerian media industry who are employed by the newspaper under study.

02- **News Agency reports:** Sexuality issues and reports in the Nigerian media sourced from News Agencies.

03- **Unidentified sources:** This will specifically refer to news stories written without a known byline and the sources used in writing the stories are also not identified.

04- **Others:** Sources that do not belong to any of the groups stated above.

G. STORY TYPE/CONTENT CATEGORIES

01- News story

02- News analysis/ Feature

03- Editorial

04- Interpretative article

05- Opinion article

06- Picture/Photo news

RESULTS

A total of 594 issues of the three Nigerian daily newspapers and two Nigerian news magazines were sampled. These issues gave rise to 1748 items on sexuality for the period under study. The percentage of this to the entire news reports in the Nigerian press for the study period was not determined as it is not within the purview of this study. Please, note that the selected units of analysis were content analyzed using statistical tables, simple percentages and bar charts. On the frequency of coverage, the following results emerged:

TABLE 4.1

DISTRIBUTION OF SEXUALITY ISSUES IN THE NIGERIAN PRESS

Table 4.1.1

Categories (For Newspaper)	Valid Percent
Punch	40.4
Guardian	22.7
Tribune	36.9
Total	100.0
	N=1674

Table 4.1.2

Categories (For Magazine)	Valid Percent
Newswatch	40.5
Tell	59.5
Total	100.0
	N=74

Tables 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 show the frequency of coverage of sexuality issues in the selected newspapers and news magazines. The tables show that sexuality issues are actually reported in

the Nigerian press while Table 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 display the aspects of sexuality issues actually and frequently reported.

TABLE 4.2
DISTRIBUTION OF SEXUALITY ASPECTS IN THE NIGERIAN PRINT MEDIA

Table 4.2.1
Newspaper Aspects

Categories (For Newspaper)	Valid Percent
Sexuality	34.8
Sexual Health	59.0
Sexual Right	6.3
Total	100.0
	N=1674

Table 4.2.2
Magazine Aspects

Categories (For Magazine)	Valid Percent
Sexuality	16.2
Sexual Health	77.0
Sexual Right	6.8
Total	100.0
	N=74

TABLE 4.3
DISTRIBUTION OF SEXUALITY ISSUES IN THE NIGERIAN PRINT MEDIA ACCORDING TO PROMINENCE

Table 4.3.1

Categories (For Newspaper)	Valid Percent
Front page	8.5
Back page	3.2
Inside page	88.2
Total	100.0
	N=1674

Table 4.3.2

Categories (For Magazine)	Valid Percent
10 columns & Above	6.8
0-10 columns	93.2
Total	100.0
	N=74

Tables 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 display the prominence placed on the sexuality issues reported in the Nigerian print media (i.e. newspapers and news magazines). As shown above, most of the reports appear on the inside pages indicating low prominence. The same scenario played out in the Magazine where the reports were presented in column inches less than 10.

TABLE 4.4
DISTRIBUTION OF SEXUALITY ISSUES IN THE NIGERIAN PRINT MEDIA ACCORDING TO SLANT

Table 4.4.1

Categories (For Newspaper)	Valid Percent
Favourable	44.9
Neutral	48.1
Unfavourable	6.9
Total	100.0
	N=1674

Table 4.4.2

Categories (For Magazine)	Valid Percent
Favourable	51.4
Neutral	41.9
Unfavourable	6.8
Total	100.0
	N=74

Tables 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 display the slant of sexuality issues in the Nigerian print media. The three categories used for direction of sexuality issues are favourable, neutral and unfavourable.

TABLE 4.5
DISTRIBUTION OF SEXUALITY ISSUES IN THE NIGERIAN PRINT MEDIA
ACCORDING TO QUALITY

Table 4.5.1

Categories (For Newspaper)	Valid Percent
Very High Report	10.3
High Report	74.1
Very Low Report	6.1
Low Report	9.5
Total	100.0
	N=1674

Table 4.5.2

Categories (For Newspaper)	Valid Percent
Very High Report	2.7
High Report	97.3
Total	100.0
	N=74

Tables 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 display the report quality of sexuality issues in the Nigerian press. The results show that the Nigerian press has not done badly in this area as most of the reports were adjudged of high quality.

TABLE 4.6
DISTRIBUTION OF SEXUALITY ISSUES IN THE NIGERIAN PRINT MEDIA
ACCORDING TO SOURCE

Table 4.6.1

Categories (For Newspaper)	Valid Percent
Internal Sources	63.3
News Agency Sources	6.0
Unidentified Sources	18.9
Others	11.8
Total	100.0
	N=1674

Table 4.6.2

Categories (For Newspaper)	Valid Percent
Internal source	54.1
News Agency source	2.7
Unidentified source	18.9
Others	24.3
Total	100.0
	N=74

Tables 4.6.1 and 4.6.2 show that the Nigerian press predominantly used in-house staff to cover and report sexuality issues. This is commendable. What has been observed in previous studies is an unhealthy dependence on foreign sources for even local issues and stories. The Nigerian press also did well with regard to story classification used. The result as presented in Table 4.7 shows that News Analysis and Features had more than 50 percent of the stories allocated to them. This is very healthy indeed. News Analysis/Features definitely featured the news behind the news and also gave detailed analysis, back-grounding and in-depth information on issues related to Sexuality, Sexual Health and Sexual Rights.

TABLE 4.7
DISTRIBUTION OF SEXUALITY ISSUES IN THE NIGERIAN PRINT MEDIA
ACCORDING TO STORY TYPE

Table 4.7.1

Categories (For Newspaper)	Valid Percent
News story	25.2
News	63.3
Analysis/Feature	1.0
Editorial	3.9
Interpretative Article	1.6
Opinion Article	5.0
Picture/Photo News	100.0
Total	N=1674

Table 4.7.2

Categories(For Magazine)	Valid Percent
News story	39.2
News	43.2
analysis/Feature	1.4
Editorial	16.2
Interpretative article	100.0
Total	N=74

DISCUSSION

It could be inferred from the data presented that for the study period of six months, the three newspapers and two news magazines together reported 1,748 stories. Out of this, 1674 were reported in newspapers while 74 were reported in the news magazines. Tables 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 above clearly illustrate this fact. The highest percentage of the 1748 stories on sexuality issues was given to sexual health as shown in Tables 4.2.1 and 4.2.2. The study also revealed that the prominence given to stories on sexuality issues by the three newspapers and two news magazines was observed to be of least importance as most of the reports were inside page stories. There were little or no back page and front page stories. This data is illustrated in Tables 4.3.1 and 4.3.2. The data generated from the three newspapers and two news magazines also indicate that sexuality issues, according to content categories, were mostly reported as news analysis/feature and least reported as editorial (See Tables 4.7.1 and 4.7.2). The data presentation, analysis and discussion have also contributed immensely to answering the research questions as well as satisfying the study objectives.

RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

What aspects of sexuality were frequently featured in the Nigerian press?

Table 4.1 did justice to this question. Within the period under study, 1674 stories were reported in the three newspapers and 74 were reported in the two news magazines making a total of 1748 stories in the Nigerian press. Tables 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 further illustrate that all the three aspects of sexuality issues- Sexuality, Sexual Health and Sexual Right- were reported in the selected Nigerian print media organizations within the period under study.

Although Sexuality, Sexual Health and Sexual Right go hand-in-hand, and the subject of sexual health cannot be played down as regards sexuality issues. The Nigerian press ought to have concentrated most of the reports on sexuality. In reference to the statement of the problem, the study aimed at ascertaining the level of responsibility displayed by the Nigerian press in disseminating information that enhance the understanding of 'human sexuality' in its complex forms/expressions thus serving as a foundation for the appropriate understanding of the other two aspects of sexuality issues- sexual health and sexual right.

RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

What aspect of sexuality has the highest frequency of reportage?

Tables 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 go further to illustrate that among the three categories of the subject matter (human sexuality), sexual health was primarily set as the agenda by the Nigerian press for individuals in the country. Thus, the Agenda Setting theory comes to bear at this point to reinforce the role of the Nigerian press.

RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

What is the prominence placed on S/SH/SR issues reported in the Nigerian press?

It can be deduced from Tables 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 that the Nigerian press did not attach much importance to stories on sexuality issues. Considering the significance of the subject matter in question, the Nigerian print media is expected to have most of their stories on sexuality issues on the front pages and back pages. However, this is not the case as majority of the stories (88.2% and 93.2% in the newspapers and the news magazines respectively) are positioned at different places within the inside pages of the Nigerian print media. Since prominence is one way of determining how sexuality issues are presented in the Nigerian press, the Second-Level Agenda and Object Salience theory is of much relevance in this area.

RESEARCH QUESTION FOUR

What is the slant given by the Nigerian press to issues regarding S/SH/SR?

Based on the findings of the study, Tables 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 indicate that the three newspapers had the least amount (i.e. 6.9%) of unfavourable stories on sexuality issues, more favourable ones (i.e. 44.9%) and most (i.e. 48.1%) were reported neutrally. In the case of the two news magazines, stories on sexuality issues had the least amount (i.e. 6.8%) of unfavourable coverage, more (i.e. 41.9%) of neutral coverage and most (i.e. 51.4%) of favourable coverage.

The social responsibility theory lays a demand on the Nigerian press to do a responsible coverage of sexuality issues, which of course, would be favourable most of the time. However, this does not seem to be the case based on the findings of the study.

RESEARCH QUESTION FIVE

Are S/SH/SR issues reported in the Nigerian print media of high quality?

The illustration in Table 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 is an affirmation that sexuality issues in the Nigerian print media are of high quality. Going by the findings of the study, the Nigerian press can be adjudged as responsible in the coverage of sexuality issues within the period under study. These findings, however, met the expectations of the press as outlined in the Second-level Agenda and Object Salience theory. Based on such expectations, the main concern of the study is on how the Nigerian press covers sexuality issues (as regards quality) not necessarily the amount of coverage given to such issues. According to the theory (Second-level Agenda and Object Salience), the manner in which the (Nigerian) press covers human sexuality determines if it will end up being a matter for the society to think about as well as gain from.

RESEARCH QUESTION SIX

Do the Nigerian print media identify the sources used in reporting sexuality issues?

The findings in Table 4.6 indicate that the Nigerian print media identify the sources used in reporting sexuality issues. This identification of sources as well as the percentage identified as internal sources further give credence to the stories on sexuality issues and thus reinforce the social responsibility role of the Nigerian print media, which is encapsulated in the Social Responsibility theory.

RESEARCH QUESTION SEVEN

Which type of report has the highest coverage of sexuality issues?

The answer to this question can be deduced from Tables 4.7.1 and 4.7.2. For the period under study, the researcher's findings reveal that the highest percentage of stories on sexuality issues appeared as News analysis/Features.

CONCLUSION

The Nigerian press has not performed creditably well in its coverage of sexuality issues. She needs to focus more on the crux of every subject matter she reports and endeavour not to only set the agenda for the day but to do it effectively and responsibly. The Nigerian press needs to pay a lot of attention to Editorials, which are commonly used to set public agenda, to stress the importance of subject matters such as sexuality issues. This is the major reason these recommendations are put forward to help address the lacuna which exists in this area of media coverage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

People in power can influence how materials and information are distributed and disseminated. Legal, social, political, cultural, and religious forces can use their power to restrict access to sexual materials as well as to prevent people from expressing their sexuality openly and adopting sexual orientations that may be heavily stigmatized or illegal in their societies (Handel and Stern, 2001). The government is one of such people in power that can influence the way and manner sexuality issues are disseminated in the Nigerian press.

Second, government should support comprehensive sexuality education offered by the print media with the provision of reasonable financial aid(s) which the government must be committed to.

Third, the Nigerian government has to come in financially so as to create that enabling work environment for journalists to play their social responsibility role to the public efficiently. Adequate provision must be made for journalists in the Nigerian print media to give their best while reporting critical matters such as sexuality issues.

A subject of this nature can only be disseminated adequately in terms of tone and quality when journalists who specialize in such area serve as the source of such stories covered in the Nigerian print media. As presented in this study, majority of the stories on sexuality issues were sourced internally but the issue here is not in having internal sources but having the *right* internal sources (i.e. journalists that specialize in the subject matter). Going by the recommendation of Serour and Ragab (2005):

There is need for an intervention programme that would provide a targeted group of newspaper writers with correct, understandable, reliable, and sustainable package of information on sexuality and reproductive health issues. The Ministry of Health and Population could design and implement such a programme, which in the past proved to be successful in the area of family planning. To implement the suggested programme, there is also a need to work with senior editors, to develop a database of the journalists who are interested and qualified to work in the subject area and also to conduct training programmes for the targeted journalists. In addition, it would be important to form a network of the target journalists and to develop a press briefing kit, which should be updated frequently.

With these, we are proposing that the Nigerian media (whether print, broadcast or the internet) should adopt a culture of presenting sexual content in a responsible manner. In an addition, the media should help do the following:

1. Recognize sex as a healthy and natural part of life.
2. Encourage and stress the importance of parent and child conversations about sex.
3. Provide a platform to showcase the consequences of unprotected sex.
4. Mount media campaigns that indicate the use of contraceptives as a normal part of sexual relationships.
5. Depict rape as a crime of violence and not one of passion.
6. Promote the use of condoms to prevent STDs and pregnancy for adolescents and adults who are already sexually active.
7. Promote campaigns that encourage the citizenry to seek help whenever their sexuality is violated or their sexual rights trampled upon.

In this manner, the Nigerian print media would successfully demystify the concept of human sexuality and enhance the right sexual attitude amongst individuals in society.

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