

Headline and Photo Portrayals of Raped Persons in Select Editions of Nigerian Dailies: A Textual Analysis

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Abstract

As a social plague that has been with mankind for all time, rape has left many stereotyped, stigmatised, and sometimes, irreparably damaged. The act is an evil that defies the age, race, location, and social status of its sufferers. Despite the heavy legal penalties that this crime attracts in many parts of the world, its occurrence has, nonetheless, been on the increase. Research reveals that many rape cases go unreported by their sufferers for fear of further harm from their attackers and for fear of stigma. In Nigeria, even when they are reported to the police, the authorities do too little to bring perpetrators to justice - a misnomer that gives the rapists more impetus to repeat their act. The few of these cases that are carried by the mass media, ostensibly, project the sufferers as hopeless and pitiable individuals, whose lives are ruined. Theoretically situated within the framing ideology, this paper adopted the textual analysis method to establish that Nigerian newspapers exploit the use of headlines and photos to re-victimise raped persons in the ways they are portrayed. Rather than ameliorate the effects of the evil done to such individuals, these texts present them and their loved ones as hopeless victims. This paper holds that rapists should be portrayed as the ones needing of pity and help. Although the paper agrees that both the rapist and the raped need dissimilar psychosocial (and medical) rehabilitations, it recommends that Nigerian newspapers should deemphasise angles that throw pity parties for those affected by the incidents, while the rapists should be projected as the real victims of themselves and of their acts.

Background to the Study

Media reports on rape in Nigeria are not new as it is truer of other parts of the world. It is committed by both men and women against persons of various ages and social placing just as it is openly condemned and criminalised by most societies. The level of closeness of the perpetrator to the victim is immaterial as it can be committed by a familiar face as well as by a stranger. Although, what appears to be new is the surge in the numbers of younger persons, minors, and even the physically challenged, that are being sexually violated in recent times (Olatunji: *Punch*, July 30, 2020; Muhammad: *Daily Trust*, June 26, 2020; Olajide, Agboluaje, Ahovi, and Osuji: *The Guardian*, June 15, 2020). Across cultures and civilisations, women are variously viewed as weaker species of mankind and hence have been the underdogs of many patriarchal designs made to keep them vulnerable perpetually in an atmosphere replete with inequality. These designs defy the boundaries between socially acceptable and socially unacceptable norms and practices meted against them (Okafor-Vanni, 2010). And rape is one of such. Structures are put in place, which consciously or unconsciously, promote the culture of rape and sexual violence against women. These are represented in societal attitudes, practices, and even in some mass media normative.

There is no simpler way to describe rape other than the act of having sex with someone forcefully and against their will. Interchangeably used as sexual violence, rape (World Health Organisation, 2002, Ch. 6, p. 149) is defined as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments and advances or acts to traffic or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality using coercion by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim.” It is a violent carnal penetration of a person by another without their consent (Brigneti and Egbonimali, 2002). Also, Onyejekwe (2008) said rape is a pervasive violence against women, a crime in which the perpetrator uses sex to inflict humiliation on the victim or exert power and control over them. Lastly, Peters and Olowa (2010) said that rape is a sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual penetration by one person with or against another person with or without their consent.

Rape violates the fundamental human rights of their sufferers in terms of their rights to privacy, self-preservation, and dignity (Chiazor, Ozoya, Udume, Egharevba, 2016). It leaves physical, psychological, and social wounds on them as well as on their families, which, most times do not go away (Classen, Palesh, and Aggarwal, 2005; Obasi, 2007; Ashiru and Orifowomo, 2015). Some result in unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Other sinister but equally destructive effects are the vices that the abused take to as measures to cure the depression and trauma caused by the gory experiences (Women Aid Collective, 2002). These vices range from drug addiction, alcoholism, reckless lifestyles, self-blame, and so on, which further predispose them to much worse vulnerabilities. They can hardly trust people, initiate or begin new relationships.

The news media generally recreate social realities and thus project perceptions on happenings to their audiences. Similarly, particular rape cases are reported in dissimilar ways, using different points of view, sources, and in conformity with each news

medium's house style. Literatures have attempted to probe scientifically how these stories are retold by the mass media. The concern of this paper however, is not to replicate the myriad of studies done on these stories per se, but to fill a gap in the body of empirical works by doing a critical appreciation of the perceptions projected about raped persons by headlines and photos on major Nigerian dailies. These texts have the capacity to create certain impressions about subjects and people concerned in the minds of the audience. Some aspects of perceived reality (Entman, 2002, p. 291) are taken by the media and made salient in communication texts in manners that market certain problem descriptions and superficial interpretations. It is the suspicion of this paper that this could be the situation with Nigerian newspapers' texts' portrayal of individuals affected by the activities of rapists.

Problem Statement

It is commonplace that when stories of sexual violence are retold, third parties who read or hear about the persons violated perceive them as victims. They are often viewed pitifully and with sympathy, given the hurt already meted on their physical bodies and minds. Same is truer of the news media when they retell these stories. This article attempted to query the nature of perception projected about raped persons by Nigerian newspapers in their headlines and photos. Do the texts have the capacity to help the raped heal or do they cause more *unintended* damage? Do the texts give them undue publicity that deepens the stigma they already suffer? Is the nature of these texts another scourge, added to the rape pandemic, which should merit some serious attention? These questions are encapsulated in what informed the objective of this paper.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this paper is to contend that Nigerian newspapers, through the framing of their headlines and photos on rape incidents, subtly re-victimise raped persons. Whether this is a deliberate act or one of oversight by newspaper content creators, is a subject of another scholarly engagement for another day. However, the representation of these incidents, which are recreated social realities, have the potential (Baran and Davis, 2012) to present raped persons as pitiable hopeless individuals while at the same time giving scanty attention to the rapists.

Literature Review

It is not novel that many rape incidents in Nigeria go unreported to law enforcement agencies or by the news media. A growing culture of silence is rife in many instances where the raped, who need justice, would rather not tell for fear of stigma, implications on future relationships, protecting their families' names, among other factors (Ifeacho, 2012, p. 4 and Ugwuanyi, 2018), which only gives an easy escape to the rapists from the long arm of justice. The Nigerian Legal System is fingered for espousing the activities of rapists because investigations and prosecutions lull and eventually get swept under the carpet (Muoghalu, 2012), leaving many hurt individuals and families to suffer in silence. In some extreme situations, the raped persons get killed and the country's law enforcement agencies are unable to draw closures on the prosecutions. As of the time of doing this

paper, the case of a 22-year-old Microbiology student of the University of Benin, Miss Vera Uwaila Omosuwa, who was gang-raped and gruesomely murdered in a church, where she was a congregant in Benin, Edo State (Aliu: *Sunday Vanguard*, June 7, 2020), had not made a significant progress in terms of getting justice for her and for her family. The same also apply to Miss Barakat Bello, an 18-year-old resident of Ibadan, Oyo State, who was gang-raped and stabbed to death (Amnesty International, 2020; Usman: *Saturday Vanguard*, June 6, 2020), and six-year-old, Khadijah Ya'u, raped to death by unknown persons in a mosque in Kurmin Mashi, Kaduna State (Wuyo and Uchechukwu, 2020). Some cases that were reported became the undoing of the raped persons. Testimonies abound of security personnel who sometimes detained them, blamed them for the act, and even rape them all over while in their custody (Amnesty International, 2018; and Adesewo: *The Guardian*, August 19, 2012). Lamentably, Amnesty International described the notoriety of rape committed by the police and other security personnel in Nigeria as endemic and serial, comparable only to their own failure to bring other perpetrators to book. For example, *Punch* reported that a policeman in Tai Local Government Area of Rivers State, Mr. Peter Ebah, detained and raped a widow in a guest house after she was arrested for not wearing a face mask, in violation of the COVID-19 guidelines in the State (Itode: *Punch*, July 30, 2020). Less than 20% of rape cases (Ojeme: *Vanguard*, June 11, 2020; Agbonkhese: *Sunday Vanguard*, June 7, 2020) ever reach the law enforcement agents for necessary action in Nigeria as a result.

In some parts of the country, rape is linked to the activities of ritualists (Tade and Udechukwu, 2018). Women and girls are sexually abused by ritualists as part of their rites, sometimes terminating their victims' lives. *The Guardian* reported that a 45-year-old resident of Imo State, Mrs. Susanna Iwuoha was kidnapped, raped, and killed by suspected ritualists in Ihitte Uboma Local Government Area of the State (Jegade & Ologbosere: *The Guardian*, June 16, 2020). Another report carried by *Daily Trust* (Musa, 2020) on the kidnap and gruesome rape of a three-months-old baby by one Mr. Ahmadu Yaro in Adogi, Nasarawa State, is also suspected to be rituals related. Mr. Yaro, who was alleged to have been serially raping babies in that community kidnapped this said baby and raped her at an uncompleted, was building (Muhammad, 2020). The child sustained life-threatening injuries that left her receiving treatment at the Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH) in Jos, Plateau State.

Some rapists blame their acts on the influence of substance. One Mr. Wasiu Bankole, a 25-year-old resident of Ijoko in Ogun State, for instance, raped a 70-year-old woman (Olajide: *The Guardian*, June 5, 2020), according to him, under the influence of alcohol. For others, it is just a ventilation of sheer violence on their helpless targets. One 25-year-old Mr. Aminu Bala, in Gusau, Zamfara State, accosted his elder brother's wife, raped and inflicted machete wounds on her, which later led to her death (Jegade and Ologbosere, 2020).

Further, as an indicator of the rape surge during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in Nigeria, *The Guardian*, in its June 15, 2020 edition, did a four-pronged report of gory rape incidents in Ogun, Oyo, Plateau, and Imo States (Olajide, Agboluaje, Ahovi, and Osuji: *The Guardian*, June 15, 2020). In Owode Egbado, Ogun State, the Nigeria Police command

there said that it was a three-year-old girl that was defiled by one Mr. Badmus Qaudri. The little girl's mother noticed blood at her daughter's private after which the girl revealed that it was Mr. Qaudri that had carnal knowledge of her. In Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State, a 21-year-old lady, Miss Grace Oshiangwu, was raped and murdered on a Christ Apostolic Church's premises. In Jos, Plateau State, it was one Mr. Abdul Abdul, a father of six, who forced himself on a 13-year-old sachet water seller at her grandmother's home, while he waited to collect his change after buying water from the girl. Lastly, a five-year-old girl was placed on admission at the Federal Medical Centre (FMC), Owerri, Imo State, following internal injuries she sustained after one Mr. Chidiebere Egbukonye raped her. Medical reports revealed that the incident which took place in March, 2020, led to complications in her womb, abdomen, and genital. It further resulted to internal bleeding, swollen stomach, and an unpleasant smell oozing from her private part due to ruptured bladder.

Literatures document types of rape to include anger rape, prison rape, date rape, war rape, spousal rape, gang rape, rape by deception, and sadistic rape (Oduah, 2014; and Chiazor, Ozoya, Udume, and Egharevba, 2016). The Nigerian Legal System criminalises rape, committed either through force or by deceit. Its provisions tried to cover more than just the commonly known form in which rape occurs – a man pinning a woman person down and having his way with her. This is captured in Section 357 of the Criminal Code Act, Law of the Federation of Nigeria 1990 CAP 77, mostly applied in the southern part of the country. It says that (cited in Women's Aid Collective, 2002, p. 1):

Any person who has unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or a girl, without her consent, or if her consent is obtained by force or by means of threats or intimidation of any kind, or by fear of harm, or by means of false or fraudulent representation as to the nature of the act, or in the case of [a] married woman, by [im]personating her husband, is guilty of an offence which is called rape.

The emphasis of this legal provision is on women and girls being the victims and not men. Even when consent is given by the raped person, it has to be proved that it was under duress in prosecuting the accused. For example, *Daily Sun* (Uwujare: *Daily Sun*, June 22, 2014) reported in that a clergy lured a 12-year-old daughter of his neighbour's with biscuits and money and raped her. *The Vanguard* (Efe: *Vanguard*, June 9, 2020) reported that another clergyman in Delta State, under the guise of conducting a deliverance, drugged and raped a 19-year-old girl. *The Guardian* reported that one 75-year-old Mr. Jacob Ayinla lured a 15-year-old local brew seller to his apartment in Osogbo, Osun State, under the pretext of buying her drink and raped her (Sunday & Ojo: *The Guardian*, June 12, 2020). Also, a tricycle operator offered money to a 15-year-old girl after he forced himself on her (Ben-Nwankwo: *Punch*, February 6, 2016). These occurred in the southern part of the country.

In the northern part of Nigeria, where the Penal Code applies, the statute against rape is captured in Section 282, and reads thus:

A man is said to commit rape who...has sexual intercourse [W]ith a woman in any of the following circumstances: (a) against Her will; (b) obtained by putting her in fear of death or of hurt; (c) With her consent when the man knows that he is not her husband [A]nd that her consent is given because she believes that he is the Man to whom she is or believes herself to be lawfully married; (d) [W]ith or without her consent when she is under fourteen years [O]f age or of unsound mind (Cited in Tade and Udechukwu, 2020, p. 2).

Newspapers' Representation of Rapes in Nigeria

Nigerian newspapers treat rape cases more episodically than thematically. This is due (Egbo, 2011) to the lack of follow-up reports after the initial coverage per case. As a result, the measure of priority placed as socially responsible citizens to ensure justice for the victims by the news media appears weak. In a quantitative content analysis, Ugwuanyi (2018) documented that the mass media in Nigeria do not properly set agenda for rape committed in the country. For a phenomenon that has assumed an endemic dimension, and because of the shallow attention given to it by the mass media, even the government is not compelled to be adequately involved in prosecuting reported cases conclusively (Nwabueze and Oduah, 2015).

Tade and Udechukwu (2020) recorded that although 96% of rape victims in stories carried by the Nigerian news media were females, the remaining four percent, who were males, hardly get audience in the courts or sympathy from the society. Sociocultural environment, ideological biases of reporters carrying the stories, and the attitudes of the criminal justice system in Nigeria, add up to affect the approach to male rape victims.

Theoretical Guide

This paper is guided by Framing Theory as it relates to the media. Erving Goffman, in 1974, developed the framing analysis to give a systematic account of how people use expectations to make sense of daily situations around them in what is referred to as "The Framing Process" (Baran and Davis, 2012, p. 330). Framing influences how people think about issues and how they invoke interpretative schemas that influence their interpretation of information that follow (s) (Scheufele, 2000, p. 309). Hence, the mass media focus attention on certain events and situate them within fields of meaning. Goffman argued that people constantly changed the way they defined and typified situations, actions, and other people as they move through time and space. The media also, according to him, impose these frames in what he described as "media frames". They include words, images, phrases, and presentation styles adopted by media outlets about an issue (Asemah, Nwammuo, and Nkwam-Uwaoma, 2015, p. 81). The decision on the tilt of these texts depends on who produces the content, the media organisation, and their perception about the issue (Baran and Davis, 2012). This forms the crux of the theory's relevance to the subject under consideration.

Research Method

The paper adopted textual analysis to achieve its aim. This method was considered apt in view of the paper's objective, which is, to establish that the portrayal of raped persons by Nigerian newspapers through headlines and photos re-victimises them. Textual analysis is a qualitative method of research used to collect, process, and interpret text data (Bainbridge, 2011). It is a central methodology in Cultural Studies of media and communication. When a textual analysis is carried out on a text (or a group of texts), the researcher (McKee, 2003) is making an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might result from the text(s). It is a method communication researchers deploy to describe and interpret the characteristics of visual and recorded content. This process describes content, its structure, and functions of the messages contained in the text(s). Bainbridge (2011, p. 224) puts it in a way that is significant to this research. It is:

[A] toolkit for examining the media, applicable to very simple media forms (such as advertisements), up to more complex forms such as news narratives, television series and films. It is also a toolkit for media practitioners who want to convey a certain message or try to convince audiences to think in a certain way.

Qualitative research deals with some interpretation, which often vary in depth and the level of abstraction, be they manifest or latent (Patton, 2002). Hence, analyses of texts are done with an open mind in order to identify meaningful subjects that answer a given research question. Being an in-depth and a latent study, which does not necessarily require an elaborate or broad assemblage of data, the qualitative approach will help to keep the research focus within perspective without risking a baggage of unimportant data.

Therefore, in this paper, the population of the study is Nigerian dailies that are widely circulated and widely read. For this study, they consisted of three (3) major dailies – *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, and *Daily Trust*, published within June, 2020. The sample size is nine (9) editions of the dailies, with three (3) editions drawn from each of the newspaper titles. The units of analyses consisted of headlines and photos from randomly selected rape reports carried by each newspaper edition in the sample within the period of June, 2020. It is noteworthy to mention that newspaper reports were replete with a surge in rape cases during the lockdowns occasioned by the spread of the dreaded COVID-19 in Nigeria, covering February through June, 2020. This factor informed the rationale for electing to sample newspaper editions within June, 2020).

Data Presentation and Analyses

Data 1.

Title and Date of Paper: Vanguard, Monday, June 1, 2020

Headline: UNIBEN student raped to death inside church in Benin

Photo:



Fig. 1

Analysis:

Data 1 presents the victim as weak and vulnerable. Moreover, the fact that the victim is described as someone from the university community makes it even more horrific to say the least. The reason for this deduction is that being in the university is a credible status in the Nigerian context. Thus, it can be deduced that she was robbed of an academic future that promises of better things. To put it another way, it can be concluded that a promising life and career has been cut short as a result of the activities of rapists. Another ironic twist to this event is that it was done in a place of worship: a church! This also buttresses the fact that the rapists had no regard for her Christian faith. On a deeper revelation however, it further shows that most victims of rape are not safe anywhere, not even in sacred spaces. This sends the wrong signal to the effect that nowhere is beyond the reach of rapists, as it emboldens them in the process.

Data 2.

Title and Date of Paper: Vanguard, Sunday, June 7, 2020. (Page 5)

Headline: 10 rape incidents in a row: Girl, 13, drugged, gang-raped in Kaduna

Photo: None

Analysis:

The focus of Data 2 is on the rider "Girl, 13, drugged, gang-raped in Kaduna". This rider portrays the teen in a very pitiable situation. First, the age of the girl, 13 years, is deliberately captured to induce pity, and certainly as a reflection of her innocence and vulnerability. This is perhaps in a bid to validate the proposition that suggests that the bulk of raped persons are the young and innocent. Second, the use of the word "drugged" is indicative of a chemical inducement of some sort to gain access to her. It shows that the girl was lured somewhere, subdued before she was raped. This further reveals that her willpower was forcefully stolen or taken away by the perpetrators before this heinous crime was carried out. On the whole, this data presents the girl as gullible, weak, and even stupid.

Data 3.

Title and Date of Paper: Vanguard, Thursday, June 11, 2020 (Page 6)

Headline: Lagos court frees girl, 15, accused of killing dad's friend over rape; Man jailed 2 years for raping 8-year-old girl in Ogun;

Photo: None

Analysis:

The use of the word “frees” in the kicker above shows that the victim was arrested and detained. And nobody knows for how long. Indeed, it can be asserted here that the word “released” could have been deliberately substituted for “frees” to make it sound probably more appealing to the reading public. This is clearly a case of self-defense from a highly traumatised fellow, but she was not only re-victimised in the newspaper headline above, but also vilified. Also, in one of the riders in Data 3, a man gets only two years sentencing for raping an eight-year-old girl. Just two years? This abused girl and her family will surely be saddened by the reduced sentenced that was given to this rapist. In a way, they could feel that the State does not seem to care about how rape victims feel or even take the offence seriously.

Data 4.

Title and Date of Paper: The Guardian, Friday, June 5, 2020. (Page 8)

Headline: I raped 70-year-old woman under the influence of alcohol, man confesses in Ogun; Another 25-year-old rapes 85-year-old grandmother in Niger

Photo:



Fig. 2

Analysis:

In Data 4, the use of the expression “under the influence of alcohol” somehow seems to exonerate the rapist from the crime committed. The woman, on the other hand, is presented as someone who was in the wrong place at the wrong time. A rape is a rape and it does not matter what state the rapist was when they carried out their hideous act. Nevertheless, by adding this to the headline, the victim is re-victimised all over. A 70-year-old woman! For the 25-year-old man who raped an 85-year-old grandmother, it could be indicative of a psychiatric disorder or sheer fetishism! If not, it is simply beyond imagination. Nevertheless, the adjectives given to these old women in the headlines, through the detailing of their ages, show that the newspaper was only interested and

eager about ramping up patronage for itself. It did not necessarily care about how these texts would affect the old women or their families. Such screaming headlines, no doubt, would attract the attention of many to want to read the full stories. Certainly, these women will not feel proud with such publicity created about them through such profiling in the headlines.

Data 5.

Title and Date of Paper: The Guardian, Wednesday, June 10, 2020. (Page 8)

Headline: Man in court for raping physically challenged girl in Ogun State

Photo:



Fig. 3

Analysis:

The use of the word “physically challenged” is uncalled for. To say that she is physically challenged is to make her appear weak and defenseless. Being physically challenged is not an illness neither is it an excuse to pity someone or to be taken advantage of them. Nonetheless, it seems that is what is being suggested or intended. A statement like this, this paper affirms, re-victimises the girl. If she comes across this proposition, she is more likely to be broken by how she was described than by the injustice that was meted against her sexually. A rape victim should be cast in a positive light and not the other way round. Additionally, the photo in Data 5 is without a caption. The picture did not also say which kind of physical challenge the girl is living with. The newspaper's reason for using this picture in this manner leaves much to be desired as it will elicit wild guesses from readers.

Data 6.

Title and Date of Paper: The Guardian, Friday, June 12, 2020 (Page 10)

Headline: 75-year-old man rapes teenage hawker in Osun

Photo:



Fig. 4

Analysis:

It has been suggested earlier that vulnerability is often presupposed when the age of a raped person is mentioned. Thus, this makes it seem like by that singular fact, they do not have a fighting chance. A scenario is evident in Data 6 too. Besides, the use of the word “hawking” in the story's headline appears to suggest that the girl put herself in a position to be raped. This is stereotypic and simply unacceptable. To drive the point home, a headline, for example, like “75-year-old man, with neither wisdom no morals, rapes a young entrepreneur” would have applauded the girl's daring will to survive legitimately. From the photo in Fig. 4, it is difficult to tell if that is the image of the real girl or of someone else's entirely from an archival collection of the newspaper, or even a reenactment. No caption accompanied the photo, which reinforces the suspicion of use of an archived photo and/or reenactment. Whichever the case, portrayal of brokenness and gloom is manifest in the choice of photo selected for the report.

Data 7.

Title and Date of Paper: Daily Trust, Saturday, June 6, 2020. (Page 5)

Headline: Outrage as rape cases rise in Nigeria:
My daughter's death shouldn't be in vain - Uwa's father;
They have killed the hope of our family - Baraka's mother

Photo:



Fig. 5

The excerpt “rise” in Data 7 is worrying and makes other victims and perhaps “potential victims” which is clearly what is being suggested in the newspaper, angry at the status quo. Rape victims will feel betrayed by the society for not taking rape cases a little more seriously. This has already been pointed out in Data 3 where a man was given “only two years” sentencing for raping an eight-year-old girl. The two riders “My daughter's death shouldn't be in vain - Uwa's father” and “They have killed the hope of our family - Baraka's mother” also seem to support that the rapists have prevailed over the family of the bereaved. With particular regard to both families, there is no show of strength or courage in either of the riders or the photo. This is a bad development as far as the submission of this paper is concerned.

Data 8.

Title and Date of Paper: Daily Trust, Saturday, June 13, 2020. (Page 5)

Headline: A year under rapist's rule: Kano community recounts traumatic experience

Photo:



Fig. 6

Analysis:

The analysis in Data 7 above also applies here. The rape victims are re-victimised because they are thrown into a pensive mood considering the state of things in Kano. Besides, the headline seems to suggest that rapists go scot free as Kano now appears to be under their lordship. And it can be suggested that they are not held accountable too often or the punishments are mild. If drastic measures were taken against them, there may not have been a surge. Surely, anyone who has been raped before in Kano will feel unsafe, not to mention those who have not been raped, just by reading this headline.

Data 9.

Title and Date of Paper: Daily Trust, Tuesday, June 23, 2020. (Page 54)

Headline: Saving the Adogi Baby: Three-month-old Nasarawa baby stolen from mother's bed, raped fights for her life in Jos

Photo:



Fig. 7

Analysis:

Again like most of the data already examined, it is the position of this paper that the headline, pictures, and even the captions “Maimuna Adam with her daughter, who was stolen and raped now recouping at JUTH” and “Doctors have to find creative ways to help the baby pass urine and faeces” re-victimise the innocent child, and certainly her family too. Again, she is presented graphically as exposed, vulnerable, and used. The perpetrator is however presented in a more “courageous” light. He is presented as “adventurous” or more like a daredevil in this instance.

Discussion

It could be deduced that the analysed texts, especially the headlines in Data 2, 5, and 6, loudly projected elements of gullibility, weakness, and vulnerability on the part of the girls raped. The impressions these texts hold are that the girls were lured and overpowered by the rapists as a result of their own weaknesses and vulnerabilities. The news media, more or less, celebrate each fresh rape incident in an episodic manner. Egbo (2011) lampooned the Nigerian news media for not following up on previous incidents on their thematic merits. Instead, they trash them and sit in wait for the next one to happen to a different person for them to feast on it with screaming headlines.

Closely related to the above is the lack of deliberate agenda set by the Nigerian news media on rape. This is in tandem with Ugwuanyi (2018)'s assertion that they do not properly set agenda on the rape pandemic in the country. As evidenced in the data analysed, what appears to be a common denominator among the Nigerian news media, are the pity parties they throw for raped persons and their families. Beyond this, there is no solutions-driven agenda on the social plague. For this reason, it is obvious that the government (Nwabueze and Oduah, 2015) is not compelled to show serious commitment to solving the problem through a preventive approach and conclusive prosecution of existing cases.

Also, the gender distribution of raped persons covered in the data analysed, and also as reflected in the literatures reviewed, shows that they were all females. Does it then mean that the news media cannot report on male rape victims? Or are they deliberately been ignored as a result of the lack of judicial and sociocultural sympathies for them as documented by Tade and Udechukwu (2020)? Had there been a variation in the attitude of the courts and the larger society towards male rape victims, would there have also been a shift in the news media's focus on such cases? This confirms a fertile area for the news media to set agenda on, since males are not immune to being victims of rapists, be they male or female rapists. It is probable that the Nigerian news audiences are already too used to anticipating that the gender of each new rape victim in a screaming newspaper headline is a female.

In furtherance of setting the pity party agenda, some newspapers use file photos and reenactments to complement gloomy headlines on rape stories. In Data 5 (Fig. 3) and Data 6 (Fig. 4), the photos used by *The Guardian* of June 10, 2020 and June 12, 2020 respectively for "Man in court for raping physically challenged girl in Ogun State" and "75-year-old man rapes teenage hawker in Osun" obviously do not carry the images of the real girls raped. The photos do not carry captions either, which are eloquent proofs that they were dug out from the newspaper's archives and pasted on the stories. They may very well be pictures of girls who are totally not related to the stories but reenacted for that purpose, since the newspaper had to transmit a melancholic feeling to its audience about the raped girls. However, in Data 1 (Fig. 1), with the headline "UNIBEN student raped to death inside church in Benin" in *Vanguard* of June 1, 2020, despite the murder of Miss Vera Uwaila by rapists, the newspaper projected a warm picture of her that is capable of triggering beautiful memories about her in the minds of those who knew her, and which

could also be less traumatising to neutral audiences who never knew her. Why, for instance, did *Vanguard* not use a picture of her corpse in the same report? The answer lies in the fact that these are simply framings by the mass media which are not accidental (Baran & Davis, 2012). They are deliberate designs implemented by people who man and control the gateways of content production in newsrooms. The designs are also meant to project certain predetermined perceptions to the audience on a given issue. This is truer of Data 9 (Fig. 7). Even though the images in Fig. 7 are the representation of the real persons affected by the rape incident, they are careful selections of the most graphic and the most disturbing by *Daily Trust*, meant to portray the family in pathetic and pensive states.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The framing of texts by Nigerian newspapers on rape incidents have great impact on the way rape victims are perceived by the audience. These framings have the capacity to affect the victims either positively or negatively. It is likely that Nigerian newspapers take this fact for granted. From the texts analysed in this paper, it is eloquent that the meanings and impressions the framings convey are significant. The passiveness of content creators and gate keepers in newsrooms can wreak more havoc than good in a bid to carry out their journalistic duties. It is on this note that this paper concludes that the impressions created by Nigerian newspapers on rape victims add to their injuries. These portrayals make them victims all over at another level. Their ordeals are being feasted upon by the newspapers for commercial gains and other patronages through the casting of screaming headlines and horrific photos about the victims, hence the media's re-victimisation of them all over.

This paper recommends the following:

- i. Nigerian newspapers should deemphasise the pity party they too easily throw for raped persons and their families in headlines and photos because it does not help them.
- ii. Nigerian newspapers should set an agenda for shaming rapists in all ramifications in their texts – headlines, photos, captions, cartoons, etc. Rapists are the ones deserving of pity from society because of their tendencies and acts.
- iii. Finally, the newspapers should pressure the government, through their content framing, on the need for comprehensive psychosocial and medical rehabilitations for persons affected by the monstrous activities of rapists. On the flip side of the coin, rapists should be retired to psychiatry confinements, where they too would receive their deserved rehabilitation, following conclusive legal prosecutions. Their menace should be treated as a psychiatric emergency by both the Nigerian news media and the government.

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