Print Media and The Management of Human Rights Abuses in Nigeria: A Study of The Nation, Premium Times, Sahara Reporters and The Punch Newspaper

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Abstract—Newspaper assuages the society by providing up-to-date events as it unfold. Its altruistic performance of feeding the public with information within the lengths and breadths of the society is indeed worthy of accolades and extolling. It is conceived that, the media should live up to expectations by setting a pace for others to follow as postulated by agenda setting theory. The research method employed in the study was content analysis, while the coding sheet was the instrument used in gathering data. The population of the study was 208 editions of selected newspapers, 52, editions for each. It was arrived via a randomly sampling technique. The paper employed two theories to support its points, and the theories were agenda setting theory and Utilitarian theory. The study concluded that the media practitioners should live up to expectations by exhibiting their agenda setting function to society by providing human rights abuses in Nigeria by not giving prominence to human rights abuses cases and also by reporting high percentage of such issues in inside pages instead of front pages. The paper recommends that Newspapers should focus more on in-depth analysis in their reportage to ensure that human rights abuses are reduced to a bare minimum and also media practitioners should live up to expectations by exhibiting their agenda setting function of reporting up-to-date events to the public as well as setting crusade on pivotal issues.

Keywords—Print media, newspaper, media, human right and abuses

INTRODUCTION
Newspaper appears to be very crucial in contemporary society since the world is InfoTech, and society cannot be modernized without information, development programmes and government policies are communicated to the people via the media. Newspapers play a significant role in the society. Disparity experts have had their opinions on the concept of newspaper. Newspaper is seen as a printed material that is published daily or weekly and it has been so vita to the society.

The issue of human rights abuses is no longer new, and it is something the media need to pay more attention to. Print media consists of newspaper and magazine. Magazine is seen as printed and bounded material that comes out penultimately, fortnightly, monthly or quarterly. Its also covers ranges of issues such as articles on human right abuses, sports, entertainment and other human interest stories. One of the leverage of magazine is the in depth analysis its gives on contemporary issues. Though, newspaper also covers diverse issues but magazine gives more in depth analysis.

Newspaper is a useful tools for promoting literate communities. Because of their invaluable functions of informing, educating, entertaining and constructively bringing the activities of the government nearer to the people, newspapers are now very popular and common with adults and young alike. Newspapers are veritable tools for promoting literacy through reading, writing and dialogues (among readers and critics), which are the hallmarks of effective and efficient use of language. Babalola (2002).

Newspaper has been very instrumental to the society and most of the development programmes we have achieved in the past was as a result of the media which set agenda for people to follow. The press is perceived as the fourth estate of the realm they are the mirror of the society whose philanthropic role has brought succour to many especially those that are in dire needs of assistance Example, people who were neglected by the government in some remotes villages or areas over time have received government attention in recent times via the media.

Naankiel (2013) submitted that the widespread violations of human rights, especially torture, extra-judicial killings, extortion and other forms of abuses by the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) are no longer strange. These violations by the NPF have become Nigeria’s albatross. Innocent people are killed daily for offenses they know nothing about, many are languishing in different Nigerian Prisons without giving attention to their cases. By right, whoever had served stipulated jail term should be freed, but most times the situation is different. They are people who ought not to be in Prison beyond stipulated period but due to certain excesses by some of the men of Nigerian Prisons and other sister agencies.

Adetoro & Omiyefa (2014) posited that despite more than a decade of democratic governance and endorsement of universal declaration of human rights
charter, Nigerians still face a lot of human rights abuses. This is because contrary to democratic ethos, the state is still largely authoritarian in leadership and security operations (Akhaaine and Chizea, 2011). Cases of human rights violations which McCulley (2013) described as becoming a culture of impunity in the country includes extra-judicial killings, illegal detention, destruction of property by security forces, etc. Even studies by researchers (Adetoro, 2012; Oladunjoye and Omemu, 2013; Udama, 2013; Ojo et al., 2014) acknowledged the role of extra-judicial killings of Mohammed Yusuf and other Boko Haram leaders in escalating the sectarian violence that nearly consumed the whole of North Eastern Nigeria. Kidnapping for ransom and rituals are also alarming (Agabe, 2013; Atoyebi, 2014). Other forms of human rights abuses in Nigeria include motorists’ harassment and extortion by security personnel, political assassinations, undemocratic imposition of candidates in leadership and intimidation of political opponents (Akhaaine and Chizea, 2011); rape, child abuse, education denial and domestic violence (Adesupo, 2013; Ayegboyin, 2013; Ayoola, 2013; Hamzat, 2013; Salahudeen, 2013). It is against these backgrounds that this paper examined newspaper and the management of human rights abuses in Nigeria and suggested the way forward.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Newspaper play a sacrosanct role in the society. Its altruism function of educating, informing, entertaining and mobilizing the public can’t be over stressed. It is quite glaring that the society would have been stagnated without the media and development would have also been drowsy or lethargic. Newspaper is a platform for sharing of information and also provides an avenue for people to share their views and opinions on issues of public interest as well as to keep people abreast of happenings within their surroundings.

Without being polemic, newspaper ought to unravel societal ills perpetrated by government officials, political gladiators and other non-law abiding citizens who don’t respect the rule of law, especially issues concerning human rights abuses or violation, but some newspapers appear to allot less or no concern on issues related to human rights abuses. A situation that has made many innocent citizens go to jail for offences they never committed, while others molested and culprits go scot free without questioning or reproached by the cold arms of the law. Also, many police officers who engaged on extra-judicial killings abscond freely without stringent penalties melted on them. In spite of these important role of the media, there is still rising spate of human right abuses. Therefore the study aim to find out if newspaper is given much attention to human right abuses.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study seeks to:

1) To ascertain the relevance of The Nation, Premium Times, Sahara Reporters and The Punch newspaper in the management of human rights abuses.

2) To determine the level to which human rights abuses are covered by The Nation, Premium Times, Sahara Reporters and The Punch newspaper in the management of human rights abuses.

3) To find out how The Nation, Premium Times, Sahara Reporters and The Punch newspaper fare in the management of human rights abuses.

Research Questions

The following questions are generated to guide this study:

1) How does The Nation, Premium Times, Sahara Reporters and The Punch newspaper cover human rights abuses?

2) What is the extent to which human rights abuses are covered by The Nation, Premium Times, Sahara Reporters and The Punch newspaper in the management of human rights abuses?

3) Of what relevance is The Nation, Premium Times, Sahara Reporters and The Punch newspaper in the management of human rights abuses in Nigeria?

Relevance of study

This study will be helpful to the government, media practitioners and even legal experts. It will help them to know the impact of the media to the society, and its contributions on human rights issues, also the general public will benefit from this study because the voiceless will have their voices heard through the media.

The study will serve as a research material for undergraduate and Post-graduate students of Mass Communication, Theatre and Media Studies, Languages and Communication Departments in the University of Calabar, CRUTECH and other students across other schools in the world.

The researcher and other researchers will also benefit from the study because new areas of knowledge will be unveiled.

Justification

The practical relevance can be found in the fact that the media plays a pivotal role in the society by educating, informing, entertaining and giving voices to the voiceless. This study will bridge the gap in knowledge. It will unravel excesses, lawlessness and unnecessary abysmal disrespect for the rule of law by those that tread on human rights and extant laws. The study will affirm the assertion that no one is above the law irrespective of your social status in the society and it will help to address the incessant issues of human right abuses.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Newspaper

The term newspaper is perceived differently as many people view it to be an avenue where news around our environment is obtained. While others also see newspaper to be a platform where goods and services are promoted. However disparity experts have had sundry opinions on the concept of newspaper. In the field of Mass communication, there are two broad categories of media, we have the print media and broadcast media. The print media consist of newspaper and magazine, while the broadcast media composed of radio and

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television. Though recently we have the online media as technology evolved.

Print media has been very instrumental to the society. Many scholars across the world have had their disposition on the concept of print media. Print media consists of newspaper and magazine etc. In Nigeria the first newspaper is Iwe-Irohin championed by Reverend Henry Townsend in 1859. Ever since then the print media has expanded its operations. Nigerian newspaper landscape is growing increasingly by the day. The advent of technology has given room for expansion of newspaper industry in Nigeria and across the globe. Majority of practitioners have delved into online medium. We have bloggers who owns different online blogs that deliver up-to-date events as the events unfold, Eti (2017).

Hynds (1972, p.43) posited that newspaper stimulates, motivates, inspires, interprets, builds, preserves, excites, satisfies and sometimes disappoints. It archives yesterday, chronicles today and periscopes the possibility of a brighter tomorrow, Ogbaeja (2012, p.201) asserted that newspaper is a very significant mass medium in which the world survives today. It is both the business and an institution of social, economic and cultural change. Various scholars and authors have in their own ways provided the definition and meaning of this concept. Most of the definitions are based on the nature, content, structure and purpose of the medium.

In the words of Sandman, et al (1976, p.260 in Okunna 1999, p.43) a newspaper is seen as: “An unbound, printed publication issued at regular intervals, which present information in words, often supplemented with pictures.” The Denish Union of Newspaper Publishers and Editors (DUNPE) on March 3, 1964, according to Drachma (1999, p.33) defined a newspaper as: a local, regional or national printed periodical appealing daily or several times a week, taken by readers in subscription or brought as single copies.” the Union stresses that the primary aim of a newspaper is to carry all round news from home and abroad and contribute to information to societies’ political and cultural development Ogbaeja (2012, p.202).

According to McDougall and Reid (1987, p.23) in Ogbaeja (2012, p.202) informed that the newspaper is an institution developed by modern civilization to inform and lead public opinion and to checkmate government activities. Newspaper according to Cheyne’ (1992) in Babalola (2002) stated that it is the textbook that provides up-to-date information on local, state/provincial national, and world affairs; the most current analysis and criticism on executive and legislative decision-making; the latest in music, theatre, television, and the fine arts and even columns and comics to make people laugh. Newspapers are among the most accessible texts available to the vast majority of people – literate, illiterate, young and old, students, workers, elites and peasants – in any community. This is because every category of reader mentioned above can find something they care about inside the newspaper’s pages. Today’s newspapers use design elements – story placement, typeface, and graphics – to make information easily accessible to the reader. Important stories usually are placed at the top of a page. The most important stories have large bold headlines. Graphics appear next to related stories.

Anaeto et al (2009, p.5) in Ogbaeja (2012, p.202) stated that newspaper is an unbound publication issued at regular intervals and containing a variety of materials, usually printed on a paper called newsprint.

Akan (2015p, p.2) submitted that ” newspaper is not only to inform its readership in the form of daily happenings from the local areas, on a nationwide basis, it is also advice by offering guidance and opinion to help mould and shape people’s views on certain issues or subject matter. It also entertains by covering crosswords, games, puzzles, gossip columns and happenings of celebrities.

The Press and Good Governance

Media plays a crucial role in shaping a healthy democracy and ensuring good governance and better enlightenment of the public. Newspapers generally are published in order to disseminate diverse kinds of information that are of interest to the reading public, both young and old. A typical Nigerian newspaper contains varied topics of interest to a broad spectrum of the audience among who are school children, youths in their impressionable years, elites and educated adults, semi-illiterates and stark illiterates, etc. Babalola (2002).

Every nation of the world that is enjoying good governance is as the result of the critical role played by the media. In United States and UK for example, it is the press that has helped to entrenched good governance via its effective reportage and objectivity. The media, through its watchdogging role can assist the society by making it a better place. There is no doubt that human beings are the most difficult thing to manage or control because of the dynamic nature of life. But with objectivity, consistency and effective reportage would help to hold man accountable in governance, and this can equally ensure good governance.

Investigative journalism can open the government’s secret records to external scrutiny and critical evaluation, and hold authorities answerable for their actions. The media also exposes manoeuvrings and abuses of fundamental human rights. It also castigates elections rigging and offer objective assessments of the process and results of elections and offer recommendations for improvement where necessary.

Democracy requires that people should have the right to know all the activities of the government, particularly the decisions of the government that affects their lives, liberty and property. Nigerian has experienced nineteenth years of unbroken or uninterrupted democracy, and one of the basic tenet of democracy is to
ensure absolute freedom of speech and fair ruling. From the concept of democracy which holds that “democracy is the government of the people by the people and for the people” this implies that, people should have absolute freedom of speech and other sacrosanct privileges that comes with democracy. Good governance entails that people have the right to approach the media and express their plights to the government. It also means that the media have the right and the freedom to report government ills or excesses without intimidation, clampdown, or harassment.

Media has been playing a crucial role in protection of rights by making people aware of their rights. Media also make people to be vigilant on political developments in the world and helping to stimulate debate as well as drawing attention to all social ills including the institutional failures, corruption, inefficiency and illegal activities. The truth is that in any democratic society the media include multifarious organisations that serve as channels for limitless range of conflicting views on virtually all issues, which are frequently in competition with one another.

This is not necessarily a shortcoming for where otherwise, the media would lose their key role of being a market-place of ideas. However, it creates a problem in terms of imbuing the media with collective responsibility for governance, particularly when some outlets may be hostile to the idea because of the nature of their ownership or their alignment with certain political or economic interests.

The media also have ancillary functions such as seeking to entertain that, although important, do not form the basis for the primacy given to media freedom in democratic societies. The justification for the protection and freedom which we seek for the media lies in the fact that they are the means of guaranteeing the free flow of information and ideas necessary for the effective functioning of a democratic society. The media are not institutions of government, but they form an essential institution of democratic governance. But most times reverse is the case. There have been incidences where the media are not allowed to report certain issues that portent danger to the government or issues that threatened to portray the government and its activities in a bad light, and these are issues that are not in favour of the masses. This sometimes relegates the efficacy of the media to the background due to suppression of press freedom. For example, countries that practice authoritarian system of government, the media have no say. The government determine what goes on air and any outlet or editor that dare rock the boat, he/she would be blame and sometimes the media outlet would be shutdown.

Human Rights
Inter-Parliamentary Union (2016) opined that human rights are rights inherent to all human beings. As a human being, you are entitle to different right. You have the liberty to enjoy the right to life, the right to equality, security of person, freedom from slavery, Freedom from arbitrary arrest/detention; Freedom of movement and residence; Due process of law, freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of association and assembly and many other rights.

Suleiman & Ahmadu (2015) averred that human rights are rights which people have simply as human beings irrespective of their nationalities, religion, citizenship, marital status, occupation, income or any other social or cultural activities should enjoy and have free access to other privileges that comes with the rights. Nwankwo, (2011) further opined that human rights are generally moral rights claimed by everyone and held against everyone, especially against those who run social institutions” (Orend, 2002:37). With the advent of the United Nations (UN) and the subsequent adoption of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948, the concept of human rights has turned out to be one of the most contemporary issues across the globe.

Adetoro & Omiyefa (2014) avouched that human rights are the fundamental features of any true democratic setting because the essence of democracy itself is based on the idea of human rights. Human rights are mostly viewed as the inalienable rights of people (Enebe, 2008). They are the legal entitlements which every citizen could enjoy without fear of the government or its fellow citizens. To Kaluge (2013), Human rights are those rights which cannot be said to have been given to man by man but are earned by man for being a human because these are necessary for his continuous happy existence with himself, his fellow man and for participation in a complex society (P.4).

According to Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2014) the modern human rights era can be traced to struggles to end slavery, genocide, discrimination, and government oppression. The UDHR was the first international document that spelt out the “basic civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all human beings should enjoy every rights including:

- Right to life;
- Equality;
- Security of person;
- Freedom from slavery;
- Freedom from arbitrary arrest/detention;
- Freedom of movement and residence;
- Due process of law;
- Freedom of opinion and expression;
- Freedom of association and assembly;
- Right to safe and healthy working conditions;
- Right to form trade unions and to strike;
- Right to adequate food, clothing, and housing;
- Right to education; and
- Right to health.

Human Rights Abuses
Suleiman & Ahmadu (2015) posited that the violation of human rights is not a strange experience in Nigeria. This sad situation has been attributed to decades of military rule in the country (Ahmadu, 2001), which had attracted sanctions and all sorts of condemnation from the
international community. Sadly, however, the end of military rule, and the consequent enthronement of democratic rule has failed to eliminate or at least, reduce the cases of violations of human rights in Nigeria.

Hornby (2000) in the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (6th Edition) defined abuse as unfair, cruel or violent treatment of somebody. Along the same view, Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English described it as the act of using something in a way that it should not be used. Human right abuse is a violation of human right. It also means denying human his fundamental human rights as it involves treating man in a cruel, unfair and violent way or less human. In the recent past, human rights violations and abuses in Nigeria had held people down and devalued the nation’s cherished values (Nnochiri, 2013) Adetoro & Omiyefa (2014).

Empirical Studies on the significance of newspaper to the society

Studies have shown that, sundry experts in mass communication, Theatre and Media Studies, Communication, Languages and linguistic as well as other media related fields have carried out research to find out the magnitude at which the media has been giving concern on human rights abuses.

In a study conducted by Etika (2018) titled "Use of print media in propagating not too young to run bill in Nigeria. A study of selected newspapers, the objectives of the study is to assessed the coverage of selected Nigerian newspapers of not too young to run bill campaign. Mainly the objective are to: Examine the nature of news stories covered by Nigeria newspapers on not too young to run bill in Nigeria, find out the frequency of newspapers coverage on not too young to run bill in Nigeria, assessed the tone or slant of newspapers' coverages of not too young to run bill in Nigeria, determine the eminence allotted to news stories on campaign for not too young to run bill in Nigeria.

The study employed content analysis method. Meanwhile, the systematic random sampling technique was equally used to select newspapers over the span of the study which focused from the November 1, 2016 to February 28, 2018 of not too young to run bill. The Nation, Vanguard and The Sun published from November 1, 2016 to February 28, 2018 of not too young to run bill in Nigeria.

The sample size of the study is 300 editions made up of 20 each, of The Nation, Vanguard and The Sun newspapers in a month. The samples were drawn from publications in fifteen months from November 1, 2016 to February 28, 2018. Four editions were randomly selected from the three newspapers per month. The editions were arrived by selecting randomly one edition per week for four weeks in one month.

The study reveals that there were iota coverage of newspaper on not too young to run bill campaign in Nigeria. The data indicated that newspaper does not give more priority on the issue under review, although the level of in depth coverage differed from the three newspapers.

The study recommended that, newspapers should focus more on in-depth analysis in their reportage to ensure that issues of public interest are given top priority. Media practitioners should live up to their expectations by exhibiting their agenda setting functions of reporting up-to-date events to the public and not too young to run bill is a bill that agitates for inclusion of youth in Nigerian political trigonometry, as such if the campaign is properly covered by the newspaper, it will be actualized and the society will take a new turn which the media stand to gain out of this agitation.

In another study carried out by Nwabueze (2012) in Akang (2015) titled "Newspaper coverage of Nigeria police activities: A study of the Nation, Punch and Daily Sun, the research aimed at ascertaining the extent at which the newspaper coverage of police activities in the face of bad image and reputation of the police. Content analysis method and systematic technique was used, to select the newspaper over the period of three months publication (January 1st to March 31 2012). Sample size drawn from the total population was 273 publication, the researcher chose to study 162 size that was later drawn from the total population. Data were analyzed using simple percentage statistical method.

The findings revealed that the volume of coverage on the activities of Nigeria police by the selected newspaper were commendable. The study recommend that, the media and other stakeholders in security operation should realize that it is good to focus attention on the police as unsecured nation or country drives away investment. However, seminar, conferences and stakeholder's forum of international standard should be organized to save Nigerian police from total collapse.

In a study conducted by Olushola, Anjolaoluwa & Olufumilayo (2014) in a paper titled "Coverage of Corruption News by Major Newspapers in Nigeria", the research arises from the need that conscious efforts and attention is needed to curb the negative effects of corruption on socio-economic transformation of the nation and that exploiting the media to expose corrupt practices.

This study used content analysis. Meanwhile, multi-stage sampling technique was used to select three newspapers, namely: Tribune, The Nation and Guardian; and a total of nine hundred and thirteen (913) corruption articles generated from the 540 issues were analyzed in this study. Data were collected on frequency of coverage, categories of items/stories, prominence, space allotment and depth of treatment of articles on corruption.

The study concluded that there is an increase in the coverage of corruption articles by the media but articles are concentrated more on the inside pages of newspapers and space allotment to corruption articles is small as majority of these articles occupied one-quarter page of the newspapers.
The study however recommend that it is necessary to place the reportage of corruption articles on the front burner of Nigeria newspapers agenda giving the pervasiveness of the problem in the country. Also, efforts should be intensified by journalists in the area of writing editorials on corruption.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Agenda Setting Theory

Agenda setting theory is a theory concerning the press on people's belief and evaluations of the topics in the news. The theory explains how individuals come to regard some events and situations that they encounter through news reports in the press as more important than others, the theory proposes that what people know and discuss tend to be those issues which the mass media present to them.

Agenda setting theory rests on two basic assumptions. The first one states that the media fitters and shapes reality instead of simply reflecting it, for example, news stories are not presented according to the number of people affected by them but in an order which the producer or editor determines to be the most “sensational”, or most appealing to audience. The second assumption states that the more attention the media gives to certain issues, the more likely the public will label those issues as vital ones. In other words, agenda setting doesn't necessarily tell people how they should think or feel about certain issues, but rather what issues they should think about. http://www.communicationstudies.com/communication-theories/Agenda-setting-theory.

The central idea of this theory is that the media draws attention to some aspects of socio-political life or issues at the expense of others and the consistent building of such attention is referred to as agenda building /setting. The theory therefore focuses attention on audience interaction with the media.

This study is based on the assumption which states that the more attention and importance the media gives to certain issues, the more likely the public will label those issues as vital which means that if The Nation, Premium Times, Sahara reporters and The Punch newspaper cover and place emphasis on human rights abuses, it would lead the media to set agenda for public debate or discourse on what to think about. By this, the agenda setting theory would have played the role of agenda setting.

Based on the preponderance evidence of this theory, it is perceived to be relevant to the study because its core tenets which rest on the fact that the media set pace of agenda for others to follow, will help the newspaper strengthen its role of covering or addressing human rights issues occasioned by human excesses in the society. Most people's rights have been subverted over time, and the constitution guarantees every citizens freedom to enjoy certain human rights.

Utilitarian Theory of Rights

This theory argues that human rights are not individual right but collective rights, and that individual rights pose danger to the general welfare of greater number of society members. The utilitarian theorist replaced rights with duties, they are consequentially theorists, believing that the consequences of an action, if it would serve the best interest of the greater number of society is most welcome, hence for example the killing of, without due process of an armed robber by policemen is okay- if it would maximize the happiness of majority and minimize pain.

Methodology

The study employed content analysis, which involves the analyses of the manifest content of communication to discover the defining patterns. Kelinger (2000) cited in Wimmer and Dominick (2011) supported the use of content analysis for this kind of study when he argued that the design allows for the studying and analyzing communication content in a systematic, objective quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables. The population of the study covered all issues of the four selected newspapers published from December 2017 to December 2018.

Sample Size and Sample Procedures

The population of the study is made of four selected newspapers which were; The Nation, Premium Times, Sahara Reporter and The Punch newspaper published from December 1, 2017 to December 1, 2018 of human rights issues or abuses in Nigeria. The headquarters of the four selected newspapers is at Lagos cum Abuja, and the reason for selecting these four newspapers as follows;

1) They are licensed to operate in Nigeria.
2) The four newspapers are owned by Nigerians.
3) These newspapers are accessible and available daily both online and offline.
4) They have a wider readership and their content is quite fascinating to the readers.

The sample size of the study is 208 editions made up of 52 each of the four newspaper in 12 months. The sample were drawn from publications in twelve months from December 1, 2017 to December 1, 2018. Four editions were randomly selected from the four newspapers per month. The editions were arrived by selecting randomly one edition per week for four weeks in one month.

Units of Analysis

These are the actual thing counted when coding. Those things were: news stories, editorials, photographs as well as opinions on human rights abuses in Nigeria.

Content Categories

The content categories which these units were analyzed are:

Type of story: these are the kind of stories or reports about human rights abuses in Nigeria such as features, news stories, opinions, editorial and pictures.

Frequency of reports: this is determined by the number of times stories on human rights abuses surfaced on the four selected newspapers in relation to items count.

Tone or slant: reports of the newspaper under tone/slant could either be partisan or unpartisan. A story or reports could be seen partisan if it spurs good agitations, and unpartisan when it cajoles or incites chaos. Caglayan
(2010) in Toochukwu, Uchechukwu and Chioma (2017, p.56) stated that tone as negative when there is an expression of fear, unease or problem. Positive when there is use of affirmative expression and neutral, when there is no inclusion of value judgment.

Eminence: this is rated by order of importance. The stories that are more relevant often appears on the front page, and the ones that are considered second important are placed on the back page, while the ones reported on inside pages seems to be least important.

Inter-Coder Reliability
For the inter-coder reliability, Holsti’s formula is

\[ R = \frac{2(M)}{N_1+N_1} \]

Where, 
M is = number of coding decision the coders agree on. 
\( (N_1+N_1) \) = Total number of coding decision by the first and second coder respectively.

Therefore:

\[ R = \frac{2(41)}{50+50} = \frac{82}{100} \]

Reliability =0.81

A coefficient of 0.81 was arrived at indicating internal consistency of the instrument.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
A sum total of 170 stories were published in the four selected newspapers on human rights abuses in Nigeria. The Nation had 30, Premium Times had 60, Sahara Reporters had 55 and The Punch had 25. The data gathered were presented in simple percentages and cross tabulation. From the information indicated in table 1, shows that, The Nation, Premium Times, Sahara Reporters and The Punch newspaper reports news stories on human rights abuses in Nigeria. This table further shows that, maximum attention is given to straight news stories more than other types of news stories like features, opinions articles, editorial and pictures which is not bad at all, because people tend to read straight news stories more to other types of stories per se. Though, there is no ambivalence that features stories, editorials and others convey great message in newspaper organization to its divergence audiences as well.

The table 2 indicates that a total of 208 stories were reported in the four selected newspapers on human rights abuses in Nigeria under the period the investigation focused on, with Sahara Reporters leading with a total of 55 stories (32.4%), seconded by Premium Times with 50 (29.4%), The Nation with 35 (20.6%) and The Punch with 30 (17.6%). This analysis portrays that newspaper organizations in Nigeria are doing a salient job. The percentage of coverage of human rights abuses in Nigeria by newspaper outlets is high.

Table 3 explains that, the tone at which The Nation, Premium Times, Sahara Reporters and The Punch newspaper reports stories on human rights abuses in Nigeria was unpartisan, with 80.5% of issues relating to this. Human rights abuse is something that is unconventional and unaccommodating. It is an issue of public concern that requires or deserves maximum support to abate this act. The analysis shows that the media has demonstrated some sort of ingenuity by giving substantial coverage on human rights abuses in Nigeria.

### Table 1: The type of news coverage of human rights abuses in Nigeria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Stories</th>
<th>The Nation</th>
<th>Premium Times</th>
<th>Sahara Reporters</th>
<th>The Punch</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Features</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight stories</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinions articles</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td><strong>55</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>170</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field work (2018)

### Table 2: Frequency of newspaper coverage of human rights abuses in Nigeria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Nation</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premium Times</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahara Reporters</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Punch</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>170</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field work (2018)

### Table 3: Tone of coverage of human rights abuses in Nigeria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone or slants</th>
<th>The Nation</th>
<th>Premium Times</th>
<th>Sahara Reporters</th>
<th>The Punch</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partisan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpartisan</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td><strong>55</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>170</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field work (2018)
This table shows that, the four selected newspapers reports stories on human rights abuses in Nigeria in inside pages more, back pages and front pages had few stories, this means that the selected newspapers does not give prominence to the coverage of human rights abuses in Nigeria. Based on the practical evidence emanating from the study, the table indicates some level of prominence accorded to stories on human rights abuses in Nigeria. In newspaper organization, story placement is allotted based on inverted pyramid. Stories that appears in front page is considered to be more relevant than any other. Also, back page stories is seen as the next most important story. Therefore, the media should place most human interest stories in front pages and back pages to give it relevance, in order to allure the attention of the appropriate authorities, such as the federal and state governments as well as the law makers to put an end to this ludicrous act. Human rights is unalienable and that is why the constitution guarantees certain rights to humans.

**Table 4: Degree of prominence of coverage of human rights abuses in Nigeria.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eminence</th>
<th>The Nation</th>
<th>Premium Times</th>
<th>Sahara Reporters</th>
<th>The Punch</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Front page</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22 (12.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inside page</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>133 (78.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back page</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15 (8.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>170 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field work (2018)

**Discussion of Findings**

The findings from the study reveals that there were little coverages of human rights abuses in Nigeria by the four selected newspapers. Toochukwu, Uchechukwu and Chioma (2017,p.55) asserted that this theory was advanced by media scholars to define the effects the mass media could have in creating salience of issues, setting agenda and framing public opinion particularly during elections. Accordingly to (Daramola 2003), the agenda-setting theory holds the assumption that there is relationship between news coverage and public perception of the importance of issues. The theory posits that mass media attention to an issue will elevate such issue to high point of importance to the public. Therefore, the newspapers have failed in their social responsibility function of enlightening and informing the public on human rights abuses in Nigeria.

The newspaper reported only 208 issues under the period reviewed, the study shows the analysis of issues that appears on The Nation, Premium Times, Sahara Reporters and The Punch newspaper. Out of 208 reports analyzed, features have 20 (11.8%) straight news 84 (49.5%), opinions articles 27(15.8%), editorial 10 (5.8%) and pictures 29 (17.1%).

In line with the above coverage, it indicates that Nigerian newspapers only reports straight to the public as issues arise, and not giving in-depth reports about important issues in the society like issues related to human rights abuses which we know that many people had been trampled upon their rights. The assertion is deduced from the findings obtained from the four selected newspapers which show that, they had few issues on features, opinions articles, editorial and pictures.

Findings also indicates that, the four selected newspapers sampled, reports stories on human rights abuses in Nigeria in inside pages more, back and front pages had few stories. This means that the selected newspapers do not accord enormous prominence to the coverage of human rights abuses in Nigeria.

**CONCLUSION**

Newspaper triggers and assuages the society with its reportage. Its sacrosanct role of obliging the public with useful information is very obvious, but the issue borders on whether they are living up to expectation of inundating the public with vital information, and also given maximum attention to issues that concerns the public. There is no cynical that there are certain issues that have gained undue impunity in the past, ordinarily would not have. For instance, the issue of extra judicial killings by the men of the Nigeria Police is one discord that has trampled on the virility of many citizens. History has it that, many and sundry who fell prey of extra judicial killings were not given fair hearing in the court before taking such action. Moreover, there are people whose cases are lying fallow in prison that if given fair hearing in court, will be exonerated. But they are yet to grant them such privilege. They are people who were wrongly accused of crimes they didn't commit, but still suffering injustice.

The study reveals that there were iota coverage of the four selected newspapers on human rights abuses in Nigeria. The data indicates that newspaper does not give more priority on the issue under review. The newspapers have failed in their social responsibility function of enlightening and informing the public on human rights abuses in Nigeria by giving less prominence to human rights abuses cases and also by not reporting high percentage of such issues in front pages instead of inside pages.

**Recommendations**

1. Newspapers should focus more on in-depth analysis in their reportage to ensure that human rights abuses are reduced to the barest minimum.
2. Media practitioners should live up to expectations by exhibiting their agenda setting functions of reporting up-to-date events to the public.
3. There should be upwards reviews of laws that guarantee human rights to ensure that everyone enjoys his/her rights without any undue interference.
4. Police authorities should check the excesses and inadequacies going on amongst its officers and make sure this act of disparagement is curtailed drastically in order not to disrepute its image.

5. Human rights abuses or violation cuts across every forms of violation, any infringement of individual’s rights, be it freedom of speech, fair hearing or freedom of movement, etc, portends danger to human rights and should not be condoned. Human rights is unalienable.

REFERENCES


