

An Assessment of Nigerian Newspaper Coverage of Child Domestic Labour

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ABSTRACT

This study examined an assessment of Nigerian Newspaper Coverage of Child Domestic Labour. The study was anchored on two theories: Agenda-Setting, Functional Theory. The study used the content analysis method. Three newspaper; The Guardian, The Punch, and the Sun were chosen for a period of one year 2010. The study adopted the multistage sampling technique and the constructed week sampling. 28 editions were studied totaling 84 editions for the three newspapers. The content categories for this study were; Prominence, Depth/Space, Genre/Forms of coverage. The result of the analyses showed that only six reports were found on child domestic labour. Three reports were covered in straight news format while three in features. None of the reports were given prominence as all were inside the newspapers. In conclusion, newspapers did not give sufficient coverage to child domestic work and did not consider the issue important enough to place the reports in prominent position. On the basis of the findings the study recommended that media reports on child domestic labour should be given priority in order to attract attention.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of child labour force has been an age-long phenomenon. It is a social problem of global concern which seems to have assumed an explosive dimension and severity with the onset of industrial and agricultural revolution in developed countries. But it is generally acknowledged that cumulative result of circumstances related to political, economical and social situation, our environment and also the various cultural practices in diverse ways account for the prevalence of child labour in the non-industrialized, developing countries like, Nigeria.

The concept, child labour is elusive not only because of the special and practical difficulties involved in the design and implementation of child survey, but also because of the differences in perception about what constitutes a child, child work and child labour and when child work in household or family business becomes child labour. Child labour is also a confluence of so many disciplines, each of which sees the concept from its own angle. The cultural variation also contributes to making it difficult to arrive at an agreed definition.

Child labour has been described by various authors with a bias toward their discipline. It is an employment of children under the age of physical maturity into jobs requiring long hours. This focuses on physical maturity and ignoring the overall moral, physical, mental and emotional well-being of the child. The concern here is that labour is exploitative without regards to the child's well being.

The International Labour Organization (2004) therefore describes child labour as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. Furthermore, it refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work, (International Labour Organization, 2004 p.16). Child labour spans across various sectors, including, agriculture, manufacturing quarrying and mining, auto-technical works, sexual work, car washing, weaving and domestic service. Often this is hidden from public eye especially the vulnerable set domestic works in private households that accounts for 90 percent and is the most under reported form of child labour (International Labour Organization, 2004).

According Thorsen (2012), one-third and two-thirds of all working children engage in domestic work. This female dominated force comprises of an estimate of 15.5 Million

child domestic workers worldwide (Anti-Slavery international n.d; United Nations Children's Fund, 2014; Fawcett 2013).

Accordingly, a domestic worker can be referred to as a person who is employed for remuneration whether in cash or kind, many household through any agency or directly, either on a temporary basis or permanent, part time or full time to do the household work or allied work: household and allied work includes but is not limited to activities such as cooking or a part of it, washing clothes or utensils, cleaning or dusting of the house, caring/nursing of the children/ sick/ old/ handicapped Domestic Workers Registration, Social Security and Welfare Act, 2008, p.4).

In Nigeria, child domestic labour goes beyond the formal employment of a child into the labour force, as some parents consider some types of child labour as part of training required by the child for roles in the country (Osiment 2014). The typical Nigerian child socializes into the notion of hardwork, respect and consequences of disobedience as early as possible from cradle.

Tambo (2014) notes that at age four, children are assigned petty home chores as training and are made to understand that working hard is for the common good. Growing into this, the child sees domestic work as normal; hence it can be seen as the easiest way into labour since no extra training is required. In the course of instilling these values, corporal punishments are administered, hence bearing characteristics with labour.

It has been discovered that the African custom of fostering has also been identified to harbour and promote domestic work. Fostering is a strategy to redistribute the expense of providing for a child, as raising a child is believed to be a communal effort in the Nigerian society. This is exemplified in a Yoruba proverb that says 'enikan lo nbimo, opeoeniyan lo n ba'ni to' meaning that 'a child is born of a particular parent but the upbringing of the child becomes that of many (Oni 1995 cited in Ajaegbu and Olatunbosun (2017). The idea behind fostering is to have 'poor rural families send their children to family members in urban centres with the belief that the urban families offer

their children better education and work opportunities’ (De Haas, 2006). However, owing to the nature of services rendered and treatment meted, children become domestic workers in their foster homes.

In addressing the problem of child labour, the media have a duty of sensitizing the citizenry about the Child Rights Act.

Despite the various legislative measures, the issue of child protection still remains a major problem and failure on the part of the government to instill enforcement mechanism to protect children has been the reason for the increase of different forms of abuse society imposes on children.

As a vulnerable form of labour with employee’s insecure remuneration modes diverse in nature and time expended on the job, domestic child work is often characterized with bonded labour, forced labour and slavery.

Corroborating the above, Chambers (2002) posits that ‘vulnerability has thus two sides: an external side of risks which include shocks and stress to which individual or household is subject; an internal side which is defencelessness, meaning a lack of means to cope without damaging loss. Loss has many sided forms where include becoming or being physically weaker, economically impoverished, socially dependent, humiliated or psychologically harmed.’

The media play a crucial role of interpreting issues which could help to define social realities. Uwom and Oloyede (2014) assert that “the mass media are to help in creating awareness, accelerating information flow and mobilizing the populace towards attainment of national goals and aspirations to ensure a total transformation of the society.”

In the light of the problems facing children and the concerns expressed both at international and national. What can be done to sensitize citizenry. In the words of Uwom. It is from this perspective that media advocacy becomes relevant to the study. Media advocacy is defined as the strategic use of mass media and community advocacy

to advance environmental change or public policy initiatives. It stem from the understanding that the media are a tool not a goal and that the media coverage of issues is a means to an end and not an end in itself. Owing to widespread of global child poverty, maltreatment and labour in particular, its prevalence in Nigeria, the continuous studies on issues relating to child development and protection has become gemane. On the other hand, the promise of education, apprenticeship skill acquisition, money and better living conditions from employers might be enticing to children who opt for domestic works.

There are risks of failed promises, trafficking, maltreatments, sexual abuse, unlimited work hours, denial of basic necessities and medical attention, battering, corporal abuse, and a bleak hope for a brighter future are unending. These risks affect the mental, physical, psychological, and social development of child domestic workers, and the society by extension as every society can be said to be the product of its citizens.

The mass media in performing its surveillance role is expected to report the issue of child domestic work, provide analysis and communicate messages that are worth propelling a change of orientation towards an anti-child domestic labour among the citizens that employ children as domestic servants, parents that put their children for domestic works as well as policy makers. Consequently, this study would look into the reportage of child domestic labour among selected newspapers.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The widespread of global child poverty, maltreatment, labour and its prevalence in Nigeria has made issues relating to child development of prominent attention. Factor such as the promise of education, apprenticeship, skill acquisition, money, better living conditions, from employers have often been used to entice children who opt for domestic works.

However, it has been observed that some employers of child domestic workers fail to keep to their promises and the risk associated with the failed promises are enormous. These include: trafficking, maltreatments, sexual abuse, unlimited work hours, denials of basic necessities and medical attention, battering/corporal abuse among others. These risks affect the mental, physical, psychological and social development of child domestic workers as well as the larger society.

The media being part of the social institutions in the society have the mandate to reflect issues in the society, set agenda for discussion and advocate for issues that can foster development. The mass media in Nigeria through its surveillance role is expected to report/bring to the fore the issue of child domestic work, provide analysis and communicate messages that are worth bringing a change of orientation towards an anti-child domestic labour among its citizens that employ children as domestic servants, parents that put their children for domestic works as well as policy makers.

It is against this backdrop that, objective of this study is geared towards the assessment of Nigerian Newspaper coverage of child domestic labour.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Determine the dominant Journalistic genre in which child domestic labour reports are presented in the Guardian and the sun Newspapers.
2. Determine the level of prominence given to child domestic labour by the selected newspapers.
3. Ascertain the level of depth of treatment given to child domestic labour by the selected newspapers.

Why Children become Domestic Workers.

Poverty alone is the most referenced significant and umbrella push factor of children working as domestic (Awosusi and Adebo 2012; Okafor (2011; Olutayo 1994; Tade and Aderinto 2012; Thorsen 2012).

Having a close look at poverty in as more encompassing way, this study adopts Mosse's definition which describes as an 'outcome of the historical and contemporary dynamics of capitalism, including process of accumulation, dispossession, differentiation and exploitation; but equally, considers the social mechanisms, categories and identities which perpetuate inequality and facilitate relations of exploitation' (2007, P.I).

The economic hardship of a home is the most obvious form of poverty that affects the child. This often directly affects upkeep and payment of child's school fees, leading to drop out for those initially in school.

According to Awosusi and Adebo (2012) from Ekiti and Ondo states of Nigeria, 35% of child domestic workers acknowledged the inability to pay school fees as a reason why they work.

While Tambo (2014), Pp. 33-34) pointed out that a death in the family and displacement can lead to the decline of finance for child's schooling, pushing such homes to search for a way out, like 'domestic and educational fostering' or working and saving up to continue schooling later in the future.

It is important to note that by inculcating hard work, respect and consequences of disobedience early enough, Nigerian children give consent to their parents' wish to be domestic workers, with little or no questions raised.

Complementing the above, Johnson (2009) and Olutayo (1994), Thorsen (2012) suggests that 'a prime motivation for child domestic workers is to earn but often they are also motivated by the desire to do what is expected of them'. In other words, they strive to be good children.

Risks and Abuses of Child Domestic Work

Education, apprenticeship, skill acquisition money, better infrastructure and living environment are factors used to entice or lure the child to accept becoming a domestic worker but however, the risks and abuses associated to it are enormous. Most employers take advantage of the children's situations, exposing them to risks like sexual abuse, battering/ corporal abuse, denial of necessities, unlimited hours of works and excessive workload.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse occurs in a top-down approach, which is, having an authoritative figure in the household exercise power to show sexual advances, rape and incest on vulnerable, unconsenting house-helpers. In Maiduguri Nigeria, Audu, Geidam and Jarma (2009) reports, that 77% of child domestics have faced sexual assaults and 55.3% of them were abused within abuser's home.

In any situation, sexual child abuse is a grave offence that is punishable by law. It however, becomes complicated with house-helpers in Nigeria as most cases are not reported and some abusers are relatives. The World Health Organization's (2011) study also shows that 57.6% with fosterage experience have had sex with more than one partner, showing that being fostered does not completely reduce the probability of sexual harassments. The sexual practices increase the risks of unwanted pregnancy, Vesico Vaginal Fistula, HIV/AIDS, STIs and psychological traumas with these threats.

Battering/ Corporal Abuse

Foster parents and employers often chastise or maltreat workers for not doing their work efficiently and for being rude through beating, kicking, slapping and verbal insulting utterances (Fakunmoju and Bammeke (2023). However, not officially drawing lines between corporal punishment for correction and abuse has resulted in headlines like 'pregnant Lagos beautician beats maid to death' and Woman beats 16 Year Old House Girl to Death in Lagos' (CKN Nigeria 2013; Folarin, 2017).

Unlimited Hours of Works and Excessive Workload.

Long working hours cannot be escaped especially for live-in maids. This leaves them at the beck and call of their masters, having excessive workload which was not included during the negotiation stage if there was any concrete agreement in the first place.’ Without any respite’ Awosusi and Adebo (2012) lament that child domestics are sometime exploited by their employers and used as cheap labour’ and ‘their day off work is nil’. That is the reason many child domestics are seen playing dual roles, even as sales girls/boys in employer/guardian private businesses.

Denial of Basic Necessities and Medical Attention

Children in domestic work especially when living with their employers are poorly catered for and are denied of basic amenities such as food, good health care, and decent sleeping location. Food denial is often used as a form of punishment for the children. Awosusi and Adebo (2012) say that the food given to them are of lower quality than eaten by their employer. Even as they are in urban areas with better infrastructure and financially better households, domestics sleep in indecent locations like garage, kitchen, living room and boys quarters. In the midst of these denials, the health of the child is taken with negligence (Thorsen, 2012) and the requests for medical attention/rest are seen as signs of laziness.

CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPT

According to (www.thefreedictionary.com) a child is a person between birth and puberty or full growth, a young boy or girl.

While the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines a child as an individual below the age of 18years.

(www.merriam-webster.com) sees a child as a young person especially infancy and puberty.

According to the Nigerian Labour Act, ‘domestic servant means a house, stable or garden servant employed in or in connection with the domestic services or any private dwelling house, and includes servant employed as the driver of a privately owned or privately used motor car (Section 91, Subsection 1).

However, section 59 subsection 3 says ‘no child shall be employed or work in any capacity except where he is employed by a member of his family on light work of an agricultural, horticultural or domestic character approved by the Minister’. In her research in Francophone African Region as seen in other West African cities and corroboration by studies of Tade and Aderinto (2012).

The second set of child domestics, rented child or hired help and the wages little maid, are children from other families/households/parents employed by households which are classified among the middle and high income earning social class.

Otherwise called “house helps or housemaids (Tade and Aderinto 2012, P.522; Aderinto (2000, P. 1200) these children are expected to engage in satisfying the needs of the household in which they have been employed. As they are officially employed through recruiters/ guardians usually referred to as the ‘maids mother’ Jacquemin 2006, P.393, most of the domestic workers live within the employer’s household, and work limitless hours as they are at the reach of their employer day and night.

Tade and Aderinto (2012) show in their research that the need for women to cope with full-time jobs has increased the demand of house-helps to bear the ‘time consuming and energy sapping domestic activities’ in their households (P.53).

Additionally, child domestics sometimes engage in income-generating tasks to contribute to the economy of the employer’s household. The specifically occurs ‘if the woman of the house is a trader or runs a restaurant’ (Thorsen 2012, P.3).

Aderinto (2000) and Okafor (2010) in Nigeria, Jacquemin (2004) identifies the typology of child domestic workers as (a) the little niece, (b) the rented child or hired help; and (c) the wages little maid. These name tags originated from Abidjan the economic capital

of Ivory Coast; however, the rented child or hired help and the wages little maid mean the same in the Nigerian setting.

The little niece is a product of the African child fostering custom. Children who stay with their parents/members of their extended family or close family friends to help the household by doing most of the work constitute this first set of domestic workers. In return, the little niece is remunerated with kind gestures such as food, clothing, medical care, apprenticeship and sometimes education (Okafor, 2010; Tambo, 2014; Thorsen 2012).

This in Nigeria is common among all forms of domestic works, which gives the child a sense of responsibility and self-worth in the family. Though not for commercial purposes, the deprivation of needed rest, time to attend to schoolwork if not totally interfering with schooling and recreation constitute to why “little niece” is regarded as child labour (Kuti, 2006).

Dangers Associated with a Child’s Escape Routes and Endangering Child’s Social Development.

Different approaches have been employed by child domestic workers to resist risks and abuses. Thorsen’s (2012) study shows that workers take breaks outside the household when sent on errands and rebel against having to work without eating. These temporary escape routes put domestics into more abuses from employers who at all cost want to shape the children into correction, as well as maintain their authority.

Absconding from the household is also common especially when the children have faced excessive maltreatment as well as ‘threat of death’ (Thorsen 2012). Absconding leads the child to the streets, which he/she is not likely to be familiar with because he/she was probably trafficked there. The child is then prone to insecurities like theft, homelessness, sexual harassments, begging, and initiation in other forms of child labour. Endangering the child’s life and causing psychological stress for parents, employers are practically at will to either search or not, because reporting to the police are often not an

option for parents due to the illegality of child labour and the sanctions that might ensue. In the end, parents are the most vulnerable victims who opt for personal search and prayers for the return of their child.

The dangers and/or vulnerabilities cause physical weakness, unnoticed long-lasting psychological harm is committed. At the young formative age, the child is denied of parental love and is exposed to abusive languages, inequality in the household, unfair treatments, isolation, and victimization. These are likely to affect the development of the child in the building of self work and esteem.

Some responses from child domestic employers in Tade and Aderinto's (2012) research show that they know that they abuse their domestic workers and it is wrong to do so. This has increased employer's preference for the rented child or hired help who they can have total unquestioned power over. In the words of Tade and Aderinto (2012) beating a relative and subjecting him or her to ill treatment could threaten the family bond and solidarity (p.530).

Many child domestics want a bright future, but what plans are in place for its fulfillment? The future plan or knowing what future plan is all about were probably dashed by broken promises of apprenticeship and education, uncertain little remuneration, health issues, poor self-esteem, misplaced priorities among many others.

The reality of escaping poverty the cause of work and the vulnerabilities therein remains a mirage. Looking into an example from Awosusi and Adebo (2012) where' 35.0% were not certain about what to do in future, 16.25% contemplated going back to school, 32.6% planned to continue with the job but desired another location, 12.5% wished to learn a vocation while 3.75% wanted to embark on trading'. For the few that have personal aspirations of medical and legal professions, they are unable to recognize the requirements needed to realize the dreams, as all children have poor school performances affected by domestic work which takes precedence over school activities (Olutayo, 1994).

Bringing all these factors to bear, Afolabi, (n.d) opines that child domestic's workers' rarely grow up to become anything tangible in life (p.3).

Media and Coverage of Child Labour

Different communication scholars have tried to study the role of the media in protecting children rights in Nigeria and in the world with a view to find out if the coverage is adequate and if eventually the coverage is inadequate then they would proffer solutions on how the media can be involved in the fight against child labour and violation of child rights.

Ochonogor (2009) suggests that “development media messages, if structured and sustained over a long period of time will ensure a smooth transition, of mass media agenda to public agenda”.

Oyero (2010) in a study sought to find out how the coverage of child rights is influenced by the ownership of media organizations. The study adopted the content analysis of two national Newspapers- one government owned (Daily times) and one privately owned Newspaper (The Guardians) from 1999 to 2003. The sample constituted 600 issues, 300 per newspaper. The findings showed that a total of 193 stories were covered on the issues. While it was discovered that Daily Times gave greater coverage, years 2002 and 2003 recorded high reportage and the Child Right's Act was passed by the National Assembly in 2003. This shows the connection between media agenda, public agenda and policy agenda in the sense that the issue was highlighted in the media to the point that it got the attention of the people and the policy makers and this led to the passing of the Child Rights Act. The straight news format was used most in the reportage meaning that the reports were not comprehensive enough. The author concludes that because of the commercial interests of privately-owned papers; they pay more attention to reports that are of economic interest. The research recommends that the papers should devote more attention to development issues and support the coverage of child rights issues.

In another study, Oyero (2011) looked at how children rights issues were presented by Nigerian and Ghanaian Newspapers between 1999 and 2003. Using stratified sampling, four papers were selected, two Nigeria and two Ghanaian newspapers. For Nigeria, the Daily Times (government-owned) and the Guardian (privately-owned) newspaper were chosen and for Ghana, Daily Graphics (government-owned) and Daily Guide (privately-owned) were chosen. 300 issues were selected from each of the papers totaling 1200 issues. Findings showed a total of 448 stories were covered. Ghanaian newspapers gave greater prominence with 56.9% while Nigerian newspapers had 43.1%. 60% of the stories were covered by the government owned newspapers while the privately owned newspapers had 40%.

The author concludes that with the gross under-reportage of the issues, children are invisible in the newspapers' content. The level of prominence given to the reports was low as most reports were buried inside the pages of the newspapers showing that child rights stories had weak newsworthiness. The newspapers also covered the reports predominantly as straight news. The author recommends that newspapers should give more prominence to child rights issues by placing stories in important positions and also that story should be presented in feature format for extensive reporting.

Jabeen (2004) also studied the coverage of child protection in Pakistan. It was discovered that the newspapers gave some coverage to child protection issues covering themes such as crimes against children like rape, killing and negligence of public departments and agencies that should actually protect the children. He concluded that the coverage by the newspapers highlighted the nature and scale of violence, abuse and exploitation against children in Pakistan and that newspaper can actually be a veritable tool to record child protection issues in Pakistan.

Summarily, these studies show that media have not done enough to bring the problem of child labour to light with a sustained reportage and it also underscores the role of the media as a major actor in the fight against child labour using the power of the pen and

the tongue. The agenda setting theory explains that the media needs to be selective in its reports in terms of the quality and frequency of the reports and the prominence given to such issues. In view of the social responsibility theory, the media are to be used for public good and must put public interest above their own interest above their own interest.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on agenda setting theory and functionalist theory.

Agenda-Setting Theory

Little John and Foss (2008) state that agenda setting occurs because the media must be selective in reporting the news; they further add that the media make choices about what to report and how to report it. The media does this by giving more prominence to an issue in terms of time for broadcast and space for print.

Corroborating the above, Greenberg and Salwen (2009) posit that; “media coverage of issues or individuals confer status (fame or infamy a like) on people, place, events, ideas, etc. it is assumed that topics which are absent or less emphasized in the media are considered of less important to the public”.

Baran and Davis (2009) expatiate that there is an important relationship between media reports and people’s ranking of public issues. Miller (2002) explains that agenda setting can be considered in three ways: the media agenda, the public agenda and the policy agenda. The media agenda are topics addressed by the media, the public agenda are topics the members of the public believe is important while the policy agenda are issues decision makers deem important. This means that, by bringing attention to specific child labour issues through the agenda setting function, the media sets agenda for the public and for policy makers.

Functional Theory

This theory explains the needs of the society and of the individuals from the perspective of those social practices and institutions within the society.

According to McQuail (2005, Pp. 96-97) society is viewed as an ongoing system of linked working parts or subsystems each making an essential contribution to continuity and order. The media can be seen as one of these systems. Organized social life is said to require the continued maintenance of a more or less accurate, consistent supportive and complete picture of the working of society and of the social environment. It is by responding to the demand of individuals and institutions in consistent ways that the media achieve unintended benefits for the society as a whole.

He says further that, the theory depicts media essentially self directing and self-correcting. The theory is anchored on the abuse functions of the media in society. Based on this perspective, this theory becomes useful in this study as the media can provide useful information about what children's rights means. It can draw attention to the violation of such rights in their surveillance function. The media can mobilize support individuals, and government agencies involved in rights advocacy.

METHODOLOGY

The content analysis method or research was adopted for the study. The manifest contents of three newspapers, The Punch, The Guardian and The Sun Newspapers from January to December 2010 were used for the study.

The study adopted the multi-stage sampling technique; first the one year period was divided into four-Quarter 1) April, May, and June (Quarter 2) July, August, September (Quarter3) October, November, and December (Quarter 4). One month was selected from the four quarters totaling 4 months of the study for one year. Further selection was done to determine the actual days/weeks that were studied. A constructed week sampling procedure was adopted and this is important because it

allows for a cyclic variation of news content. (Luke, Caburnay, and John 2011 p. 78). They further explain how a constructed week sampling can be done. Constructing one week from a month involves selecting one Sunday from all four Sundays in the month, one Monday from all Mondays in that month and continuously till all days of the week are represented in the final sample.

Seven days were chosen from each month and 28 editions for one year. 28 editions were studied for the one year per newspaper totaling 84 editions of three newspapers. The content categories for this study were: Prominence, Depth/Space, Genre/Forms of coverage.

RESULT DISCUSSION

Out of the number of editions selected for the study, there were:

Table 1.1: Genre

Genre/Newspaper	Straight News story	Editorials	Feature	Opinion articles/Columns	Letters	Photo news
The Punch	1 (33.3%)	0	2 (66.7%)	0	0	0
The Guardian	2 (66.7%)	0	0	0	0	0
The Sun	0	0	1(33.3%)	0	0	0
Total	3 (100%)	0	3 (100%)	0	0	0

Source: Field Study 2023

The major genre of coverage used to report child domestic work are straight news and features as they both accounted for 3(50%) each. There were no editorials, Opinion articles or columns and also no Photo news. This means the reporters performance more of informational role and based on the three feature stories, they also performed some interpretational role by giving a broader context to the issue. This implies that reports do not allow for much interpretation on the issue. In a study, of three countries, Internews

Europe (2014) found out specifically from Kenya that straight news accounted for greater coverage while there were low levels of opinion, editorial and feature articles. They assert that without genres like features, editorials and opinion articles ‘there will be lack of in-depth, thoughtful, well discussed reporting’ (Internews Europe, 2014). Oyero (2010) said that the trend of having more reports straight forward news format could be attributed to the commercial interests of the newspapers so they pay more attention to reports that have economic interests. There were no editorials and opinions showing that reports lacked more authoritative opinions on child domestic work issues.

Table 1.2 Promnence

Newspaper/position	Front page/ lead story	Other front page	OP-ED page	Inside pages
The Punch	0	0	0	3(100%)
The Guardian	0	0	0	2(100%)
The Sun	0	0	0	1(100%)
Total	0	0	0	6(100%)

Field Study 2023

Based on the placement of child domestic work reports, all reports were placed inside the pages of the newspaper giving not much importance to the issue. This means that the issue of child domestic labour was not given the pride of place on the publications.

Table 1.3: Depth of Treatment/Space

Depth of coverage/space	Full page	Half page	Combined two pages	More than half	Less than half
The Punch	0	1(33.3%)	1(33.3%)	0	1(33.3%)
The Guardian	0	0	0	0	2(100%)
The Sun	1(100%)	0	0	0	0

Total	1	1(16.7%)	1(16.7%)	0	3(50%)
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Source: Field Study 2023

Table 1.3 shows the depth of treatment given to child domestic work reports, it was discovered that half 3(50%) of the reports were presented in less than half page. This could mean the information gotten was small or reporters did not deem it fit to do extensive research on the issue. From the above, findings show that the issue was covered in less prominent positions showing it was not considered important by the media organizations. Oyero (2011) corroborates this finding as he reported that child right issues are usually buried in the inside pages probably showing that they had weak news worthness. The agenda setting theory as explained by Baran and David (2009) revealed that there is an important relationship between media reports and people’s ranking of public issues. This implies that when the media give priority to issues through their reports people pay greater attention to such issues as important for discussion and when there is constant discussion for an issue, it could attract the attention of policy makers.

CONCLUSION

From the findings, this study concludes that the newspapers under study did not give sufficient coverage to child domestic labour as only six reports are grossly inadequate. The stories also were not given prominent positions in the paper like the front page or back page rather they were buried inside the pages of the newspaper.

However, it should be noted that one major cause of child domestic work is poverty on the part of parents that give their children out and also illiteracy. This means that the underlying causes of poverty should be addressed by relevant authorities. Child domestic labour is a serious problem that has societal, cultural and religious undertones and as such the issue should be given a broader treatment in order to proffer a better and lasting solution to it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The issue of child domestic labour is a serious societal problem that needs urgent attention. The world's most forgotten children which are the domestic workers are exposed and prone to different dangers. The media which is the mirror, agent of change and development in the society can through accurate and comprehensive reporting bring the issue to the fore. In the light of the above, reports on child domestic work should be given more attention and placed in more prominent positions in order to attract audience attention. While reports can also come in straight news format, there could be a sustained to follow-up through features and editorials to better discuss the subject. In the same vein, reporters are to liaise with relevant authorities and other social actors in the fight against child domestic labour to get more information and also seek better ways to report children issues.

Also, reporters should get more involved into investigative reporting to dig into issues because some of the affected child may not have the courage to come out and tell their stories for fear of being harmed by their employer.

Government at all levels should endeavour to uphold the laws protecting children and their rights and ensure strict enforcement.

Media should constantly embark on education and enlightenment programmes especially for illiterate parents and guardians on the need not to send their children out to domestic labour with a view to making ends meet or as a means of survival.

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