

MEDIA COVERAGE OF CULTURE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The patriarchal nature of the Nigerian Society, enthrone the male over the female gender. This trend has led to the general belief system that the place of women is in the “Kitchen” or “The other room”. Due to the aforementioned belief in Nigeria, it has brought about increasing number of domestic violence cases, perpetrated against the male folk in Nigeria. Some go silent and unheard of; in order to safeguard the image and reputation of the man, while some obvious and persistent cases are reported to law enforcement agencies, others get to the media. Between 2020 and the first quarter of 2021, the Lagos State Government recorded eighty-nine (89) domestic violence cases against men who were battered by their wives. Also, the outcome of a research by a non-governmental Organization (NGO), the Purple Lifeline Connection revealed that over 25 percent of men suffer abuse in the hands of their partners in Nigeria. These are a few cases amongst many, leading to the death of some Men. Contrary to popular belief, domestic violence against men is not real. This study seeks to Assess Media Coverage of Culture and Domestic Violence against Men. The objectives seek to i. Investigate how the culture of patriarchy, promote domestic violence against Men. ii. Examine the level of media coverage of domestic violence against Men by the Nigerian Media. This study deployed Survey Research Method with Questionnaire as the tool for data collection. A total of 100 copies of questionnaires were administered. Data generated were presented in percentages tables and descriptive statistics. Agenda-setting theory was used. The findings revealed that the culture of patriarchy leads to silence and disbelief which further promotes domestic violence and intimate partner violence against men, by women. Also, the Nigeria media does not place much coverage value on domestic violence against men compared to the much coverage given to incidences of domestic violence against women. The study recommends that the media should give equal attention to violence against men as it is given to violence against women.

Key Words: Culture, Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Violence, Media Coverage, Patriarchy

Introduction

Culture is described as the total way of life in any society that exists on earth. In this study, culture can also be viewed as a way of living that promotes Patriarchy, which implies male dominance in the Nigerian society, particularly in the home front or sexual relationships. As such, culture shapes every aspect of human endeavor of humans, from the food, dressing, belief system as well as the dos and don'ts. Furthermore, the operating cultural system in a society made up of both male and female gender, prescribe gender roles, responsibility, behaviour, as well as the perception of one gender towards another. The mass media whether print, broadcast or internet content becomes a reflection of each society's cultural perception, thereby deciding to set agenda or refuse to give priority to certain issues that affects either the male or female gender in every society (Dala, 2021).

Therefore, the Nigeria mass media is one amongst many media that emanates from a society shaped by a cultural system known as Patriarchy. Male dominance has been depicted in media such as literary works of art by Chinua Achebe's Things fall Apart among others; in popular children musical rhymes such as “Father in the parlour watching film, mother in the kitchen cooking rice.....) amongst others used as part of the Nigerian School curriculum, which gets to shape the upbringing of the younger generation.

Topmost is the culture of incentives, fellowship sponsorships, Conference sponsorship and scholarships that are attached to the coverage of violence against women as perpetrated by the male folk, with little or no

sponsorship opportunities for the coverage of domestic violence against men. This paints a situation of the nonexistence of domestic violence against Men, a situation that is contrary to the reality of the Nigerian society today.

While, owners of Nigerian Media who are mostly of the male gender and most male Editors in Media organizations view the coverage of domestic violence against men as a taboo and situations that should not be heard in the media as a result of its demeaning effect on the male folk and his ability to control the home front or relationship. Therefore, these issues are relegated to the background and denied from getting into mass media content, due to the fear that it might affect the ego and level of respect accorded the male folk in the Nigerian society in general, particularly the Northern part of Nigeria where patriarchy practice is held and practiced in high esteem.

Consequently, some reports within and outside the media seem to be springing up as the female gender who is assumed to be the weaker sex is gaining more control over the male gender and this control is demonstrated through domestic violence in the forms of denial of sex (sex starvation) between husband and Wife, spousal abuse through vulgar words, silence and withdrawal of financial as well as material support in the home front to poisoning, physical confrontation and death of the male spouse, in some cases in the North, South, East and Western parts of Nigeria (AfroNews, 2017). Cork Rape Crisis Centre (2019) identified this form of abuse to include pushing, pinching, damage to property and as Dobash and Dobash (2018) note, it can occur at any time or place.

Statement of the Research Problem

The patriarchal culture of Nigerian Society, enthrones the male over the female gender. This trend has led to the general belief system that the place of women is in the “Kitchen” or “The other room”. Due to the aforementioned belief in Nigeria, it has brought about increasing number of domestic violence cases, perpetrated against the male folk in Nigeria. Some go silent and unheard of, in order to safe guard the image and reputation of the man, while some obvious and persistent cases are reported to law enforcement agencies, a few others get to the media. Between 2020 and the first quarter of 2021, the Lagos State Government recorded eighty-nine (89) domestic violence cases against men who were battered by their wives. Also, the outcome of a research by a non-governmental Organization (NGO), the Purple Lifeline Connection revealed that over 25 percent of men suffer abuse in the hands of their partners in Nigeria. These are a few among many unreported cases, which have led to the death of some Male victims, contrary to popular belief that domestic violence against men is not real. Hence, the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society has further affected the priority given by the media to the coverage of domestic violence issues in Nigeria, thereby causing more problems than good in the home front. Hence, this study will investigate the claims against patriarchy culture, as the major barrier to media coverage of domestic violence against Men in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

1. To determine how the culture of patriarchy, promote domestic violence against Men.
2. To examine the level of media coverage of domestic violence against Men

Research Questions

1. How does the culture of patriarchy promote domestic violence against men?
2. What is the level of media coverage of domestic violence against Men?

Review of Related Literature

Patriarchy and Media Coverage of Domestic Violence against Men

Steinmetz (2017) argued that male battering may be as old as wife beating. Historically, this abuse has been ridiculed, ignored, and underreported. In research on couples’ violence, Makepeace (2016) posited that patterns of violence start in the dating phase and transit into marriage with both genders claiming victimization, but overall, less reporting was done by men. Despite the recent media reports exposing severely abused male victims in the central region in Nigeria, this male-battering phenomenon is not entirely new in Nigeria. Gathogo (2017) explored the depth of male battering in the past in Nigeria and found that incidents were rare, which is presumed inaccurate due to underreporting, influenced by cultural beliefs.

The recent cases of male victims in Nigeria media have presented the worst cases of physical violence such as major facial and bodily cuts and burns by fire and hot liquids (Muhindi, 2018). This is consistent with existing literature of female perpetrators causing severe physical injuries to their partners, compared to male perpetrators as they are most likely to use objects (Swan et al., 2018). Obeji et al. (2017) found that more than 65% of the male victims had deep cuts, broken bones, eye injuries, and broken teeth among other visible injuries. Unlike developed countries, sexual violence against men in African countries is rarely reported and research is limited.

Patriarchy stigma, based on cultural beliefs that men are not supposed to waver under female pressure is branded as a sign of weakness, and the pressure for masculinity is a major barrier to mass media coverage in Nigeria (Obeji et al., 2017; Thobejane et al., 2018; Tsiko, 2016). Hence, these men feared ridicule from their partners, extended families, friends, law enforcement, and even some church leaders (Ayodele, 2017; Gathogo, 2015; Thobejane et al., 2018). As a result, they continue to suffer in silence. In comparison to female victims of intimate partner violence, male victims rarely reported abuse incidents or sought medical care globally, except when severe injuries are sustained (ONS, 2018). The rate is even lower in patriarchal societies such as Nigeria; making it hard to quantify the magnitude of the crisis by the media as confirmed by Obeji et al. (2017) in a study where it was found that 67% of the male participants did not seek help. This was mainly due to the preconceived social gender norms and roles as well as power asymmetry which mainly favours men, who may not want to appear weak (Morgan & Wells, 2016; NCRC, 2019; Obeji et al., 2017). This perception of male dominance as cited by Mongare et al. (2018) further leads to poor implementation of legislation and lack of political will to address male victimization as persistent abuse. While other men think the abuse incidents are private matters, too trivial, and not worth reporting especially non-physical violence (O'Campo et al., 2017; ONS, 2018). Older men and those with a disability may fail to report abuse due to limited access and fear of retaliation. This situation result in the lack of trust in law enforcement (Ayodele, 2017; Drijber et al., 2016; ONS, 2018). McCarrick et al. (2016) explained this claim by reiterating that abused men who undergo double trauma of partner violence are not being believed.

Based on Ayodele (2017); Obeji et al. (2017) submissions, limited access to legal services and other resources such as shelter are other barriers to media coverage of domestic violence against men, due largely to the practice of patriarchy in Nigeria, as exhibited by politicians of mostly the male folk who are reluctant to acknowledge male victimization, to make policies and commit resources to abused victims (NCRC, 2019; Zanchetta et al., 2017).

Case Studies of Domestic Violence against Men in Nigeria

On the 4th of February, 2015, Victoria Gagariga murdered her husband, Henry Gagariga in their residence at Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. After three years of prosecution in the court, the trial judge found her guilty and consequently sentenced her to death by hanging (Nwachukwu, 2018). Similarly, Maryam Sanda of Wuse 2, Abuja stabbed her husband, Haliru Bello Bilyaminu to death (Osazuwa and Ibom, 2018). In Delta State, the High Court sitting in Effurun convicted Mrs. Mary Attah for the murder of her husband, Pastor Darlington Attah on the 6th of July, 2012 with a kitchen knife after immobilizing him by rubbing pepper on his face. Not satisfied, she dosed the bleeding husband with fuel and set him ablaze.

In the same vein, an Ibadan based lawyer, Yewande Oyediran knifed her husband, Lowo Oyediran to death on the 2nd of February, 2016 at their 30, Adeniyi layout, Abidi-Odan, Akobo, Ibadan home. The state high court in Ibadan subsequently found her guilty of the offence and sentenced her to 7 years' imprisonment on the 27th November, 2017 (Adezion, 2018). Another pathetic incidence of husband killing took place at Diamond estate, Sangotedo, Lagos State on the 3rd of May, 2018, when Barr. Udemé stabbed her husband, Otike Odubi to death. She went further to cut off the man's penis and laid it on his right hand (Nwafor, 2018).

Theoretical Review

A research of this nature requires an underpinning theoretical framework. Among other Media theories and models, Agenda Setting Theory became the most appealing and relevant to this study. Agenda setting refers to the idea that there is a strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media place on certain issues (based on relative placement or amount of coverage) and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences (McCombs & Shaw, 1972); (Folarin et al., 2018). The main thrust of the Agenda Setting Theory

is that while the mass media may not be powerful enough to determine how the public actually think, they are obviously influential in determining what a nation, society or group thinks about, at a particular time: they predetermine what issues are regarded as important at a given time in a given society. The elements through which the media (consciously or unconsciously) prosecute agenda setting include:

- i. The quantity or frequency of reporting on an issue
- ii. Prominence given to the reports — through headline display, pictures and layout in newspapers, magazines, film, graphics; or timing on radio and television
- iii. The degree of conflict generated in the reports
- iv. Cumulative media-specific effects over time.

Furthermore, Lang and Lang (1960) draw attention to two important factors in agenda- setting. The “reciprocal effect”, concerned with the very presence of the media at the scene of an event; and the “landslide effect”, which refers to the (usually exaggerated) impressions created by the kind of media handling or reporting. Agenda setting involve comparisons between media content over a certain period and the subjects that most people in the society are discussing (Folarin et al., 2018). The greater the consonance, the more the agenda- setting hypothesis is confirmed. As McLuhan (1968) concludes, the press can colour events by using them in a particular way, or refusing to use them at all.

While Cohen (1963); McQuail and Windahl (1993) gives another perspective to Agenda-setting as the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media. Two basic assumptions underlie most research on agenda-setting: (1) the press and the media do not reflect reality; they filter and shape it; (2) media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues. One of the most critical aspects in the concept of an agenda-setting role of mass communication is the time frame for this phenomenon. In addition, different media have different agenda-setting potential. Similarly, Agenda-setting effects assume that the locus of effect lies with the heightened accessibility an issue receives from its treatment in the news (Price & Tewksbury, 1997). Thus, it is not information about the issue that has the effect; it is the fact that the issue has received a certain amount of processing time and attention that carries the effect (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

If the media set agenda on creating awareness about the issue of domestic violence, they are inadvertently influencing the perceptions of their viewers or audiences on the ills of such practices and giving voice to the voiceless, in this case the male folk who are violated against due to patriarchy. The result is that the audience may adhere to the advocacy of the media condemning such ills and decide to desist from practicing such acts. This will go a long-way in reducing cases of domestic violence against men in the society as it can be achieved through the tenets of agenda setting theory.

Methodology

The research design entails preparing a mental plan or scheme of attack for solving a research problem, in a systematic manner, within the circumstance of the researcher (Akuezuiilo & Agu, 2003). Survey design will be employed. Survey is best used when the study is concerned with perception, ideas and disposition.. Scheafer (2004:3) defined Survey design as the detailed plan or method for obtaining data scientifically. Baran (2002) further explained that survey design allows mass communication researcher to measure characteristic, opinion or behaviours of sample group under study. Agburu (2001) explains ‘‘survey design as the most effective and useful method in the measurement of public opinions, attitudes and orientation which are the dominating feature in a large population at a period of time.

The population of the study is drawn from North Central Nigeria, comprising Plateau, Niger and Abuja, the federal capital territory. The population includes men and women, who are learned and have access to mass media content, both broadcast and print as well as the social media. Thereafter, purposive sampling technique, which is the process researcher, selects elements from the population on the basis of his presumption that they are suitable for the study or representative of its population was utilized to get the sampled population. The essence is to access the opinion of different respondents regardless of the political differences, ethnicity and cultural background and to reduce bias.

According to Piroaska Bisits Bullen, the minimum sample size is 100 and maximum sample size is 10% of your research population. Suppose that you want to survey student at a school which has 6000 pupils enrolled. The minimum sample would be 100; this will give a rough and useful idea about their opinions. The maximum sample would be 600 which will give a fairly accurate idea about their opinions. Therefore,

this research adopted Piroška Bisits Bullen point of view and sampled the opinion of 100 respondents which implies that 100 questionnaires were distributed to the research respondents.

While structured questionnaire was implored as the instrument for data collection and administered by the Researcher. According to Ogili (2005), questionnaire is a carefully designed instrument for data collection in accordance with the specification of research questions and hypotheses. Afterwards, the researcher presented the data using simple frequency and percentage tables. Toluhi (2001) describe it as percentage expressed at rate of the total variables in proportion of hundreds that expresses the relative frequency of a phenomenon as a ratio in 100 terms". Subsequently, descriptive statistical methods were used to give a general overview of the responses.

Data Presentation and Discussion of Findings

The 100 structured questionnaire distributed were all recovered. Hence, 100 respondents' views were used for the analysis in this study. The results of findings showed that equal number of the respondents, 50% Male and 50% female participated. It also showed that the respondents come from diverse cultural backgrounds and engage in different life endeavors, spread across the three sampled states in the North Central region of Nigeria.

The first objective sort to determine how the culture of patriarchy, promote domestic violence against Men. Majority of the respondents (78%) acknowledged that the culture of patriarchy promotes the practice of silence and disbelief about issues relating to various forms of violence suffered by the male folk from the female gender. To be precise, the perception of male dominance in the Nigerian culture of patriarchy has brought about disbelief, which alters reality in the home front by making the society not to believe that men can be made to go through domestic violence from their spouses. This point of view is further validated by McKeown and Kidd (2016); Taft et al. (2017) who observed that men who are victims of domestic violence face a society that believes that wives are the only victims and husbands are the abusers. While gendered risk of violence in public health policy target male-to male public violence and male-to-female intimate partner abuse with no mention of female-to-male abuse. Basically, most of the respondents argued that this general notion is constantly being reinforced by the several media campaign against the abuse of women in intimate relationship and the sympathy and support females receive while male victims are treated with utter disbelief (Cleary, 2016). These submissions support the tenants of Agenda Setting theory which promotes the ability of the mass media to change agenda and promote the reality of female domestic violence against the male folk, if given priority by the mass media in Nigeria

The second objective that seeks to examine the level of media coverage of domestic violence against Men shows that the media pays less attention to any kind of violence against men and tend to give more attention to violence against women because, it is believed that a man in Nigeria already have a voice and a woman can not violate the man. This point of view is confirmed by 24 respondents, representing 24.4% who selected low coverage, alongside 31 respondents, representing 31.9 who went for very low. This finding is in line with previous research that has shown that the disproportionate coverage of sensationalized violence is of utmost concern for the mass media, as Werden (2017) points out "Men's violence against women is treated like a "dog bites man" story and women's violence against men as a "man bites dog" story. Probing further, respondents were asked whether there were peculiar programs on domestic Violence against men, featured on mass media platforms and the internet. Result from the respondents showed that majority of over 80 persons, representing 82.4% selected the option "No". The results of this study points to the fact that violence against Men might likely continue unabated, if the mass media refuse to feature such issue. However, reverse can be the case, if the press can colour events of incidences of domestic violence against Men, by using them in a particular way as posited by Agenda setting theory (McLuhan, 1968).

Conclusion and Recommendation

The fundamental finding in this study reveals that domestic violence against men actually exist in Nigeria and most respondents seemed to have witnessed such violence personally or have come across people who are victims of such violence. This study exposes silence and dominance as the major factors that patriarchy

culture promotes to maintain repeated maltreatment of the male gender through domestic violence, as perpetrated by the female gender at the home front or between intimate partners in Nigeria.

Likewise, the study found that in as much as there exist the prevalence of domestic violence against men, the mass media have not done enough in the coverage of such violence against men, rather, the media prioritize the coverage of domestic violence against women instead. It anchored the submission on the empirical study conducted by Dala (2021) that opine that the lack or inadequate media coverage of domestic violence against men in Nigeria, has in turn trivialized and over simplified very complex issue such as domestic violence to be regarded as irrelevant in the society.

The study recommends that the media needs to pay more attention to the coverage of domestic violence against men, just like the case of the coverage of domestic violence against women.

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