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Josephine Osatohanmwen Adeyeye [α] & Chamberlain Chinsom Egbulefu [σ]

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I. Introduction

Trafficking in human beings has become a universal problem that affects every single nation and constitutes a grave human rights violation. Conservative estimates indicate that well over 20 million persons globally have been affected directly and indirectly (Atkinson, Curnin & Hanson, 2016). Also, Atkinson, et.al, (2016) reported that this crime births trauma that is diverse in forms to its victims and identified both immediate and long-term physical and psychological harm to its sufferers.

The United Nations (as cited in Smith, 2019) defined trafficking in persons as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercions, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of the position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or removal of organs. Human trafficking is also relatively portrayed or defined as the criminality of trading in human beings, human exploitation, abuse of the soul and body, violation of fundamental human rights, trade of human organs, organized crimes, and the like. The activities of human trafficking are constantly evolving and changing. At present, it is one of the wildest and rapidly advancing forms of organized criminality worldwide (Uchem, 2008).

In the view of Allais (2006) trafficking in human beings is one of the biggest revenue making avenues for planned delinquency in Africa and evidence submits that practically no nation-state of the continent is exempt from this trade in human beings as all African States are affected, involved either as nation-states of origin, transit and or destination. In some scenarios, some states are an aggregation of three dimensions of involvement. It is noteworthy to mention that this trade in humans has been given a boost by borderless developments like the internet, the globalized economy, and the global systems for mobile communication (GSM), which have internationalized human trafficking through the provision of information about sources and demand for slaves. Olube (2015) also asserted that human trafficking-related activities are either directly or indirectly conducted and span from delicate unsuspecting practices, and methods using platforms such as organized brothels, sex tour arrangements, human trading networks and syndication, involuntary marriage arrangements and cases of bonded labour (p. 20).

Nigeria with population of over 170 million was named one of the top eight countries of origin or human trafficking and is one of the leading African countries in human trafficking with substantial cross-border and internal trafficking (UNODC, 2006). The historical antecedent of human trafficking in Nigeria had been examined by scholars and researchers linking the phenomenon of human trafficking to the Structural

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Adjustment Programme, a prognosis that was conditioned by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (WB, IMF) for debt ridden countries of Africa to bring economic restoration. However, the policy demanded for cut backs in so many social areas that can benefit the citizens such as Education, Employment, Food, Agriculture, etc (Babawale 2006; Taran and Demaret, 2006; Attoh and Okeke, 2012).

In Nigeria, human trafficking is multi-dimensional, which comprises domestic (trafficking within Nigeria from rural to urban communities) and international (trafficking overseas). Nigerian women and children are taken from Nigeria to other West and Central African countries, as well as to South Africa, where they are exploited. Nigerian women and girls are subjected to sex trafficking throughout Europe, and are also recruited and transported to destinations in North Africa, the Middle East and central Asia (Badejo, 2016). Iyanda and Nwogwugwu (2016), posited that there are two different kinds of trafficking that Nigeria is notoriously known for: internal and external trafficking. Internal trafficking is in the form of domestic servitude and street begging, while external trafficking is mostly about sex trafficking and domestic labour. It is also important to note that the dynamics of the trade sometimes differs from one zone to another. For example, Edo/Delta is majorly known for sex trafficking and accounts for 95% of incidence of trafficking in Nigeria. Lagos and Ogun are known for child labour and domestic servitude while Benue and Sokoto for street begging and domestic servitude (CNN 2012, Adepoju, 2005, 2010, TIP Reports 2000-2013). Apart from the fact that, Nigeria is said to be the main supplier of child labour into different parts of the West African sub-region or across much of Africa (Adepoju 2005). There is also evidence suggesting that human trafficking in Nigeria had taken another dimension, as it has incorporated baby selling known as 'Baby factory' (a system which promotes child trafficking by creating room for exploiting young girls with undesirable conception) and organ harvesting (UNESCO, 2006, Salihu and Chutiyami 2016).

Despite these ambiguities, the Nigerian government has not rested on its oars in combating this menace after being ranked third place in the list of human trafficking criminality after trafficking in drugs and economic fraud in the UNESCO 2006 publication. For instance, in 2012, the government collaborated with the European Union and the UNODC to promote awareness about the actuality, perils and consequences associated with irregular migration. The nationwide campaign entitled "I am Priceless", emphasized the consequences accompanying either being smuggled into other nations or being a victim of human trafficking. The slogan of the campaign "I am Priceless" was designed and aimed to communicate and reemphasize the reality of the importance, self-worth and dignity of all mankind irrespective of race, religion, ethnicity or gender, etc. It was also intended to infuse a sense of liberation and an orientation of empowerment to neutralize adverse information that the victims or potential victims of trafficking had experienced over time or as an aftermath of a trafficking experience (UNODC, 2012).

The issue of human trafficking has attracted and increased media attention and thus provides a case study for researchers because of its composite nature of many crimes that are linked to migration, labour, gender and health issues, human rights and criminal justice (Sanford, Martínez & Weitzer, 2016). According to Santas (2015), the mass media are indispensable in a democratic society and their major role involves feeding the public with accurate, timely and adequate information about trends and happenings in the society. Therefore, as major stakeholders in the Nigeria project, the mass media have a crucial role to play in reporting criminal activities. Given the critical importance of news report in shedding light on societal problem, the study examined how the media covered human trafficking.

a) The Problem

Over the last two decades, trafficking in human beings has become an issue of concern for many international and national organizations, government and interest groups with political, social and economic consequences. As succinctly put by Nkememna (2009), human trafficking constitutes a cruel deviation from societal norms; a situation where humans are abducted for forced labour, forced prostitution, exploitations and deprivation of human right; and this crime often results in both short- and long-term physical and psychological harm to its victims. In Nigeria, the issue of human trafficking is the third most common crime despite constitutional provisions outlawing slavery and forced labour in Section 34(1) of 1999 constitution. Also, Sections 223-225 of the criminal code which provide sanctions against whoever trades in prostitution or facilitates the transport of human being within or outside Nigeria for commercial purposes (Nkememena, 2009).

Due to the growing prevalence of this problem, this study seeks to explore press coverage of the issue of human trafficking in terms of their severity and complexity which could help draw the attention of both local, national and international communities to have a clear understanding of the heinous activities against humanity and therefore, create an enabling environment for sustainable development. Given the critical importance of news in shaping public attitude, this study becomes important to know the extent to which the press has reported human trafficking incidents in the news by analyzing the coverage of the three Nigerian newspapers.

b) Research Questions

For the purpose of this study, the following questions were formulated:

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1. What was the frequency of newspaper coverage given to human trafficking stories by the selected newspapers?
2. What was the prominence accorded to the reports on human trafficking?
3. What were the patterns of coverage used to sensitize the society about the ills of human trafficking?
4. What is the dominant form of human trafficking reported in the selected newspapers?

II. The Literature

a) Understanding Human Trafficking

Human trafficking depicts several different things to diverse individuals and groups. Over time this devious trade in human beings has taken varied forms. Historically (chattel servitude, debt bondage, involuntary marriage, agreement slavery, etc.), trafficking in persons has continually involved the obtaining, keeping and using free labour through the application of threat, force and compulsion (Bales, 1999; Wallinger, 2010). Gimba (2005) in Iyanda and Nwogwugwu (2016) aver that trafficking or trade-in human beings entails the act of movement of an individual or persons after having conscripted the person, from one location to a new one using the assurance of offering the individual an employment or a proposal to marriage, often through the use of deceit, falsehood, trickery, coercion or force. From whatever angle the phenomenon is considered, the consistent final outcome of human trafficking is involuntary labour and/or sexual exploitation of the victim either of which Gimba like several other scholars view considers as a major and significant violation of the person's fundamental human rights. According to Nkememena (2009), human trafficking includes all involuntary prostitution, child prostitution, home servitude, unlawful and bonded labour, subservient marriage, dishonest adoption, sex leisure industry and show business, pornography, systematized begging, bodily parts/organ harvesting, and other illegal and criminal activities.

The historic nature of human trafficking in this nation has been studied by academics and there is the belief in some quarters that the issue of human trafficking is significantly connected to the Structural Adjustment Programme. The structural adjustment programme was designed and recommended by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to bring economic restoration to the countries of the African continent that were neck-deep in debt. The requirements of the policy, however, necessitated cutbacks in several social areas that were of benefit to the citizenry especially in areas such as food, agriculture, education, and employment etc. (Babawale, 2006; Taran & Demaret, 2006, Attoh & Okeke, 2012). The different types of trading in human beings according to the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report cited in Badejo (2016, p.27) are summarized as sex trafficking, child sex trafficking, forced labour, forced child labour, bonded labour, domestic servitude, organ trafficking, child soldiers, forced marriage, servile marriage. There exists also some variants of trafficking which may consist of using victims of human trafficking for spiritual rituals (see: Fitzgibbon, 2003; U.S Department of State, 2006; Kamala, et.al, 2001) as cited in Oppong (2012, p. 40). As stated by Oppong (2012) this form of trafficking for rituals, sometimes involves the religious priests using the trafficked victims for involuntary labour while in some circumstances they may utilize their bodily organs for prescribed religious rituals (Oppong, 2012).

Gleaning from the literatures, factors forcing human trafficking are illiteracy, lack of knowledge, greediness, the absence of opportunities, inequity, gender-induced cultural biases, ignorance, growing unemployment and underemployment, poverty (a principal driving force), and large family size, absence of government support etc. Other factors include the high demand for cheap labour from overseas, the absence of a political commitment, weak porous and permeable borders, the absence of a strong political will, low access to education, sex-selective/discriminative migration policies, disruption of the supportive system, traditional community attitude, manipulation of religious rituals, HIV and AIDS, insecurity and insurgency, the loss of parents or guardians, ie. orphans, human deprivation, etc. (Moore, 1994; ILO, 2004, Osakwe & Olateru-Olagbegi, 1999a, De Dios,1999; Aghatise, 2002, Adepoju, 2000, 2005, 2010, UNESCO, 2006; UNODC, 2006; Eghafona, 2009; Attoh, 2009). Fundamentally, some identified undeniable causes of human trafficking are: biting poverty, the quest for migration for both study and work in better cities and overseas, battles, defective and weak legal system, absence of sufficient legislative regulations, the lack of a political will on the part of government etc. (Adepelumi, 2015; Okeshola & Adenuga, 2018).

b) Human Trafficking and the Media

The media is considered as the 'fourth estate because it is an authoritative tool in influencing societal opinion and uplifting awareness concerning a matter or an issue (UN.GIFT, 2008). According to Baran and Davis (2000), the world appears different to diverse person's subjects both to their own personal interest and also on the map drawn for them by the publishers of the newspapers they read. Thus, the press helps to shape the thought of the people based on their news reports, which means there is a correlation between press reports and the public view and ranking of issues in society. Habte (as cited in Olube, 2015) affirms that the media has the capacity to influence and define the perception, beliefs and attitudes of individuals and

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society. The media also has the capacity for educating individuals and society on the hazards of involving in human trafficking and other associated crimes as well as the consequences of these crimes. Njoku (1994) reiterates that the media is very well known for its surveillance function through the monitoring of events and reporting them to the appropriate audience. In the issue of human trafficking, he affirmed that, the media is making a lot of efforts in reporting news stories about the phenomenon and creating awareness about its sudden upsurge. For example, educating parents on the dangers of sending their children away to guardians and foster parents. But a lot more needs to be done by media reports on apprehended culprits of human trafficking; and that the report should not be allowed to fade into obscurity as a result of political and financial challenges. Such reports should be followed up; the trails of these cases should be followed until it gets to its logical conclusion.

Leighley (2004) remarks that apart from shaping the perspective of individuals, institutions and society, the mass media further functions as a determinant of the issue(s) to which government would attend. It is known that whenever issues/events are exposed in the public space as news, the citizenry and the government of the day becomes conscious of the problems and issues raised. Consequently, the government swings into action to address the situation in tandem with its constitutional purpose of societal good for all and the state. This response of the government is however hugely dependent on the degree of prominence accorded the issues and events at hand by the mass media. In this sense, the mass media decides and regulates what and what issues will be attended to by the government or otherwise (Leighley, 2004). It is therefore the extent of the prominence of attention the media gives to human trafficking stories, viz - a - viz other issues that would determine the public response, value and the attention that society would place on the stories.

As expected, the general public awaits the media to enlighten and update them to understand the issue of human trafficking. Thus, the media wields the power to influence public learning and to dictate the opinion of the public through the news and language expressed and shared (Borer, 2015; Wallinger, 2010). The function of the mass media is therefore important for the promotion of responsiveness and precisely notifying the community on issues of trading in human beings. The principal purpose is to battle and avert this phenomenon and sensitizing society on the potential risks as a problem threatening all citizens (Esdras, 2016).

c) Media Coverage of Human Trafficking

Media attention on the issue of trafficking in human beings has grown progressively since the setting in of the new millennium. The coverage of the subject matter by the broadcast and print industry further increased from around the year 2005 and has continued to increase continually since that time (Farrell & Fahy, 2009; Austin & Farrell, 2017). The media is a powerful force when it comes to developing our understanding of the world, and human trafficking is not exempt. While different forms of news transmittance are being utilized, newspapers are still important in shaping what we, as a society, understand about social issues. Social issues and their presentation in media matter because they influence public interests, perceptions, and positions (Smith, 2019; Curtis, 2012).

Irrespective of the problematic nature of human trafficking, scholars have assessed media coverage/ framing of human trafficking in several countries and across different news media. Studies on media coverage of human trafficking has been conducted globally and locally, which includes but not limited to the following researches (Farrell & Fahy, 2009; Nkememena, 2009; Pajnik, 2010; Gulati, 2011; Egbo, 2011; Marchionni, 2012; Johnson, Friedman & Shafer, 2014; Borer, 2015; Stanford, Martizez & Weitzer, 2016).

Researches that have explored media coverage of human trafficking, showed that newspapers gave significant attention to issues on human trafficking, even as they fail to offer adequate explanations to trafficking issues in general (Marchionni, 2012; Sobel, 2014; Borer, 2015; Stanford et. al., 2016; Gregorious & Ras, 2018). Sobel (2014) studied the English- language news coverage of human trafficking in the USA, India, and Thailand and found out that there was an increased in the volume of coverage of the issue after the treaty, was more localized. Also, Borer (2015) examined media coverage of trafficking in human beings and the study showed plenty of related messages on trafficking inside the print industry. Stanford et. al. (2016) expanded an earlier work of Gulati's 1980-2006 time period which was a content analysis of news reports on trafficking in persons published by the New York Times and the Washington Post during the period 2012-2013. Their research established that there was an increase in the number of articles published each year compared to Gulati's study. While Gregoriou and Ras (2018) study found that UK newspaper coverage of human trafficking steadily increased between the year of 2000 and 2016. These findings contrasted with that of Nkememena (2009) who studied two Nigerian newspapers (*Daily Sun and Vanguard*) over a period of twelve months. Findings from the study revealed that the selected newspapers did not give adequate consideration to the evils of trafficking. This is due to the low incidence scores ranging between 1-5 times in media reports concerning child trafficking with less magnitude accorded to news stories in the sampled newspapers. Sanders and Godoy (2002) opined that there is need to increase societal awareness concerning issues that may affect children

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and that the prevention of child trafficking comprises changing the citizenry orientation, attitude, belief and circumstances both at the individual and community levels as this is aimed to discourage human trafficking to occur.

Several studies that analyzed newspaper articles on human trafficking found straight news stories as the most used genre in reporting human trafficking issues (Nkememena, 2009; Gulati, 2011; Stanford et. al., 2016; Reichert, Houston-Kolnik, Vasquez, & Peterson, 2018). Stanford et. al. (2016) study showed that most of the 464 articles referencing human trafficking in the their study appeared as news stories (63%), followed by editorials and commentary (18%), mentions of trafficking in a list or transcript (9%), news summaries (6%), and letters to the editor (5%). These results are similar to those found by Gulati (2011) that news stories and editorials/commentary remained the two largest categories. Also, Nkememena (2009) and Reichert et. al. (2018) found out that most of the stories were straight news.

Information on issue focus of an article refers to the form/type of human trafficking referenced and/or the context in which trafficking was discussed. Stanford et. al. (2016) study found that the greatest percentage of articles referred to sex trafficking (64%), followed by articles discussing both sex and labour (13%), and labour only (11%). The remaining articles discussed trafficking in the context of immigration/human smuggling, illegal adoptions, and historical slavery (9%), or did not reference a specific trafficking issue (3%). The prominence of sex trafficking in this article is consistent with other studies, such as those by (Marchionni; 2012; Gulati, 2011; Johnston et al., 2014; Muraszkiewicz, Georgious & Constantinou, 2014; Borer, 2015; Smith, 2019). These researchers interpreted these findings as confirmation that media coverage helped legitimize the dominant view of trafficking, which at that point was characterized mostly as sex trafficking and prostitution by both the U.S. government and the UN. Muraszkiewicz, Georgious and Constantinou (2014) conducted a study to appraise the way the issue of human trafficking is framed within the media in the United Kingdom, Cyprus and Poland. In their study, they discovered that the central discourse surrounding trafficking in human beings in the press was sex exploitation, predominantly prostitution. While Borer (2015) research established that sex trafficking stood out as the most predominant form of trafficking covered by the media. The issue that sex trafficking continues to dominate in media coverage is particularly interesting given that the ILO estimates that there are nine times as many victims of labour trafficking than sex trafficking, and that current statistics from the UN show that more than 50% of trafficking victims in North America are exploited in forced labor (ILO, 2012b; United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2014).

While this review of the current literature suggests that much scholarly work has already been conducted regarding media coverage of human trafficking, there is clearly room for additional research. The review however reveals a paucity of studies that analyzed how the media covered human trafficking issues within the Nigerian context. Additionally, by focusing on a research question that is almost entirely unaddressed which has to do with the dominant forms of human trafficking in Nigeria using quantitative analysis and given the depth of such analyses, this study contributes new insight to the growing field of research.

III. Theoretical Underpinning

The study is premised on the agenda setting theory and social responsibility theory of mass communication.

a) Agenda-setting Theory

The agenda-setting theory which was first developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in their Chapel Hill study states that the mass media set the agenda for public opinion by highlighting certain issues. The agenda setting theory describes the ability of the news media to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda (Okoro, Ukonu, Odoemelam and Eze, 2015). Wimmer and Dominick (2005) argues that agenda setting examines the relationship between media priorities and audience priorities in the relative importance of news topic. This implies that what news is given priorities to with large prominence and frequency becomes the most important news topic on the public agenda. Folarin (1998) states that agenda setting implies that the mass media pre-determine what issues are regarded as important at a given time in a given society. The element involved in agenda setting according to him includes;

i. The quality of frequency of reporting
ii. Prominence given to the reports
iii. The degree of conflict generated in the report
iv. Cumulated media – specific effects over time (p.78).

This study is anchored on this theory because it helps in explaining how the media raised issues on what to think about. The issue of human trafficking needed to be emphasized seriously with much time and space given to the report that will help form public agenda based on the fact that human trafficking has been universally condemn as a crime against humanity and it's what the society frown at. Okoro et al (2015) affirms the relevance of the theory by stating that it quite appropriate to help us understand the pervasive role of media.

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b) Social Responsibility Theory

The study is also anchored on the social responsibility media theory being one of the four normative press theories evolved by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm and is traceable to Hutchins Commission on the freedom of the press (1947). According to Middleton (2009, p.4) as cited in Oboh (2016, p.2)

> 'The social responsibility theory was presented as the third theory… alongside Authoritarian, Libertarian and the Soviet-Communist theories. One of the pivotal characteristics of their view is an emphasis on the medias responsibility to use their powerful position to ensure appropriate delivery of information to audiences… if the media fail in carrying out this responsibility, it may be relevant to have a regulatory instance enforce it''

It would be necessary that the commitment of social responsibility be imposed on the media because journalists are expected to have the moral obligation to consider first the interest of the society when making editorial decisions on what to report about regarding the events that occurred in the society (Oboh, 2016). This theory is also relevant to the research work because it emphasizes on morality and the responsibility of the media to be accountable to the people by ensuring appropriate delivery of information to audiences that will help to preserve the dignity of life and not to infringe on it.

IV. Research Method

The method of content analysis was used to conduct an analysis of hard copies of newspaper articles from three respected sources- *Vanguard, The Guardian* and *The Nigerian Observer,* published between September 1, 2016 and August 31, 2017. The *Vanguard and The Guardian newspapers* were selected based on their national outlook and coverage on national issues while *The Nigerian Observer*; a regional paper was selected based on the high level of human trafficking activities in the state it resides. The study period was chosen basically because of its significance in the area of human trafficking: the year 2016 was selected as the start date because trafficked victims soared from 1,454 to 11,009 as reported by Pathfinder, 2018. The year 2017 is also of great significance as it was the year the Federal Government designed a five-year nationwide action strategic plan document including the first draft of a protocol for identification, safe return and rehabilitation of trafficked persons (U.S. State Department's TIRs, 2018). The content analysis involved a stepped approach. Samples were selected using composite week sampling procedure that yields constructed weeks for each month (Riffe, Aust & Lacy, 1993). A sample of one Monday (drawn at random from the four or five possible Mondays in the month), one Tuesday (drawn from the available Tuesdays), and so on, until all weekdays have been included (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011). To arrive at the editions studied within one year, the edition of the newspaper for the month under investigation were drawn at random- for example, using the month of September, 2016 by picking day 5th as one Monday from the possible four or five Mondays in a month, day 20th, as one Tuesday from the available Tuesdays and on until all weekdays were included. A total of 180 newspaper editions were selected for the content analysis. This involved an observation of six content elements in the papers, news stories, features, editorials, opinions, cartoons and photographs. These elements constitute the primary journalistic output of news media in Nigeria. Also, categorization scheme were carefully formulated, which includes categories and subcategories under five mutually exclusive dimensions.

Because of our interest to examine the extent of human trafficking coverage in the selected newspapers, we conducted an analysis to find out the number of editions of the newspapers studied that reported human trafficking stories and the total number of human trafficking stories published by the selected newspapers. Also, we compared the frequency of stories dealing with crime issues to other major topics treated in the newspaper stories. Then, we narrowed it down to human trafficking issues to other crime related topics treated in the selected newspaper. We also coded for issue focus (the type/form of trafficking), genres (pattern of coverage), placement and volume (space). The data were analyzed in number with their corresponding percentages.

V. Results and Discussion of the Research Questions

Tab. 1: Newspaper Editions Studied

Category	Frequency	Percentages
Editions of Newspaper with Human Trafficking Report	30	17%
Editions of Newspaper without Human Trafficking Report	150	83%
Total	180	100%

Source: Content Analysis 2022

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The table above gives a vivid breakdown of the total 180 editions of the newspaper studied. Out of which only 30 (17%) editions had stories on human trafficking.

Tab. 2: Total Number of Human Trafficking Stories Published by the Newspapers

Newspapers	Frequency	Percentages
Vanguard	15	47%
The Guardian	10	31%
The Nigerian Observer	7	22%
Total	32	100%

Source: Content Analysis 2022

The table above shows that a total number of 32 stories were published by the three dailies. Out of this number, *Vanguard* published 15 (47%) stories; *the Guardian* Newspaper published 10 (31%) while *the Nigerian Observer* published 7 (22%) stories. This indicates that *Vanguard* Newspaper published more stories than *Guardian* and *the Nigerian Observer* during the period reviewed.

Tab. 3: Distribution of the Selected Newspaper Reports on Major Issues

Newspapers	Contents										Total	
	Govt./Politics		Security/Law		Crime		Education/ Health		Others			
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Vanguard	688	20%	287	9%	80	2%	146	4%	548	16%	1749	52%
The Guardian	326	10%	131	4%	52	2%	152	5%	359	11%	1020	30%
The Nigerian Observer	208	6%	107	3%	22	0.6%	70	2%	194	6%	601	18%
Total	1222	36%	525	16%	154	5%	368	11%	1101	33%	3370	100%

Source: Content Analysis 2022

The table contains the data which shows the major issues carried by the newspapers which includes, government and politics, security and law, crime; education and health and others. The last variable (others) contained newspaper content such as sports, business, economy, technology, amongst others. From the table, the newspapers (*Vanguard, the Guardian and the Nigerian Observer*) content analyzed for the reported 3370 stories in the period under review. Of this figure, 1222 stories (36%) on issues relating to government and politics, 525 (16%) on security and law, 154 (5%) on crime, 368 stories (11%) on education and health while 1101 (33%) was on others. This means that government and politics stories is more reported than crime stories in the newspapers studied.

Tab. 4: Distribution of the Selected Newspaper Reports on Crime

Newspapers	Contents										Total	
	Armed Robbery/ kidnapping		Militancy/ Piracy		Boko Haram, Herdsmen/Cattle rustling		Child Abuse, Rape/ Defilement		Human Trafficking			
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Vanguard	40	26%	4	2%	6	4%	15	10%	15	10%	80	52%
The Guardian	21	14%	7	5%	9	6%	5	3%	10	6%	52	34%
The Nigerian Observer	4	2%	-	-	3	2%	8	5%	7	5%	22	14%
Total	65	42%	11	7%	18	12%	28	18%	32	21%	154	100%

Source: Content Analysis 2022

In furtherance to determine the issues the newspapers reported on crime under which human trafficking is subsumed, the study reviewed 154 stories. Of this figure, issues relating to armed robbery and kidnapping were 65 (42%), 11 stories (7%) were carried on militancy and piracy; 18 stories (12%) on boko haram, herdsmen/cattle rustling, 28 (18%) stories were on child abuse, rape and defilement while 32 (21%) were carried on human trafficking. This indicates that armed robbery and kidnapping is the highest crime stories reported by the newspapers studied.

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Tab. 5: Distribution of the Selected Newspaper Reports on Human Trafficking

Newspapers	Contents										Total	
	Labour Trafficking		Sex Trafficking		Organ Trafficking		Forced Marriage		Child Trafficking			
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Vanguard	2	6.2%	4	13%	-	-	1	3%	8	25%	15	47%
The Guardian	3	9.3%	2	6.2%	-	-	2	6.2%	3	9.3%	10	31%
The Nigerian Observer	3	9.3%	2	6.2%	-	-	-	-	2	6.2%	7	22%
Total	8	25%	8	25%	-	-	3	9%	13	41%	32	100%

Source: Content Analysis 2022

The table above, shows the forms of human trafficking stories reported by the newspapers. Stories on labour trafficking accounted for 8 (25%) stories, sex trafficking stories were also 8 (25%), 3 stories (9%) were on forced marriage and those on child trafficking were 13 (41%), while no report were carried on the menace of organ trafficking. This indicate that child trafficking is the highest form of human trafficking stories reported by the newspapers reviewed.

Tab. 6: Prominence attached to Reports on Human Trafficking

Newspapers	Placement						Human trafficking Reports		Total Issues
	Front Page		Inside Page		Back Page				
	No	%	No	%	No	%			
Vanguard	-	-	15	0.4%	-	-	15	0.4%	1749
The Guardian	1	00.3%	9	0.3%	-	-	10	0.3%	1020
The Nigerian Observer	1	00.3%	6	0.2%	-	-	7	0.2%	601
Total	2	0.1%	30	0.9%	-	-	32	1%	3370

Source: Content Analysis 2022

The data displayed in the table above shows the prominence given by the selected papers to the report on human trafficking. From the total number of 3370 stories published, only 32 stories were on human trafficking with meager (1%) prominence. With reference to their placement, stories on inside page has the highest score 30 (0.9%), followed by 2 (0.1%) stories at the front page while there is no stories on human trafficking on the back page of the Nigerian dailies. Notwithstanding, one can infer that prominence given to human trafficking matters on the lead pages of the newspapers is extremely low when compared to the value given to other issues reported within the same period.

Tab. 7: Pattern of Coverage on Human Trafficking

Newspapers	Items												Total	
	News		Features		Editorial		Opinions		Cartoons		Photo			
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Vanguard	14	44%	-	-	-	-	1	3%	-	-	-	-	15	47%
The Guardian	7	22%	-	-	-	-	2	6.2%	-	-	1	3%	10	31%
The Nigerian Observer	7	22%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	22%
Total	28	88%	-	-	-	-	3	9%	-	-	1	3%	32	100%

Source: Content Analysis 2022

The table above reveals the analysis of the pattern of coverage on human trafficking in the newspapers studied. A total number of 32 items were distributed across the items. News items on human trafficking were 28 (88%). Comparatively, *Vanguard* newspaper had 14 (44%); *Guardian* had 7 (22%) while *the Nigerian Observer* also had 7 (22%). Opinions items on human trafficking were 3 (9%), *Vanguard* had 1(3%), while *Guardian* had 2 (6%). Photo items is just 1 (3%) reported by the *Guardian* newspaper. The following

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content matters: editorial, features and cartoon had no entry on human trafficking. This meant that none of the papers discussed the issue of human trafficking in their editorial, features and cartoons. However, the majority of the coverage on human trafficking was in the news genre (88%) which is followed by the opinion genre (9%). On a comparative analysis, *Vanguard* newspaper had the highest news item on human trafficking.

Tab. 8: Volume of Space Allocated by the Newspapers

Newspapers	Space allocated to stories						Total	
	Full Page		Half Page		Less than half Page			
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Vanguard	-	-	1	3%	14	44%	15	47%
The Guardian	-	-	-	-	10	31%	10	31%
The Nigerian Observer	-	-	-	-	7	22%	7	22%
Total	-	-	1	3%	31	97%	32	100%

Source: Content Analysis 2022

Table 8, above indicates the volume of space allocated to the coverage of human trafficking stories. The papers devoted less than half page (97%) to human trafficking stories, following by half a page (3%). The three dailies did not allocated full page to any of their stories on human trafficking. The *Vanguard* newspaper devoted most of its pages to cover the incident more than other newspapers.

VI. Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: What was the frequency of coverage given to human trafficking stories in the selected newspapers?

The result of this study from the analysis of data responding to this research question showed that the selected newspapers gave 17% of their coverage to human trafficking from the total number of 180 newspapers studied and also only 32 (1%) frequency in their reports on human trafficking from their total number of 3770 stories published (See table 1, 2 and 6). With this result therefore, we infer that the newspapers did not attach significance to stories relating to human trafficking, this is evident in their infrequent reporting of the discourse. This however is not contrary to the result of Nkememena (2009) and Egbo (2012) that found out that most of their study stories did not get adequate consideration due to the low incidence scores in media reports. Another evidence in the study findings in reference to space allotment showed that human trafficking stories in the papers reviewed is relatively low because most of the stories found were in less than half pages across all the selected newspapers. This is also an indication that human trafficking stories did not enjoy much space and the implication of this trend is that human trafficking stories did not have adequate coverage from the newspapers. This result is disturbing because frequency is one of the important indicators of agenda setting (Folarin 1998 as cited in Ikechukwu 2015). Also, a study conducted by Gever (2014) in Ikechukwu (2015, p. 182) indicate that frequency is an important indicator which influences audience understanding.

Research Question Two: What was the prominence accorded to the reports on human trafficking?

The analysis in table 6, revealed that 30 (0.9%) of the stories were placed on the inside pages while 2(0.1%) at the front page of the newspapers studied. With reference to the age-long practice in the print media, stories considered of utmost importance are given prominence through lavish display on both front and back pages where readers could easily notice them while those of less importance are situated in the inside pages of the papers. By implication, this indicates that the prominence accorded to the stories on human trafficking were extremely low when compared to the value given to other issues reported within the same period. This means that the selected newspapers did not give adequate attention to the issue of human trafficking. This result is worrying because of the severity and complexity of the problem. The result of this study corroborates with that of Egbo (2012), which reported that the three dallies studied did not attach importance to sexual violence issue based on the premise on their placement of sexual violence reports. He further states that placement of story is not only an indication of adjudged importance of the story by newspapers which invariably influence people's perception of such issue being important but also, it makes the story strategic for audience attention.

Research Question Three: What were the patterns of coverage used to sensitize the society about the ills of human trafficking?

Data analysis in table 7, shown quite a differential pattern in the distribution of entries. Findings revealed that most of the stories were news stories which is validated by 88%. This however is collaborates with the result of Nkememena, 2009; Gulati, 2011; Egbo, 2012; Stanford et. al., 2016; Reichert, Houston-Kolnik, Vasquez, & Peterson, 2018), that found out that

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the most used genre in reporting crime issues were straight news. This is followed by opinion articles with 9%. This could mean that some readers were able to send their opinions to the papers following the activities of the menace as they unfold during the period understudy. The findings, further showed that the three dailies- *Vanguard, the Guardian and the Nigerian Observer* have no entry of human trafficking stories in their editorial page. This was not expected as editorial give readers the stand of the newspaper house on the issue, given the fact that human trafficking as an issue has drawn the attention of local, national and international communities. A study by Aja (2010) cited in Okoro et al (2015) showed that factors like editorial idiosyncrasy, ownership and house style might be responsible for determining the pattern of newspaper coverage.

Research Question Four: What is the dominant form of human trafficking reported in the selected newspapers?

The analysis of the data responding to this research question showed that child trafficking with 41% is the dominant form of human trafficking stories reported by the three dailies (See table 5). With this result, it could mean that Nigerians are in the habit of trafficking children since they are defenseless and inevitably depend on their immediate human and material environment to cater for their numerous needs or that the phenomenon of baby factory might have promoted child trafficking by creating room for exploiting young girls with undesirable conception. Makinde et al (2015) in Salihu and Chutiyami (2016, p. 33) define baby factories as building, hospitals or orphanages to places for young girls and women to give birth to children for sale in the black market, often to infertile couples, or into trafficking rings". This form of abuse operates in a shadow simply because of the stigma attached to undesirable conception by teenagers, and poor economic status which poses them to offer themselves for little financial gain. Nkememena (2009) in her study, stated that the continuation of such abuses and exploitations would seriously undermine the developmental capacity of children, thereby mortgaging the future of the entire nation.

VII. Conclusion

The media are known to be socially responsible in reporting news event of national importance. They are expected to inform both the public and government, by creating a particular view in the minds of the people in terms of educating, sensitizing and mobilizing them for actions against human trafficking. Though the media have lived up to expectation in setting the agenda for public discourse by serving as a source of information but findings from this study have demonstrated that media reports to a very low extent have been able to publicize the activities of human trafficking which is evident in their infrequent reporting, placement of reports and rare use of editorial in their patterns of reporting. Furthermore, human trafficking stories were mostly presented in news format which by implication, prevents a more comprehensive human trafficking news reporting as well as drawing conclusions from more varied, nuanced sources and viewpoints (Sanford et al., 2016). This situation might hinder members of the society from having expanded knowledge and understanding on salient and more complex issues surrounding human trafficking.

VIII. Recommendations

As a result of the outcome of the present study and related issues raised it was recommended that:

1) The press should draw more attention to the dangers of human trafficking by increasing the level of their reports on the issue. This will help in creating more awareness about human trafficking related risks and also in monitoring human trafficking trends in the country.
2) The media should undertake an in-depth investigative reporting of human trafficking in order to discover more balanced, broader and nuanced perspectives that could help in the understanding of the problem. The press at all levels should also explore more of the news genres, forms and accord more prominence to human trafficking stories.
3) Greater efforts should be made by the government agencies, non-governmental organization and the media to undertake massive campaign to enlighten the populace that there are no greener pasture to collect on the streets on the developed countries. This would help dissuade them from becoming victims of trafficking as a result of false impression.
4) The government should ensure effectively implementation of all of the ratified international laws and regulations, in particular the Palemo protocol (2000), the UNCRC, the ILO Convention No. 182 and the CEDAW, in order to provide an environment conducive to the elimination of human trafficking in Nigeria and the focus must be on all forms of trafficking. Considering the fact that any law without enforcement is bound to fail.
5) The security agencies, particularly those along the borders, like the Nigerian immigration Services and the Nigerian Customs Service, should be trained in the area of tracking down syndicates involved in the heinous crime. The Nigerian Police will also have a role to play in detecting perpetrators of the crime (Olube, 2015).

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