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Highlights

- Supporting Ethnically Diverse Generation Status for Community
- Gandhijis Views on Spirituality
- Examining South-East University

Discovering Thoughts, Inventing Future

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Differences in GPA by Gender and Ethnicity/Race as a Function of First-Generation Status for Community College Students

By Deshonta L. Holmes & John R. Slate
Sam Houston State University

Abstract- In this investigation, the degree to which GPAs might be different between first-generation and non-first-generation students by gender and ethnicity/race for community college students was addressed. Utilizing a 25% random sample of responses from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), student success as a function of their gender and race/ethnicity was analyzed. Student success was statistically significantly different between first-generation and non-first-generation students by gender and by ethnicity/race. In all cases, GPAs were higher for non-first-generation students than for first-generation students. Implications of the results were discussed.

Keywords: *first-generation students, community college, gpa, gender, ethnicity/race.*

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Differences in GPA by Gender and Ethnicity/Race as a Function of First-Generation Status for Community College Students

Deshonta L. Holmes [α] & John R. Slate [σ]

Abstract- In this investigation, the degree to which GPAs might be different between first-generation and non-first-generation students by gender and ethnicity/race for community college students was addressed. Utilizing a 25% random sample of responses from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), student success as a function of their gender and race/ethnicity was analyzed. Student success was statistically significantly different between first-generation and non-first-generation students by gender and by ethnicity/race. In all cases, GPAs were higher for non-first-generation students than for first-generation students. Implications of the results were discussed.

Keywords: first-generation students, community college, gpa, gender, ethnicity/race.

I. Introduction

The 21st century brought about important changes within the workforce. In 1973, a high school diploma was all that was required for 72% of jobs nationally (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010). Carnevale et al. (2010) projected that by 2018, 63% of jobs will require some type of college-experience. Due to low demand for less skilled workers, postsecondary education is essential. However, postsecondary access, success, and completion is an issue of importance for educators and administrators, particularly among underrepresented groups. The difference in a lifetime of poverty and a secure economic future is dependent upon obtaining a college degree or workforce training.

Enrollment of students from non-college educated families into postsecondary institutions has continued to rise (Capriccioso, 2006). Reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (2001) was that 54% of students whose parents graduated from high school enrolled in a college or university after finishing high school. This population is termed first-generation students. First-generation students are defined as "students from a family in which no parent or guardian has earned a baccalaureate degree" (Choy, 2001 p. 19).

First-generation college students differ from their non-first-generation counterparts. These students are less academically prepared for college and have lower reading, mathematics, and critical thinking skills than do non-first-generation students (Terenzini et al, 1996). Riehl (1994) determined that first-generation students scored lower on SAT and have lower GPAs when compared to non-first-generation students. This population also tends to come from lower socioeconomic families, have lower educational aspirations (Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996), and typically obtain lower grades than their counterparts (Chen, 2005). In addition, first-generation students lack familial support in regard to college experience.

Although approximately 34% of freshman enrolled in colleges and universities are first-generation students only 73% of these students return in the second year (Stuber, 2011). Not only is it important that first-generation students enroll in higher education, but it is imperative that they are successful while enrolled so that they obtain their degrees. Though well documented in the research literature (e.g., Forbus etal., 2011; Pascarella et al., 2003) that differences exist among first-generation students and their counterparts, only limited research is available regarding GPA differences by gender and ethnicity/race in first-generation students in community colleges.

a) College Readiness of First-Generation Students

Byrd and Macdonald (2005) conducted a qualitative college readiness study of 8 first-generation college students. Participants were over the age of 25 and had obtained an associate degree from a community college before transferring to a university.

During the interviews with each student, the authors gathered data about the participants' background and experience as college students. Several themes emerged as a result of these interviews, which were grouped into three categories: skills and abilities, background factors and life experience, and the nontraditional concept. An important finding was that students contributed their success in college to their life experiences. Having worked on a job and being older allowed them to be more focused on their goals, which resulted in better time management skills and self-advocacy.

Another qualitative investigation was conducted by Reid and Moore (2008) on college-readiness for first-generation college students. Their sample consisted of 13 Black or immigrant students who were economically disadvantaged and who had graduated from the same

Author α σ: Sam Houston State University. e-mail: profslate@aol.com

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high school. Reid and Moore (2008) focused on the perceptions of these students' preparation for postsecondary education. One important finding was the value of relationships students had with their teachers, counselors, and administrators. Students attributed these close connections as essential to their decision to attend college. Another finding was that students believed their high school English course prepared them for college, but were underprepared in mathematics and science.

In a recent study, Atherton (2014) examined the academic preparedness of first-generation students. Data were obtained from 6,280 students at a public, 4-year university who participated in the Cooperative Institutional Research Program survey from 1999-2009. Mathematics and verbal SAT scores were used to measure academic preparedness between first-generation students and non-first-generation students.

Non-first-generation students who came from families where both parents attended college had SAT verbal scores 48% higher than first-generation students (Atherton 2014).Non-first-generation students who came from families where one parent attended college had scores 32% higher. On the mathematics portion of the SAT, students from families where both parents attended college scored 38% higher whereas students from families where one-parent attended college scored 30% higher than first-generation students. Atherton concluded that evidence continues to support the idea that first-generation students exhibit lower academic preparedness for college.

b) Academic Performance of First-Generation Students

DeFritas and Rinn (2013) conducted a study to examine if academic performance of first-generation students was related to verbal and mathematics self-concepts. Participants were 167 ethnically diverse first-generation students enrolled at a 4-year university. Students with lower self-concepts also had lower GPAs. As reported in similar research by Masewicz and Vogul (2010), ethnic/racial differences were present with White students outperforming both Black and Hispanic students.

An important factor in student learning and outcomes is student engagement (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Soria and Stebleton (2012) investigated differences in academic engagement and retention between first-generation and non-first-generation students. The Student Experience in the Research University survey was administered to 28,237 first year students with only 1864 students responding. It was noted that most of the first-generation students were students of color, came from a working class family, and were low income. The authors concluded that first-generation students were associated with a 45% decrease in odds of reenrolling the second year. Additionally, it was noted that first-generation students exhibited lower academic engagement during their first year.

Aspelmeier, Love, McGill, Elliott, and Pierce (2012) investigated the role of generational status on psychological factors (i.e., self-esteem and locus of control) and college outcomes (i.e., college adjustment and GPA). Participants were undergraduate students at a 4-year university and a majority were females. No statistically significant gender differences were present for GPA, however, statistically significant results were reported for generational status. The association with GPA and self-esteem was large among non-first-generation students than first-generation students. Aspelmeier et al. (2012) concluded that self-esteem was a good predictor of college adjustment and a modest predictor of higher self-reported GPA. In addition, internal locus of control was associated with better college adjustment and moderately associated with higher GPA. External locus of control was associated with lower college adjustment and slightly associated with lower reported GPA.

II. Statement of the Problem

Carey (2004) stated that "Higher education, and the promise it represents, has long been one of the main drivers of opportunity, social mobility and economic progress" (p. 1). The difference in a lifetime of poverty and a secure economic future is dependent upon obtaining a college degree or workforce training. Other benefits are gained from a college-education, which include improved working conditions, better quality of life, and job security. Increased earnings are typically associated with higher levels of education (Day & New burger, 2002).Postsecondary enrollment and completion is an issue of importance for educators and administrators, particularly for underrepresented groups. As such, research is warranted into variables that might be related to student completion of a postsecondary degree.

III. Significance of the Study

The significance of this research study is to determine the degree to which differences might be present in the GPAs of first-generation and non-first-generation community college students by their gender and ethnicity/race. A considerable body of research is available about differences in academic performance and motivation of first-generation students when compared to their peers. Investigating differences in GPA of first-generation and non-first-generation students by their gender and ethnicity/race has the potential of assisting postsecondary education administrators and faculty in understanding and implementing programs or interventions that focus on each specific student demographic.

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IV. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which differences were present in the GPAs of first-generation community college students by gender and ethnicity/race(i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black). Results from this empirical investigation may be informative tohigher education administrators regarding the presence of any achievement gaps present between first-generation and non-first-generation community college students. Furthermore, administrators can use this information in the planning process of student success programs to aid in college completion rates of first-generation students.

V. Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study: (a) What is the difference in GPA as a function of first-generation status for males? (b) What is the difference in GPA as a function of first-generation status for females? (c) What is the difference in GPA as a function of first-generation status for Black students? (d) What is the difference in GPA as a function of first-generation status for White students? and (e) What is the difference in GPA as a function of first-generation status for Hispanic students?

VI. Method

a) Participants

Participants in this study were returning community college students who participated in the 2014 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) survey. The total number of participants was 36,068 students; however, invalid responses were coded as missing and, therefore, were not analyzed. In summary, the total number of students analyzed for differences in GPA was 10,365 first-generation students and 25,703 non-first-generation students.

VII. Instrumentation and Procedures

Data for this study came from the CCSSE survey. The survey is administered annually to students at participating community colleges. The data from participating community colleges were requested and obtained directly from the Center for Community College Student Engagement and then imported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software program. After the CCSSE data file was converted into a SPSS data file, labels were given to relevant variables used in this investigation. Because data were obtained directly from the Center for Community College Student Engagement, minimal errors in the data are assumed to be present.

VIII. Definition of Terms

The focus of this study is differences in GPA of first-generation community college students. *First generation* is a term that refers to students in which neither parent as obtained a bachelor's degree (Choy, 2001). These students are not always low-income individuals, and not always considered at-risk. Grade point averages (GPAs) are used by education institutions to summarize overall academic performance. In this study, GPAs were recorded from an interval scale into 4 categorical groups: highly successful, successful, moderately successful, and not successful. Highly success full abel refers to a grade of A. Successful label refers to grades that fall within a range of A- to B. Moderately successful label refers to grades that fall with a range of B- to C. Not successful label refers to grades that range from C- or below.

IX. Results

To ascertain whether a difference was present in GPA as a function of first-generation status, Pearson chi-square were conducted. This statistical procedure was selected as the preferred statistical procedure because (a) frequency data were present for all variables, (b) all variables were categorical, and (c) the large sample size provided for a per cell size of greater than five (Slate & Rojas-Le Bouef, 2011).For the first research question regarding GPAs of first-generation and non-first-generation male students, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(3) = 27.32$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was below small, .028 (Cohen, 1988). As can be seen in Table 1, differences were present between first-generation and non-first-generation status for successful and not successful male students. For highly successful and moderately successful students, a 1.5% and 2.2% points respectively, were present between first-generation and non-first-generation male students.

Regarding the second research question on the GPAs of first-generation and non-first-generation female students, the result was statistically significant, χ^2 (3) = 194.69, $p < .001$. The effect size, Cramer's V, was below small, .065 (Cohen, 1988). As indicated in Table 1, differences were present between first-generation and non-first-generation status for successful and not successful female students. For highly successful and moderately successful students, non-first-generation students had a 4% higher success rate than first-generation female students.

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Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages of Male and Female Students' GPA as a Function of First Generation Status

Gender by GPA	First Generation %	*n*	Non-First Generation %	*n*
Male Students				
Highly Successful	14.40%	1,492	15.90%	4,092
Successful	55.10%	5,713	56.00%	14,398
Moderately Successful	28.10%	2,917	25.90%	6,649
Not Successful	2.30%	243	2.20%	564
Female Students				
Highly Successful	15.70%	2,535	19.70%	5,890
Successful	56.70%	9,169	57.50%	17,176
Moderately Successful	25.70%	4,153	21.30%	6,357
Not Successful	2.00%	319	1.60%	464

For the third research question on GPAs of first-generation and non-first-generation Black students, the result was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(3) = 0.83$, $p = .84$. The effect size, Cramer's V, was below small, .01 (Cohen, 1988). Readers are directed to Table 2 for the frequencies and percentages of Black students' GPA as a function of first-generation status. For the fourth research question regarding GPAs of first-generation and non-first-generation White students, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(3) = 8.49$, $p = .037$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was below small, .013 (Cohen, 1988). As indicated in Table 2, differences were present between first-generation and non-first-generation status for highly successful, successful, and moderately successful students. For highly successful and successful students, non-first-generation students had a 3% and 1% higher success rate than first-generation students.

Regarding the research question on the GPAs of first-generation and non-first-generation Hispanic students, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(3) = 60.04$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was below small, .07 (Cohen, 1988). As seen in Table 2, non-first-generation Hispanic students had a 3.7% higher highly successful GPA and 4.8% moderately successful GPA than first-generation Hispanic students.

Table 2: Frequencies and Percentages of Students' GPA by Ethnicity/Race as a Function of First Generation Status

Ethnicity/Race by GPA	First Generation %	*n*	Non-First Generation %	*n*
Black Students				
Highly Successful	8.10%	261	8.10%	444
Successful	50.10%	1,623	50.70%	2,777
Moderately Successful	37.80%	1,224	37.60%	2,058
Not Successful	4.00%	129	3.60%	199
White Students				
Highly Successful	19.30%	2,629	20.10%	7,519
Successful	57.60%	7,828	57.80%	21,612
Moderately Successful	21.70%	2,956	20.70%	7,742
Not Successful	1.40%	184	1.40%	531
Hispanic Students				
Highly Successful	9.10%	607	12.80%	710
Successful	55.40%	3,676	56.60%	3,152
Moderately Successful	32.80%	2,175	28.00%	1,558
Not Successful	2.70%	177	2.60%	145

X. Discussion

In this study, differences in GPA by gender and ethnicity/race as a function of first-generation status were examined for community college students. Being a first-generation student was statistically significantly related to student GPA. That is, first-generation community college students had statistically significantly lower GPAs than did non-first-generation community college students. With reference to student ethnicity/ race , first- generation White and Hispanic community college students had statistically significantly lower GPAs than did non-first-generation White and Hispanic community college students. Interestingly, statistically significant differences were not present in GPAs between Black first-generation and Black non-first-generation community college students.

First- generation students are enrolling in postsecondary institutions at high rates (Capriccioso, 2006). Unfortunately, many of these first-generation, along with many non-first-generation, college students

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do not have the college-readiness skills to be successful in their postsecondary experience (Barnes & Slate, 2014; Atherton, 2014; Reid & Moore, 2008). Also present are achievement gaps between male and female students as well as among ethnic/racial groups. As such, programs are needed in which support can be provided to students who enter postsecondary settings without the requisite skills to be successful.

No attempt was made in this study to examine differences in gender among ethnicity/race. As such, this issue should be explored in further studies, specifically among Black students. This additional research will assist policy makers and educators in developing a deeper understanding of the disparities that occur within this population of students. A second recommendation is to expand the study across multiple years. Given this study was limited to one year of date, the extent to which these results are generalizable are unknown. A multi-year study would improve the generalizability of this study.

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Gandhiji's Views on Spirituality and Sensitivity in Daily Life

By Dr. Varsha Das

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He addressed spirituality largely from four angles. They can be enumerated as his faith in Lord Rama, his profound understanding of the teachings of Lord Krishna as depicted in the *Shrimadbhavadgeeta* of the *Mahabharata*, and his realisation that Truth itself is God. Finally, Spirituality as reflected in one's day to day life, in one's thought, speech and action.

Keywords: first-generation students, community college, gpa, gender, ethnicity/race.

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Dr. Varsha Das

Keywords: *raamanaam, eleven vows, bhagavadgeeta, vaishnavajana.*

I. Introduction

A lot has been written about Gandhiji's life, work and thought in the past hundred years. It is difficult to think of anything new. One can only narrow down the scope, and look at one aspect of his multifaceted life in more detail. Gandhiji's moral courage, his stress on ethics and soul force in every sphere of life emerge from his strongly rooted existence in spirituality.

He addressed spirituality largely from four angles. They can be enumerated as his faith in Lord Rama, his profound understanding of the teachings of Lord Krishna as depicted in the *Shrimadbhavadgeeta* of the *Mahabharata*, and his realisation that Truth itself is God. Finally, Spirituality as reflected in one's day to day life, in one's thought, speech and action. These four aspects are not different from each-other. Rather they are interconnected, and quintessentially they all mean the same. These have been organised with a pragmatic approach in his text on Eleven Vows. Those Eleven Vows are: Truth, Non-Violence, Chastity, Control of Palate, Non-Stealing, Non-Possession, Bread Labour, Swadeshi, Fearlessness, Removal of Untouchability, and Tolerance. There can be other dimensions as well of looking at his views on spirituality, but the four mentioned above seem to be the obvious ones.

Gandhiji used to inspire and guide hundreds and thousands of people through his speeches, articles and letters. The recipients of letters benefited in their understanding of spirituality, which according to him was the way of life. It is almost impossible to enlist or even imagine how many people's lives he had touched, influenced and changed for the better during his lifetime that was spent in three different continents. Those to whom he wrote regularly included his wife, his immediate and extended family members, his associates in the *Satyagrahas* and the *ashrams* in South Africa and India, including their spouses and children, politicians, thinkers, journalists, rich businessman, farmers, downtrodden, visitors from various parts of India and abroad, and so on. I have tried to put together in this paper Gandhiji's views on spirituality asexpressed in his letters to his relatives in Gujarati language.

Author: *e-mail: varshadas42@gmail.com*

II. Ramanaam

It is said that expanse of Gandhiji's life was from *Hey Rama to Hey Rama to Hey Rama*. The first famous incident was at his home when he was a child. He was scared of going in the dark. His governess Rambha had asked him to recite the name of Rama and go to the next room which had no light. He at that young age did not understand why and how that recitation had given him the courage, but he trusted Rambha with all his heart, and he began to believe that recitation of Rama's name helped to overcome fears. Later in life he encouraged many others to do the same to overcome fears, and also explained deeper connotation of Rama.

The second significant incident was in Johannesburg in the year 1908. Gandhiji had uttered *Hey Rama* just before falling unconscious when he was brutally attacked by Mir Alam and his Pathan associates. They were under the impression that Gandhiji by agreeing to register himself was on the side of the British. Mir Alam's heart completely changed when he came to know the truth. He repented and became Gandhiji's bodyguard!

Gandhiji's last words, as he fell on January 30, 1948 when he was shot dead by Nathuram Godse from close range, were also *Hey Rama.*

Gandhiji's trust in Rambha led him to trust Rama. What did he mean by Rama? Was Rama of the famous Indian epic the *Ramayana* Gandhiji's icon? On reading his letters and other writings one realises that Rama was a metaphor for a fearless spiritual way of life, the life that was rooted in and moved among the masses. If we split the root words of the *Ramayana* they are Rama and *Ayana. Ayana* in Sanskrit means to move among the people. When Rama was in exile for fourteen years he went on foot from village to village, meeting people rooted in the soil. He befriended the tribes of Nishada, Bheel and others, and also birds and animals in the forest. Gandhiji's life in India and abroad replicated the same.

'Rama' in its tangible and intangible form was an integral part of Gandhiji's life. In February of 1934 when Gandhiji was travelling in Karnataka, he wrote to his wife Kasturba explaining the significance of recitation of Rama's name as given by the saint poet Tulasidas, "*Naam* (name) means *Ramanaam* or the name of the god, and he (Tulasidas) has said that the name is greater than Rama which means that there was Rama

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who possessed a body, that was his limitation. His body was mortal but his name is immortal. The person called Rama also had limited virtues, but virtues of the god in *Ramanaam* are limitless. We can add any number of virtues to him because there is no end to his virtues. That is why he is *gunaateeta* (the one who transcends the three properties of nature i.e. *sattva,* goodness or purity*, rajas,* passion and *tamas,* darkness or ignorance)...We can undoubtedly swim through the ocean of this life if we engrave the name of god in our heart." (22 February 1934)

In another letter to Kasturba written five days later, on 27 February, Gandhiji took this subject a little further, "...How does one recite the name? How does the recitation help when there are thousands of thoughts? You recite it from the heart or else don't recite. If it is recited to show it to others then it is zero. It is rather sinful because it is hypocrisy. Recite with pure intention. Don't get tired of recitation even if there are other thoughts. Continue to recite in spite of thoughts. As you continue to do so it will be engraved in your heart one day....Illiterates and fools can also recite the name."

Gandhiji gave similar encouragement to his eldest daughter-in-law Gulab (Harilal's wife) in his letter of 19 August 1932. He wrote to her that she should not worry about good thoughts crossing her mind. However, "drive away negative thoughts by reciting *Ramanaam* and think only about your work." It is like light dispelling darkness. Gandhiji guided his relatives in the pursuit of spirituality according to each one's understanding and circumstances. He was at that time in the Yervada Jail. His campaign to open temples for the Harijans (the people of lower castes, now known as *dalits*) was bearing fruits. Twelve temples in Allahabad and all the temples in Ayodhya were opened up for the Harijans on 18 September. A Jain temple in Ahmedabad also opened its doors for the Harijans on 19 September 1932.

To Harilal's daughter Manu too Gandhiji wrote about the power of *Ramanaam* on 22 May 1945. "The world intimidates the person more who gets intimidated. Therefore, it would be better if you throw away your fears into the sea. Recitation of *Ramanaam* is the only infallible remedy."

III. The Bhagavadgeeta

The *Bhagavadgeeta* was Gandhiji's spiritual dictionary, a reference book. In his introduction (included in *Geetatriputi*, written from Segaon, Wardha on 24 September 1936), of the book *Geetapa-darthakosha* Gandhiji said that whenever he was in dilemma of action or non-action - *karmaakarma* - he found the right guidance from the *Geeta*. The *Geeta* for him was living, life-giving immortal mother. He believed that the *Geeta* wakes you up from swoon.

Gandhiji was first introduced to the *Geeta* by Edwin Arnold's translation in verse form published as the *Song Celestial* in 1888-89. Gandhiji had also translated the *Geeta* from Sanskrit to Gujarati with the hope that Gujarati men and women would read it and practice it in their day to day life.

He wrote to Kasturba Gandhiji from Kanya kumari, almost Southern tip of India, on 22 January 1934 as he was away from her for quite some time, "....The *Bhagavadgeeta* mentions that god's devotee must stay in solitude. It is important to understand this. We have come alone in this world and will leave alone. Then why do we long for someone's companionship during the period that is indefinite between birth and death? We can also see that though we are born alone are (actually) not alone. We are with our parents. We cannot live for a moment without them. As we grow we generally get married. There also, there are others. Friends also keep company. To an extent we need such company for the growth of our soul. Then why is solitude recommended? Let us understand that. As we think of companions we realize that they show our dependency. Mother, father, husband, wife, friends all of them make us dependent to some extent....Therefore, the mother *Geeta* asks us to look for solitude. It does not mean that you should run away from the company of human beings. It only means that you should not have expectation for having companions. Do not be afraid when there is none. And even if you are in the midst of millions enjoy mental solitude and experience closeness with god."

The fear of death is rejected in the *Geeta* when one is engaged in discharging one's duty. Gandhiji never minced words while talking about death. His letters to his dear ones vouch for it. Gandhiji's relationship with Kasturba since the time they got married till she breathed her last in the Agakhan jail provides the most invaluable lessons for life. Gandhiji was imprisoned in South Africa. He received a telegram from Mr. Albert West informing him about Kasturba's serious illness. Gandhiji wrote the most endearing letter to her from Pretoria on 9 November 1908.

a) Dear Kastur

Mr. West has sent today a telegram about your health. My heart is bleeding. I am alive and yet am not in a position to nurse you. I have dedicated everything to the struggle of Satyagraha. I just can't come. I would certainly not pay the fine. You'll get well if you muster a little courage and eat properly. Yet, if it is my destiny to lose you then I would write just this much that it would not be appropriate that you leave during (our) separation when I am still alive. My love for you is so much that you will remain alive for me even after your death. Your soul is immortal. Leave this life with full faith in the god. If you die it will be your offering to Satyagraha. Mine is not a mere political struggle. It is a

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religious struggle and therefore, it is absolutely pure. How does it matter whether one lives or dies? I am hoping that you also agree with the same and will not feel bad. I am asking this of you.

Mohandas

What a moving letter it is!

Gandhiji's views on death had not changed. From Yervada jail he wrote to his ailing daughter-in-law Lakshmi, his youngest son Devdas's wife on 7 July 1932, "Don't spoil your health by worrying. You should completely get rid of your fear of death and sorrow. Why fear and feel sad for something that is inevitable for each human being? To consider death as a punishment given by the god is ignorance. Death is a gift of god to human beings...."

Gandhiji gave similar assurance about god to his second son Manilal and his wife Sushila on 13 April 1943 from Agakhan jail, "God is indeed (our) guardian in all our sufferings. He can't be seen but he is very much with us. You'll never be perplexed if you maintain this trust."

Gandhiji had experienced near death situation more than once in his life. Separation from a dear one is painful. Even that he had experienced many a times. He could sail through it all because of his spiritual strength. In his letter to his daughter-in-law Chanchal (eldest son Harilal's wife, also known as Gulab) written on 28 January 1909 he quoted examples from India mythology. Perhaps that was the best way to shift Chanchal's mind from sorrow to a positive experience. In the very first sentence he assured her that he would never do anything that would harm her or make her unhappy, "There have been scores of women in India for whom separation was beneficent. Damayanti became immortal after she was separated from her (husband) Nala. Taramati's separation from Harishchandra did well to both of them. Draupadi's separation was for the Pandavas' well-being and all the Hindus are praising Draupadi's firmness. You should not think that these examples did not (actually) happen. Lord Buddha left his wife and became immortal and his wife also became immortal. This is ultimate. I only want you to know from these that your separation is not harmful to you. It is but natural that separation makes you unhappy. It is a sign of love...."

From Segaon Gandhiji wrote to his second daughter-in-law Sushila (Manilal's wife) on 30 June 1938 explaining to her the importance of making right choices in life. "Instead of submitting to our desires we should submit to *Dharma* and consider this as your life's resolution. Many a times there is contrariety between desire and *Dharma*, between pleasure and greater good. On such occasions do only that which is for greater good...."

Gandhiji had arrived at this spiritual height because of his continuous self-reflection and inner reformation. He could talk about the most profound philosophical concepts with such ease and made them relevant to each one's life.

IV. Truth is God

Gandhiji's own life was an ongoing quest for truth. In his letter to his nephew Narandas, written from the Yervada jail on 22 July 1930 Gandhiji explained. "Speaking the truth is generally considered as the meaning of the Truth. But the word Truth has been used in a larger sense. The truth in thought, speech and action is indeed the truth. Nothing more remains to be learnt in this world for the person who understands this Truth completely, because knowledge of all kinds is included in it. Whatever is not included is neither truth nor knowledge; how can it then contain true happiness? If we learn to use this method of testing then we'll immediately know which activity is worth undertaking, (and) which should be avoided; what is worth seeing (and) what is not; what is worth reading (and) what is not."

Gandhiji was writing quite regularly to Narandas from the jail. His letters combined personal queries seeking and giving information, guidance and instructions, and also his articles for the journals, the *Navajivan* in Gujarati and the *Young India* in English. These journals played significant role during the freedom struggle. They were used for Gandhuji's loud thinking, for propagating his views through debates and discussions. Their publication was suspended from 7 July 1930 as the Navajivan Printing Press worth Rs. 40,000 at that time, was confiscated by the Government. But no one was defeated in the spirit. Gandhiji continued to send articles in the form of his letters to Narandas. The text for the journals was typed and brought out in cyclostyled form. English translations of Gandhiji's articles were generally done by Valjibhai Desai and Mahadevbhai Desai. At times Gandhiji himself used to translate them in English for the *Young India*. Once while sending his English translation he wrote to Narandas that his translation should be used only if Valjibhai had not spent his time in translating it.

Gandhiji valued time immensely. In Sevagram he had placed a placard behind his seat which could be read by the visitors. It said, "Be brief, Be quick, Be gone".

Gandhiji was also very particular about not wasting anything. Most of the things were used again and again till they completely wore out, particularly envelopes. Once there was a discussion about the reuse of cloth covers. They all arrived at some conclusion, but after the prayer meeting one person raised the same issue once again. The matter was discussed once again. Gandhiji's pain for having wasted so many people's time is evident in his letter to Narandas written on 31 July 1930:

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"The question was, whether the whole cover is to be pasted with a blank sheet of paper or small chits are to be pasted on the written lines? This conversation was useless. Fifteen minutes of the beautiful time after the prayer was spent on this. As a result it confirmed our foolishness. It harmed truth, non-violence and discernment. Truth was offended because there was no desire for the quest for truth behind this conversation. Non-violence was put to shame because (the person) whose every moment should have been used to observe prevailing misery and pondering upon its remedies, gave his invaluable 15 minutes to this meaningless conversation; and discernment could not be followed. If there was any thought about essential and non-essential things, this conversation would not have lasted even for a moment. Having robbed the people of their fifteen minutes both the persons saw their foolishness in the face, and thanked the god for awakening them."

This may look like an insignificant incident but Gandhiji connected it with much deeper values of life. Apparently abstract concepts like truth, non-violence and discernment manifest in ordinary human behaviour which one often misses to notice.

Further, in the same letter Gandhiji said, "All (of you) must know this much: The search for truth is impossible without non-violence. Truth and non-violence are merged with each-other, like two sides of the same coin, or two sides of a smooth disc. Which one of them is the front and which one is the reverse? Yet, take non-violence as the means and truth as the end. Means are in our hands, therefore, non-violence is the supreme *dharma*. Truth then is god. If we continue to worry about the means we will definitely reach the end some day. We shall win the world if we can determine this much. Whatever obstacles we encounter on the way, we may often feel defeated externally, but without forsaking our trust we shall continue to recite the same mantra, (that) there is truth, it is indeed there. That is the only god; it can be encountered only through one way, by only one means, which is non-violence."

Non-violence alone therefore, is the method, the tool, the way of life to find the truth, the god. Non-violence is the soul-force that is most powerful of all the forces. However, it is not easy to be non-violent in the midst of rampant violence all around. One has to continuously forge it, be convinced about its ultimate success even when it is interpreted by some as weakness. Some intellectuals have interpreted that Gandhiji's non-violent struggle against injustice was due to the reasons of logistics. Since it was a mass movement it had no other choice but to shun weapons! Gene Sharp, an American intellectual inspired by Gandhiji's confidence and conviction in non-violence says, "If you fight with violence, you are fighting with your enemy's best weapon, and you may be a brave but dead hero." When Egyptian protesters' peaceful and disciplined Satyagraha was successful in driving away the dictator, Gene Sharp said, "This is straight out of Gandhi." Gandhiji's confidence in non-violent means to fight injustice had begun in South Africa in the year 1906, and it works even in now. Gandhiji's humanistic approach for resolving any problem, any dilemma was based on inner change, shift of focus from outside to inside. It helped in developing fearlessness and dignity of life.

For cultivating humanistic approach and nurturing it all through the life Gandhiji had spoken about Eleven Vows. These were meant for building one's character. In his words, "I feel and I have felt during the whole of my public life that what we need, what a nation needs, but we perhaps of all the nations of the world need just now, is nothing else and nothing less than character-building."

V. Eleven Vows

Gandhiji's views on spirituality and ethics are interwoven in the eleven vows. These are actions in daily life prompted according to each one's bent of mind, one's own traditions and beliefs, and capacity to understand the under currants of emotions. Gandhiji listed out eleven vows for the ashramites. They are recommended for a simple and happy life, for a continuous process of inner change, and for creating a solid spiritual foundation. As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, the very first vow is Truth (satya), the next is Non-Violence (ahimsa), third is Observance of Celibacy (brahmacharya) and others are Control of the Palate, Non-Stealing, Non-Possession, Physical Labour, Swadeshi, Fearlessness, Removal of Untouchability and Tolerance. All of them support and sustain each other.

In his letter written to Narandas on 14 October 1930 Gandhiji mentioned the necessity of these eleven vows. He said, "Vow means unshakable determination. Vows are necessary to go beyond inconveniences. Unshakable determination is that which endures inconveniences and yet does not give up. A person cannot continue to rise without such a determination. Experiences from the world over would vouch for it....Taking a vow indicates strength and not weakness....If it is proper to do a certain thing, it should be definitely done. That is a vow....Those who say 'I'll do as per my capacity' are exposing their weakness or vanity, even when they refer to it as their modesty. There is not an iota of modesty in that. I have seen in mine and in many others' lives that the phrase 'as per my capability' is poison in good determination. 'As per my capability' means plunging into inconvenience right from the beginning. The sentence 'I'll act in accordance with the truth as per my capability' is meaningless. Any note that says that a certain amount will be paid by a certain date, as per my capability, will not be honoured in the form of a cheque or a bill of exchange."

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More about modesty Gandhiji had explained in his letter to Radhika dated 18 October 1930. Radhika, also known as Radha was Gandhiji's nephew Maganlal's daughter. He said, "The lesson of modesty cannot be learnt. Modesty emerges on its own while cultivating non-violence. Modesty is a significant form of non-violence. It is possible to learn modesty as external conduct which we find in royal families. That is not real modesty. It is a kind of culture. Modesty that I have indicated entails elimination of 'me'. Only a zero remains. Can this learning be imparted? The one who has become aware of this body's momentary (existence) and has a little knowledge of *atma* becomes modest immediately. If I scold you and you keep listening to it with the eyes of a poor cow, and do not get angry even in your mind, then what kind of modesty is that? It emerges only when you have learnt to have self-respect."

Such a common and misunderstood concept of modesty has been explained with such clarity that all those who read this letter will be compelled to do a bit of soul searching to figure out one's own category! One can ask oneself-- Am I modest? Am I hypocritical or is my modesty emerging from my non-violent and self-respecting attitude?

On November 2 of the same year Gandhiji had sent another letter to Radha clarifying more about self-respect and modesty. "If someone kicks me and expects a salute from me, I would tolerate his kick, would not get angry, and would wish well for the person who kicked, would not even retort, but I would not salute him. Here I maintained both self-respect and modesty. Having kicked me he tried to make me sit near his feet. I did not reply, I did not wish him bad even in my dreams but I did not sit near his feet. I think I maintained both. I had no knowledge nor was I aware whether I am modest or what was I when that incident took place.* I am analyzing it now. You can take many lessons from this. You can also learn from your own life, and it is better form a habit of learning from your own life rather than from others. It would be very good if you learn that art. Don't bother to learn about your virtues when you are trying to learn from your life, because others can also see that. Look for your faults. Observing one's faults is also modesty."

(This was during Gandhiji's journey in a horse carriage from Pietermaritzburg to Pretoria, in the year 1893 in South Africa.)

One's conduct in day to day life teaches a lot provided one develops the habit of looking at oneself critically. Gandhiji's explanations regarding eleven vows also lead towards enhancing positive traits and reducing one's negativities. The process seems a seamless connection between pragmatism and spirituality.

Nirmala was Gandhiji's third son Ramdas's wife. To her he wrote on 7 November 1932, "..No anger against anger, no flaw against flaw; calmness against anger, fault returned by good turn, abuse returned by love, ingratitude returned by doing favour - this is *dharma*. This is the conduct in the *ashram*." This letter was sent from Yervada jail.

Although the eleven vows were prescribed for the residents of the ashrams, their observance was voluntary. It was not thrust upon anyone. For that matter in almost all the aspects of life Gandhiji used to show the way, but he did force or drag people to walk that way. However, some have opined that he had forced his experiments in celibacy on his wife and a few others. But on reading Gandhiji's own writings it becomes clear that he always took the consent of the other person. In his letter dated 5 August 1930 to Narandas Gandhiji explained the composition of the word *Bra*hmacharya. He linked it with his primary search for the truth. "*Brhamacharya* means putting into practice (*charya)* the quest for *Brahman* - Truth." In the same letter he further said that semen is to be utilised for enhancing physical and mental power in both (the partners). The procreating senses (*jananendriya*) will be easily controlled if one can control all the senses (*sarvendriya*)."

Gandhiji's life itself was a series of experiments, be it on diet, fasting, S*atyagraha*, non-violence, etc. Everything he experimented first on himself. He included others in the experiment only when he himself was satisfied with the process and the results. That is why the title of his autobiography is *My Experiments with Truth.*

His explanation of *aparigraha* - non-possession is not confined to material wealth. He wrote to Narandas on 26 August 1930, "It is worth remembering that there should be non-possession of thought, similar to non-possession of things. A person who fills up his brain with unnecessary knowledge is a hoarder. All those thoughts which keep us away from god or do not take us towards the god are included in 'hoarding'. This definition has been given by the god in the 13th chapter (of the *Geeta*)."

Gandhiji gives similar advice to Narandas's wife Jamnaben, (letter dated 16 October 1932) in a different manner. It was towards leading a frugal, simple and alert way of life, "Even if it is your money you must keep the account of each cowrie (i.e. a coin of the lowest denomination), because it is a fact that nothing in this world belongs to oneself. We experience it on daily basis that everything belongs to god. Therefore, enjoy and spend everything with the sense of renunciation. Those who follow this keep an account of each *pai* (a copper coin, one third of a paisa) for their own satisfaction."

Not to get attached to worldly wealth, and serve others without any expectation of fruits or laurels was Gandhiji's advice to almost all his relatives. He wrote to his granddaughter Sumitra, Ramdas's daughter, on 4 January 1945, "...the next is about gold bangles. What

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will you do with them? The bangles can be of cotton thread, of shell, of glass, of silver, of gold, of diamond. But of what use they are to you? Your bangles are in your heart itself. This is the real and permanent ornament. Everything else is false...."

And to Amba, his nephew's son Prabhudas' wife, Gandhiji said, "...we want to serve in the midst of any kind of adversity, and that too with cheerful mind and reverence. It is alright if people get to hear about it or they do not hear...."

During his hectic travels in South India Gandhiji wrote to Kasturba on 5 February 1934. Although it was written to her, he ended it by giving his blessings to all. This is another simple and convincing letter about benevolence, about doing good to others. "We have a proverb which says, 'two tasks on the same one road' (*ek panth do kaaj*) . Two tasks should not be taken as two tasks only. Here two means more than one. So it can also be said that 'hundred tasks on one road'. Thousands of people got buried in Bihar within a minute. One naturally realises from this that not a minute should be wasted. Mira has sung, 'Make the best of today. Who has seen tomorrow?' We are not even aware of a minute or a moment. We step out with a yawn. Then which is that golden road where all your objectives are fulfilled as you walk it? Doing good to others (*paropakaar*) is the only road. It means serving the neighbours. Its name is (*paramaartha*) philanthropy. Paramaartha means the highest end of man (emancipation), and its third name is devotion to god, which is not achieved by turning the rosary or by doing *tilak* (mark of pigment on the forehead) or by bathing in the Ganges. We sing this during the morning songs (*prabhaatiya)* of Narasimha Mehta. Devotees teach us that devotion is exchanged against the head (i.e. life). Therefore, all the time, while eating and drinking, sitting and getting up, in the prison and outside, we wish well to the whole world, and to fulfil that do our best to serve others...."

VI. On Vaishnavajana

Narasimha Mehta was a 15th century saint poet of Gujarat. One of the devotional songs written by him was very dear to Gandhiji. Its first two lines are*: Vaishnavajana to tene kahiye je peed parai jane re, Paradukhe upakara kare toye mana abhimana na ane re.*

It means, the person who understands the pain of others is known as a *Vaishnava*. He helps others who are suffering but never boasts about it. The word Vaishnava literally means a devotee of lord Vishnu. In each line of this poem Narasimha defines a true *Vaishnava.* These are basically the qualities of a good human being. This song was often sung during the morning and evening prayers at the ashrams. A number of outsiders used to visit Gandhiji at the Phoenix Settlement (ashram) in South Africa. One of them was Joseph Royeppen. He was a Christian, and was good at music. He loved singing *Vaishnavajana* song. As written by Gandhiji in his letter to Narandas , dated 30 September 1930, "Once, instead of *Vaishnavajana* he sang *Christianajana*. All joined him instantly. I could see, Joseph's joy knew no bounds." A good human being can be of any religion, from any part of the world.

In the same letter Gandhiji also mentioned, "Late Daud Sheth's son Late Husain often stayed at the ashram. He used to join the prayers quite enthusiastically. In a very sweet melodious voice, accompanied by an organ he used to sing, '*yeh bahare baug duniya chand roz*' (this spring in the garden of world is but for a few days). We all learnt to sing that devotional song and it was often included in the prayers."

It has been recorded by the historians that just as Joseph Royeppen had replaced *Vaishnavajana* with *Christianjana*, Imam Saheb had replaced it with *Muslimajana*. Gandhiji raised a pertinent question in his letter to Narandas dated 23 September 1930, "...Why do we need so many religions? We know that there are many religions. There is only one soul but there are innumerable human bodies. Masses of human bodies cannot be avoided even if you want to. Just like in the tree there is only one root of religion but its leaves are innumerable."

"I am trying to explain religion to you. I would not force it on you," wrote Gandhiji to Narandas on 22 April 1929. It was his day of silence. This is what Gandhiji did all his life. He explained, never forced.

In conclusion I give two amusing episodes. Gandhiji had left for London by the Rajaputana ship from Bombay on 29 August 1931 to attend Second Round Table conference. Two British spies boarded the ship at Marseilles. One officer from the customs department went to check Gandhiji's luggage. Gandhiji showed the luggage and told him, "I am a poor beggar. All that I have in my luggage is - six spinning wheels, porringers from the jail, one container of goat's milk, six loin-clothes and a towel, and my honour --which may not be of much value!" These are the words of the man who practiced the vow of non-possession.

And the second episode: Gandhiji stayed in London for nearly three months. On 18th November he went to meet Llyod George and spent nearly four hours. When he left that place at one o'clock in the morning his whole family including the domestic staff went to see him off. The meeting between Gandhiji and Llyod George was reported in the *Manchester Guardian*. Besides the contents of the meeting it also mentioned that an unknown cat was visiting Mr. George's house every day and was sitting at a fixed place for some days prior to Gandhiji's visit. When Gandhiji arrived into that house and sat at a particular place it turned out to be the place where that cat used to sit! She came on that day also and sat on Gandhiji's lap. She kept sitting there till he left, and was never seen thereafter by anyone!

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Supporting Ethnically Diverse Students to 'Be Themselves': Culturally Inclusive Practices of Visual Arts Teachers in New Zealand

By Jill Smith

Abstract- New Zealand, a small nation in the South Pacific, is one of the highest migrant-receiving countries in the world. Paralleling the 2013 New Zealand Census statistics for the adult population, visual arts teachers in its largest city, Auckland, are predominantly European. In contrast, the youthful population under 20 years now comes from ethnically diverse groups. This article reports on research, conducted in ten Auckland secondary schools in 2015, which investigated the effects of this contrasting demographic on visual arts programs. A significant finding was that European visual arts teachers are using culturally inclusive approaches to support their ethnically differing 15-to-18 year old students to 'be themselves'. Conveyed through the teachers' 'voices', the students' artworks speak of the multiple ways in which they express their ethnic identities through the 'visual.

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Supporting Ethnically Diverse Students to 'Be Themselves': Culturally Inclusive Practices of Visual Arts Teachers in New Zealand

Jill Smith

Abstract- New Zealand, a small nation in the South Pacific, is one of the highest migrant-receiving countries in the world. Paralleling the 2013 New Zealand Census statistics for the adult population, visual arts teachers in its largest city, Auckland, are predominantly European. In contrast, the youthful population under 20 years now comes from ethnically diverse groups. This article reports on research, conducted in ten Auckland secondary schools in 2015, which investigated the effects of this contrasting demographic on visual arts programs. A significant finding was that European visual arts teachers are using culturally inclusive approaches to support their ethnically differing 15-to-18 year old students to 'be themselves'. Conveyed through the teachers' 'voices', the students' artworks speak of the multiple ways in which they express their ethnic identities through the 'visual'.

I. Introduction

New Zealand's 2013 Census (Statistics New Zealand, 2014), and subsequent migration statistics, provided prime motivation for research that I conducted in ten Auckland secondary schools in 2015. The research was informed by data from an earlier study (author, 2007), which showed that while New Zealand was becoming increasingly multicultural, biculturalobligations remained the major focus in visual arts education. In 2015, my aim was to ascertain whether competing tensions between biculturalism and multiculturalism persisted (author, 2010); to determine the influence of cultural policy in national curriculum and assessment; and to discovewhether teachers were using culturally inclusive pedagogies in the visual arts. Underpinning the data collection were theoretical perspectives on using 'voices' and the 'visual' as powerful tools in research (Leavy, 2015; Rose, 2012). Oscar Wilde's words, displayed in the art room of one teacher, encapsulates the key finding from this small-scale qualitative study; that European ethnic teachers are supporting their ethnically differing students to 'be themselves'. I posit that the multiple means through which students expressed their individual identities in powerful ways through their artworks signals a positive direction in culturally inclusive visual arts education in New Zealand.

Author: e-mail: j.smith@auckland.ac.nz

II. Issues Informing the Research

a) *The Widening Gap: European Art Teachers / Ethnically Diverse Students*

Demographic contrasts between visual arts teachers and their students was a key issue underpinning my research in 2015. By 2013 New Zealand's population had reached 4.24 million people of whom 74% identified with European ethnicities, followed by 14.9% Māori, 11.8% Asian, and 7.4% Pasifika peoples (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). The population of Auckland, the largest city, was 1.42 million. While there were fewer adults of European ethnicities living in Auckland (59.3%), compared with nationally, this city had gained a very diverse youthful population. Students of Pasifika (35.7%) and Asian (20.6%) ethnicities comprised over half of young people under 20 years (56.3%). European youth (19.6%), along with Māori, Middle Eastern, Latin American, African and Other ethnicities comprised the remaining population. The increasing demographic contrast between visual arts teachers and students was evident in my earlier research (2007), aligning with a world-wide phenomenon in Western societies (Feistritzer, 2011; Landsman & Lewis, 2012). An aim in 2015 was to ascertain whether this gap had widened further.

b) *Competing Tensions: Biculturalism And Multiculturalism*

In the 1970s, while other former British colonies were introducing multiculturalism as national policy, cross-cultural understanding in New Zealand was advocated in terms of biculturalism, with multiculturalism a hoped-for future outcome (Hill, 2010; Irwin, 1989). Although New Zealand has become an increasingly diverse society since the 1990s, the bicultural commitment founded in its postcolonial history affected multicultural education for ethnically differing students (Hill, 2010; Singham, 2006). My research in secondary schools in 2007 confirmed that visual arts curricula and pedagogical practices emphasised biculturalism over multiculturalism. I found that visual arts teachers prioritised European and Māori art and culture, adopted a token obligation to Pasifika, and ignored an Asian presence (2010, 2011). A priority in 2015 was to ascertain whether competing tensions between

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biculturalism and multiculturalism persisted, or whether this situation had changed.

c) *Pedagogical determinants: Cultural Policies In Curriculum And Assessment*

Visual arts education is informed by *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2007), which contains eight learning areas, of which the Arts (visual arts, dance, drama and music) is one. It is stated that "The Arts are powerful forms of expression that recognise, value, and contribute to the unique bicultural and multicultural character of New Zealand" (p. 20), and that "European, Māori, Pasifika, Asian and other cultures add significant dimensions to New Zealand's visual culture" (p. 21).The curriculum cites 'cultural diversity' as one of eight principles that embody beliefs about what is important in education. However, an evaluation by the Education Review Office (2012), an independent government body, found that "cultural diversity ranked as the 'least evident' principle underpinning school decision making" in 201 primary and secondary classrooms (p. 19), and that bicultural obligations took precedence. This finding resonated with my research in visual arts programs in secondary schools in 2007, reported above.

In their final three years of secondary schooling, 15-to-18 year old students who elect to study visual arts have their artwork assessed through Level 1-3 Achievement Standards for the *National Certificate of Educational Achievement* [NCEA] (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2014). Informed by the curriculum, visual arts teachers design NCEA programs to enable students to meet the achievement standards. At successive levels students are expected to demonstrate understanding of artworks in cultural contexts; develop, clarify and generate ideas; and produce a cohesive body of work informed by established practice (the study of 'artist models') in one or more fields of painting, design, sculpture, printmaking and photography. The intention is not for students to imitate or replicate artists' works, but to inquire into their ideas, techniques and processes to inform their 'own' art making (Duncum, 2002). In 2015,I wanted to ascertain whether students received opportunities to express their ethnic identities within the framework of curriculum and assessment policies.

d) *Culturally Inclusive Pedagogies: Understandings Of The Visual Arts Teachers*

Nieto and Bode (2012, p. 124) claim that "subject matter dominates pedagogy in secondary schools"; that… "teaching from the point of view of students is uncommon… and many teachers attempt to treat all students in the same way, reflecting the unchallenged assumption that "equal means the same"" (Nieto, 2004, p. 106). Culturally responsive pedagogy is defined by Gay (2010, pp. 26-27) as "teaching to and through [students'] personal and cultural strengths, their intellectual capabilities, and their prior accomplishments" … premised on "close interactions among their ethnic identity, cultural background, and student achievement."

New Zealand researchers argue that teaching is the most important factor in student achievement (Alton-Lee, 2003; Rubie-Davies, 2010). This requires teachers to take responsibility for every student, value diversity, respect students' cultures, have high expectations, and build on students' experiences. Nash (2004) agrees that student achievement is affected by the degree to which a student's culture is respected by the school and the similarity between the culture of the community and the values of that school. These international and local perspectives provided a foundation for the research. In 2015, it was essential to ascertain visual arts teachers' understandings of culturally inclusive pedagogies, and whether these affected their students' art making.

e) *Validation of images in academic research: The 'visual' as a powerful tool*

By the 1990s arts-based practices constituted a new methodological genre that "posed serious challenges to methods conventions, thus unsettling many assumptions about what constitutes research and knowledge" (Leavy, 2015, p. 11). While traditional modes of academic discourse have questioned the validity of images as 'data', the decision to collect examples of students' art works was influenced by theoretical perspectives on the 'visual' as a potent tool in educational research and the notion that images are an illuminating means through which meanings can be expressed in ways that words cannot (Rose, 2012; Weber, 2008). Stanczack (2007, p. 3) stresses that "images are not merely appendages to the research but, rather, inseparable components to learning about our social worlds. "Pertinent to the 2015 research, Leavy (2015) states that while imagery is created and produced through art making, it is "the way that visual art opens up multiple meanings that are determined by the artist and the viewer that is important" (p. 224). Her view is that visual images provide "a significant source of information within which researchers can discern patterns pertaining to individuals and society" (p. 225). Sindling, Gray and Nisker's (2008) reminder to researchers that they should enable research participants "to engage with the images before they are put in the public domain" (p. 465), was adhered to as part of the university's ethical requirements for this research.

III. The Shape of the Research

Fifty-three state secondary schools in Auckland were randomly selected from the Ministry of Education's (2014) *School Statistics: Culture counts* website on the basis of location, school type (single gender, co-educational) and decile (a socio-economic ranking from

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1-10). A visual arts teacher at each school was invited to participate in the research, for which the research question was: "How are visual arts teachers responding to the increasing diversity of students in Auckland secondary schools?"

The research was conducted in two stages: an anonymous online questionnaire and an optional face-to-face interview. Rich baseline data were gathered from the questionnaire. Although not reported in this paper these data informed the interviews. Of the 28 teachers who volunteered to be interviewed, 10 were randomly selected using the same criteria as for school selection. I invited these visual arts teachers to bring to their interviews examples of students' art works that they believed reflected their responsiveness to those they teach. The university's ethics process required consent from students and their parents/caregivers, prior to art works being brought to interviews and used in reporting the findings. It was beyond the scope of this small-scale research for me to interview students, butI anticipated that interviews with their visual arts teachers, together with examples of art works, could provide important insights.

a) The Visual arts Teachers and their Schools

Six of the ten visual arts teachers who brought art works by year 11-13 students (15-to-18 year olds) to their interviews, feature in this paper. Their secondary schools, hereafter referred to as Schools 1-6, ranged from decile 1-10, were different in type, and located across Auckland. The visual arts teachers taught across the range of schools. Four were European-New Zealand, a fifth was European-New Zealand Māori, and the sixth was New Zealand-Dutch. In accord with the university's ethics process pseudonyms were required to protect the identities of schools and teachers, but I was able to identify students' art works with their first names, ethnicity and age. Prior to their interviews, teachers completed a spreadsheet detailing their professional and academic qualifications, the school's student ethnicity statistics and a copy of their school's mission/vision statement. These documents provided rich introductions to the schools and participants and informed the interviews.

b) Data collection through interviews and students' art works

The three-hour semi-structured, audio-recorded interviews with teachers took place in their school's art department, followed by photographic documentation of students' art works. Interviews were informed by the research question and the underpinning issues presented above, the influence of each school's philosophy and mission/vision statement and decile ranking, and whether the teachers were enabling ethnically diverse students to 'be themselves' through making art works.

IV. Findings: Enabling Students to 'be Themselves'

The findings are presented through the 'voices' of six visual arts teachers and 'visual' examples of their students' art works completed for the Level 1-3 Achievement Standards for the *National Certificate of Educational Achievement* [NCEA] (NZQA, 2014). Each example illustrates the teachers' commitment to their schools' philosophy and vision statements; their pedagogical beliefs and perceptions of what constitutes culturally inclusive approaches; and their desire to enable their ethnically differing students to 'be themselves' through depicting their identity and social life (Meyers, 2004).

a) Kaitlin and her student Aeluna

Kaitlin, a European New Zealander, had taught visual arts at School 1 for six years. This large state co-educational school had a low decile 2 socio-economic rating and a roll of 1892 students of whom 941 were from Pasifika ethnic groups (50%). The next largest groups were Māori (24%), Asian (15%) and European (9%), with 2% from Other groups. Kaitlin explained how the school's mission statement focused on respecting each other, striving for academic and self-excellence and embracing each other's cultures. She said, "Although we may come from different cultures we belong to one family." In accord with Nash (2004), student achievement at School 1 was enhanced by the way in which the school and Kaitlin respected the students' cultures. A feature of her pedagogy was placing cultural diversity at the centre of planning at all levels, and encouraging students to share knowledge of their cultures with their peers. She said, "By planning around that we get results because students have a sense of empowerment and buy into it." Kaitlin's program for year 12 students, mostly 16-to-17 year olds who were engaged in NCEA Level 2, focused on 'Symbolic Self-Portraits'. As the starting point students began with items or objects with which they identified, and were then introduced to how a range of artist models treat symbolism in portraiture. The aim was for students to bring themselves to the forefront of their art and to celebrate who they are.

Kaitlin's approach is evident in the art works of Aeluna, a 17-year-old Middle Eastern girl who had fled from Syria with her family and came to New Zealand. Kaitlin described Aeluna as being "very shy by nature and quite closed and reserved about how she presents herself and when she meets people."Aeluna had spoken to her about the importance in Syria of family religion, education, self-discipline and respect. Kaitlin perceived that a possible consequence of Aeluna' s cultural upbringing was that "she struggled in her self-portraits to make eye contact where she looked straight at the

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at the viewer. I reassured her that she could find other ways to draw the viewer in."



Figure 1: Aeluna, Middle Eastern, 17 years

Aeluna's 'other ways' were to present her face in three-quarter view, or profile, gazing contemplatively into the distance. Kaitlin explained that "Aeluna's use of symbolic objects was where her culture really started to come in. She has the isotoxal star triangle, and above it the wings of the East Semetic God Assur … and the skull because she talks about life and death a lot."As the 'viewer' of her images, Aeluna provided me with a significant source of information (Leavy, 2015). I was captivated by the strong contrasts between the skull, the dove as an emblem of peace and daisy as a symbol of innocence and perceived Aeluna's use of purple as a sign of spirituality, sacred wisdom and enlightenment. A hint of geometric Syrian patterns coexist with those drawn from the paintings of her artist model, American painter Chuck Close, in which she used his gridded application of individual colour squares to add depth to her self-portraits. Kaitlin remarked, "At the end I said to Aeluna, your technique is absolutely wonderful and your art works are reading so much like your personality."

When asked if she thought teacher disposition was a significant part of teaching at School 1, Kaitlin was adamant that "if a teacher's attitude is narrow, if you're not open to new ideas and learning from students, it's not going to work at this school." She concluded, "The year 12 program is like a self-identity unit in some respects because I don't think students realise exactly who they are until they start doing this." Kaitlin saw her role as one in which she grew "really good relationships with students", supporting them to be themselves.

b) Matthew and his student André

Matthew, a European New Zealander, had taught at School 2 for over 30 years. This low decile 1 state co-educational school had a roll of 721 students of whom 570 identified as Pasifika (79%). Along with four Europeans, there were a number of refugee students from South East Asia, India, and Middle Eastern countries. Matthew emphasised the strong culture of Pasifika languages, spoken at home and in school, and determination that all students should have opportunities to succeed. One of his key roles was countering the low English language literacy among Pasifika students by giving students confidence to 'be themselves' and express their individual ethnicities through visual arts. This ambition was the driving force behind his year 11 NCEA Level 1 program, with mostly 15-year-olds. Matthew explained that what the students are interested in is of utmost importance: "They want to tell stories about themselves and their cultural milieu … and they know what they want to do. I've learnt to accept the student voice… I've had to let go and let them have a shot in their own way." For boys, "it's mostly about rough and tumble … any bodily contact, fighting, wrestling, dancing, and sports, especially basketball. Culture works really well as a strand, and so does religion. "Because of his anti-bullying stance, Matthew said he had managed to take fighting into animé which he found more acceptable.

Matthew's approach is embodied in the art works of André, a 15-year-old Cook Islands Māori boy. One of his strategies for motivating students to generate work is for them to take photographs of each other in action, doing leapfrogs, hip-hop dancing, shooting goals and interacting with one another. A second strategy is to select artist models whose approaches resonated with themes students wanted to explore. A favourite is Jon Cattapan who generates his work on the internet to make political and social representations of the urban environment. But it is the artist's techniques of using dots and lines and blocks of colour that students use to give a sense of dynamism to their work. These pedagogical strategies were evident in André's paintings. Matthew spoke of how André used elements of movement and dramatic contrasts of light and dark to express his cultural milieu: "It's high and low art and popular culture blending together in an animé theme, and that whole power-ball thing … lots of physical contact … he's dealing with what he wants to deal with." I was particularly impressed by 15-year-old André's use of perspective, dramatic foreshortening and scale, and painterly techniques, all of which added intensity to what he wanted to say.

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Figure 2: André, Cook Islands Māori, 15 years

When asked about his relationship with Pasifika students, who comprised the majority at his school, Matthew said they accepted him as a New Zealand European … "they're not critical of difference." I could see that Matthew was at home in this environment and had a deep understanding of the students. "I'm actually quite strict in the way students have to behave, but I'm gentle with them, too, and it works." This was apparent in the warmth with which he talked about working with, and for, all his students and encouraged them to be themselves.

c) Martin and his student Roberta

Martin, a European New Zealander, had taught at School 3 for twelve years. This low decile 1 state co-educational school had a roll of 1268 students of whom 72% were from Pasifika ethnic groups. Māori students made up 10% and the remaining 8% included only four European students. In its vision statement, School 2 described itself as "a dynamic learning community that is meeting the needs of its student population while maintaining the awareness of living in a rapidly changing society with diverse cultural needs." Martin explained that the schoolemphasized curriculum expectations that address cultural diversity. He said, "You wouldn't survive in this school if you were culturally ignorant, couldn't pronounce the students' names, and if you didn't have some awareness of the life they lead." Although Pasifika students "are the real force" in his NCEA Level 1-3 classes with 15-to-18 year olds, Martin provided opportunities for all students to learn about the art and culture of the indigenous Māori people, including the significance of whakapapa (genealogy), whenua (land) and place (turangawaewae). "We go up Mangere Mountain, one of the largest volcanic cones in Auckland. It used to be the site of a major pā(Māori village or defensive settlement).The students sit in this fabulous amphitheatre with the whole of Auckland cut off from them, drawing Pohutakawa and other trees, and the landscape from the internal crater."Whatever their ethnicity, Martin's style of teaching is to encourage each student at NCEA Level 3 to "follow their own dreams, their own pathway."



Figure 3: Roberta (NgāPuhi-TeHikutu, NgātiWhatua-Te Uri o Hau), Māori, 18 years

This approach is exemplified by the art works of Roberta, an 18 year old Māori girl. Roberta's artist models were Star Gossage, a Māori (NgatiWai) woman with French, English and Portuguese connections, and John Walsh (Aitanga a Hauiti). Like Gossage and Walsh, whose art works are influenced by ancestry and whanau (family), Roberta adopted a similar approach to locating figures on the land, and within the land. Whereas Gossage's raw and intuitive work features blurred transitory figures, Walsh brings a human-like face to his paintings of carved forms. Martin explained that Roberta had "substituted human figures with the Māori female frontal 'tiki' …carved pendants that were worn as talismans of fertility and childbirth. Together with the tiki, Roberta used its profile form, the 'manaia', to speak of her whakapapa and ancestry."In her mixed media art works, inspired by being on Mangere Mountain with its crater, volcanic peak extending 106 metres above sea level, and the wind-swept Pohutakawa trees, I sensed that Roberta's dream-like portrayal of images were a reflection of her place as tangata whenua, the first people of the land in Aotearoa-New Zealand. Within this school, where Pasifika students were dominant, Martin had supported Roberta to explore her Māori-self … to be herself.

d) Sandra and her student Hyemi

Sandra, a European New Zealander, had taught at School 4 for ten years. Her high-decile 10 state co-educational school had a roll of over 1700 students, of whom European New Zealand students comprised

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49.68% and other European students 30.89%. Chinese (5.33%), Māori (4.93%) and South East Asian (1.72%) were the next largest ethnic groups. Sandra said the school's mission statement focused on "striving for our students to do their best and to achieve good academic results, but we also want students to be good all-rounders." She added, "There is definitely care for students of different ethnicities and wanting the best for every student no matter where they come from."

The art works of Hyemi, an 18-year-old Korean girl, reflected Sandra's pedagogical approach of supporting students to be themselves. Hyemi was educated in Korea and New Zealand and had a clear vision of the "issues she wanted to convey" in her NCEA Level 3 artwork. She spoke to Sandra about the Korean education system; that "schools are like factories that produce skilled individuals like a manufacturer." The issue for Hyemi was the "strict education system in East Asian countries, the enormous pressure to succeed, and the social problems students face as a result." Sandra discussed how Hyemi had used her own image to convey her messages in a particularly powerful way. Inspired by the blue-tinged paintings of Ivan Alifan, and the painting 'The Death of Marat' (1793) by Neoclassical artist Jacques Louis David, Hyemi portrayed her feelings of drowning, of "sink or swim," of keeping her head above water, and the notion of art education as a conveyor belt. Hyemi's view was that "you either remain in a restrictive system or you break out of it."



Figure 4: Hyemi, Korean, 18 years

For me, Hyemi's art works represented "inseparable components to learning about our social worlds" (Stanczack, 2007, p. 3). For Sandra, Hyemi's expression of ideas through the visual arts was indicative of her pedagogical approach to supporting NCEA Level 3 students (mostly 17-to-18 year olds) to "have their say about what concerns them most."

e) Jacqui and her student Nimo

Jacqui, a European New Zealand Māori, had taught at School 5 for ten years. This low decile 1 state co-educational school had a roll of 922 students, of which 77% were from Pasifika groups. Māori students comprised 19% and the remaining 4% included 24 Europeans. The school's mission statement was "To nurture in each individual a belief in the self, a commitment to achievement and the spirit of aroha (caring)." Jacqui explained that the art department's vision was "to inspire in each student a creative outlet that will develop their confidence, support their wellbeing and help shape their personal identity in a positive way. "In Jacqui's NCEA Level 3 painting program, emphasis was placed on the students' individuality. She said, "It is at this level that my 17-to-18 year old students really want to make art about them selves … and they want to place themselves in their own personal and cultural contexts." Jacqui explained that when each student has decided what ideas they want to explore, what messages they want to convey, and what artists' styles and techniques they are attracted to, she helps them locate artist models for inspiration. The school's intranet is used for this purpose because "for families in this low socio-economic area buying books is a low priority."

Jacqui's approach is illustrated by the paintings of Nimo, a 17-year-old Samoan boy. I was immediately struck by the sense of sadness that pervaded his work. Jacqui explained that the focus of Nimo's paintings was his two siblings, an older brother who perished in a house fire and the love he has for his little sister, Orchid. Jacqui helped him find artist models whose art works used techniques that would help to make his story more potent. Nimo drew upon David Schnell's illusions of architectural and foreshortened constructions through lines of perspective, to convey "a sense of drama, of being here and no longer there." He drew upon aspects of paintings by street/graffiti artist Connor Harrington, applying the subdued side of Harrington's work. A dark palette, painterly gestural style, and juxtaposition of sharp lines alongside realistic self-portraits were the means through which Nimo conveyed his personal story. I assumed that the New Zealand ensign, with its Union Flag on the canton and the white stars of the Southern Cross, indicated Nimo's country of birth. Jacqui considered the black silhouetted images of Nimo holding Orchid's hand as they walked towards, and stood before their brother's coffin, his most powerful painting. This student's art work supports Weber's (2008) advocacy for "the ability of images to evoke visceral and emotional responses in ways that are memorable" (p. 47). They illustrate Jacqui's pedagogical approach to providing opportunities for her students to be true to themselves and make art that was most meaningful to them.

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Figure 5: Nimo, Samoan, 17 years

f) Yvonne and her student Jeeun

Yvonne, a New Zealand-European with Dutch connections, had taught at School 6 for over 20 years. Her mid-decile 6 state co-educational school had a roll of 1900 students of whom European-New Zealand students comprised 47%. While Indian and East Asia students formed the next largest groups, there were students of 60 differing ethnicities at the school. Yvonne described how the school's mission statement was twofold: "To inspire students to achieve educational excellence through a rich learning and social environment, and for students to become the best person they can be and contribute to society." She believed her school was "multicultural in a harmonious way, in an environment of acceptance and respect." It was on a large poster in the art room at School 6 that students were alerted to Oscar Wilde's words: *"Be yourself; everyone else is already taken."* Part of Yvonne's learning as a visual arts teacher had been to broaden her knowledge, through research, of the art and culture of students of differing ethnicities at her school so that she could support them to express their individual identities.

The art works by Jeeun, a 17-year-old Korean girl who had immigrated to New Zealand with her family, embody an approach that a number of Yvonne's year 13 NCEA students pursued; an examination of issues related to their particular culture. Yvonne noted that students educated in China or Korea had experienced a more traditional academic approach of observational drawing, rather than the emphasis in New Zealand's NCEA "on developing and expressing ideas, communicating and interpreting." The issue Jeeun chose to explore was how a large percentage of young women in Korea undergo surgical interventions for their face, and even equipment interventions to lengthen their legs. Jeeun talked to Yvonne about the role of women in Korean society and how "they gain value in the world by looking after the physical body ... that it's also linked to how people in Korea talk about 'reading the face'". She spoke of the particular meanings attributed to facial features; "that it's preferable to have a 'happy face' and more likely to lead to employment. "Yvonne and I agreed that Jeeun had created a very potent story about the manufacturing of beauty. Yvonne added, "Jeeun's work has tracked the research. She started off kind of anti but now that she's researched it more … this might be a possibility for her eighteenth birthday. About 80% of young women have this done, and that was part of the conversation."



Figure 6: Jeeun, Korean, 17 years

V. Discussion

The findings that emerged from conversations with the six visual arts teachers, in conjunction with examples of artworks by their 15-to-18 year old students, encapsulate their school's philosophies and the teachers' professional beliefs. They reflect the teachers' pedagogical approaches informed by curriculum and assessment policies, and their desire to support students to 'be themselves' through the visual arts in a range of Auckland secondary schools in New Zealand.

a) The schools' philosophies

The mission statements of each school reflected their educational philosophy and cultural perspectives in relation to their student population. At the lowest decile Schools 1, 2, 3 and 5, where students were the most ethnically diverse, and included Pasifika student populations ranging from 50% to 79%, emphasis was given to embracing diversity and affirming each other's cultures. At Schools 4 and 6, the mid-to-high decile schools, at which European students ranged from 47% to 49.68%, prominence was given to striving for academic excellence. Not with standing these emphases, all six schools promoted a culture of care for their students and wanted the best for them. These positions align with Nash's (2004) argument that student achievement is affected by the degree to which a student's culture – whatever that may be – is respected by the school and the values of that school.

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b) The teachers' pedagogical practices

Albeit small, this sample of six visual arts teachers aligns with international research that teachers continue to be white while students are becoming increasingly diverse (Feistritzer, 2011; Landsman & Lewis, 2006). All six teachers were European New Zealanders, with two identifying their Māori and Dutch connections. In accord with Alton-Lee (2003), Nash (2004) and Rubie-Davies (2008), their culturally inclusive practices were grounded in their school's mission statements and enacted through their positive teaching "to and through [students'] personal and cultural strengths" … premised on "close interactions among their ethnic identity, cultural background, and students achievement" (Gay, 2010, pp. 26-27). The 'voices' of the six teachers exemplify how each took responsibility for their students, respected their cultures, had high expectations, and supported them to express their identities and individuality through art works. This contradicts Nieto and Bode's (2012, p. 124) claim that "teaching from the point of view of students is uncommon." Rather, these teachers' pedagogical practices were underpinned by *The New Zealand Curriculum's* (MoE, 2007) declaration that "European, Māori, Pasifika and other cultures add significant dimensions to New Zealand's visual culture" (p. 21). They were driven by the Level 1-3 achievement standards for the *National Certificate of Educational Achievement* (NZQA, 2014) through which their 15-to-18 year olds were given opportunities to demonstrate understanding of art works in cultural contexts, develop, clarify and generate ideas, and produce a cohesive body of work informed by established practice (the study of 'artist models'). The finding from my earlier research (2007) that visual arts curricula and teachers' pedagogical practices emphasized biculturalism over multiculturalism, was no longer evident in 2015.

c) The students' art works

The students, whose art works were selected by their visual arts teachers, were ethnically diverse. Two were Korean, the others being Middle Eastern, Cook Islands Māori, Samoan, and New Zealand Māori. Their art works (Figures 1-6) justify my decision to collect art works as data. They visually depict how the students' culturally responsive teachers contextualized their teaching in ways that resonated with their students. As Weber (2008) expresses it, "Images help us to adopt someone else's gaze, see someone else's point of view, and borrow their experience for a moment" (p. 45). They carry what Becker (2002, p. 11) refers to as "real, flesh and blood life" and are used not just as evidence, but as persuasive statements about the individuality of each of these 15-to-18 year olds.

VI. Conclusion

This research sought answers to the question: "How are visual arts teachers responding to the increasing diversity of students in Auckland secondary schools?" This paper reports specifically on how six European-New Zealand visual arts teachers supported their ethnically diverse students to 'be themselves.' The shape of the research highlighted potential limitations. First, the visual arts teachers who volunteered to participate probably did so because they held a particular interest in the research question. This could account for the fact that the majority taught in low-to-mid decile schools with ethnically diverse students. A further limitation, although beyond the scope and timeframe of this small-scale research, was that the 'voices' of students were not sought. The issue of validity could also be considered a limitation especially since validity of interpretations and meanings has long been questioned in debates over the legitimacy of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This research is not generalizable in the traditional sense. Rather, it has verisimilitude through "the creation of a realistic, authentic, life-like portrayal" (Leavy, 2015, p. 57), as evidenced in the findings.

I contend that the knowledge generated by this research is significant in its own right. The data collected through teachers' 'voices' and 'visual' examples of their students' art works highlight the importance of building relationships between predominantly European-ethnic teachers and the increasingly diverse student population. The art works illustrate that "culturally responsive pedagogy and racial identity are related to achievement and resilience" (Hanley & Noblit, 2009, p. 81). They encapsulate the importance of teachers supporting students to be themselves. This research has the potential of transferability of the teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practices, and the role of images in research, to other settings within and beyond visual arts education.

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Examining South-East University Students Optimisation of the Feedback Tool of the Online Newspaper in Nigeria

By Anthony Chinedu Ekwueme & Sylvester Ugochukwu Ugwuanyi

University of Nigeria

Abstract- The process of sending, and having, reactions to contents of traditional newspapers published used to be tortuous, but with the online newspaper readers' responses to published contents can almost be instantaneously posted online. This current ease has however raised the question as to whether the tool through which users can post reactions online are appreciated and optimised by readers. This study therefore looks into this optimisation within the frameworks of the agenda-setting theory and the democratic-participant theory. A total of 383 students drawn from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and the Federal University of Technology, Owerri, were surveyed. At the end, findings showed that 76% of users read comments succeeding news stories on online newspapers, 55% of online newspapers readers do not utilise the comment box adjourning contents to express their thoughts. While 39% of the comments read by online newspaper users relate to the stories they are adjoining, 41% of respondents say the comments they post on the message board have a direct bearing on the story in question. It was also found that 56% of respondents believe that the process of posting reactions to stories published on web pages is still not easy.

Keywords: online newspaper, feedback, tool, optimisation.

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Abstract- The process of sending, and having, reactions to contents of traditional newspapers published used to be tortuous, but with the online newspaper readers' responses to published contents can almost be instantaneously posted online. This current ease has however raised the question as to whether the tool through which users can post reactions online are appreciated and optimised by readers. This study therefore looks into this optimisation within the frameworks of the agenda-setting theory and the democratic-participant theory. A total of 383 students drawn from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and the Federal University of Technology, Owerri, were surveyed. At the end, findings showed that 76% of users read comments succeeding news stories on online newspapers, 55% of online newspapers readers do not utilise the comment box adjourning contents to express their thoughts. While 39% of the comments read by online newspaper users relate to the stories they are adjoining, 41% of respondents say the comments they post on the message board have a direct bearing on the story in question. It was also found that 56% of respondents believe that the process of posting reactions to stories published on web pages is still not easy.

Keywords: online newspaper, feedback, tool, optimisation.

I. Background of Study

Prior to the advent of online newspaper, the kind of interaction that goes on between traditional newspapers and their readers was far from being prompt and hassle-free. At that time, there was a great time lag between when feedbacks to news and opinions in newspapers are posted and the time they eventually appear on the newspaper pages. Readers then used the post offices to send their letters to the PO Box and PMB of newspapers and magazines. The delivery of such mails took time as the postal services was not that efficient; hence by the time such responses get to be published, something else would have become more topical. And if such feedback gets published, many a reader would be struggling to connect the feedback to a story that trended some time ago.

Although media houses have the responsibility of publishing and airing the reactions of their audience, countless number of letters to the editor and responses to opinion articles could not see the light of the day mostly as a result of the challenges pointed out above; Right of Reply even becomes affected in the circumstance. Aside the delay inherent in when a reaction is written and when same gets published, space constraint constitutes another snag as editors, columnists and other journalists are usually left with no option than to drop less important contents, a category under which reactions from readers are mostly found, for subsequent editions.

But thanks to the internet, online newspapers have come to the rescue, taking care of the two factors of time and space identified above as major inhibitions to the publishing of readers' reactions to newspaper contents. According to Talabi (2011, p. 17) "The new media give users the means to generate, seek and share content selectively and to interact with other individuals and groups, on a scale that was impractical with traditional mass media". Nwabueze (2015, p. 160) writes that, "Web media have a message board for immediate audience reaction to stories. So the online audiences are not passive; neither are they distanced from the reporter. In some cases, they are waiting at the other end as you write the story and once you post it, they immediately read and react".

This goes to show that with digital newspapers, readers no longer have to wait until their letters get delivered by the postman. They are now also occluded from waiting till their letters get the attention and approval of the editor before such sees the light of the day, as they are empowered in most news sites to post their comments and see it published on the site almost immediately without the input of a moderator. Presently, readers no longer need to constrain themselves to a specific number of words as they are at liberty to deploy whatever amount of words they think is enough to pass on their message.

According to Sanusi, Adelabu & Esiri (2015), "journalists and media houses now have the opportunity to interact with users. Interactivity does not only benefit the readers, it also allows journalists to combine different kinds of information in both new and different ways. The internet provides an interactive component that is lacking in the print media and even in television".

With the process of reacting to a newspaper content now made easy and simplified, it would be

Author α: Ph.D, senior lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
Author σ: Master's student in the Department of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. e-mail: ugovesterugwuanyi@gmail.com

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expected that readers, particularly youths who spend more time on the internet, optimise this digitization in participating in the national conversation by commenting on news stories that catch their fancy. In view of the fact that comments can now be posted to online stories and articles in a matter of minutes without the reader even having to rise from the sofa upon which he or she laid to consume online newspaper contents, online readers of newspapers would be expected to maximise this opportunity to make their voices heard and even take the narrative away from the journalist or opinion moulder.

Optimisation of online newspapers' feedback tools should ordinarily be popular among readers since online newspapers are easily accessible provided there is an internet access and the accompanying gadget. It really should be the rave in the present age unlike in the days when the process of sending a feedback to contents on newspapers and magazines begins with buying a copy, which many did not have the means to do. With the process now simplified, it calls for wonder whether readers who are now readily availed this interactivity of the online newspaper are really taking full advantage of the innovation.

a) Statement of the Problem

Okunna (1999, p.115) disclosed that, "The mass media also performs the function of serving as a forum for public debate and discussion of important issues in the society". Severin and Tankard (1987) in Sanusi, Adelabu & Esiri (2015, p. 11) identified; providing a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism, as the second of the five guidelines submitted by Hutchins Commission on the role of the media. This function is now better played through the message board embedded in digital newspaper pages which has made discussions and debates on every story published online possible. Indeed, one of the comment plug-in software is called Disqus, a parody of the word 'discuss' which the box attached to every online story seeks to engender.

Arguing that the internet provides an interactive component that is lacking in the print media and even television, Sanusi, Adelabu & Esiri (2015) pointed out that journalists and media houses now have the opportunity to interact with users in a manner that does not only benefit the readers, but allows journalists to combine different kinds of information in both new and different ways.

But despite this innovation which fulfils one of the very important functions played in the society by the mass media, which online newspapers are a part of, it is worrisome that many a user do not avail themselves of or maximise this opportunity to air their views and join in public debates that would help in shaping public opinion and give government officials an idea of what the mood of members of the public are. Such readers exhibit their apathy by not only refusing to post reactions to stories they read, there are indications that many of them do not even bother to read the comments posted by those who reacted to what they read online. Readers in this category therefore act in negation of the assertion of Okunna (1999) that, "The mass media make it possible for people to know what others are thinking and saying about issues of importance".

Yet, there is also the nagging issue of users posting comments that are at variance with what the story in question is all about. While some use the comment box to hurl insults at a user over his expressed opinion, others unfortunately abuse the noble invention by posting information through which unsuspecting persons are swindled. A visit to the comment section of some online newspaper pages will show fraudsters parading as Customs officers informing the public about the auctioning of vehicles and other goods at ridiculous prices. Many have lost their hard-earned resources to these identity thieves who are plying their nefarious activity on a forum that should ordinarily be more like an intellectual fest where ideas that would help the journalist who authored the story, the media house and the other readers, should be bandied. When this prompt avenue for feedback are abandoned and misused as pointed out above, the online user loses his or her power to control contents in newspapers through their criticism or commendation of the journalists' work. For journalists and media organisations take note of these comments and are guided by them so as not to lose their much esteemed readership that endears them to advertisers.

It is in the light of these that readers' optimisation of the feedback tool of the digital newspaper need to be probed. The comment section of newspapers is too important not to be used, read or left to mischief makers and swindlers. The manner this feedback tool is used and abused also deserves to be investigated in view of some online mediums' seeming encouragement of the posting of all kinds of comments all in the bid to show themselves off as very popular and having a committed swam of loyal readers who do not only voraciously consume their contents but go a step further to share their thoughts on same.

b) Objectives of Study

This work is guided by the following objectives:

i. To find out if users of online newspaper contents read comments succeeding news stories published on web pages.
ii. To see if users of online newspapers utilise the comment box adjourning online news stories to express their thoughts.
iii. To discover the kind of comments users of digital newspapers post on the comment box attached to news stories on online pages.

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iv. To find out how easy it is for users of online newspapers to post reactions to stories published on web pages.

c) Research questions

Based on the above-listed objectives, the following research questions were drawn:

i. Do users of online newspaper contents read comments on the same web page with news stories?
ii. Do users of online newspapers utilise the comment box adjourning online contents to express their thoughts?
iii. What kind of comments do users of digital newspapers post on the message board attached to news stories on online pages?
iv. How easy is it for users of online newspapers to post reactions to stories published on web pages?

d) Significance of Study

This work would be of great help to all who surf the internet for news stories. This is as it would be opening their eyes to the enormous power which the comment plug-in on digital newspapers has bestowed on them. The study would not only make users of digital newspapers cultivate the habit of reading comments that trail every story they read but would make them seek to lend their voices to online conversations. That way, they would be playing a part in balancing the flow of information as well as influencing how journalists report and present contents online.

Those who provide contents for online newspapers also stand to benefit from this study. With the increased awareness readers and users would have of the comment plug-in, content providers would now have more persons reacting to their articles and through that means get to know whether their work is actually striking the right chord in the audience as well glean areas they need to improve upon. This is in line with the submission that "understanding the nature of online audience will put a reporter in a better psychological and physical perspective to approach his job". Nwabueze (2015, p. 160).

Also, when the users rightly use the comment box, media houses will by that be presented with an appraisal of the reporters, writers and editors. For instance, when there are errors in an article, users can point that out through the comment box so that whoever edited the script can be called to account.

Indeed, any means by which public opinion on issues are made known should be valued by the government as those in positions of authority can easily measure the mood and feelings of the populace towards their policies and programmes. Public opinion is very evident in exchanges that go on in the comment section of most web pages in reaction to stories contained therein. Since most stories and articles are usually centred on those running the government and the policies being pursued, the most prominent thought of an engaged audience or community which the comment plug-in engenders should ordinarily guide the powers-that-be.

In the main, this work as an addition to existing body of knowledge will be relevant to those in the academia. The study can provide a basis for further research or can be a valuable resource to researcher working on a similar subject.

e) Scope of Study

This research work is on South-East university students' optimisation of the feedback tool of the online newspaper. The scope is therefore limited to both the undergraduate and postgraduate students of universities in the South-East. As that is where one can easily find the youthful population. Edegoh, Ezeh & Samson (2015, p.65) stated that "at present newspapers are available in both hard copy and electronic form and are accessible through the Internet using all kinds of devices which are at the disposal of youths, particularly students. All these innovations are meant to improve readership of newspapers and attract young readers".

Considering that there are five states in the South-East geopolitical zone with each of them having at least more than one university, the quest for a manageable study and the need to beat deadline led this researcher to purposively choose students in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, and the Federal University of Technology, Owerri. These cover for Enugu, Anambra and Imo states.

Online newspapers' contents which come with message board are varied; they range from sports, entertainment, gossips, health, motoring, fashion to public affairs. Since studying these story genres would make the work unwieldy and may undermine the drive to get a well-informed and analytical sample size, a decision was taken to restrict the study to users who expose themselves to both news stories and opinion articles that can be categorised under public affairs contents. More so, the utilisation of the feedback tools attached to such stories aids and enhances political participation by the citizens. Hence, the research instrument seeks out respondents who use public affairs contents published by online newspapers.

f) Definition of Concepts

Online newspaper: According to Ganiyu (2011, p. 127), "Online media is a multimedia platform whereby it is possible to reach the same audience via text, audio, video, graphics, animation and pictures at the same time". Quoting Hasting Tribune Online, Mustapha & Wok (2014, p.76) defined online newspapers are serial, machine-readable news-oriented publications that are

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accessible via the Internet, adding that they are equally referred to as digital newspaper, electronic newspapers, enews, e-newspapers, among others.

Feedback*:* This was explained by Okunna (1999, p.8) as the appropriate response from the audience through which to measure whether members of the audience received and understood the intended message. She identified the two types of feedback as immediate and delayed feedback. This study is concerned with the former as Ufuophu-Biri (2013, p. 178) stated, "The scenario of instant feedback tends to create a situation of physical presence actually stimulated through virtual presence. The audience members are able to comment on the stories or issues and even discuss among themselves".

Tool: In this study, tool is seen as an apparatus through which a process or operation is carried out.

Optimisation: This can be said to mean an appropriate usage of something. In this study, it will refer to exploiting an innovation in a manner that was intended by the innovator.

II. Literature Review

With the online newspaper, media users now have more power than ever before in balancing the flow of information. The audience members are no longer like the sitting dog waiting to lap up whatever information that is thrown at them by a reporter or columnist. While they are at still at the receiving end of the information, the journalists and indeed the media house is at the receiving end of audience members' reaction – that is feedback which has been made more prompt by the comment plug-in in new media. Nwabueze (2015, p. 155) pointed out that "most online news media create space (message board) for readers to give feedback on the news they read, making these media interactive in nature".

The internet users, who are said to be involved in the creation of contents on online newspapers, do not just make this happen by merely using the web but by relying on tools which Talabi (2011, p. 18) categorically identified thus: "Armed with easy-to-use web publishing tools, always-on connections and increasingly powerful mobile devices, the online audience has the means to become an active participant in the creation and dissemination of news and information; and it's doing just that on the internet". Barker & Sadaba (2008, p. 88) in Ganiyu (2011, p. 127) agreed with him that "internet users are not just viewers, listeners, or readers but they are involved in creating contents".

It is this same internet that has made "news sites become more responsive and better able to handle the growing demands of readers and viewers" (Talabi 2011) and powers the building of an online community around the contents posted on the online newspaper. This must have led Ukonu (2013, p. 183) to posit that "the interactive nature of online news means also that reporters and editors are writing in a more interactive, informal, tell-a-friend style in online news".

Ekwueme (2008, p.146) stated that "developers of websites have established a variety of ways that individuals can interact, such as designing their own websites, chat rooms, polls, immediate response to information and others". This was buttressed by Ufuophu-Biri (2013, p. 178) who said, "The audience could send feedback immediately after consuming the content or while still consuming it. They do this through e mail, live audio/visual telephone conversation such as on Skype and Yahoo live messenger. They can also send immediate feedback through the social media which include: facebook, twitter, youtube etc".

Barker & Sandaba (2008) held that interactivity is the "measure of a medium's potential ability to let the user exert an influence on the content or form of the mediated communication". Ganiyu (2011) stated that "it is the interactivity of internet as a medium that has given rise to not only citizen journalism, whereby non-journalists report news and events but also the advent of bloggers, some of them with more reach than some traditional media". Kiousis (2002) in Wogu (2009, p. 157) attempted to define the basis for new media interactivity by identifying four yardsticks which are as follows: proximity, sensory activation, perceived speed and telepresence.

McQuail (2006, p. 38) in Nwabueze (2015, p. 147) explained that the major features that distinguishes the new media (under which is the online newspaper) from the 'old' media lie in their interconnectedness, their accessibility to individual users as senders and/or receivers, their interactivity, their multiplicity of use and open ended character, and their ubiquity and 'delocatedness'. Nwabueze (2015) then added that "the concept of new media specifically refers to web facilitated communication channels which have redefined journalistic information sharing and dissemination with a more interactive sender-receiver relationship in a mass communication environment".

Listing out the tools through which the online newspaper facilitates interaction as well as gets feedback from users, Folayan (2004, p. 45) wrote,

There are a number of interactive options that can facilitate this dimension of interactivity on an online newspaper site and these include chat rooms, discussion groups, bulletin boards, feedback mechanisms and email addresses displayed on the home page. Email addresses, discussion forums and live chat areas can serve to make communication easy between users and staff at online newspapers and attract and keep readers at a site. What the foregoing quotations from various authors seek to make categorical is that the online newspaper has actually created an avenue for users to be interactive to the extent of even influencing media contents. Since not all

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online users would want to take advantage of these interactivity enabled by the message board, Wogu (2009, p. 162) pointed out that, "Participation in many online discussions and interactions is thus essentially anonymous, and this may sometimes be part of the attraction".

But the participation of the online users in discussions through the comment plug-in on digital newspaper is very important as this fulfils the mass media function of creating an avenue for deliberation of matters that are of interest to the society. As Okunna (1999, p. 115) noted, "This is one way in which the mass media help in the formation of public opinion, which is made up of what the majority of people in a society think about a particular issue of public importance. The mass media make it possible for people to know what others are thinking and saying about issues of importance".

These thought aligns with those of Ufuophu-Biri (2013, p. 178) who said, "The audience members are able to connect on the stories or issues and even discuss among themselves. This also creates an online community of media audience. They discuss media contents among themselves and others who are not members of such community also benefit".

Meanwhile, it bears pointing out that in as much as it is desirable for digital newspaper users to post their reactions to stories immediately after going through them; there are online newspapers that actually shut the door against some of the reactions. The online newspaper, TheCable, says it is noted for moderating comments on stories in a manner that makes it difficult for people to post hate speech and fraudulent messages such as "Customs is auctioning cars" and "Cheat MTN".

Speaking about comment moderation on the medium, The Cable editor, Taiwo George, said, We had to put someone on it. We have failed more than 200,000 comments in three years and we are glad that those who want to post inappropriate comments now know that TheCable is the wrong choice. People often tell me there are no enough comments below our stories but they don't know how glad we are. We are not an online newspaper just looking for page views — we have a professional and moral responsibility to encourage decent discourse.

The Cable (April 29, 2017 retrieved from https://www.thecable.ng/hurray-day-2014-thecableborn)

a) Review of Empirical Studies

Studies abound on youths reading profile of newspapers as well as on their use of the message board provided by online newspapers. In a study on *'Evaluation of Newspaper Reading Habits of Youths in Anambra State, Nigeria'* which administered the research instrument on 294 respondents, Edegoh, Ezeh & Samson (2015, p.68) found out that 100 per cent of them affirmed that they read newspapers regularly. As regards their reading profile, 54 per cent of the respondents read newspapers daily, 27 per cent read newspapers 2-5 times per week, 18 per cent others read newspapers weekly while 1 per cent of the respondents consulted newspapers on monthly basis.

It has also been said that the youths pursuing education source their news from online newspapers. Writing on the circulation figures of newspapers, Ganiyu (2011, p. 126) said,

It could have been better if not for the internet which has seen most young people between the ages of 18 – 35 in most parts of the world using the new media to source for their news... This is more so when the young are being wilfully driven online in Nigeria by the education industry which makes it compulsory for them to get their admissions through the internet.

In a thesis on 'Interactivity in online journalism: a case study of the interactive nature of Nigeria's online', Folayan (2004, p. 63) found out, after observing the website twice a week for six months, that the web version of Guardian newspaper does not have discussion or news groups and also discovered that "the online Guardian site has no public bulletin board for posting messages... there are opinion polls that allow users to vote on topical issues."

According to Mustapha & Wok (2014, p.76) research has shown that the readership enjoyed by online newspapers is on the increase, as many people prefer to read current news on the Internet rather than through the traditional source, adding that,

While DailyBreeze.com (2008) said online newspapers readers turn to the Internet every day for national and world news, Ihlstrom, Lundberg and Perdrix (2003) found that an average of 67.1% and 52.8% read recent and local news, respectively, on the net. In 2005, a study by Pew Research Center for People and the Press also reported that 62% of Internet news consumers said they read the websites of local and national newspapers (Rosenbery, 2005).

A study conducted by Mustapha & Wok (2014, p.76) entitled: *'Online newspapers use and homeland political participation potentials of the Nigerian students in Malaysia'* which sampled 370 Nigerian students studying in Malaysian universities and university colleges returned with this outcome:

Of the three most preferred online newspapers, Daily Trust commands the highest readership (40.4%). While 15.3% of the respondents preferred online news only papers, Vanguard snewspaper was the least preferred (14.7%). Close to a half (45.8%) of the respondents read online newspapers for five days up to seven days a week; about almost a third (29%) read for between three and four days while a quarter of the respondents didn't read or only read for not more than two days a week. Exactly half (50%) of the respondents preferred political news content, while over one-tenth (12.5% and 13.2%) read lifestyle and sport content

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respectively. Other contents (finance, crime, and foreign news) had less than 10% patrons among the respondents in this study. With regards to attention paid to the news, a little over one-third (35.6%) reported giving moderate attention while slightly above a quarter accounted for much attention. Those who gave no attention are in the least with 15.5%.

b) Theoretical Framework

This work *'Examining South-East university students' optimisation of the feedback tool of the online newspaper'* is hinged on the Agenda-setting theory and the Democratic-participant theory. These two theories were used because they both complement each other as can be seen in the media giving audience members what to react to by virtue of the news stories published by online newspapers (Agenda-setting) and the reader picking up from there by posting their reactions to, and even trying to influence the set agendum (democratic-participant). We shall now look at each of the theories so as to draw out their relationship with the study.

The Agenda-Setting Theory: This theory, which was developed by Walter Lippmann through his text entitled: *Public Opinion* was made popular by Bernard Cohen in 1963. It was further entrenched by the empirical study conducted by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw. Wogu (2013, p. 89) quotes McCombs & Shaw (1972, p. 180-181) as positing thus: "In choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position".

The relationship between the Agenda-setting theory and this research was succinctly made obvious by Okunna (1999, p. 122) thus: "The mass media can also set the political agenda by deciding what political topics people talk about". Identifying the major idea behind this theory, Wogu (2008, p. 141) asserted that "people consider as important those things reported in the media, and that major issues discussed in the society are introduced by the media".

In view of this given, contents of online newspapers should ordinary provoke discussion centred round the news stories published. It is the readers for whom the digital newspaper reports stories who should go ahead to discuss the idea put across by posting their reactions via the bulletin board contained in the web page of the reports they read.

Democratic-participant Theory: In an attempt to define this theory, Wogu (2013, p. 75) wrote that "the belief here is that people in a society should fully partake in information exchange, rather than remain just recipients of communication from mostly the government. The idea is horizontal, not only vertical/top-down communication". Enzensberger (1970) in Ojobor (2002, p. 16) averred that this theory takes care of the right to relevant information, the right to reply as well as allows the use of the means of communication for interaction in small-scale settings, interest groups, and sub-cultures.

This theory, which addresses the needs, aspirations and interests of the receivers in a political society, is also said to favour multiplicity, smallness of scale, locality, de-institutionalisation, interchange of sender-receiver roles, horizontality of communication, interaction, and commitment, (Enzensberger (1970) in Ojobor 2002, p. 16). The democratic-participant theory is also referred to as media democratization as it empowers members of the audience to become active partners in the creation of contents and not just a mere object of the information dished out by media organizations.

It is on this basis that this theory provides a vital anchor for this study which is looking at audience members' optimisation of the feedback tool of online newspapers. It is through the democratic-participant theory that one can now see how the user of digital newspapers can through the message board exert a measure of influence in the contents provided by a particular online newspaper. The theory also takes care of the horizontal communication and discussion that takes place among the online newspaper, the user and other users of the platform, thereby making such a classic case of media democratization.

III. Methodology

a) Research Design

Considering that this work is out to examine online readers' optimisation of the feedback tool of online newspaper, the survey research design was picked as tool for carrying out the field work. Ezeah and Asogwa (2013, p.302) pointed out that "Survey method is a very good and reliable method of data gathering for research work and it can be used to study a large population or describe the behavioural pattern of the population". Through the survey design, this researcher was able to elicit raw information from students of universities in Nigeria's South-East which expressed how they take advantage of the feedback tool provided by digital newspapers.

b) Population of the Study

Both the undergraduates and postgraduate students in South-East universities constitute the population of this study. They qualify to be the population of this study in view of the assertion of Ganiyu (2011, p. 126) that most young people between the ages of 18 – 35 in most parts of the world use the digital newspaper to source for their news, adding that the youths in Nigeria are being driven online by the nation's education industry which makes it compulsory for them to get their admissions through the internet.

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But considering that it will be cumbersome studying all the universities in the South-East states of Enugu, Anambra, Imo, Ebonyi and Abia, this researcher had to settle for the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in Enugu State, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, NAU, in Awka, Anambra State and the Federal University of Technology, Owerri, FUTO, in Imo State. According to the Academic Planning Units of these institutions, the total number of students in UNN is 32, 608, that of NAU is put at 30,000 while FUTO has a total of 22,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students. The sum of these figures is 84,608.

c) Sample Size

With the population of the study arrived at 84,608, the Sample Size Calculator as developed by the National Statistical Service of Australia (http://www.nss.gov.au/nss/home.nsf/pages/Sample+size+calculator) was used in determining the sample size for this study. With a confidence level of 95% and confidence interval of 0.05, the resulting figure of 383 formed the sample size for the study.

d) Sampling Technique

The quota sampling technique was then used to decide the number of respondent to be drawn from each of the three universities. Owing to the fact that FUTO has the least number of students, it was allotted 120 of the research instrument, NAU got 130 while 133 of the research instrument is to be administered in UNN.

e) Instrument for Data Collection

The questionnaire was used as the measuring instrument to get desired responses from the sample size surveyed. The questionnaire came in Sections A and B. Section A contains list of questions on the demographic characteristics of the audience such as gender, age, educational qualification, occupation and marital status. To get the psychographic data, Section B had questions based on each of the research objectives, meant to draw out responses from respondents which can help in addressing the research problem. However, there were specific questions asked to elicit response from the research subject regarding a particular research question.

f) Validity and Reliability

The measuring instrument used in this study evaluates what it is meant to measure and would consistently yield the same answer, baring the vicissitude of human response to issues. The reliability of the instrument stems from it containing structured questions that amply address the research problem and covers the scope of study. This researcher can also vouch for the validity of the instrument because the questions contained therein were all woven around the four research questions of this study.

g) Method of Data Analysis

The researcher used quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis to present and analyze data gathered from the field. This was done through the use of tables of frequencies and percentages. Sentences were also used to buttress whatever data is contained in the tables.

IV. Presentation of Findings

Before going into the presentation of findings, proper, it needs to be pointed out that of all the 383 questionnaires distributed in deference to the sample size, two were unaccounted for. It was also discovered that three others were not properly filled which invalidates the three. Less this number (5), the researcher was left with 378 questionnaires from which to get findings. The 378 responses are presented below in tables of frequencies and percentages.

Table 1: Respondents Demographic Characteristics

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	218	58
Female	160	42
Total	378	100
Age group		
18 – 24	140	37
25 – 30	160	42
31 – 35	57	15
36 – 40	21	6
Total	378	100
Marital status		
Single	295	78
Married	83	22
Total	378	100
Educational attainment		
SSCE	175	46
Diploma/NCE	63	17
BA	85	22

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MA	55	15
Total	378	100
University		
UNN	132	35
NAU	127	34
FUTO	119	31
Total	378	100

This table on the demographic characteristics of the respondents shows that while the males made up 58 per cent, females represented 42 per cent. It also shows that respondents within the age group of 25 to 30 were in the majority raking up 42 per cent, this was followed by those between the ages of 18 to 24 who constituted 37 per cent while respondents in the category of 31 to 35 were 15 per cent and the age group of 36 to 40 had the remaining 6 per cent.

As regards marital status, majority of the respondents (78 per cent) were shown in the table to be single while the remaining 22 per cent of the respondents were married. It was also discovered that 46 per cent of the respondents have SSCE as their highest educational attainment; they were followed by those with Bachelors degree who constituted 22 per cent. Respondents with Diploma and NCE added up to 17 per cent while those with a Masters degree take the remaining 15 per cent. In terms of location, 35 per cent of the respondents were in UNN, respondents studying at NAU made up 34 per cent while those in FUTO constituted the remaining 31 per cent.

Table 2: Reading of comments posted in message boards of online newspapers

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Read comments online?		
Yes	285	76
No	91	24
Total	378	100
Frequency of reading comments?		
Most times	50	18
Rarely	104	36
Every time	83	29
Sometime	48	17
Total	285	100

This table summarises the response to the first research question of this study. It can be seen that as much as 76 per cent of the respondents voted that read comments succeeding stories posted on online newspapers. The remaining 24 per cent however stated that they do not read such comments. Respondents who said they read comments were in another question in the questionnaire asked how often they read users' reactions to news stories and it was found that respondents who read comments most times were 18 per cent, those who rarely read were 36 per cent, respondents who read comments every time were 29 per cent while those who sometime go through readers' reactions to online stories make up the remaining 17 percent.

Table 3: Readers of digital newspapers' use of the comment box adjourning online contents to express their thoughts

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Ever posted comments online?		
Yes	171	45
No	207	55
Total	378	100
Frequency of posting online comments?		
Every time	41	24
Most time	26	15
Sometime	49	29
Rarely	55	32
Total	171	100

Just 45 per cent of respondents say the use the message board in posting online comments, the remaining 55 per cent of respondents say they do not do this. In a bid to know how regularly online users post comments through the bulletin board, it turned out that 24 per cent of them do this every time, 15 per cent

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others post comments most time, respondents who some time post comments on the same web page with a story are 29 per cent while 32 per cent of them say they rarely do this.

Table 4: The kind of comments posted by users of digital newspapers on the reaction box attached to news stories on online pages

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Comments you find online ...		
Relates to the story	110	39
Advertises idea, services	70	24
Replies an earlier comment	80	28
Criticises the reporter/makes clarification	25	9
Total	285	100
Comments you post online...		
Pertain to the story	70	41
Advertise idea, services	41	24
Reply an earlier comment	38	22
Appraise the reporter/make clarification	22	13
Total	171	100

Two questions from the questionnaire effectively answer the third research question and they were captioned in this table showing that 39 per cent of the respondents who had said they read online comments (285) voted that users' reactions to online stories are related to the news story in question. This was followed by 28 per cent of the respondents who held that reactions to online reports they come across are replies to earlier comments made by users, 24 per cent others believe that those who post on the message board of web pages of online newspapers only advertises idea, goods and services, while only 9 per cent of the respondents find comments on online newspaper stories as criticising the reporter or making clarification on the news report in question.

In a bid to validate this finding, the question 'If you answered yes to question 6, what kind of reactions do you post on the message board after reading an online story?' was posed and it was found, as captured in the table above, from those who said they post reactions to online newspapers, (171), that 41 per cent of them post comments that pertain to the story. Next to this are respondents (24 per cent) who admitted that they use the comment box on web pages to advertise an idea, goods or services. While 22 per cent of the respondents use the message board to reply an earlier comment made by user on a story, 13 per cent of the respondents said they use the comment plug-in to apprise the author of the story or make clarification about the information contained in the report.

Table 5: Ease of posting reactions to stories published on web pages?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Do you consider posting of online reactions easy?		
Yes	168	44
No	210	56
Total	378	100
Preferred position of the comment box		
Immediately after the story	150	40
After the headline	30	8
After the lead paragraph	80	21
Middle of the story	118	31
Total	378	100

From this table, it can be seen that majority of respondents, up to 56 per cent, do not think that posting reactions using the comment box on digital newspapers' pages is easy. They were however countered by the 44 per cent who voted to say that it is easy posting comments on the message board of online newspapers. To squarely tackle the research question, the respondents were asked 'Where should the comment box be sited on the web pages of online newspapers to make it easy/easier for you to post reactions?' and it turned out that majority of them (40 per cent) still preferred the current location of

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immediately after the story. However, a significant number of the respondents (31 per cent) want to be able to post their comment in the middle of the story, 21 per cent others want the message board situated after the lead paragraph, while a minute 8 per cent would prefer posting their comment immediately after the headline or caption.

a) Discussion of Findings

The findings above expose whether students of universities in the South-East, while consuming online news reports also read the comments on the same web page with the news stories, it brought to the fore whether the university students in the geopolitical zone use the comment box adjourning online comments to express their thoughts. Aside revealing the kind of comments users of digital newspapers post on the message board adjourning stories, the findings also unearthed whether it is easy or not for users to post comments on the web pages of online newspapers.

RQ1: Do users of online newspaper contents read comments on the same web page with news stories?

Most of the respondents answered in the affirmative to this research question. With 76 per cent of them (n= 285) saying that do read comments on the same web pages with news stories, it then becomes safe to posit that this is what obtains and also validates the postulation of Okunna (1999, p. 115) that, "This is one way in which the mass media help in the formation of public opinion, which is made up of what the majority of people in a society think about a particular issue of public importance. The mass media make it possible for people to know what others are thinking and saying about issues of importance".

Taking into consideration the assertion by Ufuophu-Biri (2013, p. 178) that through the discussions carried out by online community of media audience using the comment plug-in "others who are not members of such community also benefit", this finding has then gone to show that most users of digital newspapers "benefit" by reading online comments. All this effectively fits into the Agenda-setting theory because readers practically see how the digital newspapers have given people what to talk about in the comment section. This goes a long way in affecting the importance readers attach to such issues. Lending credence to this finding is the study done by Edegoh, Ezeh & Samson (2015, p.68) on youths in Anambra State whose outcome was that 100 per cent of 294 respondents affirmed that they read newspapers regularly.

RQ2: Do users of online newspapers utilise the comment box adjourning online contents to express their thoughts?

It was found that majority of users of online newspapers, up to 55 per cent, do not take advantage of the comment plug-in provided in digital newspapers to express their thoughts. Only 45 per cent (n=171) were found to be doing that. Even out of this figure, 32 per cent said they rarely use the message board on web pages to post comments. This may not be unconnected with the novelty of comment plug-in on digital newspapers. As at thirteen years ago, Folayan (2004, p. 63) discovered that the web version of Guardian newspaper, which is one of the most popular newspapers in Nigeria, does not have discussion or news groups and also found out that "the online Guardian site has no public bulletin board for posting messages... there are opinion polls that allow users to vote on topical issues".

That 55 percent of respondent do not get interactive on online newspapers means that these yardsticks: proximity, sensory activation, perceived speed and telepresence identified by Kiousis (2002) in Wogu (2009, p. 157) were not met. However, the 45 per cent of respondents who post comments using the message board on web pages cannot be ignored and they are the ones whose activities have been captured by the democratic-participant theory and who were said by Barker & Sadaba (2008, p. 88) in Ganiyu (2011, p. 127) to have gone beyond being mere viewers, listeners, or readers into getting involved in the creation of contents.

RQ3: What kind of comments do users of digital newspapers post on the reaction box attached to news stories on online pages?

For this research question, it was found that while 39 per cent of the comments read by online newspaper users relate to the stories they are adjoining, 41 per cent of respondents say the comments they post on the message board have a direct bearing on the story in question. These constitute the majority in two questions asked in that wise in the questionnaire. This makes the position of Ufuophu-Biri (2013, p. 178) that "the audience members are able to connect on the stories or issues and even discuss among themselves... They discuss media contents among themselves" to hold water.

While it was also found that there are users who make good use of the message board by appraising the reporter as well as making clarifications on the information presented in the story, there are those who use the comment plug-in to reply an earlier comment or advertise idea, goods and services. Little wonder Taiwo George of The Cable said his medium refused to publish inappropriate comments that propagate hate speeches and fraudulent messages such as "Customs is auctioning cars" and "Cheat MTN". However users who post comments that relate to the story or appraise the reporter and make clarifications to the information contained in reports are those being covered by the democratic-participant theory as active partners in the

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creation of contents and not just a mere object of the information dished out by media organizations.

RQ4: How easy is it for users of online newspapers to post reactions to stories published on web pages?

The finding in this regard is that as much as 56 per cent of respondents believe that the process of posting reactions to stories published on web pages is still not easy. This negates the view by Talabi that users of online newspapers are "armed with easy-to-use web publishing tools..." but finds justification in George's assertion that the online newspaper he edits has "failed more than 200,000 comments in three years and we are glad that those who want to post inappropriate comments now know that The Cable is the wrong choice".

Sensing that this may not be the only reason why users do not think that posting reactions to online stories is easy, they were asked their preferred location for the comment box and 40 per cent of the total number of respondents wants the message board retained in the extant position of immediately after the story. But if one takes into consideration that 60 per cent of the total number of respondents wants the comment plug-in sited immediately after the headline, the lead paragraph or the middle of the story, it gives an indication that the placement of the message board is a reason why some lazy readers think that posting comments to online news stories is not easy. This is bearing in mind the assertion by Dominick (2002, p. 343) in Nwabueze (2015, p. 155) that "Research has indicated that many readers don't like to scroll down through stories". By stating that "the audience could send feedback immediately after consuming the content or while still consuming it" Ufuophu-Biri (2013, p. 178) may have seen the possibility of situating the comment box within, not immediately after the story.

V. Conclusion

Communication has been defined as the sending and receiving of messages by one or more persons through a channel with some effect and opportunity for feedback. Ndolo & Ekwueme (2013, p. 15) wrote that "to communicate basically means to share ideas, information, opinion, feelings or experiences between people. The basis of communication is sharing or exchanging between people i.e. establishing common ground with another person or group". Going by these definitions of communication, it then means that the publishing of stories by online newspapers can only become an act of communication when there is feedback. It is this very important feedback function that completes the communication process by digital newspapers that this paper has laboured to explore.

The comment plug-in has become a major component of web pages because of the need for a feedback, which has comparatively become quite easy to carry out unlike what obtained in the hay days of the hardcopy newspaper. The message board are there in digital newspapers to enable communication among readers as well as communication between the editorial staff of a particular medium and its readers. It is on this basis that the user of the online newspaper is seen as being involved in the creation of content which gives life to the democratic-participant theory of the press. Indeed, the comment box allows the readers of online newspapers respond to the agenda already set by the medium by virtue of the published story.

This work restricted itself to online stories that have a public affairs slant because it is through such reports and the accompanying reactions from readers that political participation can be deepened. As such, the feedback is not only advantageous to the media organisations but equally provides those in authority an avenue to feel the pulse of the citizenry on issues of governance reported by the media. This would then mean that the media is not alone in holding the government accountable but the citizens have joined in as well through the instrumentality of the comment plug-in. But all these become possible and effective when the feedback mechanisms of online newspapers are optimised and not abused.

VI. Recommendations

In view of the need to enhance the interactivity of online newspapers which is greatly assisted by the comment plug-in that is now a regular feature of web pages, the following recommendations become necessary:

a) Online newspapers must do more in making it easier for their readers to be able to post reactions to stories; even if this means doing away with any form of registration such that the only thing users are required to do is just to type reactions on the box, add a name and post.

b) There is the need for the digital newspapers to encourage their readers to comment on stories through their style of writing. Without compromising the seriousness with which news stories are written, reporters and editors can still adopt a conversational tell-a-friend style which would ordinarily present avenues for readers to latch on to in doing an immediate riposte.

c) Users of online newspapers must develop the discipline and patience of reading through a story so as to be able to make relevant and intelligible contributions to the discourse that follows. They must not jump into posting their comments just on the basis of the headline or the lead paragraph of the story. They must also temper their language so as to engender a decent conversation on the web pages.

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d) Advertisers and other stakeholders must stop basing the popularity of an online medium on the number of comments stories on that medium generate. This can make online newspapers lower the standards and allow all manner of comments which will not bode well for the society and the intellectual discourse that should be going on in the comment section of digital newspapers.

e) Government also has a role to play in the optimisation of the feedback mechanism of online newspapers by allowing freedom of expression so that users are not hounded by security agents on account of the comments they posted on digital newspapers' sites in reaction to government policies and programmes. They must also improve the electricity situation in the country so that readers do not get discouraged from visiting online news sites, reading stories to the very end and posting their reactions because the batteries of their devices and gadgets are without charge.

f) Public officials are well advised to make it a point of duty to regularly visit the comment sections of online newspapers so that they can read through people's reaction to what they (the government officials) are doing. That way, they would keep abreast of public opinion.

g) The data service providers operating in the country should make broadband service available across the country and make same reliable so that subscribers are not prevented from reading an entire story or posting their reaction because of a buffering network. The relevant agencies of government should prevail on the service providers affordable to virtually every citizen. There should not be a case of people being denied their right to being heard just because they cannot afford the cost of being heard.

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La Femme Africaine Moderne Face a La Problématique Du Veuvage a Travers *Widow* d'Agatha Amata Et Kingsley Ogoro, *La Révolte d'Affiba* Et *Le Prix De La Révolte* De Regina Yaou

By Ajoke Mimiko Bestman (Ph.D)
Obafemi Awolowo University

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Motsclés : femme africaine, problématique, veuvage, film, roman, womanisme africain, engagement. Pour quelles raisons l'humanité en son entier a-t-elle développé des systèmes de pensée valorisant le masculin et dévalorisant le féminin, et traduit ces systèmes de pensée en actions et en situations de fait? (Tanella Boni).

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Motsclés: femme africaine, problématique, veuvage, film, roman, womanisme africain, engagement.

Pour quelles raisons l'humanité en son entier a-t-elle développé des systèmes de pensée valorisant le masculin et dévalorisant le féminin, et traduit ces systèmes de pensée en actions et en situations de fait? (Tanella Boni)

I. Introduction

Obìrin bímọ fùn ni ò ní kó má pá ni. (Qu'une femme ait enfanté pour un homme ne l'empêche pas de le tuer). *Ọkùnrin tí kò tíí kú aya rẹ ni ò tíí paa*. (Un homme est vivant tant que sa femme n'a pas décidé de le tuer, voir Bestman 2013). Ces deux proverbes yoruba résument la conception de la femme dans la société patriarcale en Afrique. De tels préjugés traduisent la haine et le soupçon dont elle est l'objet en cas de décès de son mari. Il faut bien le dire, l'institution du mariage constitue l'une des montagnes sur le dos de la femme africaine pour utiliser la métaphore bien connue d'Ogundipe-Leslie (1994). De ce fait, l'on constate que le veuvage est l'un des sites les plus accablants de l'oppression de la femme africaine. Ce phénomène socioculturel reflète la réalité des milieux africains et constitue un sujet primordial dans l'imaginaire des écrivaines africaines. Mariama Bâ, l'une des premières écrivaines de l'Afrique francophone aborde justement ce sujet dans son roman bien connu *Une si longue lettre* (1980). Cinq ans plus tard et même une douzaine d'années après, Regina Yaou, la romancière ivoirienne reprend ce sujet de façon plus élaborée dans *La révolte d'Affiba* (1985) et sa suite *Le prix de la révolte* (1997) où elle accentue davantage le mauvais réservé à la veuve dans le milieu africain. La romancière est issue de la société *akan* où les femmes sont obligées d'affronter l'hostilité des beaux-parents, et sont traitées des objets à abandonner après le décès de leurs partenaires. Evidemment, ces deux romans s'inspirent de l'expérience vécue des compatriotes de Yaou. En 2007, les cinéastes nigérians Kingsley Agatha Amata et Kingsley Ogoro réalisent un film très réussi intitulé *Widow* (*Veuve*) sur le même sujet. Cet article se veut une étude de la thématique du veuvage dans ces ouvrages.

Le choix du corpus est animé par la pluralité des genres - l'écrit et le visuel - qui permet une vue plurielle pour aborder la problématique du veuvage. Les romans visent une couche sociale élevée, *Widow* est conçue pour toutes les couches sociales. Les premiers relèvent de l'écriture, le deuxième de l' art populaire audio-visuel. Ces deux moyens d'expression permettent ainsi aux auteurs d'atteindre un public plus élargi étant donné l'importance du sujet.

Author: Department of Foreign Languages Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, Nigeria. e-mail: folajokey@yahoo.com

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Widow s'inscrit dans le cadre de la culture igbo au Nigéria et elle peut servir d'échantillon pour d'autres cultures de ce pays tout entier. Il s'agit dans le film d'un couple moderne qui habite un centre urbain au Nigéria. Chima est homme d'affaires très riche, sa femme Nnena ne travaille pas afin de prendre bien soin de la famille. Chima est un mari très attentionné et amoureux de sa femme. Il lui procure des terrains et subvient à tous ses besoins. Il est aussi très généreux envers sa famille élargie. Son frère aîné, Ifeanyi, est employé dans sa compagnie mais à un moment donné, il découvre que ce dernier l'escroque systématiquement. Confronté à son forfait, Ifeanyi se montre récalcitrant et menace même son frère. Chima est obligé de le poursuivre en justice à l'encontre du désir de sa femme. Sachant qu'il risque d'être déclaré coupable, Ifeanyi cherche l'appui de leur famille élargie, surtout leur mère qui descend du village et accuse Nnena d'avoir tourné son mari contre ses parents. Chima meurt mystérieusement le jour même où Ifeanyi doit comparaître devant le tribunal. Dès lors, Nnena subit la colère de sa belle-famille.

Dans la même veine, *La révolte d'Affiba* et *Le prix de la révolte* démontrent l'histoire d'une veuve dans la société ivoirienne. Ces œuvres proposent une réponse de la femme africaine moderne au sujet du veuvage et du droit de la femme à l'héritage. Dans le premier roman, Affiba, une jeune avocate, tombe amoureuse de Koffi Mensah, un architecte, la veille de son départ pour la France où elle compte faire sa spécialité dans les assurances. Les deux jeunes gens se marient en France. Le mari rentre avant sa femme et obtient un crédit qu'il ajoute à leur économie pour faire construire une belle maison pour sa famille. Affiba rentre plus tard et trouve un bon emploi comme inspectrice dans une agence d'assurances. Elle travaille assidûment pour aider son mari. En fait, c'est grâce à l'argent d'Affiba que Koffi arrive à constituer le capital nécessaire pour monter, avec un groupe d'amis ingénieurs dans divers secteurs, un cabinet d'ingénieurs-conseillers. Cette affaire de Koffi réussit énormément et sa femme s'épanouie. Pourtant, tout va à la dérive lorsque Koffi, peu après l'ouverture du cabinet, prend une maîtresse et abandonne sa famille pour vivre avec sa maîtresse et leur enfant. Affiba est déçue et affolée. En fin de compte, Koffi retourne en famille après deux ans mais meurt peu après. L'histoire de *Le prix de la révolte* commence là où celle de *La révolte d'Affiba* s'arrête et raconte les événements qui se déroulent dix ans après le décès de Koffi.

Le womanisme africain proposé par Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi (1985,1996) et Mary E. Modupe Kolawole (1997) sert de cadre théorique pour cette étude. La théorie womaniste africaine est une théorie féministe conceptualisée spécifiquement pour analyser la condition de la femme africaine. Elle revendique la libération des Africaines de l'oppression patriarcale mais préconise en même temps l'entente, la compréhension, le compromis, la conciliation entre l'homme et la femme. Elle souligne également la complémentarité entre les deux sexes. Comme toute théorie féministe, le womanisme reconnaît l'importance de la solidarité féminine dans la lutte contre l'assujettissement de la femme.

II. La Veuve Culpabilisée

Le calvaire des deux protagonistes des ouvrages choisis pour cette étude commence suite à la mort de leurs maris. Il est pertinent de constater que le film *Widow* est basé sur une histoire réelle. Autrement dit, la souffrance du personnage principal dans le film représente une expérience vécue d'une veuve au Nigéria. La belle-famille de Nnena lui en veut parce qu'elle est considérée comme une égoïste qui a joui toute seule des biens de son mari. En effet, la société traditionnelle en Afrique a du mal à accepter le couple monogame et l'épouse dans ce genre de famille est généralement enviée et détestée parce que chacun dans la famille élargie de l'homme pense qu'elle l'empêche de jouir de ce qui lui revient de droit. Donc la mort inattendue d'un mari, surtout d'un mari riche, est considérée comme un coup lancé par sa femme afin de s'emparer de la possession de l'homme. Ainsi, au lieu de compatir avec une veuve, la belle-famille cherche à la culpabiliser et à la déposséder.

Nnena est accusée de meurtre et subit un affront incroyable de ses beaux-parents. Pendant le deuil, elle est aspergée de crachats, accablée d'injures et même battu. Le conseil des anciens siège et décrète qu'elle doit subir une épreuve recommandée par la tradition. Cette épreuve est à l'envergure de l'animosité de sa belle-famille à son égard et consiste en deux volets. Premier volet, elle est enfermée dans une chambre avec le cadavre de son mari pendant trois jours; puis elle est contrainte à boire une quantité de l'eau utilisée pour laver le cadavre; et elle est amenée sur la place publique du village aux heures prescrites pour « hurler sa détresse » devant un auditoire méprisant et agressif. Le deuxième volet de la cérémonie vient à la fin des funérailles. C'est le domaine des femmes du village - *les Umuada* - et il est présidé par la belle-mère. Encore, le procédé de la cérémonie est à la hauteur de la haine de ces femmes contre la victime. Ces femmes pensent que Nnena leur a privé de leur soutien financier. « Who will pay our children's school fees now? » (Désormais, qui va payer la scolarité de nos enfants?) revient comme leitmotiv dans leurs conversations et ce sont de tels sentiments qui nourrissent leurs actions pendant la cérémonie. Nnena est terriblement malmenée, elle est rasée à la tête, aux aisselles et au pubis. Puis, elle est obligée d'aller toute nue et toute seule se baigner dans la rivière. Toute cette cérémonie se déroule la nuit dans la brousse! Il est

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pertinent de considérer la communication entre ces femmes et Nnena:

- My mothers, why are you inflicting so much pain on me...my mothers, is widowhood not enough pain and punishment for me? (Mes mères pourquoi m'infligez tant de douleur. Le veuvage n'est-il pas assez de douleur et de punition pour moi?)
- The enforcement of widowhood rites is the function of women, this is the sad story of our lives. (La mise en pratique des rituels du veuvage est l'apanage des femmes. C'est cela la triste histoire de nos vies.) Répond la belle-mère.
- But why? Is it our fault that we were born women, that we must be victim to everything that happens? Why is it like that, why? (Mais pourquoi? Est-ce notre faute que nous ayions été nées femmes, devons-nous être victimes de tout ce qui se passe? Pourquoi est-ce comme ça, pourquoi?)
- It is a pity my child that we have to dance to the music dictated to us by our ancestors. Don't worry someday you will lead other women down the same path. (C'est dommage ma fille que nous soyions obligées de danser au rythme de la musique dictée à nous par nos ancêtres. Ne t'en fais pas, un jour tu mèneras d'autres femmes sur la même voie).

Le film nous présente ici d'une manière vivante la femme comme bourreau de la femme en Afrique. Les *Umuada* servent d'instrument au patriarcat, pour opprimer la jeune veuve. Pourquoi? Parce qu'au cours des années, elles se sont tellement identifiées avec l'oppression patriarcale qu'elles ne pensent ni à se révolter contre le système ni à se solidariser avec les jeunes pour se débarrasser de ce joug. Le constat que fait l'une de ces femmes sur le fait qu'elles sont obligées de danser au son de la musique imposée par les ancêtres, témoigne de leur résignation au sort. Sans poser de questions elles assistent le patriarcat à perpétuer l'oppression de la femme. La position womaniste face à ce problème consiste à éduquer, à sensibiliser et à éveiller la conscience de toute catégorie de femmes afin qu'elles s'interposent vis-à-vis de ce fléau. Voici la pertinence des films comme *Widow* et des romans comme *La révolte d'Affiba* et *Le prix de la révolte*.

Si *Widow* constate l'assujettissement de la veuve, les romans de Yaou dépassent le niveau de la souffrance pour subvertir la tradition et revendiquer la justice. Après la mort de son mari, Affiba, comme Nnena est soupçonnée de l'avoir tué. Par conséquent, ses beaux-parents demandent qu'elle subisse des rites dégradants et qu'elle jeûne jusqu'à l'enterrement du mari. En plus, elle doit boire le « breuvage de la vérité », afin de prouver son innocence et de vérifier si elle a été une épouse fidèle. L'injustice et la discrimination sexuelle sont très évidentes dans ces lois traditionnelles. De son vivant, Koffi avait trompé sa femme au vu et au su de tout le monde. Il n'avait pas été condamné, et il était même disculpé sous prétexte que c'est une faiblesse inhérente de l'homme de courir les jupons. Pourtant, c'est la femme trompée qui est obligée de prouver sa fidélité ou « vérité ». Or, Affiba est une femme qui ne se laisse pas malmener, une femme qui assume bien sa personnalité et qui s'affirme. Elle déclare avec force:

Je ne jeûnerai pas…Ensuite, je ne goûterai absolument pas au breuvage de la vérité!... Le choc de la mort d'un époux ébranle déjà trop physiquement pour que la veuve soit soumise à d'autres épreuves! Ce fameux breuvage de la vérité, je ne mets pas en doute son efficacité, mais je tiens à la vie. Je vais purement et simplement me faire empoisonner. Parce qu'ils savent, ces présumés héritiers, qu'ils ne réussiront pas à mettre la main sur mes biens, ils mettront dans le bol un poison qui m'étendra raide morte; mais on dira «Affiba trompait son mari! » (*La révolte* 143).

L'analyse d 'Affiba s'avère très lucide. En général, la période des funérailles d'un décédé est dure et très précaire pour la veuve, surtout si l'homme de son vivant était monogame. C'est le moment pour sa famille élargie de prendre sa revanche sur une « étrangère » qui leur aurait « volé » leur fils. Pire, la femme est conçue comme l'objet de possession de son mari, une sorte d'esclave présente pour le servir, lui procurer le plaisir sexuel et fabriquer des enfants. C'est donc un écart de conduite de la part d'une femme que de se considérer comme individu à part entière. Mais Affiba se révolte contre cette chosification. Elle est soutenue dans sa révolte contre la tradition par Manzan, sa sœur cadette. Cette étudiante universitaire, porte-parole de la romancière, opine que les femmes doivent résister aux coutumes nuisibles de leur société. Une telle résistance exige d'abord, la solidarité des femmes afin de contester leur infériorisation par le patriarcat. Or, comme le constate bien Ogundipe-Leslie (1994), il faut aussi une interrogation critique des cultures africaines afin d'éliminer les coutumes et les traditions qui servent de prétexte pour opprimer les femmes. Il devient inadmissible pour le patriarcat en Afrique de se cacher derrière les traditions pour continuer à humilier et à déshumaniser les femmes.

III. La Question D'héritage

Il est sûr et certain que le mauvais traitement de la veuve en Afrique est motivé par un penchant pour le matériel. Les règles de la société traditionnelle veulent qu'à la mort d'un homme, ses parents prennent possession de tous ses biens. Autrement dit, la femme et les enfants du défunt seraient complètement dépouillés au profit de sa famille élargie. Dans cette logique, une épouse ne jouit d'aucun droit dans sa famille conjugale. Tout au plus, elle est considérée comme un simple objet, une possession à hériter et dans plusieurs cultures en Afrique, la première possession à hériter après le décès

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d'un homme est sa femme. D'après Rangira Gallimore (1994), « en Afrique, c'est à travers le corps de la femme que la société se maintient et se perpétue. Ainsi ce corps doit -il être façonné, contrôlé et marqué ». La tradition de lévirat montre à quel point la femme est contrôlée, malmenée et déshumanisée dans son corps. Normalement, c'est le cadet qui hérite de l'aîné mais il est des cas aberrants comme dans *Une si longue lettre* de Mariama Bâ où l'aîné, par convoitise, prétend ajouter la femme de son frère cadet à son harem. Ainsi, malgré l'éducation et le *standing* social de la protagoniste de Bâ, son beau-frère illettré a l'audace de lui faire une proposition de mariage parce qu'il ne voit en elle qu'une femelle.

Imprégné de la conception du corps de la femme comme objet à posséder, le conseil des anciens du village de Chima demande que sa veuve soit héritée par son frère aîné, Ifeanyi, bourreau principal de cette dernière. L'union avec le beau-frère vise à donner à ce dernier non seulement le droit à la possession de Chima mais aussi au corps de Nnena qui est considéré comme un objet de consommation. Autrement dit, la femme n'a pas le droit de contrôler son corps même après la mort de son mari. Il est aussi évident que ce mariage est conçu pour humilier Nnena. D'abord elle est plus scolarisée que son beau-frère. De plus, cet usurpateur était un employé dans l'une des compagnies appartenant à son mari et à elle. Malgré la supériorité sociale de Nnena, la société patriarcale la considère comme une subalterne sans voix. Nnena refuse carrément le lévirat et la réponse de sa belle-mère est catégorique : « Then prepare to leave this house alone. You cannot take our kids and at the same time, you cannot take anything that belongs to my son with you. » (Alors prépare-toi à quitter cette maison toute seule. Tu ne pourras pas partir avec nos enfants et en même temps tu ne prendra aucun des biens de mon fils). Selon la tradition, le fruit du corps de la femme appartient au mari et à son clan. Pire, comme le constate l'avocat de Nnena, le système judiciaire reconnaît la loi religieuse et coutumière et ces lois en général, privilégient l'homme au détriment de la femme.

Malgré les protestations de Nnena, sa belle-mère et son beau-frère Ifeanyi s'installent chez elle et commencent à maltraiter ses enfants. Qui plus est, Ifeanyi essaie de coucher avec elle. « I have come to claim my rights, my cojugal rights » (Je suis venu réclamer mes droits, mes droits sexuels) dit-il. Evidemment il envisage, par l'acte sexuel, à la subjuguer. Mais plus grave, il ne s'attend pas à ce qu'elle résiste à cette proposition, ce qui montre jusqu'à quel point la femme est chosifiée dans la mentalité patriarcale. Par comble des choses, Nnena surprend ce même Ifeanyi et sa belle-mère en train de parler de l'éliminer parce qu'elle est officiellement l'ayant droit de son feu mari. Consciente du danger, elle s' échappe pendant la nuit et trouve asile chez une amie. En fin de compte, c'est par l'aide d'une autre amie, une avocate, qu'elle parvient à envoyer ses enfants à l'étranger hors de menace de sa belle-famille. Ici, les cinéastes présentent les jeunes femmes éveillées sous l'égide de lutteuses unifiées pour résister à l'oppression de la société patriarcale. Ils soulignent l'importance de *female bonding* - solidarité des femmes - préconisée par les womanistes comme instrument efficace de lutte pour l'émancipation de lafemme en Afrique.

A l'instar de Nnena dans le long métrage *Widow*, le personnage principal dans *La révolte d'Affiba* et *Le prix de la révolte*, doit elle aussi faire face à la question d'héritage. Affiba est sommée par sa belle-famille de quitter son foyer conjugal, mais elle refuse de se laisser dépouiller et insiste sur ses droits et ceux de ses enfants. Elle se révolte contre cette tradition qui cherche à l'écraser, à la rendre en « sans-abris » alors qu'elle a travaillé très dur pour assurer la stabilité de sa famille. Il lui est répulsif d'être destituée alors que d'autres qui n'ont pas levé le petit doigt comptent jouir du fruit de son labeur. Avertie de l'arrivée de ses beaux-parents chez elle, Affiba s'apprête à les confronter: « Je leur apprendrais que les choses ont changé... ils s'imaginent que je vais me laisser délester de tout ce que je possède. Il y a des biens que nous avons acquis ensemble, tout de même! Lorsque j'avais tout vendu pour aider Koffi, où étaient ses parents? » (136). De leur côté, les parents de Koffi croient qu'ayant tout sacrifié pour éduquer leur fils, ils ont droit à ses biens. Quant à sa femme, elle n'a aucun droit sur la propriété de son mari puisqu'elle n'a pas de lien de sang avec cette famille. Si elle a fait des sacrifices elle aussi pour contribuer à l'éducation de Koffi, elle n'a fait que remplir son devoir de femme. Par contre, leurs sacrifices pour la réussite de leur fils sont pour eux un investissement qui doit rapporter des gains. C'est à ce titre qu'ils considèrent la maison de Koffi comme la leur. Mais Affiba décide de se lever contre cette loi odieuse, espérant que son cas servira à libérer d'autres femmes du joug patriarcal.

Par opposition à Affiba, sa mère quant à elle, prêche la docilité et conseille à sa fille de céder puisque c'est ainsi que veut la tradition. Cette femme, comme les *Umuada* dans *Widow*, accepte les préjugés contre la femme sans se poser de questions, et à force d'inhiber la notion de la dite infériorité de la femme, elle devient de fait inférieure. D'après la vieille, « c'est la coutume de chez nous qui veut que les parents du défunt récupèrent les biens de ce dernier à sa mort! Pourquoi s'y opposer?... C'est la coutume et ce n'est pas toi Affiba, *une petite fille* comme cela qui vas changer le cours des choses » (140) (Nous soulignons). L'expression « une petite fille » traduit avec éloquence, l'acceptation chez cette femme de son assujettissement. Comme on l'a bien constaté, ce sont surtout les femmes traditionnelles qui répandent ces idées discriminatoires parce qu'elles sont conditionnées à se considérer comme des

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subalternes qui ne peuvent pas prendre la parole. En effet, la révolte d'Affiba est contre les coutumes qui cherchent à la bâillonner. Yaou, à travers son protagoniste réclame non seulement le droit de la femme à s'exprimer mais revendique aussi le bouleversement des traditions qui oppriment les femmes. C'est dans cette optique que le discours de Yaou dans ces romans devient subversif.

La société d'Affiba est certainement tiraillée par les exigences de la tradition et de la modernité. La querelle de la jeune femme avec ses beaux-parents est une démonstration de ce dilemme. Ses beaux-parents sont ancrés dans la tradition qui conçoit la femme comme esclave de son mari et ils semblent avoir oublié que leur fils a épousé sa femme selon le droit civil qui accorde une grande importance à la femme et l'associe à l'héritage. Puisque Koffi les a « quittés » pour fonder une nouvelle famille avec sa femme, ses devoirs envers l'épouse l'emportent dès lors sur ceux de sa famille élargie. La loi exige également qu'à la mort de son mari, Affiba devient la tutrice des enfants, les héritiers légitimes et il lui revient d'administrer les biens de son mari. Maintenant, les parents de Koffi ont affaire non pas à une analphabète mais à une femme professionnelle qui a contribué autant que son mari à la réussite de leur famille et qui n'acceptera pas d'être exclue des biens qu'elle a pu acquérir ensemble avec lui. Elle rappelle donc à ses beaux-parents que la maison et tout autre possession dont ils cherchent à s'emparer lui appartiennent aussi:

J'ai continué à « serrer la ceinture » parce que Koffi construisait cette maison qui vous fait tant envie; au moment où Koffi rentrait de stage... je l'ai épaulé; c'est même moi qui ai fourni sa part du capital pour ouvrir le cabinet... Je n'aurais peiné si c'était pour me retrouver à la rue avec mes enfants, en moins de dix ans de mariage!... Dans tout ménage, la femme investit aussi et elle n'acceptera pas d'être dépouillée par des héritiers surgis d'on ne sait où! (146-147).

La position de la protagoniste constitue donc un affront au système patriarcal traditionnel soutenu par des conventions discriminatoires. Affiba remet en question la domination oppressive de l'homme symbolisée par ses beaux-parents et revendique ses droits. Mais au delà de ses problèmes personnels, c'est contre l'objectivation de toutes les femmes que lutte Affiba dans sa guerre d'héritage. C'est à ce titre qu'elle parle pour les femmes rurales qui sont mêmes plus opprimées que les citadines:

Ces femmes, même si elles n'apportaient pas d'argent dans le foyer, étaient utiles: il leur fallait accompagner leur mari à la plantation et mettre la main à la pâte; pourtant lorsque ces plantations produiraient, elles n'en verraient peut-être même pas la couleur des fruits. Tout simplement parce que leurs maris seraient morts et que la famille de ces derniers auraient tout accaparé (*Le prix* 21).

Autrement dit, les femmes qui triment tout au long de leur vie à côté de leurs maris vivent dans une insécurité permanente. Parfois elles intensifient leurs efforts afin de mettre quelque chose de côté au cas du décès de leurs maris. C'est la stratégie explorée par la mère d'Affiba qui se lie avec ses frères dans la culture du cacao pour sauvegarder l'avenir. Mais Yaou, à travers son protagoniste cherche à faire comprendre à toute belle-famille que les temps ont changé. «La femme n'apporte plus seulement la force physique à l'entreprise de son mari, elle apporte aussi une participation financière concrète et donc ne peut plus accepter d'être dépouillée**»**. Or, tout en préconisant la justice pour la femme, Affiba en porte-parole de l'écrivaine, ne préconise pas pour autant de négliger la famille d'origine de l'homme. Elle fait une analyse très lucide de la situation quand elle dit:

Si le monde a changé et que la loi des Blancs a remplacé la coutume, nous n'en demeurons pas moins Noirs et Africains... Il faut donc trouver un point d'équilibre car nous ne pouvons pas nous permettre de réagir exactement comme nous dicte la loi des Blancs, pas plus que nous ne pouvons obéir aveuglément à la coutume, comme je vous disais…Faut-il, au mépris de tous les sacrifices souvent consentis par les parents pour la réussite du disparu, que la femme garde tous les biens? Non, je ne le crois pas. Ou alors faut-il jeter dehors la veuve, qui autrefois, aida son mari à acquérir ces biens tant convoités ? Faut-il nier aux enfants, pour qui leurs parents se privaient, tout droit de regard sur ce que laisse le défunt? Non plus. Voilà pourquoi un compromis s'impose. Le partage des biens entre les héritiers coutumiers et les ayants-droit légaux (182 - 183).

Les femmes, victimes de l'oppression patriarcale, admirent Affiba « pour son *cran* ». Certes, elles ont d'exprimer ouvertement ce qu'elles ressentent mais elles reconnaissent en Affiba leur porte-parole. Celle-ci exerce, en particulier, une influence positive sur la jeune génération. A titre d'exemple, Ama la jeune nièce de Koffi, à qui selon la loi de la société, revient l'héritage du défunt, a des leçons à donner à son grand-père: « regarde encore tante Affiba! Cela fait dix ans qu'elle lutte pour vous faire fléchir, vous faire comprendre que la seule solution à ce problème, c'est un compromis…Il faut régler rapidement ce problème avec tante Affiba. Il faut accepter le compromis qu'elle propose » (*Le prix* 189 -190). En effet, Affiba propose le partage de l'héritage non seulement à la famille de son mari mais aussi à son enfant illégitime. Mensah, le beau-père d'Affiba, est stupéfait lorsqu'il découvre que cette dernière a fait construire trois maisons pour sa belle-famille en plus de cinq cent mille francs qu'elle veut lui donner. Affiba est ainsi une partisane des

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principes de l'entente et du compromis préconisés par le womanisme. En fin de compte, le vieux Mensah se fait l'écho de sa bru et de sa petite-fille lorsqu'il dit:

Le monde est perpétuellement en mutation. Et à ce changement il faut s'adapter ou périr... En reconnaissant à Affiba et aux enfants des droits sur l'héritage de Koffi, je ne fais que me ranger aux côtés de ceux qui ont compris que notre monde ne survivra que si nous savons faire une synthèse entre la coutume et la loi, le traditionnel et le modernisme, que si nous savons trouver des compromis. Car le compromis, comme le disait Affiba, est le mot-clé qui doit régler nos problèmes quand ils mettent face à face la tradition et le modernisme, nos coutumes et celles des Blancs (203).

Affiba gagne ainsi la lutte contre sa propre oppression et insiste à définir sa réalité. Mais si son histoire se termine sur une note positive et de triomphe, par contre celle de la protagoniste de *Widow* laisse un goût amer dans la bouche. L'on peut même suggérer que le film nous présente la réalité des veuves alors que les romans prévoient pour l'avenir, un bon dénouement à la saga des veuves. En effet, l'histoire de la veuve dans le roman d'une autre écrivaine ivoirienne, Anne-Marie Adiaffi, ressemble plutôt à celle de Nnena. Ago, dans *Une vie hypothéquée* (2000), est non seulement exclue avec ses enfants du droit de succession après la disparition de son mari, mais elle est terriblement humiliée par dessus le marché. Nous avons cité cet exemple pour montrer que ce ne sont pas toutes les veuves dépeintes dans les œuvres des romancières d'Afrique francophone qui ont l'audace et le succès d'Affiba. Pourtant, le fait de représenter ce problème traduit déjà l'engagement des écrivaines en ce qui concerne le problème des veuves en Afrique et la volonté de lutter contre cette discrimination sexuelle.

IV. Conclusion

La représentation de l'oppression des veuves dans les ouvrages sélectionnés pour cette étude témoigne de la préoccupation de leurs auteurs pour cet obstacle à l'émancipation de la femme. D'après notre analyse, l'on constate que dans les sociétés africaines, la situation d'une veuve est un cas très délicat. En effet, elle est dans la famille un être fragile. D'abord, elle subit un procédé barbare et dégradant pendant les funérailles de son mari et puis elle est écartée du partage de l'héritage en dépit de sa contribution à rassembler cet héritage. Cette tradition constitue une grande injustice à l'encontre de la femme. Qui plus est, elle détruit l'avenir des enfants. Le film *Widow* est une dramatisation très vivante de la problématique du veuvage en Afrique et il a pour but d'attirer l'attention du public à la situation angoissante des ces femmes. Ce souci des cinéastes Amata et Ogoro reflète une préoccupation des womanistes de libérer les femmes de ce fardeau écrasant. De son côté, Yaou dans ses romans, se veut délibérément subversive dans le but de sensibiliser le public contre ce fléau. Cette sensibilisation vise à éveiller la conscience du peuple et à chercher une solution libératrice. Les titres mêmes des romans, « La révolte d'Affiba », « Le prix de la révolte », soulignent le souci de la romancière de concevoir des personnages féminins non comme de simples victimes mais surtout comme des femmes fortes qui s'élèvent contre l'injustice et l'oppression. Elle montre que l'éducation formelle et la vie professionnelle ont éveillé la conscience des femmes si bien qu'elles ne veulent plus se laisser faire. Il faut donc que le patriarcat reconnaisse ces changements et renonce à l'injustice faite aux femmes, en l'occurrence, les veuves. Comme le constate bien Badini-Kinda (2010:31), « l'accès à une vie professionnelle est considéré comme la première des mutations et la plus importante pour la situation de la femme. Elle contribue au changement de son statut social ». C'est grâce à son indépendance économique renforcée par sa vie professionnelle que la protagoniste de Yaou réussit à réclamer ses droits. Mais au lieu de demeurer intransigeante, elle fait preuve de maturité et de compréhension. Par le biais de ce personnage, la romancière préconise l'entente et le compromis face à la question des veuves en Afrique et rejoint ainsi les tenantes du womanisme.

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Influence of Social Media on Public Relations Practices in Universities in South-East, Nigeria

By Agha Egwu Inya

Resume- This study examined the influence of social media on public relations practices in universities in South-East Nigeria. Qualitative research design was used to study eight public relations practitioners purposefully selected from eight universities in the zone. In-depth interviews conducted face -to -face and through telephone conversations were used to generate information from respondents. The study discovered that the use of social media by the public relations practitioners has changed the traditional methods of information dissemination in the universities. It was however discovered that the frequency which the PR practitioners use the social media was not enough to generate backlinks needed to improve the global ranking of their universities. The study recommended that universities should employ personnel dedicated to managing their social media platforms under the supervision of their public relations units.

Keywords- *social media, public relations, south-east universities.*

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Influence of Social Media on Public Relations Practices in Universities in South-East, Nigeria

Agha Egwu Inya

Abstract- This study examined the influence of social media on public relations practices in universities in South-East Nigeria. Qualitative research design was used to study eight public relations practitioners purposefully selected from eight universities in the zone. In-depth interviews conducted face -to -face and through telephone conversations were used to generate information from respondents. The study discovered that the use of social media by the public relations practitioners has changed the traditional methods of information dissemination in the universities. It was however discovered that the frequency which the PR practitioners use the social media was not enough to generate backlinks needed to improve the global ranking of their universities. The study recommended that universities should employ personnel dedicated to managing their social media platforms under the supervision of their public relations units.

Keywords: social media, public relations, south-east universities.

I. Introduction

Social media have changed the pattern of corporate communications, affecting the ways public relations campaigns are formulated, disseminated and measured. The power over the message is no longer the exclusive preserve of an organisation; the various publics also enjoy equal power to initiate dialogue. Prior to the digital explosion and the popularization of the social media, audience engagement was based on print and electronic media. The focus of a PR publicity campaign was all about securing decent coverage in television, radio and dailies. With over 75% internet surfers using social media, (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010), the social media have provided public relations practitioners a unique opportunity to collect information, monitor public opinion on issues, and engage in direct dialogue with their publics about a variety of issues. (McAllister & Taylor, 2007) Eyrich, Padman & Sweetser, (2008) observed that public relations practitioners are shifting to social media as the lines between online and offline promotion becomes blurry.

However, the level of compliance of PR managers to the social media varies. While many public relations practitioners value the social media, a few of them actually maximise the advantage it offer to their profession. (Gordon 2010). It appears that a good number of public relations practitioners are yet to understand how social media can help improve their professional practices. Some of them simply use social media as another tool of personal communication while others do not even use them at all.

In the university system, there is high level of compliance to the social media by staff and students. Many of them depend on the social media for information on activities within and outside the university. They use the social media to share their thoughts, make inquires, and react to posts shared by other members of the university community. With their Smartphone and laptops, they monitor events in the university through the social media. The development has placed a burden on public relations practitioners in the universities. It is the burden of meeting the information needs of members of their internal and external publics using their favourite channels.

With the popularity of university ranking system, public relations practitioners cannot afford to be apathetic to the use of social media in their job. The stake has gone beyond using the social media to promote internal and external communications. It also involves positioning the university as socially relevant in the global comity of universities. Contemporary public relations practice in the university requires that the public relations practitioner should use the social media to complement research efforts of his faculties in order to improve the global rankings of his institution. One of the indicators for global ranking of universities is their web presence. The social media platforms are employed by the public relations departments of highly ranked universities to generate backlinks to their institution's websites which constitute fifty per cent of the scores by Webometric, one of the biggest university ranking agencies. Although no additional form of communication skill is required from PR managers in this direction, what is paramount is the traffic attracted to universities website through their social media platforms. This is a challenge which many PR managers of Nigerian universities seem yet to embrace.

This study therefore examines the extent to which the social media have influenced the practices of public relations practitioners in universities in South-East Nigeria

II. Statement of the Problem

Social media have provided multiple channels for public relations practitioners to engage their publics directly without relying on the traditional media. The

Author: Department of Mass Communication University of Nigeria, Nsukka. e-mail: agha.inya@unn.edu.ng

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public relations practitioners have opportunities to share real time updates on activities of their organisations and receive immediate feedback from their publics.

Some of the practitioners have taken advantage of the opportunities offered by the social media to improve their professional practices and build global reputation for their organisations. On the other hand, there are some public relations practitioners who seem not to consider social media as serious channels that can be employed for the advancement of public relations programmes. At best, they use social media for their personal interactions, leaving their organisations' publics at the mercy of rumour mongers in the social space.

This study therefore intends to find out which group do public relations practitioners in South-East universities belong? Are they part of the practitioners whose practices have been influenced by the social media? This is against the backdrop that universities have high number of internal publics (youths) who use the social media, and that the social media can be used to generate backlinks considered in the global ranking of universities by the Webometric.

III. Objectives of Study

1. To determine if public relations practitioners in South-East universities use social media in their practices
2. To identify the aspect of public relations practice in the university that have been affected by the social media
3. To determine how the uses of social media have affected the personal lifestyle of the PR practitioners
4. To ascertain if public relations practitioners in South-East universities consciously use social media platforms to improve the global ranking of their universities.

Research Questions

1. Do public relations practitioners in South-East universities use social media in their professional practices?
2. What aspect of public relations practices in the university have the social media affected most?
3. To what extent have the uses of social media affected the personal lifestyles of public relations practitioners in the universities?
4. To what extent do public relations practitioners in south-east universities use social media to improve the global ranking of their institutions?

a) Significant of Study

This study will help PR practitioners in universities understand how to use the social media to create good rapport between the university administration and staff and students. Interactive channels like the social media, if well utilised, will help douse students' restiveness and reduce the problem of trade union agitations in the universities.

The study will also help public relations practitioners in Nigerian universities know how their counterparts in other highly ranked universities are using the social media to improve the global image of their institutions. It is expected that the study will propel the practitioners to strive towards building an enviable global image for their institutions.

It will also serve as eye opener to university administrators on the need to train and retrain their public relations staff on the uses of social media as well as provide them with relevant tools for on-line access.

This study will equally serve as a platform for further enquiries in related subject matters and as a resource material for researchers who intend to carry out studies in this and other related areas.

b) Scope of Study

This study covered only public relations practitioners in universities located in South-East region of Nigeria. The study was concerned with only those officially designated as public relations officers or directors of communication in their respective universities. It did not include registry or administrative staffs who are performing the functions of a public relations officer.

IV. Literature Review

a) Overview of the Social Media

Social media involve the use of mobile and web-based technologies to design highly interactive platforms by which individuals and communities share, create, converse, and adjust User-Generated Content (Kietzmann, Hermkens & McCarthy, 2011). User-Generated Content (UGC) is enabled by Web 2.0 (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Web 2.0 is a term encompassing a second generation of internet-based and interactive applications that are developed around user-generated and user-adjusted content, such as wikis, blogs, podcasts and social networking sites. The term Web 2.0 is widely attributed to Tim O'Reilly who used it as the theme of a conference in 2004 referring to a second generation of Web-based services that feature openness for collaboration and interactivity (Boler, 2008, p. 39; O'Reilly, 2005). Web 2.0 allows internet users to engage in the creative process.

Social media penetration worldwide is ever-increasing. In 2016, 68.3 percent of internet users were social media users and these figures are expected to grow. North America ranks first among regions where social media is highly popular, with a social media penetration rate of 59 percent. In 2016, more than three quarters of the United States population had a social media profile. Overall, U.S. users spend more than 216 weeks minutes on social media via smartphone, 53 weekly minutes via PC, and 50 minutes per week on

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social networks via tablet devices. (https:// www.statista. com/ statistics/ 278414/number-of-worldwide-social network-users/). In Nigeria, Facebook, a leading social media platform, has over 16 million users, (https://www.statista.com) Wright & Hinson (2009, p. 15) identified the social media and social networks mostly used by PR practitioners as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube and Blog.

b) Facebook

Facebook provides social utility services that help people communicate more efficiently with their friends, families and colleagues. The technologies of Facebook facilitate the sharing of information through the social graph and digital mapping of people's real-world social connections service. It was launched in February 2004. Facebook was founded by four students of Harvard University- Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes. It was initially called Facemash and was restricted to students of Harvard University. The use was later extended to people in the universities in Boston, Canada and Ivy League Universities. The Facemash software was written by Mark Zuckerberg. It was opened to members of the general public, of 13 years and above, in September 2006. There are over 1,679,433,530 Facebook users worldwide, out of which 9.3% (146, 637,000) of the subscribers are from Africa. There are over 16,000,000 Facebook users in Nigeria. (Internet World Stat, March 2017).

c) Twitter

Twitter is a micro-blogging social network that allows users to share real-time information in short spurts of up to 140 characters per tweet. It was founded in 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, and Biz Stone. It is online equivalent of mobile phone text messaging. Twitter users can "follow" other users or communicate by using hastags (eg #Nimbomassacre). The hastags serve as user-identifying key words that direct readers to what others think are important. Twitter is based in San Francisco but it is used in other countries. It is available in English, French, German, Italian, Japanese and Spanish. (Sheedy 2011).

Twitter is one of the most popular social networks worldwide. Part of the appeal is the ability of users to follow any other user with a public profile, enabling users to interact with celebrities who regularly post on the social media site. As of the fourth quarter of 2016, Twitter service averaged at 319 million monthly active users. In the last quarter of 2016, Nigeria recorded a total tweet of 1,646,212. That was the third biggest in Africa behind South Africa and Kenya. (https://www.statista.com/statistics/242606/number-of-active-twitter-users-in-selecoun)

d) LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a business and employment-oriented social networking service that operates via websites and mobile apps. Founded on December 28, 2002, and launched on May 5, 2003, it is mainly used for professional networking, including employers posting jobs and job seekers posting their CVs. As of 2015, most of the company's revenue came from selling access to information about its members to recruiters and sales professionals .As of September 2016, LinkedIn had more than 467 million accounts, out of which more than 106 million are active. LinkedIn allows members (both workers and employers) to create profiles and "connections" to each other in an online social network which may represent real-world professional relationships. Members can invite anyone (whether an existing member or not) to become a connection.

e) YouTube

YouTube was founded in February 2005. It uses web experience to share online videos. It allows people to easily upload and share video clips on www.YouTube.com. YouTube changed the way people share videos because it created a simple way to share otherwise cumbersome and large video files. Sheedy (2011) observes that before the advent of YouTube, it was difficult to share video with a large number of people. There are over one billion users of YouTube worldwide.

f) Blog

Web blog popularly known as blog is a discussion or informational website published on the World Wide Web consisting of discrete, often informal diary-style text entries called "posts". Posts are typically displayed in reverse chronological order, so that the most recent post appears first, at the top of the web page. The emergence and growth of blogs in the late 1990s coincided with the advent of web publishing tools that facilitated the posting of content by non-technical users who did not have much experience with HTML or computer programming. Previously, knowledge of such technologies as HTML and File Transfer Protocol had been required to publish content on the Web, and as such, early Web users tended to be hackers and computer enthusiasts. Blogs allow visitors to leave online comments, and it is this interactivity that distinguishes them from other static websites.[1] In that sense, blogging can be seen as a form of social networking service. Bloggers do not only produce content to post on their blogs, but also often build social relations with their readers and other bloggers. The two popular free blog websites are www.blogger.com and www.wordpress.com/blog.

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V. Public Relations in South-East, Nigeria Universities

Wilcox (cited in Reddi 2014) defined public relations as a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organisation and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasises the responsibility of the management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and ethical communication techniques as its research tools.

The application of the principle of public relations to meet the goals of an organisation and maintain good relations with its public is termed corporate public relations. (Reddi 2014).

Corporate public relations are practised in almost all the universities in the South-East, Nigeria. Many universities in the region have public relations units which are either attached to the office of the Registrar or the office of the Vice-Chancellor. The first university PR unit in the region was established in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. From the inception of the university in 1960, a PR unit was placed under the registry. The primary function of the department was to publish bi-monthly or monthly information bulletins on issues of interest to the university community. The unit occasionally reacted to some issues touching on the image of the university in the press. Public relations function in the university then was ad hoc until 1975 when Mr Ignatius Dike Ogu was appointed a substantive Public Relations Officer of the university. (www.unn.edu.ng).

Explaining the reason for the creation of PR units in universities, Ogu (2016, p 38-40) said some universities set up PR units as launching pad for economic campaign. The job of the public relations officer, under this arrangement, is to organise fund raising campaigns for the development of the university using his contacts with media managers. With increasing cases of students' unrest and trade union agitations, universities appoint PR managers to manage internal relations that will promote stability within the system. PR managers are also appointed by universities to salvage their image where it is battered, or build and maintain good image where none exists; or polish and launder an already existing good image. Whatever the case, the target is to attract staff and students and funds needed to run the university.

Ogu (2016) further outlined three primary functions of a university PR manager to include: improving internal and external relations, creating and improving press relations with the university, and providing a general public relations service between the university and its various publics. Farhana (2016) concurred by outlining the following as the responsibilities of a PR manager in an educational institution:

- Expand the number of applicants to the institution.
- Help the institution to become better known.
- Help the institution to gain an enhanced reputation.
- Influence decision makers to smile upon one's institution.
- Improve internal relations; teachers, students, other administrative staff.
- Maintain good relations with the community.
- Maintain positive relations with the alumni.

The latest addition to the functions of a university PR manager is ensuring that he uses the social media to complement the research efforts of his university in order to improve its global visibility and attract favourable ranking. This has made the use of social media inevitable for public relations managers in the universities. The various social media platforms if properly utilised, direct traffic to a university's website and creates backlinks which are considered in accessing the general web presence of the university. While some university PR managers, who are concerned about their global reputations, have integrated the social media into their communication programme, others who are less concerned still see the social media as convenience media, to be used only when time permits.

VI. Empirical Review Related Literature

Studies on how public relations managers utilise the social media have attracted the attention of many researchers. Achor, Nwachukwu & Nkwocha (2015) made an evaluation of impact of social media on information management in public relations practice. The study surveyed 225 registered PR practitioners in Nigeria and discovered that almost all the practitioners utilise the social media in their professional practices. The study also found that the social media have enhanced the gate-keeping function of the PR practitioners. The study further revealed that the favourite social media channels used by Nigerian PR professionals are Facebook, twitter and blogs.

However, the study did not indicate the extent and frequency of use of social media by Nigerian PR practitioners.

This concern was addressed by the findings of Waters, Burnett, Lamm and Lucas (2009). They undertook a content analysis of 275 non-profit organisation profiles to assess how they used social networking sites to promote their organisational mission and programmes. Among others, they sought to answer the question of how non-profit organisations incorporate relationship development strategies into their Facebook profiles. They found that the non-profit organisations

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had not integrated most of the numerous interactive Facebook applications on their profile. They failed to capitalise on the interactivity of social networking. They also rarely distributed organisational news through the social media channels.

Bruhn, Schoenmueller and Schäfer's (2012) examined three industries – tourism, telecommunication, and pharmaceuticals using online survey to examine the comparative effect of brand communication on brand equity through social media, as against traditional media. The survey found that communication by organisations through social media affected brand perception significantly. Undoubtedly, branding has implications on customer relationship management.

Lydia and Philip (2015) did a content analytical study on the use of social media in public relations with focus on the Ghananian Financial Services Industry. The study analysed the Facebook pages of four financial institutions in Ghana and discovered that most of the posts were targeted at wining new customers. It was asymmetrical form of communication that did not make provision for interaction with old customers. The lack of feedback on majority of the posts analysed in the study was blamed on inconsistence of the posts with average intervals of two to three days. Hence the PR managers of the financial institutions in Ghana failed to explore the interactive nature of Facebook to dialogue with their customers.

In the same vein, Macnamara (2011) made assessment of how public relations practitioners are using or abusing social media. The qualitative study sampled 15 senior public relations practitioners purposefully selected from five sectors namely; large consultancies, small consultancies, corporations, government and non government organisations. The study discovered that all the practitioners said their organisations used social network in ways that exploits their interactive two-way communication capabilities and realise best practices.

Many of the studies in this area focused on the use of social media by PR managers of different organisations other than the university. With the listing of social media as one of the indicators for accessing global web presence of universities by Webometric, a study in this area has become necessary. This study therefore intends to fill that gap.

VII. Theoretical Framework

Diffusion of Innovation Theory is considered relevant to this study. The theory was developed by Everett Rogers in 1962. It was coined from the work of a 19th-century French legal scholar and sociologist, Gabriel Tarde, titled the Laws of Limitation. Diffusion of innovations theory states that an innovation (that is, an idea, new technique, or new technology) diffuses or spreads throughout a society in a predictable pattern. A few people will adopt an innovation as soon as they hear of it. Other people will take longer to try something new, and still others will take much longer.

When a new media technology or another innovation is adopted rapidly by a great number of people, it is said to explode into being (Bryant & Thompson, 2002).The theory discussed above conforms to the study because social media are new tools corporate PR practitioners use in carrying out their duties, yet some are still skeptical about its impact in the field of public relations and are reluctant to adopt them or use them. This explains why some PR practitioners are still holding on to the traditional media for their publicity engagements, without paying attention to the new opportunities presented by the social media.

VIII. Methodology

The study area of this research work was universities located in South- East Nigeria. There are five states in South-East namely: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states. The total number of accredited universities in the zone is 23, comprising five (5) Federal universities, six state universities and 12 private universities (NUC Bulletin, May 2017).

Qualitative research design was considered apt for this study because it enabled the researcher has access to the subjective viewpoints of the objects of the study. This is supported by Daymon and Holloway (2002) in their observation that qualitative research method helps researchers to better understand social processes, the motivations of human beings, and the contexts in which they are situated".

In-depth interview was used to generate data from respondents. It provided the researcher opportunity of generating detailed information about respondents' thoughts. This is supported by Wertz, et al (2011) when he explained that one of the advantages of in-depth interviews is that they provide much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods such as surveys.

Purposive sampling technique was used to select eight (8) Public Relations Managers from eight (8) universities in the zone. The technique was considered appropriate for the study because some of the universities do not have qualified designated PR managers. It therefore became necessary to include only those from whom the researcher could get the requisite data. This is supported by the recommendation of Okeke (2001, p.143) that purposive sampling should be used if the investigator is interested in some characteristic for which only certain people know about, and if the goal of the survey is to obtain good insight and experienced critical appraisal. The subject under investigation required critical appraisal by professional PR managers, not administrative staff who are filling the gap of a public relations officer.

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The Universities whose PR managers were selected for the study included; University of Nigeria, Nsukka – Enugu State.

1. Federal University of Technology, Owerri – Imo State
2. Nnamdi Azikiwe University,Awka,-Anambra State
3. Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, - Abia State
4. Federal University, Ndufu Alike – Ebonyi State
5. Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki- Ebonyi State
6. Abia State University, Uturu, - Abia State
7. Godfrey Okoye University, Ugwuomu-Nike –Enugu State

IX. Presentation of Findings

Do Public Relations Practitioners In South-East Universities Use Social Media For Their Professional Practices?

All the respondents agreed that they use the social media for their professional practices. However, majority of them said their uses of the social media are limited to the Facebook and Twitter. A few of them have official blogs linked to their universities websites.

Respondents A, C, D &E said their universities have personnel dedicated to social media desk. The desk officers respond to enquiries from both the internal and external publics of the universities, and also post updates on activities of the university.

Respondents A &D said their social media desks are jointly managed by personnel from the Public Relations Unit and the ICT, while Respondent C&E said the desks are manned by staff of the public relations.

Respondents B,F, G &H said their universities do not have dedicated social media officers, but their social media platforms are updated by a combined effort of PR and ICT staff. "most time, the PR staff generate the content, while the ICT will do the uploading" said respondent G.

Only respondent A&C said their units have official blog which are updated frequently.

What Aspect Of Public Relations Practices In Your University Have The Social Media Affected Most?

The respondents in general indicated that the social media have affected their practices, especially with regard to the dissemination of information to staff, students and potential students. The respondents were upbeat that the social media hold great potential in improving the practices of public relations in their institutions. More than half said that the social media have made public relations notice boards irrelevant. Respondents A &C said they use the social media (blog and Facebook) to share their press releases with the media. In the words of respondent A; "What I do is to simply share my press releases and the accompanying photographs in our official blogspot and promote them with Facebook and Twitter instead of placing photographs on notice boards, I share them on flicker or instagram. It saves me the time of sending individual mails to journalists"

Respondent D said that although the social media sometimes are used to instigate crisis in the university, they provide faster channels of responding to crisis. "Regarding notice boards, people don't have time to visit notice boards again, majority of our students source information through the social media, that is where we met them".

Respondent H said that social media helps his unit to monitor opinion of staff and students on activities and policies of the university's management. "My unit has a notice board, but very few people care to visit the board for information".

To What Extent Have The Uses Of Social Media Affected The Personal Lifestyles Of Public Relations Practitioners In The Universities?

Majority of the respondents said that the social media have taking very little of their personal time. Respondent A said the pressure of monitoring responses and providing updates on the social media platforms of his institution is not directly on him because his university has a social media desk officer who is responsible for social media communications. "However I spend some of my personal time to monitor what is happening there, but not to the level of addiction"

Respondent B said that social media have limited the quality of his personal time. "Even when I close from my office, I use my Ipad to react and monitor the flow of events in my universities social media pages, especially when the university has a major event like convocation and visits of notable personalities".

Respondent C said he hardly visit the university social media pages except if there is something that requires his attention there. "Our updates are not very frequent. I can tell you that social media have not taken away anything from my personal lifestyle"

Respondent D said his challenge with social media lies in generating spontaneous materials that would match the speed of the media."We have shortage of manpower in this area. Personally, I am always occupied with other official chores. I use the social media but not to the point of letting it interfere with my personal time"

For Respondent E and F, the social media have taken much of their personal time that they can hardly differentiate their working hours from their personal time. "With my Smartphone, there is no closing time for me" said respondent F. "Interacting on facebook serve as my way of relaxing after the day's work. Though it denies me my leisure time" said respondent E.

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Respondent G and H said that the social media have not taken anything away from their personal lifestyle because they use them occasionally.

To What Extent Do Pr Practitioners In South-East Universities Use Social Media To Improve The Global Ranking Of Their Institutions?

Majority of the respondents said that they were not aware that social media presence was considered by global ranking agencies in their rating of universities. Majority of the PR managers in universities use social media to promote activities of their vice-chancellors without making conscious efforts to generate backlink traffic to their websites.

Only respondent A said that he was aware of the usefulness of social media in enhancing global reputation of universities. "We consciously use the social media to direct traffic to our website by responding to enquiries of our staff and students, posting materials that the generate traffics, and by encouraging them to create blogs with links to the university's website"

Respondent C said he was aware of the contribution of the social media to the global ranking of universities. "I know about it but we are not doing much on that because of shortage of personnel who will be generating the contents needed to ensure steady traffic" Respondents B, D,E,F, G & H said they had no idea of the place of social media in the ranking of the universities. "I am aware they consider volume and quality of published researches, I did not know that social media had any stake" said respondent B. "Universities are ranked based on the quality of research publications of their staff, what has social media got to do with the ranking?, queried Respondent D "It is possible that social media have a stake in the ranking, we are not conscious of that" said respondent E

X. Discussion of Findings

The study discovered that the social media have redefined the practices of public relations in the universities. Notice boards that were one of the traditional channels of disseminating information to the internal publics of the university have been replaced with facebook and instagram which are the preferred channels for students. The university PR managers no longer wait for the traditional media to publish their press releases, they provide updates on activities using blogs, facebook and twitter platforms. While the social media can be used to instigate crisis in the universities, they also provide faster channels for university PR mangers to combat rumours and respond to potential harmful comments against their institutions.

The study further discovered that all the public relations managers in the universities in the zone use the social media for their professional practices. This is in agreement with the findings of Achor et al (2015). Although the extent of their uses varies depending on skill and the disposition of individual practitioners, it is commendable that PR managers are flowing with trends in information dissemination. University students, who constitute the bulk of internal public of the university, are social media users. It is necessary that PR practitioners should engage them in their favourite channels.

The findings of the research also revealed that social media use by PR managers in the universities have not significantly affected their personal lifestyle. This implies that many of the managers fall under the social media personality category described by Odii (2013, p. 162) as "Dippers". According to Odii, "Dippers" access their social media pages infrequently, often in days or weeks without posting updates and they are not addicted to the social media. This attitude towards the social media has created information gaps which are exploited by rumour mongers to spread malicious information against many universities.

The discovery that many PR managers, in the zone under study, are not aware of the impact of the social media on the global ranking of the universities rattles the mind. The implication is that many of the managers use the social media as convenient channels of communication not as integral part of their global visibility strategy. The Webometric Ranking of World Universities is the largest web-based academic performance ranking system. It accesses over 24,000 universities worldwide. The ranking system is built using a combined indicator called WR. In the rankings, the number of published web pages constitute twenty-five percent; the number of rich files, those in pdf, ps, doc and ppt format form 12.5 percent; the number of articles gathered from the Google Scholar Database constitute another 12.5 percent and the total number of external networks (subnets like facebook, twitter, blogs, etc) originating backlinks to the institutions web pages form fifty percent of the ranking grading. (Aguillo, Ortega, & Fernández 2008). The effect of social media in the ranking cannot be overemphasised. Using the social media to generate the fifty percent backlinks should be a major concern of PR managers who desire to improve the global visibility of their universities.

XI. Conclusions

The purpose of this work was to examine the influence of the social media on public relations practices in universities in South-East. Qualitative research method was used. Eight public relations managers from universities across the five states of the South-East were interviewed through personal contacts and telephone interview. The study discovered that the increasing use of the social media by the managers has changed the traditional methods of information dissemination in the universities. The social media have

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not affected the personal lifestyle of the managers because majority of them use the social media occasionally. Majority of the PR managers use the social media occasionally because they are not aware that the social media can be used to generate backlinks to their websites which are highly considered in the global ranking of their universities.

XII. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are considered important

1. Public relations units and directorates of information in the universities should employ personnel dedicated to the social media. Updating information on the social media platforms of the universities should not depend on the breaking of major news events. Contents should be generated and shared on daily basis.
2. PR managers in the university should prioritize using social media to enhance the global ranking of their universities. Therefore, it is suggested that the managers should mandate every staff of their public relations unit and ICT to create blog, facebook and twitter accounts with hyperlinks to their institution's website. This will help in generating the backlinks needed to improve the Webometric ranking of their universities.
3. Further research should be carried out on the influence of university location on the social media usage by public relations practitioners.

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Newspaper Coverage of the Economic Recession Under the Buhari Administion: A Study of Guardian and Vanguard

By Dr. Ekwueme Anthony
University Of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract- This study assessed the Newspaper Coverage of Economic Recession by Guardian and Vanguard newspapers. This work was done to find out how Nigerian newspapers report the current Economic Recession under Buhari Administration. Content analysis was the research method used while code sheet was the instrument used in gathering data. The population of study amounted to 138 editions of the selected newspapers, 69 editions for each. This was got through the stratified sampling technique. Based on the descriptive data analysis, the study reveals that low significance was given to the coverage of the economic recession as most of the stories by both newspapers appeared in the inside pages coupled with the fact that most of stories were not illustrated. It was discovered that most stories were not reported through the human interest angle. The researchers recommended that the newspapers should constructively attach significance to the coverage of the economic recession. The newspapers were also encouraged to report economic recession more from the angle of human interest.

Keywords- newspaper, coverage, economic recession, buhari administration background of the study.

GJHSS-A Classification: FOR Code: 899999



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I. Introduction

According to Adebumiti (2016) Nigeria is a middle income, mixed economy and emerging market, with expanding financial, service, communications, technology and entertainment sectors. It is ranked as the 21st largest economy in the world in terms of nominal GDP, and the 20th largest in terms of Purchasing Power Parity. It is the largest economy in Africa; its re-emergent, though currently underperforming, manufacturing sector is the third-largest on the continent, and produces a large proportion of goods and services for the West African sub region. Nigeria recently changed its economic analysis to account for rapidly growing contributors to its GDP, such as telecommunications, banking, and its film industry.

But Nigeria economy is in shambles at the current estimate. The economic activities are in lull due to sharp fall in gross domestic product (GDP) to -1.5% meaning that Nigeria is in recession. There is high retrenchment of labour forces in the country and output is at all-time low. Power supply from the national grid down to 2.828mw. Average airline load factor declined for the third consecutive month as at July 2016. Oil production crashed to 1.4millions barrels per day from a high of 1.9millions per day mainly from the offshore and deep water assets. Average oil price in the first two quarters of 2016 was $49.99 per barrel. Headline inflation spikes to 16.5%, highest level in six years, Nigeria now has the highest inflation. 6.6% above the 9% inflation according to ceiling of the Central Bank of Nigeria. Rewane (2016).

Aremu (2016) in Adebumiti (2016) opines that the directive by the Central Bank of Nigeria to make commercial banks stop customers from using their debit and credit cards overseas is one that has serious repercussions and should be reversed. The cutting of $10,000 to $5,000 cash or negotiable instruments across the nation's borders for travellers with genuine business going abroad is also unacceptable. These policies have put lots of people out of job and crippled the economy more.

Ewubare (2016) writing in the Financial Times magazine of the UK, describes some of the steps taken by the government on the economy as foolishness in the sense that the intention of the Nigeria government to copy Venezuela's exchange rate policy and China's failed equity market strategy. These measures by the two communist nations failed them and Nigeria can't afford to go such a way in reviving the economy in order to come out recession.

Newspapers are one of the key sources of information about economic developments, in particular the state of the national macro-economy (Mutz 1992). The attention to and tone of economic news varies depending on the economic situation. First, economic news reflects change in economic developments rather than the absolute state of the economy. When the economy is doing well, this is not newsworthy per se (De Boef and Kellstedt 2004). On the other hand, how the economy is developing and where it is heading are newsworthy (Martenson 1998). Second, economic news reacts asymmetrically to economic developments. News becomes more negative when the economy declines, but not more positive when the economy improves (Blood and Philips 1995; Goidel and Langley 1995; Soroka 2006) in Dalen, Vreese and Albæk (2015).

Author: University Of Nigeria, Nsukka
e-mail: ifeanyiezeorah67@gmail.com

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Economic coverage can affect individual citizens' economic perceptions as well as consumer confidence on the aggregate level. This places a large responsibility on economic journalists and business reporters. In this light, it is important to look at the way economic news covers periods of economic recession. Therefore, this study seeks to examine newspaper coverage of the economic recession under Buhari administration.

II. Statement of Problem

It is far too early to draw any firm conclusions about the way the economic and financial turmoil has been communicated to the public. According to Tambini (2008) the economic crisis reminds us all of the importance of financial journalism. It has also raised a set of profound questions as to the quality of that form of reporting. Why didn't we know of this was coming?, did the journalists fail to put the financial system under proper scrutiny?, are they equipped to deal with the continuing complex story?, is this a representative of a wider problem with the news media?

This raises a lot of arguments in relation to the volume of coverage, the level of significance; the type of report that received more attention and the magnitude of human angle stories in the coverage of economic recession in Nigeria. It is vital, however, to begin addressing the issues raised. It is also essential to do so with a set of analytical frameworks that allows for balanced, considered and objective insights Tambini (2008).

Consequently, this study is reclined to unravel how Nigerian newspapers actually cover the economic recession under Buhari administration in view of the different intricacies afore-stated.

III. Objectives of the Study

The objectives include:

1. To determine the volume of coverage given to economic recession by the selected newspapers.
2. To ascertain the level of significance attached to the reportage of economic recession by the selected newspapers.
3. To identify the type of report that received more attention by the selected newspapers in their coverage of economic recession under Buhari administration.
4. To determine the magnitude of human interest stories in coverage of the economic recession.

a) Research Questions

1. What is the volume of coverage on economic recession by the selected newspapers?
2. What is the level of significance attached to the reportage of economic recession by the newspapers?
3. What type of report received more attention by newspapers in the coverage of economic recession in Nigeria?
4. What is the magnitude of human interest stories in coverage of economic recession by the newspapers?

b) Significance of Study

The significance of the study -Newspaper Coverage of the Economic Recession under the Buhari Administration- touches almost every sector of Nigeria which makes the essence of the study unique.

Thus, the significance of the study to the society reclines on the fact that it will make the society to know the extent of newspaper current coverage of economic recession in Nigeria, it will help inform the society of the level of economic recession within the period (July 2016 – February 2017) studied, they will equally be acquainted with the varied negative implications of economic recession in Nigeria.

The study will be of great importance to the media industry. Thus, through it, the media will be furnished with the information on how the selected newspapers (*Guardian* and *vanguard*) have covered economic recession within the period studied, it will supply the media with the ways in which they can report economic recession and encouragement of the media industry to inculcate hundred percent level of objectivity to their reports of economic recession.

Moreover, the importance of the study to the government is that it will help the government to know the different strategies to adopt in containing economic recession, the height of economic recession within the period understudy and it will equally help the government to know the volume of coverage, the level of significance, the direction of coverage that the selected newspapers gave to the coverage of economic recession and the type of report that received more attention during the months understudy.

The academia will also benefit from the study because it will serve as a reference to future studies on the economic recession.

c) Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is quite broad as it encompasses "Newspaper Coverage of Economic Recession under Buhari Administration: A Study of *Guardian* and *Vanguard*''. *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers will be content analysed to carry out the study. Thus, issues of the *Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers of July 2016 to February 2017 will be used for the study. This would cover a period of eight months.

d) Definition of Terms

It is pertinent to define some concepts operationally as it would engender a clearer understanding of the study.

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e) Newspaper

A newspaper is a publication that appears regularly and carries a wide variety of current issues and events. *Guardian* and *Vanguard* are the newspapers that will be used in this study.

f) Coverage

Coverage is the reporting of current events in a newspaper. The coverage of the issues of *Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers from July 2016 to February 2017 will be used for this study.

g) Economic recession

According to CBN (2012) Economic Recession is "a business cycle contraction, and it refers to a general slowdown in economic activity for two consecutive quarters. During recession, there is usually a decline in certain macroeconomic indicators such as GDP, employment, investment spending, capacity utilization, etc." p. 1.

h) Buhari Administration

President Muhammadu Buhari Administration was inaugurated on 29th of May, 2015 which is expected to last for a period of four years from the date of inauguration. The administration promised to fight corruption to a standstill which many people is the root cause of the country's high level of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, etc.

IV. Literature Review

a) Economic recession

According to CBN (2012) Economic Recession is "a business cycle contraction, and it refers to a general slowdown in economic activity for two consecutive quarters. During recession, there is usually a decline in certain macroeconomic indicators such as GDP, employment, investment spending, capacity utilization, etc." p. 1. In the same vein, Economic recession is a downturn in the economy. It is often characterized by symptoms such as rising prices of goods and services, inability of government to meet its financial obligations, exchange rate fluctuations, and poor performance of other macroeconomic variables which defines the state of the economy per time. Economic recession is a recurrent issue because of the cyclical nature of the global economy. That is why most countries, especially the developed ones, often diversify the structural base of their economy to withstand any external shock Farayibi (2016).

b) Causes of economic recession

CBN (2012) stated that there are two causes of economic recession namely:

1. Internal (endogenous)
2. External (exogenous)

Internal (endogenous): This is usually as a result of conflict of ideas, misapplication of economic theory and regulatory negligence or policy inconsistency. According to Wong, 1999; Corsetti et al, 1999 in CBN (2012) the Asian financial crisis of 1997-1998 was caused partly by internal factors; banks were lending abroad in pursuit of high profit margin, due largely to slow downs at home, desire to pursue development without due consideration of economic fundamentals, corruption, and structural and policy distortions.

Other factors were the overheating of private sector and excessive investments in real-estate with non-commensurate returns. In the same vein, the global financial crisis of 2007 and the ongoing recession was triggered by the United States housing bubble; excessive lending of banks into high-risk subprime and adjustable rate mortgages resulted in high default rates as well as downfall of banking sector. Defaults and losses on other categories of loans also rose considerably as the crisis expanded from the housing market to other sectors of the economy. Bankruptcy of several high rated investment banks started to panic on the inter-bank loan and stock markets and eventually, the bubble busted. This resulted in the fall of global GDP, rising unemployment and economic difficulties in many parts of the world Kamar, (2012) in CBN (2012).

External (exogenous): CBN (2012) states that the external causes of recession have to do with factors that are exogenous to the economy over which policy makers have little or no control. Factors like natural disaster, climate change, revolution and wars. An agricultural economy could face crop failure resulting in general economic slowdown. Also, a mono-economy could suffer recession from international price shock for its product. The neoclassical economists are of the view that state interference in the market, labour union, monopolies and technological shocks are external causes of recession.

To another group, negative demand and supply shocks as well as deflationary macroeconomic policies are the main causes of recession. The negative demand-side shocks that affect the aggregate demand work through a global economic slowdown that impacts major trading partners of a country. In the case of Nigeria, when there is economic slowdown in the U.S., China, India and EU, it could have negative impact on the demand of Nigerian crude oil from these countries. As a result, government's revenue and spending would drop, taxes will rise, disposable income will fall and aggregate demand will fall, adversely impacting the production of goods and services. These developments would culminate in economic recession. Also, a crash in asset prices as was the case during the GFC, credit crunch, where financial institutions reduced the amount of credit to support production could occur. Another source of negative demand shocks could be sharp appreciation of the domestic currency, which encourages import and discourage export of goods and

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services, and causes disequilibrium in balance of trade and deterioration in the balance of payments position.

Supply side shocks causes of recession result mainly from general increases in commodity prices such as crude oil, metals and other non-fuel inputs, foodstuff prices, etc. These factors are inflationary in nature. Inflation, which is the persistent rise in prices of goods and services, results because of high cost of inputs, which are usually transferred to the final consumers who can only afford less quantity because of higher prices. This lowers demand for goods and services, and reduces the standard of living, and ultimately depresses production of goods and services by firms. The macroeconomic policies work more or less like the internal factors discussed above. Here, when monetary and fiscal policies are not well coordinated it results to recession. During contracting growth or economic slowdown, taxes ought to be lowered, and government also ought to spend more to stimulate the economy. On the other hand, monetary authority ought to encourage borrowing by households and businesses by lowering interest rate.

However, when the above policy mixes are not properly synchronized, it could further stifle the economy. Macroeconomic policies need to be complementary to achieve the desired result.

c) Buhari Administration And Economic Policies

Aremu (2016) in Adebumiti (2016) posits that President Buhari's government is making tough choices in exchange control restrictions, altering the absurd recurrent to capital expenditure ratio, reducing the deficit and reducing the overall size of governance.

He assert that the government is also cleaning the mess and rebuilding the institutions that corruption has ravaged over the years. Nigerians cannot forget so easily the dark days where economic growth figures do not translate to the improvement in the lives of the vast majority of citizens. I think Buhari should be commended for these laudable initiatives since the inception of his government on May 29, 2015.

He, however, expect the administration to waste no time in focusing on building an economic model which would involve substantial social investment and redress the paradox of high growth figures and widening inequality, rising unemployment and poverty. It is evident that any economic model that leaves nearly half of the citizenry behind requires re thinking.

Programmes such as the Conditional Cash Transfer and renewed support for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) should be springing up. They will greatly generate employment, address poverty, reduce social tension and criminality across the country. Our economy is on its knees; the Naira has depreciated drastically, while fuel scarcity pervades the whole country. Worse still, local and foreign investors no longer see Nigeria as investment friendly because of the existing harsh policies.

The directive by the Central Bank of Nigeria to make commercial banks stop customers from using their debit and credit cards overseas is also condemnable. The cutting of $10,000 to $5,000 cash or negotiable instruments across the nation's borders for travellers with genuine business going abroad is also unacceptable.

These policies have put lots of people out of job and crippled the economy more.

He advised Buhari government to rise up to the challenge of rebuilding the nation. We are anxious to see a positive change that will begin to impact on the day-to-day life of Nigerians. We are seeing the beginning of the trial of those alleged to have misapplied the nation's money; we hope the process will be quickly concluded.

We should be able to get such looted funds back into the economy so that we can begin to focus on more positive things that are also happening in our nation that can foster socio-economic stability and growth.

Let the anti-graft agencies and the courts work hard to bring the looters to book and recover the stolen wealth. Meanwhile, this government, which has enjoyed so much goodwill from Nigeria and the international community, should not be seen moving at slow pace, in our interest and that of the unborn generations Aremu (2016)

d) Nigeria Oil Sector: An Analysis

According to Adebumiti (2016) the oil boom of the 1970s led Nigeria to neglect its strong agricultural and light manufacturing bases in favour of an unhealthy dependence on crude oil. In 2000, oil and gas exports accounted for more than 98% of export earnings and about 83% of federal government revenue. New oil wealth, the concurrent decline of other economic sectors, and a lurch toward a statist economic model fuelled massive migration to the cities and led to increasingly widespread poverty, especially in rural areas. A collapse of basic infrastructure and social services since the early 1980s accompanied this trend.

By 2000, Nigeria's per capita income had plunged to about one-quarter of its mid-1970s high, below the level at independence. Along with the endemic malaise of Nigeria's non-oil sectors, the economy continues to witness massive growth of "informal sector" economic activities, estimated by some to be as high as 75% of the total economy.

In the same line of thought Adebumiti states that Nigeria's proven oil reserves are estimated to be 35 billion barrels (5.6×109 m3); natural gas reserves are well over 100 trillion cubic feet (2,800 km3). Nigeria is a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The types of crude oil exported by Nigeria are Bonny light oil, Forcados crude oil, Qua Ibo crude oil and Brass River crude oil. Poor corporate

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relations with indigenous communities, vandalism of oil infrastructure, severe ecological damage, and personal security problems throughout the Niger Delta oil producing region continue to plague Nigeria's oil sector.

Efforts are underway to reverse these troubles. In the absence of government programs, the major multinational oil companies have launched their own community development programs. A new entity, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), has been created to help catalyze economic and social development in the region. Although it has yet to launch its programs, hopes are high that the NDDC can reverse the impoverishment of local communities. The U.S. remains Nigeria's largest customer for crude oil, accounting for 40% of the country's total oil exports; Nigeria provides about 10% of overall U.S. oil imports and ranks as the fifth-largest source for U.S. imported oil.

The United Kingdom is Nigeria's largest trading partner followed by the United States. Although the trade balance overwhelmingly favours Nigeria, thanks to oil exports, a large portion of U.S. exports to Nigeria is believed to enter the country outside of the Nigerian government's official statistics, due to importers seeking to avoid Nigeria's excessive tariffs. To counter smuggling and under-invoicing by importers, in May 2001, the Nigerian government instituted a full inspection program for all imports, and enforcement has been sustained.

On the whole, Nigerian high tariffs and non-tariff barriers are gradually being reduced, but much progress remains to be made. The government also has been encouraging the expansion of foreign investment, although the country's investment climate remains daunting to all but the most determined. The stock of U.S. investment is nearly $7 billion, mostly in the energy sector. Exxon Mobil and Chevron are the two largest U.S. corporations in offshore oil and gas production. Significant exports of liquefied natural gas started in late 1999 and are slated to expand as Nigeria seeks to eliminate gas flaring by 2008.

Oil dependency, and the allure it generated of great wealth through government contracts, spawned other economic distortions. The country's high propensity to import means roughly 80% of government expenditures is recycled into foreign exchange. Cheap consumer imports, resulting from a chronically overvalued Naira, coupled with excessively high domestic production costs due in part to erratic electricity and fuel supply, pushed down utilization of industrial capacity to less than 30%. Many more Nigerian factories would have closed except for relatively low labour costs (10%–15%). Domestic manufacturers, especially pharmaceuticals and textiles, have lost their ability to compete in traditional regional markets. However, there are signs that some manufacturers have begun to improve competitiveness.

The pump price of P.M.S. in Nigeria currently stands at 87 naira, but some filling stations in Nigeria, especially in towns far from the state capitals, tend to sell the product at a much higher price, ranging from 110 naira to 140 naira. An initial increase in the price of Petrol (Premium Motor Spirit) triggered by the removal of fuel subsidies on January 1, 2012 triggered a total strike and massive protests across the country. Then President

Goodluck Ebele Jonathan later reached an agreement with the Nigerian Labour Congress and reduced the pump price to 97 naira. The pump price was further reduced by 10 naira to 87 naira in the run-up to the 2015 general elections. The government cited a drop in costs due to the global fall in the crude oil price. Since the fall in oil prices in 2015 and 2016, the government exchange rate policy has limited devaluation of the naira due to inflation concerns by the President Muhammadu Buhari.

V. Theoretical Framework

According to Umechukwu (2004) "every scientist is supposed to base his research experimentation on some ground theory expressed in abstract terms" P. 8.

Thus, this study will be anchored on two theories namely;

a) Agenda – Setting Theory

McQuail (2005) stated that the term 'agenda-setting' was coined by McCombs and Shaw (1972, 1993) to describe a phenomenon which had long been noticed and studied in the context of election campaigns. The core idea is that the news media indicate to the public what the main issues of the day are and this is reflected in what the public perceives as the main issues.

Dearing and Rogers (1996) in McQuail (2005) define the process as "an on-going competition among issue protagonists to gain the attention of media professionals, the public and policy elites" P. 512.

Agenda-setting theory explains the power of the mass media to set the agenda and raise issues of public importance. McCombs and Shaw (1972) in Okunna (2002) wrote that members of the "audience not only learn how much importance to attach to an issue or topic from the emphasis the mass media place upon it" P. 21.

Lipman (1922) in Okunna (2002) added that the media help to "put pictures in our heads" P. 21. This explains the power of the mass media to set the agenda and raise issue of public importance. This function is closely related to public opinion generation, since it is often the mass media that raise issues upon which public opinion is expressed.

This theory holds sway to this study because Economic recession is an issue of public importance

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which the masses have to know about and based on the amount of coverage given to it, the media have thus worked in emphasizing how much important it is to national discourse and issue.

b) Social Responsibility Theory

According to Okunna (2002, p. 10), the social responsibility theory basically emphasizes the responsibility of the press to report every aspect of the society.

Umechukwu (2004, p. 10), commenting on the theory asserted that the press in any given society should be responsible in the performance of its functions.

McQuail (2005, p. 172) emphasized that the social responsibility of the press to provide a full, truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning, serve as a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism and be a common carrier of the public expression and give a representative picture of constituent groups in society and also present and clarify the goals and values of society.

Based on this premise, the social responsibility theory is relevant to this study because the citizenry has to know what is happening in the society and the press been bestowed with the responsibility to report events, have to fulfil this duty. Hence, the coverage of Economic Recession in Nigeria is their civic obligation.

VI. Methodology

a) Research Design

The research method adopted in this study is the content analysis method of research. It was adopted because it is suitable for the study. Krippendorf (1980) in Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekhareafo and Okpanachi (2012), defined content analysis as "a technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context" P. 79. Sobowale (1993) saw content analysis as "the manifest content of communication" P. 17.

Thus, it becomes appropriate to use content analysis as the above definitions have stated that it should be done on recorded materials and the newspapers are thought to be so.

b) Population of the Study

Peil (1982) in Ohaja (2003) defined population as "all cases or individuals that fit a certain specification" P. 75. Since the research is on newspaper coverage of Economic Recession, the population of study is made up of all the registered newspapers produced and circulating within the country under the period of study. According to N.P.C. (2016) a total of 267 newspapers are in circulation during this study. Therefore, the population of this study is 267.

c) Sample Size

A sample according to Best and Khan (1989) in Erebho, Nkama, Nwabufoe and Nwachukwu (2011) is, "a small portion of a population selected for observation and analysis…by observing the characteristics drawn" p. 29.

Based on the above premise, sample size can be said to be the small group you select to work on to stand in for the others you could not work on.

For this study, a sample size of 138 issues was selected for the months July 2016- February 2017. For each of the weeks of the months, two issues were chosen for the two newspapers. The days Monday and Wednesday were chosen for *Guardian* while the days Tuesdays and Fridays were chosen for *Vanguard*. The choice to study two issues for each newspaper and to choose Monday and Wednesday for *Guardian* and Tuesday and Friday for *Vanguard* was based on stratified sampling technique where the days were picked to stand in for the rest of the days that could not be studied since it would have been unwieldy to study all the editions of the two newspapers within the period under study and it became 138 issues from the calculation of the issues from the newspaper chosen for each of the weeks for the eight months.

d) Sampling Technique

Multistage sampling technique were used in this research work. The 138 issues that formed the sample size for the study were selected through stratified sampling technique. This is because this technique ensures that different groups in the population are adequately represented (Asemah et al 2012). To arrive at this, the days of the week were stratified into two days for each of the newspapers used for the eight months. Thus, Mondays and Wednesdays were used for *Guardian* which amounted to 69 issues while Tuesdays and Fridays were used for *Vanguard* which also amounted to 69 issues.

For the two newspapers chosen and the months to study, the purposive sampling was used. This is because the researcher were looking for some certain characteristics or attributes the two newspapers and the eight months will have in common for their study as agreed by Asemah et al (2012) that "purposive sampling is used when the researcher just picks the sampling elements considered to possess the required characteristics" p. 187. In this study, the researcher found the newspapers to possess some common characteristics of daily publication, wide readership, wide circulation, national outlook and professionalism and the eight months to be the peak of the economic recession. Therefore, the researcher purposively chose *Guardian* and *Vanguard* because of the afore-mentioned characteristics which are of interest to the researcher.

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e) Validity of the Instrument

Asemah et al (2012) said that "validity is the extent to which measurements instrument are useful in making decisions relevant to a given purpose" p. 208.

The procedures for this research were indeed rigorous and critical. They were subject to strict scrutiny by the professionals in the field who ensured that all due processes were followed to achieve high validity of the measurement instrument.

f) Reliability of the Instrument

Inter coder reliability according to Wimmer and Dominick (2011, p.170) opined that a study is reliable when repeated measurement of the same material results in similar decisions or conclusions of the material to the levels of agreement among independent coders who code the same content using the same coding instrument.

For the purpose of this work, two coders were trained and trusted to code the November edition of *Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers respectively. They judged a sample of 16 units and they agreed 13. Therefore, to calculate the inter coder reliability; the following formula will be employed to determine the percentage of agreement between the coders:

$$\text{Reliability} \quad \frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2}$$

Where M is the number of coding decisions on which two coders agree and N_1 and N_2 are the total number of coding decisions by the first and second coder, respectively. Thus, reliability $= \frac{2(13)}{16+16} = \frac{26}{32}$

The intercoder reliability results in -81, implying that the instrument is reliable and valid.

g) Instrument of Data Collection

The code sheet was used as an instrument of data collection for the study. The units of analysis were coded into categories on the basis of the following.

a) Placement
1. Front Page
2. Back Page
3. Centre Page
4. Inside Page

b) Illustrations
1. Photographs
2. Cartoons
3. Not illustrated

c) Story Length
1. Length I (0-10 lines)
2. Length II (11-20 lines)
3. Length III (21-30 lines)
4. Length IV (31 and above)

d) Story Type
1. News
2. Editorials
3. Features
4. Letters to the Editor
5. Opinion Articles

e) Media
1. Daily Sun
2. The Nation

f) Months
1. July
2. August
3. September
4. October
5. November
6. December
7. January
8. February

g) Direction
1. Favourable
2. Unfavourable
3. Neutral

h) Story Category
1. Politics
2. Conflicts
3. Human Interest
4. National Interest
5. International Interest

i. *Placement*

This is where stories appeared in the pages of the newspaper. A front-paged story appears in the front page. A back-paged story appears at the back page. A center-paged story is found at the centre spread. An inside-paged story appears in any of the pages inside the newspaper.

ii. *Illustrations*

Stories with photographs are coded under "photographs". Those with cartoons are coded under "cartoons". Those without any illustration are coded under "not illustrated".

iii. *Story Length*

Length I stories are those whose story lines ran from 0-10, length II stories are those whose story lines ran from 11-20, length III stories are those whose story lines ran from 21-30 while length IV stories are those whose story lines ran from 31 and above.

iv. *Story Type*

This points the format each story took. News stories are those who answer the 5Ws (When, Where, Who, What and Why) and H (How) questions. They normally appear in straight news format without any opinion.

Editorials are those written by the newspaper stating their opinion on any topical issue of great

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importance and are seen in the editorial page (s) of a newspaper.

Features are opposite of news stories. They are stories about people, events and places that are written with styles and embellishments.

Letters to the editor are opinions of the public written by individuals to the editor concerning issues of critical importance in the polity.

Opinion articles are the view point of a writer in a newspaper.

v. *Direction*

Favourable news is news that showcased the government in good light. It emphasizes the strength of the government in entrenching stability: economic, social, political etc in order to contain the Economic recession. Thus, in this work, news reports that portray the government in good light or state clearly the efforts of the government in handling the Economic Recession in a bid to end it is seen as favourable.

Unfavourable ones are those that portrayed the government in bad light. It emphasizes the weaknesses of the government in the face of the economic recession.

Neutral are those that reflect neither favourable nor unfavourable conditions.

vi. *Story Category*

Stories on politics refer to news stories that report economic recession in a political light. Those on conflicts are those that are characterized by problems and misunderstanding concerning Economic Recession. Those on human interest are on unusual happenings as well as those of people in unique conditions or situations as a result of economic recession. Those on national interest are those that have national bearing while those on international interest are those that relate to the concerns of the international community in the face of the economic downturn.

VII. Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative method of data analysis will be used in this study. Tables and percentages were used to analyze the data gathered. This was done in such a way that the findings of the study were discussed and suggestions were offered on how the media (*Guardian* and *Vanguard*) can cover Economic Recession in Nigeria appropriately.

VIII. Data Presentation and Analysis

Out of the 138 issues used for this study, *Guardian* and *Vanguard* had 78 and 49 stories respectively concerning economic recession. For the analysis, simple tables representing the aggregates of the two newspapers for the eight months under study will be adopted for simplicity and clarity. The tabulation of the analysis is as follows:

Table 1: Aggregate of the Issues of the Newspapers from July 2016 to February 2017

Issues	*Guardian*	*Vanguard*
July	15(19%)	12(25%)
August	19(24%)	8(16%)
September	9(12%)	5(10%)
October	10(13%)	6(12%)
November	8(10%)	8(16%)
December	6(8%)	4(8%)
January	4(5%)	4(8%)
February	7(9%)	2(5%)
Total	78(100%)	49(100%)

Issues

The result of the analysis on Table I shows that *Guardian* had 15 stories (19%) in July, 19 stories (24%) in August, 9 stories (12%) in September, 10 stories (13%) in October, 8 stories (10%) in November, 6 stories (8%) in December, 4 stories (5%) in January and 7 stories (9%) in February which amounted to 78 stories in all.

Therefore, as *Guardian* had 78 stories and *Vanguard* 49 stories, this made the number of stories studied under the eight months period to be 127. It equally shows that *Guardian* had more stories on economic recession than *Vanguard* during the period under study.

Table 2: Aggregate of Stories from July 2016 to February 2017 According to Placement

Placement	*Guardian*	*Vanguard*
Front Page	10(13%)	5(10%)
Centre Page	3(4%)	2(4%)
Inside Page	65(83%)	42(86%)
Back Page	0(0%)	0(0%)
Total	78(100%)	49(100%)

Placement

The result of the presentation on Table II shows that for the period of eight months (July 2016-february 2017) under study, *Guardian* and *Vanguard* had 10 stories (13%) and 5 stories (10%) respectively in the front page, none appeared at the back page on both newspapers, *Guardian* had 65 stories (83%) on its inside pages while *Vanguard* had 42 stories (86%) on its inside pages. 3 stories (4%) appeared on the centre page for *Guardian* while 2 stories (4%) appeared on the centre page for *Vanguard*.

This means that for the eight months studied, *Guardian* had more stories of economic recession in its inside pages, front pages and centre pages than *Vanguard* while both had none at the back pages.

Table 3: Aggregate of Stories from July 2016 to February 2017 According to Illustration

Illustration	*Guardian*	*Vanguard*
Photos	20(26%)	12(25%)

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Cartoons	5(6%)	3(6%)
Not Illustrated	53(68%)	34(69%)
Total	**78(100%)**	**49(100%)**

Illustration

The result of the analysis on Table III reveals that in the eight months under study, *Guardian* had 20 stories with photographs, 5 cartoons while 53 were without illustration.

Vanguard had 12 stories with photographs, 3 cartoons and 34 without illustration.

Thus, in terms of illustration, *Guardian* covered the economic recession with more illustrations than *Vanguard* as it had more stories with photographs, more cartoons and more not illustrated stories.

Table 4: Aggregate of Stories from July 2016 to February 2017 According to Story Length

Story Length	*Guardian*	*Vanguard*
Length I	0(0%)	0(0%)
Length II	0(0%)	0(0%)
Length III	27(35%)	23(47%)
Length IV	51(65%)	26(53%)
Total	**78(100%)**	**49(100%)**

Story Length

The result of the presentation on Table IV shows that both *Guardian and Vanguard* had no stories on length I and length II respectively.

Guardian had 27 stories (35%) on length III and 51 stories (65%) on length IV while *Vanguard* had 23 stories (47%) on length III and 26 stories (53%) on length

This therefore points out that *Guardian* and *Vanguard* have lengthy stories owing to the number of stories, 78 and 49 respectively that were content analyzed under both papers.

Table 5: Aggregate of Stories from July 2016 to February 2017 according to Story Type

Story Type	*Guardian*	*Vanguard*
News	42(54%)	30(61%)
Features	12(15%)	4(8%)
Editorials	2(3%)	5(10%)
Letters to the Editor	5(6%)	2(5%)
Opinion Articles	17(22%)	8(16%)
Total	**78(100%)**	**49(100%)**

Story Type

The result of the presentation on Table V shows that in the eight months under study, *Guardian* had 42 stories as News, 12 as Features, 2 as Editorials, 5 Letters to the Editor and 17 Opinion Articles. *Vanguard* ran 30 stories as news, 4 as features, 5 as editorial, 2 as letters to the editor and 8 as opinion articles.

This however, shows that more stories were run as news stories by both *Vanguard* and *Guardian* newspaper.

Table 6: Aggregate of Stories from July 2016 to February 2017 According to Direction

Direction	*Guardian*	*Vanguard*
Favourable	31(40%)	15(31%)
Unfavourable	26(33%)	22(45%)
Neutral	21(27%)	12(24%)
Total	**78(100%)**	**49(100%)**

Direction

Table VI above shows the number of stories that are favourable, unfavourable or neutral to the coverage of economic recession in the months studied.

Guardian recorded 31(40%) stories as favourable, 26 (33%) stories as unfavourable and 21 (27%) stories as neutral while *Vanguard* recorded 15 (31%) stories as favourable, 22 (45%) as unfavourable and 12 stories (24%) as neutral.

In all, 46 stories by both newspapers were favourable to the coverage of economic recession, 48 stories were unfavourable while 33 stories were neutral.

Table 7: Aggregate of Stories from July 2016 to February 2017 According to Story Category

Story Category	*Daily Sun*	*Vanguard*
Politics	6(8%)	4(8%)
Conflicts	0(0%)	0(0%)
National Interest	39(50%)	23(47%)
International Interest	20(25%)	15(31%)
Human Interest	13(17%)	7(14%)
Total	**78(100%)**	**49(100%)**

Story Category

The Table above reveals the story category of the issues on coverage of economic recession.

In the eight months under study, *Guardian* had 6 (8%) stories on politics, 39 (50%) on national interest, 20 (26%) stories on international interest, 13 (7%) stories on human interest and none on conflict category while *Vanguard* had 4 (8%) stories on politics, none on stories on conflict, 23 (47%) on national interest, 15 (31%) stories were on international interest and 7 (14%) stories on human interest.

In all, 10 stories were on politics, none were on conflict, 62 were on national interest, 35 were on international interest and 20 were on human interest as covered by both newspapers.

Having stated the findings, it is important to refer back to the research questions raised earlier in the course of this study to know whether the findings were able to answer any or all of them

Research Question

What is the volume of coverage on economic recession by the selected newspapers?

The answer to this question is found in Table I under the code "Issues". In the eight months under

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study, *Daily Sun* had an aggregate of 78 stories while *Vanguard* had 49. Thus, 127 stories were reported on Economic Recession by both newspapers. This is very low when compared with other story types in the newspapers.

Research Question
What is the level of significance attached to the reportage of economic recession by the newspapers?

The answer to this question is found in Tables II, III and IV under the codes "Placement", "Illustration" and "Story length" respectively. The page placement of stories shows that the level of significance attached to the reportage of economic recession is low as almost all the reports from *Guardian* and *Vanguard* appeared on the inside pages. *Guardian* and *Vanguard* covered only 10 (13%) stories and 5 (10%) stories respectively on the front pages under the period of study which is a small amount.

The illustration of stories reported in the eight months under study shows that most of the stories were not illustrated as *Guardian* had 53 (68%) stories not illustrated, while *Vanguard* had 34 (69%) stories not illustrated. This further points to the fact that there was low level of significance attached to the reportage of economic recession by both newspapers.

However, the story length where some level of significance was attached to economic recession as most of the stories by both newspapers appeared under length IV (31 and above). Thus, *Daily Sun* had 51 (65%) stories while *Vanguard* had 53 (53%) under length IV.

Consequently, following the afore-stated, it is quite clear that there was no much significance attached to the coverage of economic recession in the eight months period under study. This supports the finding of Fadairo, Fadairo & Aminu (2014) who found out that 87.4% stories on corruption were given low significance, that is, they were placed on inside pages.

Research Question
What type of report received more attention by newspapers in the coverage of economic recession in Nigeria?

The answer to this question is seen in Table V under the code "story type". The story type-report- that received more attention by newspapers in the coverage of economic recession was News as *Guardian* had 42 (54%) stories while *Vanguard* had 30 (61%) stories as news stories during the period under study.

This greatly supersedes other story types like features, editorials, letters to the editor and opinion articles which received minimal attention by both newspapers in the period under review as evident in the Table (V).

Research Question
What is the magnitude of human interest stories in coverage of economic recession by the newspapers?

The answer to the question is found in table viii. In the eight months under study, *Guardian* had 6 (8%) stories on politics, 39 (50%) on national interest, 20 (26%) stories on international interest, 13 (7%) stories on human interest and none on conflict category while *Vanguard* had 4 (8%) stories on politics, none on stories on conflict, 23 (47%) on national interest, 15 (31%) stories were on international interest and 7 (14%) stories on human interest.

In all, 10 stories were on politics, none were on conflict, 62 were on national interest, 35 were on international interest and 20 were on human interest as covered by both newspapers.

Therefore, the magnitude of human interest stories is only 20 (16%) by the two newspapers which is very poor, as human interest stories helps to show reflect the suffering of Nigerian during this period of economic downturn.

IX. Conclusion

As this study has been able to examine the newspaper coverage of economic recession under Buhari Administration, the researchers call the attention of the newspapers (*Guardian* and *Vanguard*) to the findings made about the economic recession during the period studied. Each will certainly benefit from the research findings in discharging their responsibilities.

Both newspapers reported more stories from the category of national and international interest forgetting to give more stories from human interest angle which neglects the suffering of the citizens during economic recession.

Thus, the researcher is of the opinion that the coverage of the economic recession by the media (in this case *Guardian* and *Vanguard*) should be taken more from the angle of human interest for this could make the polity and the government especially to really understand the predicament of the people in the face of the economic recession.

On the direction the stories took, the newspapers should always remember that they owe the society the responsibility of publishing a well-balanced report. However, despite the unfavourable angle in the direction both newspapers took, it is worthy to assert that their house style and editorial policy might have come into play in determining the direction their report will take.

However, the media should endeavour to lean on the shoulders of objectivity on any editorial matter that relates to economic recession.

X. Recommendations

1. Following from the findings made in the course of the study, the researchers recommend as follows:
2. The two newspapers (*Guardian* and *Vanguard*) should endeavour to take more of the human

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interest angle in their coverage of the economic recession. It is quite glaring that Nigerians are suffering and people are lossing their jobs and prices of goods are on the rise. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the coverage of economic recession should come from the human interest angle as this would make the government and other concerned bodies to know the current situation of the people.

3. On their part, the federal government should make it a duty to always update the newspapers with any strategy or measure that they have put in motion so far in order to arrest the worsening economy. This will help to fortify them with credible information that will assist them in their role of informing the public.
4. Significance and prominence should be constructively attached to the coverage of economic recession by both newspapers. This they can do by situating stories concerning the recession on strategic positions of the newspaper without any form of sensationalism in their reportage. Moreover, being constructive in the attachment of significance and prominence in their coverage of the recession will make the newspapers not to attach unnecessary importance to it.

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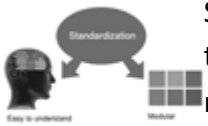

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