AN ANALYSIS OF PIONEER NEWSPAPER COVERAGE AND FRAMING OF WOMEN FROM SEPTEMBER 1ST, 2020 TO NOVEMBER 31ST, 2020

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ABSTRACT

Using content analysis, the researchers investigated *Pioneer Newspaper's* coverage of news stories about women during COVID-19 from September 1st to November 31st, 2020 to assess whether there was a significant presence of women in news stories by *Pioneer Newspaper*. The researchers argue that the level of coverage given to women during COVID-19 was low and the direction of these news stories was not positive. They found strong supports for our hypotheses by testing them with Chi-square at a significance level of 0.05. With $X^{2cal} <$ $X^{2tab}_{2, 0.05} = 0.34 < 5.99$, they refused to reject the null hypothesis of their first hypothesis and concluded that there is no significant presence of women in news stories by *Pioneer Newspaper* between September 1st, 2020 and November 30th, 2020. The researchers went further to test the second hypothesis. The test showed $X^{2cal} <$ $X^{2tab}_{2, 0.05} = 0.37 < 9.49$; thus, the researchers refused to reject the null hypothesis for hypothesis 2 and concluded that the direction of news coverage about women was not significantly favourable. In addition, from data analysed using percentages; the researchers found out that the major frame used to portray women was politics (commissioners, aides, etc.) with 22.03%. This was followed by frames that portray women as victims of societal menaces: gang rape, kidnap, murder, etc. with 16.10%. To achieve gender equity in Nigerian media, the researchers recommend that *Pioneer Newspaper* should set the pace for media's positive portrayal of women as agents of societal building and development.

Keywords: content analysis, COVID-19, newspaper coverage, Pioneer Newspaper, women

Introduction

It has been observed that every day women move up the ladder of professionalism and proficiency, day in day out; in business, politics, health, even religion among many others (Gunther & Kahn, 2004; Clapham, 2014; "The Changing Role", 2020). In addition, it is noticeable that each day how another group of women who are on the lowest rung of society's ladder struggles remarkably on our streets to support their families and society at large (Singh, 2013; Ortiz-Ospina & Tzvetkova, 2017). There are rumours of how women fall victim of societal menace such as rape, sexual assaults, kidnap, internet fraud, murder among other (Global Population Speak Out, 2020). A National Survey's study carried out in 2014 found that, 1 out of every 4 females testified of

experiencing sexual violence as a child with approximately 70% reporting more than one incident of sexual violence in Nigeria; 24.8% of females' ages 18 to 24 years experienced sexual abuse before 18 years; 5.0% sought help with only 3.5% receiving any services (Women at Risk International Foundation, 2016).

Yet, these noticeable contributions and suffering of women under our very noses have barely translated into more qualitative coverage of women's issues by Nigerian newspapers (Anyanwu, 2001). Anyanwu decried the prevalence of this situation even among high ranking national dallies in the country. Floating her post with pictures of women on the rice pyramid of Abakiliki struggling to feed the nation, Anyanwu lamented the persistently low rate of coverage by Nigeria newspapers that women receive; accentuating that, even influential women journalists also shy away from the coverage of women's issues for fear of being called feminists. With this Anyanwu puts forward that as far as newspaper coverage is concerned in Nigeria, "women are largely seen not heard… women's issues are also not given adequate coverage in the media" (para. 2) (Ogbodo, 2013). Anyanwu notices a strong masculine dominance paradigm in the Nigerian newspaper where women's issues must have a masculine authority figure in it to be considered newsworthy.

In 2015, about fourteen years after Anyanwu's supposition, Ani and Nyekwere opined, "the Nigerian media has not fared well in reporting activities of the women" (p. 1). This submission by Ani and Nyekwere, after they assessed Nigerian newspaper coverage of the Women for Change Initiative of Dame Patience Goodluck Jonathan, is the general hypothesis driving the execution of this study (p.1). A review of previous works done to ascertain the coverage of women by the Nigeria media seems to always return the same result from time immemorial. Anyanwu's (2001) opinion that the Nigerian newspaper's coverage of women is less impressive compared to other countries in the region is a cause for concern too that has not been taken seriously. At such, these presuppositions by Anyanwu (2001), Ani and Nyekwere (2005), 19 and about five years ago respectively, give substance to the crux of our study.

Premising on the supposition of Anyanwu in 2001, Ani and Nyekwere in 2015, this study proposed the following research hypotheses to guide the execution of this study, thus:

Hypothesis One (H₀): There is no significant presence of women in news stories covered by Pioneer Newspaper between September 1st, 2020 and November 30th, 2020.

Hypothesis Two (H₀): The direction of news coverage about women and/ or with women is not always significantly favourable.

Given the nature of topic which encompasses the frames and contexts that were predominant in the news coverage about women and/or with women, the following research question was formulated also:

Research Question One (RQ1):

1. What are the dominant frames used by Pioneer Newspapers in the portrayal of women in news stories?

Empirical Studies

Various studies lay credence to the suppositions that the newspaper has not done its best in covering women issues in Nigeria. Most of these works share the same sentiment that although the media in Nigeria are aware of women issues, newspapers in Nigeria, especially national dailies pay little attention to the coverage of women issues and activities. News stories about women are always there in the newspapers. There are also stories which are not about women but women are present in the news. But, these news stories about women and/or showing

the presence of women in the news is always adjudged by researchers from their findings to be very low and barely up to 45% of the entire news story (for researchers who quantify the rate of low coverage).

In 2011, Oyesomi conducted a study to appraise Nigeria newspaper coverage of women's participation in the 2007 general elections using two national dailies - The *Punch* and The *Guardian.* Her study showed that only 56 stories of the 422 stories gathered were on women's participation in politics with only 8.9% of the stories on the front page. Oyesomi found that the direction of the news stories on women was favourable (41%). In 2012, Oyesomi & Oyero content analysed two national dailies - The *Punch* and the *Guardian* to ascertain how well Nigerian newspaper reported women participation in the 2011 general elections. They found that only 62 stories were on women participation in the election out of 464 stories gathered (that is, 13% coverage) and only 10% of the 62 stories were considered front-page worthy. The study revealed that 62% of the stories about W4CI were favourable.

In a study to examine Newspaper coverage of women in politics conducted in 2013, Ogbodo still content analysed two national dallies – The *Sun* and The *Nations*. Ogbodo's finding showed that none of the stories about women (in politics) went beyond 10 inches and only 13% of just 52 stories appeared on the front pages of the analysed newspapers with 38% adjudged as being unfavourable to women image in politics. In 2015, Ani and his associate, Nyekwere, assessed Nigerian newspaper coverage of the women for change initiative of Dame Patience Jonathan. They analysed the content of four national dailies – *the Guardian*, *Daily Trust*, *Vanguard* and *Daily Sun*. They found that the newspaper being studied did not allocate enough space for stories about W4CI (only 10% of the stories about W4CI were between 1000 words and above). Also, only 4% of the stories appeared on the front pages on these newspapers.

In 2019, Bappayo and Kirfi content analysed *Daily Trust* and *Punch* newspapers to ascertain the prominence given to the reports on women's participation in the 2015 general elections. They found that newspapers did not give women in politics the desired coverage required compared to their male counterparts (53%). These stories received little prominence because only 8.9% appeared on the front page of the newspapers being studied. They ascertained that the quality of reports about women in politics was 83.9% high. In August 2020, Jonah and Nnanyelugo investigated how newspapers in Nigeria represented women in the news. The two women content analysed four newspapers – *Vanguard*, the *Punch*, *The Guardian*, and *ThisDay*. They found that all of the newspapers reported stories about women but domestic-related and entertainment stories dominated (43.8% and 22.4% respectively). The tone of newspaper representation of women, as revealed by their study, was negative with 56.2%.

Theoretical Foundation

In the bid to find theoretical support and backing for our investigation, the researchers reviewed two theories that shared similar basic beliefs with the assumption that forms the crux of this study. The researchers reviewed the feminist theory as well as the framing theory of the media.

Historically, the emergence of the feminist theories started in the early 1790s. Mary Wollstonecraft captured the concept in her publication "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman". In 1851, Sojourner Truth in her article "Ain't I a woman" also addressed issues around women rights. She, through her publication, opines that women were given limited rights due to men's flawed perception of women. As observed in preceding studies, this limited right given to women, as observed by Wollstonecraft and Truth in this theory, reflects in findings of newspaper coverage of women.

46

The researchers also considered the framing theory of the media. This theory provided support for them to investigate how Newspaper portrays women in the news. First put forth by Goffman in 1974 in his "Frame Analysis", the theory explains how people interpret what is going on around their world. It is related to Agenda Setting theory. They both focus on how media draws the public's eye to specific topics. Framing takes a step further. It considers how the news presented creates a frame for that information. In this case, a frame refers to how newspaper organizes and presents the ideas, events, and topics they cover. Framing is the way a communication source defines and constructs any piece of communicated information.

These theories are relevant to this study because they laid credence to the assumption of this study that women and not presented in good light in national and local tabloids in Nigeria. The feminist theories gave this study the grounds to hold the belief that women were given limited rights and coverage by the media including *Pioneer Newspaper*. On the other hand, framing theory provided support for us to investigate how Newspaper portrays women in the news.

Data and Method

To test the hypothesis proposed by this study, the researchers performed a content analysis of news stories in *Pioneer Newspaper* within a period of three months. Pioneer Newspaper was selected because of convenience. This study purposively selected three months – September, October and November for this study. The first three weeks of each month were coded. This study systematically sampled the first three weeks for the news stories of the three (3) issues produced by *Pioneer Newspaper* weekly. For September, the first three weeks of *Midweek Pioneer* was coded. The researchers coded stories from the first three weeks of *Weekend Pioneer* for October. Also, the first three weeks of *The Pioneer*, which is the main edition of the week, was coded for November. This resulted in a sample of 9 editions covering the three issues published by *Pioneer Newspaper*. From the 9 editions, a total of 586 news stories were generated: 224 news stories from September, 142 news stories from October, and 220 news stories from November.

The Holsti's 1969 formula for determining the reliability of nominal data in terms of percentage of agreement between independent coders was used to ascertain the inter-coders reliability for this study. One of us and two trained assistant coders judged a subsample of 60 news stories: three stories from each month. This accounts for more than 10% of the total sample size as recommended by Wimmer and Dominick in 2014. The reliability test equalled inter-coders reliability coefficient of .78; this is an accepted standard of agreement.

The researchers coded the news stories along with three categories: (a) presence of women in news stories, (b) direction of news stories with women and (c) dominant frames of news stories with women. To ascertain the presence of women in the news, we coded stories that were about women and stories that were not about women but had women in the news stories. Direction indicated whether the news stories about women were favourable, neutral or unfavourable to the image of women. Favourable news stories about women promoted the image of women in society, while unfavourable news stories about women directly attacked the image of women and portrayed women in bad light within society as victims of or perpetrators of societal ills. The researchers also coded news stories for dominant frames in news stories about women. We coded frame-related news stories to considered that particular words, phrases and context used to portray women, positively or negatively, (such as family planning, wife of the government, head of a non-government organisation, spoken persons, relative of deceased, deceased, etc.).

An analysis of pioneer newspaper coverage and framing of women from September 1st, 2020 to November 31st, 2020.

After collecting data, this study had 8.36% of stories about women, with the highest number of news stories about women appearing in October (19 news stories about women); 20.14% of the news stories had women involved in the stories; September had the highest number of women appearing in news stories with 46 stories. This shows laxity in the coverage of women by *Pioneer Newspaper*. It confirms the finding of Ani and Nyekwere (2015) that Nigerian newspapers did not give adequate coverage and depth to women participation and contributions to societal development; as well as the findings of Oyesomi (2011) and Ogbodo (2013). This result shares the same opinion with the feminist theory by Wollstonecraft and Truth that women were given limited rights due to men's flawed perception of women. See table 1a and 1b below.

Table 1a: News stories about women in *Pioneer Newspaper*

Options	September (%)	October (%)	November (%)	Total (%)
Yes	12 (5.36)	19 (13.38)	18 (8.18)	49 (8.36)
No	212 (94.64)	123 (86.62)	202 (91.82)	537 (91.64)
Total	224* (100)	142* (100)	220* (100)	586** (100)

(***Source:** Content analysed by researchers, 2020. * Total of news stories coded for each month. ** Grand total of all news stories for the three months)*

Table 1b: News stories with women in the news in *Pioneer Newspaper*

Options	September (%)	October (%)	November (%)	Total (%)
Yes	46 (20.54)	34 (23.94)	38 (17.27)	118 (20.14)
No	178 (79.46)	108 (76.06)	182 (82.73)	468 (79.86)
Total	224* (100)	142* (100)	220* (100)	586** (100)

(***Source:** Content analysed by researchers, 2020. * Total of news stories coded for each month. ** Grand total of all news stories for the three months)*

Of the 118 news stories that were about women and those that had women involved in the story, the direction was 69.23% favourable. This agrees with Ani and Nyekwere's study in 2015. Their study found that the percentage for the favourable slant of news coverage of the women for change initiative ranked highest with 64%. This data collected was used in testing the hypotheses proposed for this study. The hypotheses were tested using Chi-square. See the data presented below in tables 2.

Table 2: Directions of news stories about women and with women in the news in *Pioneer Newspaper*

Options	September (%)	October (%)	November (%)	Total (%)

Favourable	32	26	23	81
	(69.57)	(76.47)	(60.53)	(69.23)
Neutral	2	3	2	6
	(4.35)	(8.83)	(5.26)	(5.13)
Unfavourable	12	5	13	30
	(26.09)	(14.70)	(34.21)	(25.64)
Total	46*	34*	38*	118**
	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)

(***Source:** Content analysed by researchers, 2020. * Total of news stories about/ with women in the news for each month. ** Grand total of all news stories about/ with women in the news for the three months)*

Results

The researchers tested these hypotheses using the data collected and presented above with the Chi-square statistical tool. The researchers used the frequency table and percentage to analyze data to answer the research question. They found strong evidence that supports these hypotheses about the coverage and presence of women in Pioneer Newspaper as well as the direction and frame of the coverage. In particular, they found support for the first hypothesis. With $X^{2cal} < X^{2tab}_{2, o.o5} = 0.34 < 5.99$, they refused to reject H_0 and rejected H_1 and conclude that there is no significant presence of women in news stories covered by Pioneer Newspaper between September 1st, 2020 and November 30th, 2020. See the table below.

Table 3: **Summary of Chi-square analysis for the presence of women in news stories by Pioneer Newspaper**

Yes	No	N*	df*	Level of significance	Calculated Chi-square $(X^2cal.)$	Critical value of tabulated Chi-square $(X^2_{2, o.o5}$ tab)	Rule	Decision
118	468	586	2	0.05	0.34	5.99	$X^2cal < X^2_{2, o.o5}$ tab Accept H_0 Reject H_1	H_0 is accepted

(***Source:** Researchers, 2020. * Total number of news stories for the three months. ** degree of freedom)*

This finding aligns with other studies such the studies of Ani and Nyekwere (2015), Oyesomi (2011), Ogbodo (2013), Jonah and Nnanyelugo (2020) and Oyesomi & Oyero (2012) many others. Although these studies used percentage to analysis their findings, their results are consistent, in a general perspective, that Nigerian newspaper actually covered stories about women and featured woman. Nonetheless, the cause of disagreement remains that the coverage of women was porous with no significance as established by this study. With this, there was little need to test for the direction of coverage, statistically given that the coverage of women was not significant in Pioneer Newspaper.

Nonetheless, the researchers went further to substantiate the second hypothesis. They advanced to investigate the level of significance. The data were subjected to a test of independence with Chi-square. Although the data, as presented in table 2, showed that the percentage of news stories about women with a favourable direction was high (69.23%) and supported by an empirical study by Ani and Nyekwere (2015); the

test of independence showed that the calculated chi-square value was less than the critical value of the tabulated chi-square (X^2cal. $< X^2_{2, o.o5}$ tab. $= 0.37 < 9.49$). Thus, they refuse to reject its H_0 and rejected H_1; and, concluded that the direction of news coverage about women and/ or with women was not significantly favourable. See the table below.

Table 4: Summary of Chi-square analysis for the direction of news stories about women by Pioneer Newspaper

F*	U**	N***	ǂf****	Level of significance	Calculated Chi-square (X^{2cal})	Critical value of tabulated Chi-square ($X^{2tab}_{2, o.o5}$)	Rule	Decision
83	35	118	2	0.05	0.34	5.99	X^2cal $< X^2_{2, o.o5}$ tab Accept H_0 Reject H_1	H_0 is accepted

(***Source:** Researchers, 2020. *Favourable. **Unfavourable. *** Total number of news stories about women for the three months. **** Degree of freedom*)

There are contrasting opinions and findings on the direction of news coverage about women in newspapers. While some scholars (such as Oyesomi, 2011, Oyesomi & Oyero, 2012) made findings that contrast our findings stating that the direction of news coverage by newspapers was positive, we still found studies (such as Bappayo & Kirfi, 2019, Jonah & Nnanyelugo, 2020) that made findings similar to ours that the direction was negative. However, most of these findings were arrived at using percentages for their analysis. Only a few tested the level of significance using inferential statistical tools. This study added to the few that measure the level of significance of the direction of news stories in newspapers.

To provide an answer to the research question we formulated for this study, the key frames used to portray women in the news stories coded were identified and tallied. The data collected is presented in Table 5 below. There were a variety of frames used in news stories related to women. The following are the frames used arranged according to their percentages. Frames which had between 0.85% and 4.24% were prominent actresses; sued for violation of Corona virus protocols; abortion rules; bad living condition of our daughters in hostels; military and paramilitary spokesperson and deceased. Guest of honour, special guest, and keynote speakers, etc; best graduating student, noble prize winners, etc; and chairpersons, directors and executive directors, etc were frames between 5.08% and 8.47%. The frames with the highest percentages (between 9.32 and 22.03%) were businesswomen; NGO heads, health officials and practitioners, etc; victims of rape, kidnap, assault, murder, internet fraud, etc; and relative of the deceased

Thus, the major frame portrayed women as commissioners' and governors' wives and political office holders with 22.03%; followed by the frame that portrays women as being victims of or perpetrators of societal menaces (such as gang rape, kidnap, assault, murder, etc.) with 16.10%. The frame "businesswomen" was the third most used frame in Pioneer Newspaper's portray of women. This concurs with the framing theory that considers how the media, *Pioneer Newspaper*, creates a frame (such as businesspersons, NGO heads, relative of the deceased, etc.) for information about women. See the table below.

Table 5: Frames in news stories about women and with women in the news in *Pioneer Newspaper*

Options	September (%)	October (%)	November (%)	Total (%)
Businesswomen	7 (15.22)	3 (8.82)	1 (2.63)	11 (9.32)
NGO heads, health officials and practitioners, etc	4 (8.70)	5 (14.71)	5 (13.16)	14 (11.86)
Commissioners, politicians, wives of politicians	9 (19.57)	8 (23.53)	9 (23.68)	26 (22.03)
Chairpersons, directors and executive directors, etc	2 (4.35)	5 (14.71)	3 (7.89)	10 (8.47)
Guest of honour, special guest, keynote speakers, etc	5 (10.87)	2 (5.88)	1 (2.63)	8 (6.78)
Bad living condition	2 (4.35)	0 (0)	1 (2.63)	3 (2.54)
Victim of rape, kidnap, assault, murder, internet fraud, etc	8 (17.39)	4 (11.76)	7 (18.42)	19 (16.10)
Relative of the deceased	2 (4.35)	10 (29.41)	2 (5.26)	14 (11.86)
Deceased	1 (2.17)	1 (2.94)	3 (7.89)	5 (4.24)
Best graduating student, noble prize winners, etc	1 (2.17)	2 (5.88)	3 (7.89)	6 (5.08)
Abortion rights	0 (0)	1 (2.94)	0	1 (0.85)
Women in the jury	1 (2.17)	1 (2.94)	2 (5.26)	4 (3.39)
Women marginalised in mining	1 (2.17)	0 (0)	0	1 (0.85)
Sued for violation of COVID-19 protocols	0 (0)	1 (2.94)	0	1 (0.85)
Prominent actress	1 (2.17)	0 (0)	0	1 (0.85)
Military, police, FRSC, spokesperson	3 (50)	1 (2.94)	1 (2.63)	5 (4.24)
Total	46* (100)	34* (100)	38* (100)	118** (100)

(***Source**: Content analysed by researchers, 2020. * Total of news stories about/ with women in the news for each month. ** Grand total of all news stories about/ with women in the news for the three months)*

An analysis of pioneer newspaper coverage and framing of women from September 1st, 2020 to November 31st, 2020.

Conclusion

The researchers took careful consideration of the content, reach of studied newspapers and methods of analysis used in previous studies on newspaper coverage of women in Nigeria. They noticed that most of these studies content wise looked at newspaper coverage of the political participation of women in Nigeria. Most of the studies were content analysis of national newspapers in terms of reach and used simple percentages in analysis data collected. Noticing this gap, they conducted our study as a content analysis of state newspaper – *Pioneer Newspaper* to strengthen previous studies in terms of reach.

Also, they looked at the general presence of women in term of the content without being specific to politics, business, education, health, etc.; adopting a more advanced method of analysis for our data to complement the use of percentages. They did this to revalidate the claim that Nigerian newspapers, nationally and locally, pay very little attention to women-related issues. They conclude that there is an empirical visible dominance pattern in newspaper coverage in Nigeria. They detect a strong masculine dominance paradigm versus a weak feminine subservient paradigm in the newspaper coverage in Nigerian.

The study has rationales to accept the theoretical postulations of the feminist theory and the framing theory. Putting the two theories in line with the results of this study, this study concludes that the media, *Pioneer Newspaper* to be specific, used language frames for news stories about women that magnified the limited rights and coverage given to women and the unfavourable portrayal of women due to men's flawed perception .

Recommendations

The researchers recommend that:

i.   *Pioneer Newspaper* as well as other newspapers in Nigeria should assign beat journalists with the responsibility of uncovering and reporting women-related issues in Nigeria;

ii. Beat journalists covering women-related issues and newspaper editors should be optimist, objective and fair; giving equal level of coverage to the two extremes of coverage directions (positive and negative);

iii. *Pioneer Newspaper* should set the pace for the media's positive portrayal of women as agents of societal building and development.

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