

**Appraisal on the role of Mass Media in Curbing Crime in Nigeria through
Positive Reporting of Criminal Activities among Youths in Ijebu Ode Local
Government, Ogun State**

BY

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the role of mass media in curbing crime through positive reporting, in Ijebu Ode local government area, Ogun State. The study determined the attention that the mass media has given to addressing and reporting delinquent behaviors, criminal activities and deviant attitudes among youths in the country, The study also find out the constraints facing positive crime reporting on the part of mass media, examine how the mass media, through their contents, exerted efforts reporting and how information function have succeeded in curbing criminal activities among youths in Nigeria. Three research questions were raised to guide the study. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study while a population of 150 respondents were drawn among youths in Ijebu Ode local government area, Ogun State via a simple random sampling technique. Results showed that mass media has raised significant awareness on youths involvement in criminal activities and delinquent behavior in Nigeria. Similarly, results also showed that media reporting have influenced policy decision such as the establishment of national youth development policy. It was further revealed that there are constraint and challenges affecting mass media reporting of criminal activities in Nigeria particularly among youths which includes financial constraint that can hinder in-depth reporting, media ownership influences, corrupt practices which also affects arrests and prosecution, In spite of the above challenges, it was discovered that media campaign has sensitized the public on crime prevention, victims, support and community engagement which has led to arrest of offenders as well as improved collaboration between law and enforcement agencies and the community in addition to serving as platforms for victim to share their stories. It is therefore recommended that undue influences be minimized to improve freedom of mass media reporting

Keywords: Mass Media, Policy, Youths, Criminal Activities Reporting

INTRODUCTION

The perpetration of criminal activities and delinquent behaviour by the youths, over the years, are phenomena in several societies of the world. However, there have been so many reports by the press concerning the issues of violence and pandemonium, cultism in Nigerian campuses and communities, armed robbery, sexual assaults, drug abuse, hooliganism, violation of law and order, prostitution, fraud, cyber crime, theft, murder, among other criminal and anti-social practices that are observable in many societies. Adegoke (2015) affirms that virtually every society in the world has considered youthful crime as a serious problem, and Nigeria is not an exception. Youthful delinquency can be said to be participation in illegal behaviour by the youths. Gottfredson (2020) describes crime as the phenomena behaviours in violation of the law; failing to distinguish between the actual delinquent behaviour and the sanction applied to the behaviour. Moffitt (2016) identifies two different types of offenders that emerge in adolescence as the repeat offender, one who is referred to as the life-course-persistent offender, who begins offending or showing anti-social or aggressive behaviour in adolescence (or even in childhood) and continues into adulthood; and the age specific offender, which is referred to as the adolescence-limited offender, for whom juvenile offending or delinquency begins and ends during their period of adolescence.

The mass media consists of the radio, television and all printed means of acquiring information across to the public. The media is also a means through which the feelings, values and aspirations of the people are related to the government. The media also serves the purpose of entertainment to the public, this is done through dissemination of program that are meant to relax the mood of members of the public and to lighten the

atmosphere especially when the individual's mind is occupied by stress.

The mass media serve as the mirror through which the public have a comprehensive view of activities of the government. The media also help set the agenda for the activities of the government, setting a platform for participation of the event of the government of the day being ignorant of the wishes of the populace the media creates a forum of unveiling even the hidden facts about issues like this. It is this checkmating role played by the media that earned it the acronym "watchdog". In an effort to place facts right about the role of the media in curbing crime in Nigeria. The mass media function in various ways. However, the mass media's basic function has to do with communication. That is, to tell people, who says what in the society, to whom, when and how. In carrying out this basic function, the mass media perform various tasks that have been classified into four functions by Wright (2021). These are: surveillance, correlation of facts of the environment, transmission of heritage, and entertainment. The surveillance function involves mass media operators having to nose into the nooks and crannies of the society to fish out information that is of interest to the people. In correlation, the media act to mediate even the taste of the people because they interpret the information so gathered by sifting and discarding what may not be in the interest of the people before purveying such information to them. By such interpretation, they help to create values (for culture), which are then transmitted from generation to generation. The three functions of the mass media, explained above, if closely examined, would reveal the role of the media in fostering national security. First, by effective surveillance of the environment, the mass media would unveil those areas individuals or entities that may likely constitute a breach of national security. Secondly, by correlation, the mass media

assist other agencies to interpret the information so gathered about the environment and contribute in the utilization of such information to take steps to remedy any breach of national security or foster the perpetuation of practices that enhance national security. Thirdly, by transmission of culture, the media enhance the entrenchment of those norms, the defence of which constitutes national security and curb crime in the country (Clement, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

It has been a major concern that the Nigerian youths indulge in anti-social behaviours and criminal activities ranging from social immoral violence, drug abuse, terrorism, armed robbery, fraudulent activities, cultism, theft, hooliganism, murder, amongst others, are still prevalent in the nation. These acts have been a major hindrance to the economic and social well-being of the citizenry and the nation at large, and it has consequently put to birth the necessity to curb these vices. One of the major roles of the press in the society is to serve as an agent or platform for advocacy in the quest to joining the law enforcement agencies, the government, and other authorities in the campaign towards the promotion of moral values in the society, and the quest to curbing crime and deviance. Therefore, mass media in this category is also entrusted with the societal responsibility to act as an advocate of social peace, security, and stability; inculcating moral values in the society even among youths. Therefore, the researcher, through the study seeks to investigate the role of mass media in curbing crime in Nigeria through a positive reporting.

Study Objectives

The main objective of the study was to examine the role of mass media in curbing crime in Nigeria through positive reporting of youths involvement in criminal activities and deviant activities in Ijebu Ode local government area, Ogun State. Specific objectives are:

- i. To discover the extent of attention to which the mass media have given to delinquencies, youthful crime and deviance reporting in the country.
- ii. To evaluate the extent to which this level of attention on the part of media have centered towards curbing crime in Nigeria.
- iii. To examine how the mass media, through their contents, exerted efforts reporting, information function have succeeded in curbing crime in Nigeria.

Research Questions

- i. What are the extent of attention to which the mass media have given to delinquencies, youthful crime and deviance reporting in the country?
- ii. What are the constraints facing positive crime reporting in the part of mass media?
- iii. How is the mass media, through their contents, exerted efforts reporting information function have succeeded in curbing crime in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts Technological Frame of Reference theory (TFR). The TFR espoused in the 1994 works of Wanda Orlikowski and Debra Gash assumes that different people have different perspectives on the usefulness, importance and significance of technological artifacts and these differences significantly define how they perceive and relate with such technology (Segaard, 2015). According to the theory, people develop different frames assumptions, expectations and knowledge about a technology while trying to make sense of such technology and these developed frames shape their subsequent actions and dispositions towards the technology. Deductively, the TFR suggests that different people will hold different perceptions on the contributions of the social media to political participation processes based on their experiences, assumptions, expectations and knowledge about online communication platforms.

Research Methods

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the role of mass media in curbing crime in Nigeria through positive reporting among youths in Ijebu Ode local government area, Ogun State. The population of the study consisted of selected youths in Ijebu Ode Local Government Area. The samples consist of hundred and fifty respondents (150) selected youths which were considered for the study. The respondents were selected using simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire tagged;” Appraisal of The Role of Mass Media in Curbing Crime in Nigeria Through

Positive Reporting (ARMMCCNRP)”. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, [Section A and B]. The questionnaire was represented in four Likert-scale items to measure role of media towards curbing crime among the youths. The method of analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and standard deviation, to analyze the responses.

Results and Findings

Research Question One: What are the extent of attention to the mass media have given to delinquencies, youthful crime and deviance reporting in the country.

S/N	ITEMS	NO	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION
1	Mass media has helped to raise positive awareness About youths and crime delinquency in Nigeria	150	3.33	0.88
2	Media reports have influenced policy decision such as establishment of national youth development policy	150	2.36	0.85
3	Media often sensationalize youth crime stories perpetuating negative stereotypes	150	2.96	0.999
4	Media facilitates public debates and discussion on Youths and crime delinquencies	150	2.58	1.13
5	Media focus on crime can create distorted public Public perception of youths	150	2.84	1.11
TOTAL		150	15.08	2.66
GRAND MEAN			3.01	0.53

highest mean score 3.36 (SD =.880), followed by item 1 which states that “Mass media has helped to raise positive awareness about youths and crime delinquency issues in Nigeria” with the mean score 3.33 (SD= .852), followed by item 3 which states that “Media often sensationalize youth crime stories perpetuating negative stereotypes” which has the mean score of 2.96 (SD= .999) , followed by item 5 which states that “Media focus on crime can create distorted public perception of youths” with the mean score 2.84 (SD= 1.112), followed by item 4 with the lowest mean score which states that “Media facilitate public debates and discussion on youths and crime delinquencies” which has the mean score of 2.58 (SD= 1.13)

Research Question Two: What are the constraints facing positive crime reporting in the part of mass media

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Research Question Two: What are the constraints facing positive crime reporting in the part of mass media

S/N	ITEMS	NO	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION
1	Financial constraint hinders investigative journalism and in-depth journalism reporting	150	2.57	1.123
2	Insufficient training on crime reporting, ethics and Journalism standard	150	3.21	0.822
3	Media ownership influences which compromise the objective of reporting Inadequate infrastructures and poor communication	150	3.01	0.834
4	Network with limited access to information	150	3.34	0.762
5	Weak laws regulations governing media practice	150	2.84	1.11
TOTAL		150	15.54	2.53
GRAND MEAN			3.1	0.51

From the above table, item 5 which states that “Weak laws regulations governing media practices” has the highest mean with the mean score of 3.40 (SD= .722), followed by item 4 which states that “Inadequate infrastructures and poor communication network with limited access to information” with the mean score of 3.34 (SD= .762),

followed by item 2, which states that “Insufficient training on crime reporting, ethics, and journalism standard” which has the mean score of 3.21 (SD= .822), while the item 1 has the lowest mean score, which states that “Financial constraint hinder investigative journalism and in-depth reporting” with the mean score of 2.57 (SD=

1.123), followed by item 3 which states that ” Media ownership influences which compromise the objectives of reporting” with the mean score of 3.01 (SD= .834)

Research Question Three: How is the mass media, through their contents, exerted efforts reporting information function have succeeded in curbing crime in Nigeria.

S/N	ITEMS	NO	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION
1	Investigative journalism has uncovered instances of corruption leading to arrests and prosecution	150	2.45	0.869
2	Media campaign has sensitized the public on crime prevention, victims, support for community engagement	150	3.33	0.736
3	Media has provided platforms for victims to share their stories promoting empathy and understanding	150	3.3	0.637
4	Media has encouraged collaboration between law and enforcement and community	150	3.3	0.637
5	Reporting on crime prevention successes and Effective policing strategies	150	2.21	0.65
TOTAL		150	14.6	2.38
GRAND MEAN			2.92	0.48

From the above table item 2 which states that “Media campaign has sensitized the public on crime prevention, victims, support and community engagement” has the highest mean score of 3.33 (SD= .736), followed by item 3 which states that “Media has provided platforms for victim to share their stories promoting empathy and understanding” with the mean score of 3.30 (SD= .637), followed by item 4 which states that “Media has encouraged collaboration between law and enforcement and community” with the mean score of 3.30 (SD= .637), followed by item 1 which states that “Investigative journalism has uncovered instances of corruption

leading to arrest and prosecution” with the mean score of 2.49 (SD= .869), while the item with lowest score is item 5 which states that “Reporting on crime prevention successes and effective policing strategies” with the mean score of 2.21 (SD= .650)

Discussion of Findings

This study investigates the role of mass media in curbing crime in Nigeria through positive reporting among youths in Ijebu Ode local government area, Ogun State. In attempt to answer research question one, which states “What are the extent of attention to the mass media have given to delinquencies, youthful crime and deviance

reporting in the country”. it was discovered that mass media has helped to raise positive awareness about youths and crime delinquency issues in Nigeria, also media report have influenced policy decision such as the establishment of national youth development policy. These finding is supported by Arinze and Ademola (2020) who cited the impact of mass media on crime reduction in Nigeria. They opined that mass media is an open platform that enables people to report crime and allow public debates on how to reduce crime especially among the youths and give insight on how crime is being perpetuated among the youths.

In respect to research question two, which states that “What are the constraints facing positive crime reporting in the part of mass media” this findings revealed that there are constraint which mass media influences faces towards reporting positive crime in Nigeria, whereby there are financial constraint hinder investigative journalism and in-depth reporting, also media ownership influences which compromise the objectives of reporting. Hence, these findings is supported by Adaraniwon (2023), he postulated that mass media functions can be reduced due to some certain constraint especially the government regulations on the limited access to information and also limiting informations

being posted due to the regulatory body. Also, Inadequate infrastructures and poor communication network with limited access to information and insufficient training on crime reporting, ethics, and journalism standard

In attempt to answer research question three, which states that “How is the mass media, through their contents, exerted efforts reporting information function have succeeded in curbing crime in Nigeria” it was discovered that mass media through their context have succeeded in curbing crimes in Nigeria, in which they have uncovered instances of corruption leading to arrests and prosecution, also media campaign has sensitized the public on crime prevention, victims, support and community engagement. Hence, this finding was backed by Ojigbo and Ademola (2023), they cited that mass media are the watchdog of the society which have succeeded in revealing most crimes perpetuated in Nigeria which as result to arrest of the offenders and yield positive change such that it serve as lessons for other perpetuating the criminal act. It has encouraged collaboration between law and enforcement and community and also provided platforms for victim to share their stories promoting empathy and understanding.

Conclusion

The findings showed that mass media has helped to raise positive awareness about youths and crime delinquency issues in Nigeria, also media report have influenced policy decision such as the establishment of national youth development policy. These findings also that mass media is an open platform that enables people to report crime and allow public debates on how to reduce crime especially among the youths and give insight on how crime is being perpetuated among the youths.

The findings also revealed that there are constraint which mass media influences faces towards reporting positive crime in Nigeria, whereby there are financial constraint hinder investigative journalism and in-depth reporting, also media ownership influences which compromise the objectives of reporting.

This finding also revealed that mass media functions can be reduced due to some certain constraint especially the government regulations on the limited access to information and also limiting informations being posted due to the regulatory body. More so, the findings also revealed that mass media through their context have succeeded in curbing crimes in Nigeria, in which they have uncovered instances of corruption

leading to arrests and prosecution, also media campaign has sensitized the public on crime prevention, victims, support and community engagement

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are provided:

- 1.Nigerian newspapers should give more prominence (in terms of placement of stories) to the reportage of delinquency issues, and apportion more length of space for discussions of these issues on the pages of the newspapers.
- 2.Nigerian government should begin to exert deliberate and conscious efforts towards curbing youthful delinquencies in Nigeria.
- 3.The direction of delinquency stories, reports and discussions on mass media channel should be more of such that strongly disapprove, criticize or stand against delinquent behaviour rather a neutral approach.
- 4.Nigerian mass media channel should carry out more of interpretative journalism, rather than merely reporting the issues as news stories just to inform or create awareness.
- 5.Orientation and awareness should be given on how to make use of different mass media channel especially the use of social media and how to post sensitive contents and the right and appropriate channels to use

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