

# Impact of Newspapers Salience of Child Defilement on Parents' Perception of Victims and Perpetrators

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## ABSTRACT

This study focused on the impact of newspapers salience of child defilement on parents' perception of victims and perpetrators in Nigeria. The objective was to examine the level of salience given to child defilement by Nigerian newspapers and how parent's perception about the victims and perpetrators are influenced through the reportage. The study used Survey method. The study covered six states, one from each of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria- North Central, North East, North West, South East, South-South and South West. The study employed Simple Random Sampling method, as well as Purposive Sampling while questionnaire was employed as instrument of data collection. Findings indicated that people across the six geo-political zones in Nigeria are aware of child defilement as reported by the Nigerian newspapers but they believed the level of the reportage is still low. Defilers are not mainly strangers as parents and neighbours are ascribed as the major perpetrators. Also, newspapers' salience of child's defilement impacted parents' perception of the victims and the perpetrators as majority of the respondents always read about defilement stories on the newspapers as well as listen to such stories on newspapers review on radio and television.

**Keywords:** Newspaper salience, Child's defilement, Victims and Perpetrators.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the past, parents put their children in the care of their neighbours, relatives and friends even when they are away from home without any fear of their children being molested or harassed. The society treats children as innocent as they are by protecting them as invaluable assets. However, the scenario has changed recently with the preponderance of child defilement and rape cases across the nooks and crannies of Nigeria. What then is child defilement?

To start with, a child is any person under the age of 18 years (CRA,2003) while the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (10th Edition) sees

a child as a young human being who is not yet an adult. Defile to Garner (2011) means to make dirt, to figuratively tarnish, to morally corrupt, to physically soil and to deprive of chastity. As for the word "defilement", it is the noun of defile and it means the condition of being defiled or an act of being defiled, (Garner, 2011).

Combining the two words "child" and "defilement", child defilement refers to the behaviour which exposes a child under 18 to sexuality contents or using a child to obtain sexual stimulation and gratification (ANPPCAN, 2008). World Health Organization (WHO, 2018) defines child defilement as the involvement of a child in a sexual activity which s/he does not fully comprehend, meaning, s/he is unable to give informed consent to it, s/he is not developmentally prepared for it and cannot give approval to it, or activity that violates the laws, do's and don'ts, and taboos of the society in question.

According to Okoji (2015), the subject of child defilement has become a topical issue in the recent years in Nigeria. Most parents now feel that their children are no longer safe in any place because they are at any time or any place susceptible to be defiled by neighbours, uncles, and worst still, by their own fathers as being reported by the Nigerian media. The preponderance of Child defilement is typified in this assertion by the Coalition of Civil Society Group (2014):

"On a daily basis, we are bombarded by the abominable news of the rape of innocent children and hapless girls across the country. When it is not a porn-addicted 14-year-old boy raping to death a nine-year old in Ikorodu, Lagos, it is a 35-year-old pastor, Yakubu Izang in Jos, Plateau State defiling two underage girls entrusted into his care for prayers... What this shows is that our beloved country is tending towards anarchy, a lawless state where the most powerless and most defenseless are harmed without any repercussion"

Typically, the figures of defilement cases and statistics in Nigeria are at an alarming rate. This justified the outburst of the Inspector General

(IG) of Police that child defilement, with its rising statistics every day, needs to be addressed with swift actions. According to the IGP, the Nigerian Police recorded 717 rape cases, arrested 799 rape suspects, 631 of the cases investigated and charged to court while investigations are ongoing on 52 of the cases between January and May 2020 (Omoniyi, 2020). To corroborate the submission of the Nigerian Police Force, Bello (2020) reported that 42 rape cases were recorded in six months between January and June 2020 in Kano state, Nigeria.

Abdulkadir, Umar, Musa, Musa, Oyeniyi, Ayoola-Williams, Okeniyi (2011) submitted that sexual abuse of children is a global health and human rights problem that has been largely underreported and understudied in sub-Saharan Africa. They posited further that little is known regarding information on the nature of child sexual abuse and the predisposing factors in our community. There have been different unsubstantiated and unscientific factors that had been adduced as reasons why people engage in such act. Such reasons range from money rituals, age elongation, and sexual belief that children's genital organ is still 'tight' which will increase sexual pleasure, demonic possession for such obsession, etc. Angle, Baerthlem, Daftari, Ramband, and Roshani, (2014) acknowledged that this body of evidence is only anecdotal and that, further research in this area is required. Meanwhile, different reasons have been adduced for the prevalence of defilement of children in Nigeria as revealed in some empirical studies.

In Bejide's (2014) submission on the victim's mother and the law enforcement agency as a reason for defilement, he noted that mothers who may be aware that their daughters are abused, out of shame and what people's opinion on their wards may be, tend to keep it a secret until it gets out of control and to the few bold ones who may want to report the matter to the police, to their greatest amazement, there are few or no gender desks in most of the police stations in Nigeria. This circumstance further makes the parent of the defiled child handicapped.

Akinselure (2014) submitted that one of the factors that helped in the prevalence recorded in some of these defilement cases is the connivance of some officers of Nigerian police force who get a report of these crimes and succumb to the bribery from most times, families of either the girl or the perpetrator. Another factor that makes defilement cases be on the increase in Nigeria is that, most times, only very few cases are taken to the court and the number of convictions obtained is

criminally poor when compared with the daily occurrence of such acts across the country. It is worth to state that victims of defilement suffer adverse psychological and economic effects long after the offence has been committed. In one study, victims were found to present a range of psychiatric problems, somatic manifestations and disturbances in instinctive functions (Menick & Ngoh, 1999).

The media in Nigeria today are playing very important roles in society. Just as Daramola (cited in Tejumaiye 2011 p. 23) wrote, "the news media shape culture, influence politics, play important role in business and affect the daily lives of millions of people, including people's attitude, conducts and fundamental moral values".

Hamelink (2014) submitted that the extensive impact of the media on society can easily be seen these days as media have reflected our society, how it worked and what it constitutes. With the advancement in technology, there is expansion in thoughts and ideas of people which was made possible by the invention of printing press to the latest smartphones.

One of the key functions of the media is to influence people's behaviour. The media can also manipulate, influence and persuade the people on issues of importance to the society. (Kashaf, 2019). Corroborating this assertion of Kashaf, Chan (2007) described the role of media in guiding opinion. He mentioned that guidance of public opinion is more indirect, flexible and a subtle way of dealing with public opinion. He further elaborated that the media role in guiding public opinion is somewhat related to the concept of propaganda by shifting the focus on "what people think" to "what people think about". This is the main hub of media, to give issues to public for what they think and act accordingly to the perceptions they have. In many cases what the media give them is what they perceive and act on.

Essentially, in performing its surveillance function, the Nigerian media have been able to beam its search light on one of the main problems confronting the Nigerian child, which is child defilement (Okoji, 2015). Although media have a role to play in the fight against child defilement, research revealed that a wide range of factors prevent the media from playing a more substantive role in promoting awareness of child rights as well as in helping children realize their rights and in holding government accountable. A research conducted in Kenya, India and Brazil on the role of the media in protecting the rights of the children discovered that there is lack of coverage or absence

of meaningful, realistic and socially relevant media coverage on child rights issue (Angle, et al., 2014).

Specifically, the perceptions made from media discourse on child defilement can bring about policy change and positive impact on such discourse. As such, Anneke (2015) posited that media discourses do not only determine but also help shape official regulation and perception, for example, by putting paedophiles on top of the government agenda and creating an impetus for legal activity as well as influencing parent's perception of victims and perpetrators of child defilement. Are the media really beaming enough searchlights on child defilement cases? How has that influenced parent's perception on the victims and perpetrators of child defilement?

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to measure parent's perception of the media, especially, newspaper salience of child's defilement victims and perpetrators. In other words, this study examines the level of salience given to child defilement in the Nigerian newspapers and how parent's perception about the victims and perpetrators are influenced through the reportage.

### Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. assess parents' level of awareness of child's defilement as reported by the Nigerian newspapers;
2. investigate the impact of the Nigerian newspapers' salience of child's defilement on parents' perception of victims;
3. examine the impact of the Nigerian newspapers' salience of child's defilement on parents' perception of perpetrators.

### Research Questions/Hypotheses

1. What is the parents' level of awareness of child's defilement as reported by the Nigerian newspapers?
2. How does the Nigerian newspapers' salience of child's defilement impact parents' perception of victims
3. How does the Nigerian newspapers' salience of child's defilement impact parents' perception of perpetrators?

The following were the hypotheses tested in this study:

H<sub>0</sub>1: Nigerian newspapers' salience of child's defilement does not impact parents' perception of victims.

H<sub>0</sub>2: Nigerian newspapers' salience of child's defilement does not impact parents' perception of perpetrators.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Child defilement

Child defilement, otherwise called Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), is a worldwide public health threatening problem with huge adverse effects on the victims, the family and the community at large, (Laila, 2015). It has been a topic with vocal view in the public domain for more than three decades ago, even among many legislative and professional initiatives. Though there are ensuing facts but there are some basic facts about the problems which remain mysterious, unclear or in dispute (Laila, 2015).

In 2004, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA) as a war to be fought by all. This is why WHO (2004) sees Child Defilement as "a silent health emergency" of international importance. A child, as defined under the Child's Rights Act (CRA, 2003), is any person under the age of 18 years. Again, Section 23, particularly subsection 5 of the Cyber Crime (Prohibition, Prevention Etc) Act, 2015, holds that a child or minor refers to any person below 18 years of age.

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2012) stated that child defilement is the involvement of a child in a sexual activity which s/he doesn't fully comprehend, that is, s/he is unable to give informed consent to, s/he is not developmentally prepared for and can't give approval, or activity that violates the laws, do's and don'ts, and taboos of the society in question. WHO further described child defilement as the act between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development are in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, but the activity being intended is to gratify or satisfy the sexual needs of the other person solely.

Clarifying the concept of child defilement, Loraine and Andrew (2015) in their study, entitled "Sexual Abuse of Young Children in Southern Africa", stated that there are issues such as contact and non-contact child defilement that need critical understanding because the two needed to be carried along and be considered when unraveling the mystery of child's defilement. To them, child sexual abuse is not solely on physical contact between a perpetrator but also includes other forms such as, fondling, obscene phone calls, obscene text messages or digital interaction, exposing one's private part to a minor, masturbating in the presence of a minor or forcing a minor to masturbate, exhibitionism, producing, owning or sharing pornographic contents, intercourse whether oral, anal, or vaginal with a minor, sex trafficking

or any other sexual conduct harmful to mental, emotional or physical wellbeing of a child.

This research is however in agreement with article 39 of CRC Act which saw child defilement as flying in the face of a child's social integration and psychological recovery in the society. This research as well aligns with the comprehensive definition of Child Sexual Defilement as given by Hevey and Kenward (1989) cited in Akani, Imasiku, Paul and Hazemba (2015) and the explanation offered by Loraine and Andrew (2015) on Child Sexual Defilement in their study.

Essentially, perpetrators of defilement employed varieties of tactics to prevent their victims from disclosing their identities. One of such tactics used by perpetrators of all ages is known as desensitization (Berliner & Conte, 1990, cited in Fieldman & Crispi, 2012). Desensitization is a situation whereby the perpetrator engages in displays of compassion and caring attitude towards the child to get closer access to the potential victim, thereby using such closeness as an avenue to shut her mouth. Another tactic is the use of threats. They threatened to deal with the victims if s/he revealed their identities. As well, perpetrators who victimized their family member also used such relationship to prevent disclosure. According to Fieldman and Crispi (2012), perpetrators of child sexual abuse said that they always searched for victims who will keep the abuse to themselves, thereby concealing their identities.

For this heinous acts, it is however desirable to be abreast of the general symptoms that a victim might display so as to nip it in the bud when it happens or about to happen. Some of the physical signs as listed by Nurcombe (2020) were difficult walking or sitting or frequent going to the bathroom. Also, some behaviours associated with child sexual abuse include; truancy, difficulty in sleeping or eating, consistent complaints of physical problems, withdrawn behaviours, inappropriate sexual behaviours, difficulty in trusting others, aggressiveness, low self-esteem, substance abuse, sudden change in behaviours (e.g drop in performance in school), increased fears and anxieties, depression, and regression in overall behaviour, that is, reverting to previously childish behaviour such as crying, thumb sucking, having urine her pants after being potty trained for a long time (Nurcombe, 2010).

#### **Causes of Child Defilement**

Banda (2016) quoting The World Health Organisation (WHO) said child defilement as a threat to children's population is caused majorly by sexual perversity. Defining sexual perversity, Miliambo (2015) referred to it as the situation

whereby defilers have no control of their sexual desire and urge; as such, they predated and took advantage of children within their reach. Essentially, majority of defilement cases were connected to sexual perversity (Miliambo, 2015).

Another notable cause of child defilement is the belief that having sex with children can cure certain diseases. This belief of having sex with minors to cure HIV/AIDS, according to Miliambo (2016), was campaigned against by HIV/AIDS activities in media of communication such as billboard, radio, television etc. Apart from this, there are also superstitious beliefs that sleeping with minors boosts business prosperity, increases promotion at work chances, and enhances other spiritual power. These beliefs, according to Miliambo (2016), are handiwork of witch doctors and traditional healers, especially in Zimbabwe and Malawi.

In Nigeria, these beliefs as held in Malawi and Zimbabwe were unconnected with the reasons defilers engage in defiling children. Different unscientific factors had been adduced as reasons, such as; money rituals, age elongation, sexual belief that children's genital organ is still 'tight' which will increase sexual pleasure, demonic possession for such obsession etc. However, this research acknowledged that this body of evidence was only anecdotal and that further research in this area is required.

#### **Effects of Child Defilement**

Smith (2017) said irrespective of whom the perpetrator was, CSA left the child with physiological, social and spiritual effect. On the physiological effects, Smith (2017) identified helplessness/powerlessness, guilt and shame, fear, isolation, responsibility, betrayal, anger, sadness and flashbacks as the possible effects.

Corroborating Smith's view on physiological effects of child sexual abuse, Natasha (2012) affirmed further that the effects of child sexual abuse usually include low self-esteem, a feeling of worthlessness, a lack of trust in adults and an abnormal or distorted view of sex. The effects, according to Lizette (2013), can be so strong that the child may even become suicidal. Children who have suffered from sexual abuse are also at an increased risk of future abuse and may become child abusers themselves (Smith, 2017). Essentially, Osakue and Omolola (2012) similarly posited that severe anxiety, depression, difficulty in concentrating or sleeping and dreaming about what happen while emotional humbleness, flashbacks and nightmares, with fears are experienced by the victims of rape.

In the clinical reports by Glaser and Frosh (1993), the sociological effects of child sexual abuse included, bedwetting, suicidal thoughts, adolescent pregnancy, refusal to go to school, and psychological disturbance. This view was supported by Muller (1998) who added excessive masturbation, promiscuity, homosexuality, early interest in sexual relationship, preoccupation with sexual matters and sexual identification difficulties.

From a feminist perspective, sexual abuse is a grave, wrong, one too often ignored, mischaracterized, and legitimized (Whisnant 2017). Defiled victims, according to Whisnant (2017), often experienced severe long lasting distress beyond the experience of the defilement itself. About 90% of the victims reported physical injury. Other common effects included; pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and psychological trauma (Rainn, 2010). Although rape or sexual abuse may not be the worst thing that can happen to someone, it remains a terrifying and agonizing experience for victims who always hold negative perception towards the perpetrators (Whisnant, 2017).

### Media Salience

The media play an important role in making issues of public concern known by giving such issues salience through frequent mentioning in the news and organizing different discourses of such issues in media (Smith, 2018). As the forth pillar of the state and an important agent in the society, Alade (2018) described the media as serving the public through the provision of basic knowledge and information on all aspects of a single issue or on various issues that is of importance to the society they serve.

By inference from Alade's viewpoint, the media not only provide information and updates on various issues and happenings but also give direction to the public in making up their judgements and perceptions regarding certain issues such as children's defilement in Nigeria, which is the focus of this study. Essentially, the media achieved this milestone of influencing people's judgement by conferring prominence of some issues in the society (Blitz, 2016). This is termed Agenda Setting of which Media Salience is an offshoot.

It is essential to note that media discourses do not only determine but also help to shape official regulation (Baddot, 2017; Blitz, 2016). For example, by putting paedophiles on top of the government agenda and creating an impetus for legal activity, by encouraging and legitimizing punitive legislation and law enforcement and by

aiding the conceptualization of specific laws, media representations are not only words and images but are socially powerful constructions that can materialise in laws and law enforcement. In the case of child sexual abuse, this is a problematic dynamics because of the media's propensity to hype and represent the case with demonisation, sensationalism, contradictoriness, incoherence and misrepresentation (Anneke, 2015).

Media's way of representing issues differed and it was influenced by a number of factors, among which are: censorship, ownership influence, impact, economics, among others (Gilbert, 2019). The way of representing those issues and cases reported apart from the the salience conferred on it refers to framing, which is an advancement of the Media's Agenda Setting Function.

This leads to review of empirical studies on prevalence of child defilement as promoted by media salience.

Eben (2016) asserted that child abuse, especially sexual assault, is one of the major public health challenges currently facing most African countries. The lack of data, and more worryingly the lack of guidelines to manage child abuse in most emergency settings, hospitals and healthcare facilities looking after children have created a huge gap in child protection service delivery. The research conducted by Eben searched Medline and reference lists of the literature on child abuse in African countries and relevant world literature in December 2016. The literatures were reviewed thoroughly and the findings were written narratively, rather than being focused on individual aspects of child abuse. The study suggested that early identification of child abuse, as well as research into preventative strategies should be prioritised. It further suggested that establishing strong institutions and guidance to tackle abuse when it occurs is both beneficial to the survivors and the continent at large. Succinctly put, the study said this high trend of child sexual assault can be reversed with education of the public on forms of violence and the rights of children as long as governments, along with its health sectors, social services and justice systems wake up to this serious threat, not only to African children, but of course to its future adults as well.

Akpoghome, Theresa, Nwano & Theophilus (2016) noted that girls and boys defilement cases in Nigeria are on the increase, although the cases involving boys are under reported. This is contained in the study of the incidences of sexual defilement of children in Nigeria conducted by Akpoghome et al. (2016).

The study discovered that there were several circumstances that would expose a child to defilement. It noted that perpetrators of this heinous act are most times acquaintances and a cursory look showed that most reported instances of child defilement in Nigeria were from underage children who did not usually understand the very nature of the offence. Their findings also revealed that the Courts have not been imposing sentences that will deter perpetrators, although the Supreme Court of Nigeria has severally condemned these sentences. The paper, therefore, recommended that the courts should live up to their responsibilities and further called on all to arise and fight this scourge that is threatening the future of a Nigerian child.

Having similar outcome with Akpoghome et al. (2016) on the prevalence of child defilement cases, Vikas et al (2018) conducted a systematic review of child sexual abuse in India and noted that child sexual abuse (CSA) is high among both boys and girls in India. The study searched electronic literature databases (PubMed, POPLINE, and PsycINFO) for articles published in English on Child Sexual Abuse in India between January 1, 2006 and January 1, 2016 using 55 search terms and fifty-one (51) studies met inclusion criteria for the review. The study found out that commercial sex workers, men who have sex with men, and women with psychiatric disorders were at higher risks for sexual abuse during childhood. In addition, the synthesis of qualitative data across studies included in the review suggested that exposure and perpetration of CSA is a multifaceted phenomenon grounded in the interplay between individual, family, community, and societal factors. The research suggested it was necessary to inform the development of a culturally tailored primary prevention and treatment strategy for CSA victims in India.

Thomas, Hye-Jin, Thomas & Richard (2013), in their study, examined findings of a content analysis of child abuse coverage in major national and urban U.S. newspapers from 2000 to 2008. First, they determined how frequently newspapers covered the different types of child abuse. Second, they analyzed whether child abuse has been framed as either an isolated phenomenon (episodic and individual frames) or a broadly systemic and public problem (thematic and societal frames). Third, they looked for changes in coverage frequency and media frames over time. Findings were mixed. On one hand, it was revealed that different types of child abuse cases received varying degrees of coverage, with child sexual abuse receiving a disproportionately large amount.

On the other hand, the topic of child abuse in general has predominantly been framed thematically as a problem that has societal causes and solutions. However, the study revealed that there was no clear pattern in the way these causes and solutions have been framed over the years.

In a study that analyzed trends in the coverage of child sexual abuse in popular magazines since the early 1990s, Ross, Yael and Zachary (2010) employed systematic analysis to identify and analyze articles in four popular magazines. Articles were analyzed by subject, length, and publication. The results affirmed theories of newsworthiness related to the coverage of specific stories over time. However, interest in the subject waned in the past 10 years, with the brief and dramatic exception of coverage connected to the Catholic Church in 2002. The findings demonstrated systematic differences between the slants of the four magazines studied. The findings also suggested that child abuse professionals could improve the quality of coverage by conducting interviews in connection with details got from articles about childhood sexual abuse.

In a study "Case by Case: News coverage of child sexual abuse, 2007–2009" Lori, Pamela, Andrew, and Priscilla (2011) revealed that the most common topic (33%) of child sexual abuse coverage was criminal justice, such as arrests and trials of accused perpetrators.

### III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on three theories, Viz: Agenda Setting Theory and Self-Perception Theory.

On the one hand, Agenda Setting Theory as firstly introduced by College Professors Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972, describes a powerful influence of the media's ability to tell us what issues are important. This theory emanated from focused study in Chapel Hill of media effects on the salience of issues among the publics after the presidential election of 1968 in America.

Essentially, Agenda Setting is the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media. Bernard Cohen (1963) coined the mostly accepted cliché about agenda setting function of the media when he submitted that "the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about". Wimmer and Dominick (2000) observed that the theory on agenda setting by the media proposes that the public agenda or what kind of things people discuss, think and worry about is

powerfully shaped and directed by what the media choose to publicize.

On the other hand, Self-Perception Theory as developed by psychologist Daryl Bem is a theory on attitude formation as originally propounded in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Essentially, Self-perception Theory describes the process in which people, who lacks emotional responses or initial attitudes develop them by the observation of their own behaviour and arriving at a conclusion of what might have driven such behaviour.

According to the theory, "we are what we do" and we interpret own actions as we interpret other actions (Blitz, 2016). Then, those interpretations of actions and behaviour are socially influenced as they are not produced out of our free will, as we might expect.

As relevance to this study, the Agenda Theory brings the belief that the media are capable of telling the people what to think about. As such, they can bring the manace of child defilement to the public domain and help to highlight the dangers inherent in such dastard act for defilers to eschew

such attitude as well as for people to see the need to protect children while supporting the punishment of defilers.

For Self-Perception Theory, the import and relevance of the theory to this study is that any programme, news or activity targeted at attitudinal change on the manace of child defilement should be directed at our perception knowing full well that such programme, news or activity which is part of social influences, can influence our perception and behavior, no matter what our individual personality and attitude is.

### 3.1 Research Methodology

This study used Survey Method. The population of the study cut across the population of residents in the 18 selected communities in the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. The study employed Simple Random Sampling methods, as well as Purposive Sampling while questionnaire was employed as instrument of data collection. The table below shows the selection process for the sample size for the study.

ZONES / STATES	LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS	NO OF PRESIDENTS	SAMPLE SIZE
NORTH CENTRAL Kwara state	Ilorin LGA	282,500	4 1
	Offa LGA	120,100	1 7
	Pati LGA	149,600	1 2
NORTHEAST Borno	Maiduguri LGA	145,600	2 1
	Biu LGA	246,900	2 9
	Kaga LGA	126,400	1 8
NORTH WEST Kaduna	Kaduna South LGA	543,600	8 3
	Kubau LGA	378,900	5 5
	Kagarko LGA	322,700	4 8
SOUTHEAST Enugu	Aninri LGA	183,900	2 8
	Isiuzo LGA	200,600	3 1
	Nsukka LGA	417,700	6 2
SOUTHSOUTH Cross Rivers	Abi LGA	192,900	3 0
	Bekwarral LGA	141,000	2 0
	Akampa LGA	200,100	3 1
Southwest Osun	Osogbo LGA	214,200	3 4
	Ayedaade LGA	206,000	3 2
	Ife East LGA	259,700	4 2
TOTAL POPULATION/ TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE		4,332,400	6 3 4

Source: Researcher's computation (2022)

#### 4.1 Data Analysis

Out of the six hundred and thirty-four (634) copies of questionnaire administered to respondents across the six geo-political zones in Nigeria, five hundred and ninety six copies (596)

were retrieved from participants and validated for further studies; resulting in 94 percent response rate. The analysis of data gathered is presented below:

#### 4.1 a Analysis of Demographic Features of Participants

**Table 4.1.1a Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Variable		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	21-30	131	22.0
	31-40	268	45.0
	41-50	146	24.5
	51-60	51	8.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Sex	Male	230	38.6
	Female	366	61.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Table 4.1.1a shows that majority of the participants were between the ages of 31 to 50 (69.5%); while few were above 50 years of age (8.6%). In addition, male respondents constitutes

38.6% (230) of the respondents while their female counterpart constitutes 61.4% (366) of the respondents.

**Table 4.1.1b Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Religion	Christianity	288	48.3
	Islam	301	50.5
	African Traditional Religion	7	1.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Literacy Level	Primary six/modern school	17	2.9
	secondary school/ Teacher grade II	42	7.0
	OND/NCE	106	17.8
	B.A/B.Sc/B.ED/HND	268	45.0
	Masters/PhD/ProfessionalQualification	163	27.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Furthermore, Table 4.1.1b depicts that Muslims had 50.5 percent representation, Christians had 48.3 percent representation in the study; while adherents of African traditional religion (1.2%) had the least proportion of representation in the study. Also, majority of the respondents were literate because many had

B.A/B.Sc/B.ED/HND academic qualifications (45%), followed by those who had Masters/PhD/Professional qualifications (27.3%); while only 2.9 percent had primary six/modern school qualification. This implies that majority of the respondents could read and write and majority had advanced reading, writing, inductive and deductive skills.

#### Research Question One: What is the parents' level of awareness of child's defilement as reported by the Nigerian newspapers?

**Table 4.2.1 Awareness of child defilement among the respondents**

Items	SA Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	N Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	SD Freq. (%)	$\bar{x}$	SD
Child defilement is	23	147	29	388	9	2.35	0.52



widely reported by the Nigerian newspapers	(3.9)	(24.7)	(4.9)	(65.1)	(1.5)		
My level of awareness of child defilement as reported by the Nigerian newspapers is high	327 (54.9)	158 (26.5)	73 (12.3)	20 (3.4)	18 (3.0)	4.65	1.26
I hear child defilement stories on newspapers review on the radio/television	172 (28.9)	298 (50)	76 (12.8)	41 (6.9)	9 (1.5)	4.35	1.02
I read child defilement stories on newspapers	191 (32)	253 (42.4)	99 (16.6)	42 (7.0)	11 (1.8)	4.25	1.08
I am aware that child defilement cases are high in Nigeria	139 (23.3)	276 (46.3)	108 (18.1)	63 (10.6)	10 (1.7)	4.30	1.09
I am aware of parents defiling their children	144 (24.2)	231 (38.7)	127 (21.3)	66 (11.1)	28 (4.7)	4.24	1.47
I am aware of neighbours defiling children	60 (10.1)	292 (49.0)	159 (26.7)	52 (8.7)	33 (5.5)	3.98	1.32
I am aware of strangers defiling children	64 (10.7)	96 (16.1)	159 (26.7)	220 (37.0)	58 (9.6)	2.35	0.44
<b>Average Mean</b>						<b>4.08</b>	<b>1.27</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

**KEY:** SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree.

**\*\*\*Decision Rule:** if mean is 1 to 1.49 =Strongly Disagree; 1.5 to 2.49 = Disagree; 2.5 to 3.49 =Neutral; 3.5 to 4.49= Agree; 4.5 to 5 = Strongly Agree

Table 4.2.1 shows that generally participants agree that they have awareness of child defilement as reported by the Nigerian newspapers ( $\bar{x} = 4.08$ ). Specifically, respondents generally agreed to all the items but they disagreed that child defilement is widely reported by the Nigerian

newspapers ( $\bar{x} = 2.35$ ) and that strangers are those who defiled children ( $\bar{x} = 2.35$ ).

The analysis above implies that respondents across the six geo-political zones in Nigeria agreed that they were aware of child defilement as reported by the Nigerian newspapers but they disagreed that the level of the reportage is not as wide as expected and that defilers are not mainly strangers but parents and neighbours.

**Research Question Two: How does the Nigerian newspapers' salience of child's defilement impact parents' perception of victims?**

**Table 4.2.2 Perception of victims as influenced by Nigerian newspapers' salience of Child defilement**

Items	SA Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	N Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	SD Freq. (%)	$\bar{x}$	SD
Nigerian newspapers reportage on child defilement impacts my perception of the victims	103 (17.3)	291 (48.8)	181 (30.4)	21 (3.5)	-	4.37	1.00
I believe the victims are innocent	115 (19.3)	253 (42.4)	129 (21.6)	85 (14.2)	14 (2.3)	4.20	1.18
I hold the view that the victims are worthy of sharing	-	33 (5.5)	110 (18.5)	271 (45.5)	182 (30.5)	2.25	0.22

the blame for the abuse								
I see victims as capable of being exposed to shame and stigmatisation if their identifies are exposed	49 (8.2)	276 (46.3)	146 (24.5)	88 (14.8)	37 (6.2)	3.64	1.35	
I sense that the Nigerian government policy for the protection of Nigerian Child is effective	12 (2.0)	34 (5.7)	78 (13.1)	373 (62.6)	99 (16.6)	2.15	0.19	
I perceive Newspapers' reportage of rape myth (prejudice and false belief of shifting blame to the victims) as correct	-	14 (2.3)	86 (14.4)	394 (66.1)	102 (17.1)	2.42	1.01	
I am satisfied with the Nigerian newspapers' reportage about the victims.	17 (2.9)	33 (5.5)	103 (17.2)	259 (43.5)	184 (30.9)	2.21	1.27	
<b>Average Mean</b>						<b>2.32</b>	<b>1.17</b>	

Source: Field Survey 2020

**KEY:** SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree.

**\*\*\*Decision Rule:** if mean is 1 to 1.49 =Strongly Disagree; 1.5 to 2.49 = Disagree; 2.5 to 3.49 =Neutral; 3.5 to 4.49= Agree; 4.5 to 5 = Strongly Agree

Table 4.2.2 depicted that on the overall, respondents across the six geo-political zones in Nigeria disagreed with the scale on the impact of Nigerian newspapers' salience of child's defilement on their perception of victims ( $\bar{x} = 2.32$ ). Specifically, respondents disagreed to all the items but agreed that Nigerian newspapers' reportage on child defilement impacted their perception of the

victims and that they believed that the victims are innocent.

The analysis above holds that respondents believed that Newspapers' reportage of child defilement impacted their perception of the victims but they do not believe that victims should be blamed for the assault while they also believed that revealing victims identities exposed them to shame and stigmatisation. Also, the respondents see the Nigerian government policy for the protection of Nigerian child as ineffective.

**Research Question Three: How does the Nigerian newspapers' salience of child's defilement impact parents' perception of perpetrators?**

**Table 4.2.3 Perception of perpetrators as influenced by Nigerian newspapers' salience of Child defilement**

Items	SA Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	N Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	SD Freq. (%)	$\bar{x}$	SD
Nigerian newspapers' reportage on child defilement impact my perception of the perpetrators	30 (5.0)	249 (41.8)	198 (33.2)	73 (12.2)	46 (7.7)	3.69	1.24
I see the perpetrators as mainly strangers	32 (5.4)	96 (16.1)	141 (23.7)	274 (46.0)	53 (8.9)	2.27	0.23

I believe the perpetrators are guilty	48 (8.1)	249 (41.8)	174 (29.2)	71 (11.9)	54 (9.1)	3.74	1.32
I think the perpetrators are worthy of sharing the blame for the abuse	48 (8.1)	249 (41.8)	174 (41.8)	71 (11.9)	54 (9.1)	3.74	1.32
I hold the view that perpetrators are someone that must be reported to the police for punishment accordingly	186 (31.2)	325 (54.6)	48 (8.1)	37 (6.2)	-	4.45	1.62
I sense that the Nigerian government policy for the punishment of perpetrators is adequate	12 (2.0)	34 (5.7)	78 (13.1)	373 (62.6)	99 (16.6)	2.15	0.19
I am satisfied with the Nigerian newspapers reportage about the perpetrators	15 (2.5)	29 (4.9)	43 (7.2)	287 (48.2)	162 (27.2)	2.22	1.22
<b>Average Mean</b>						<b>3.85</b>	<b>1.28</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

**KEY:** SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree.

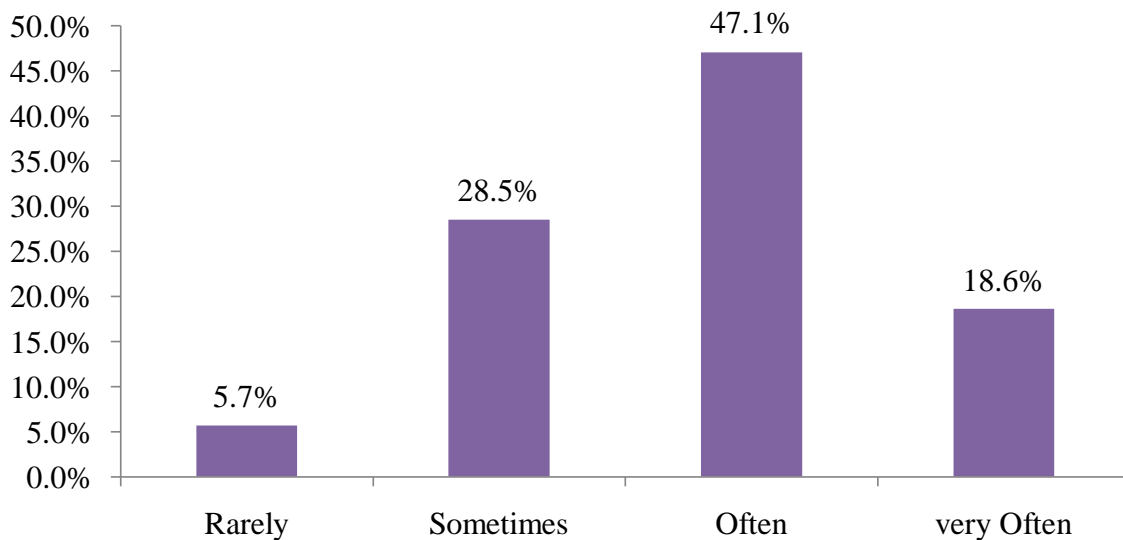
**\*\*\*Decision Rule:** if mean is 1 to 1.49 =Strongly Disagree; 1.5 to 2.49 = Disagree; 2.5 to 3.49 =Neutral; 3.5 to 4.49= Agree; 4.5 to 5 = Strongly Agree

Table 4.2.3 indicated that generally, participants across the six geo-political zones in Nigeria agreed with the scale on the impact of Nigerian newspapers' salience of child's defilement on their perception of perpetrators ( $\bar{x} = 3.85$ ).

Specifically, respondents agreed to the items but disagreed that perpetrators are mainly strangers and that Nigerian government policy for the punishment of perpetrators is not adequate.

From the analysis, respondents agreed that Nigerian newspapers' reportage on child defilement impacted their perception of the perpetrators but they do not see the perpetrators as mainly strangers. While they also believed that perpetrators are guilty for the assault, they as well, see the Nigerian government policy for the punishment of perpetrators as inadequate.

**Figure 4.2.4 Frequency at which respondents read about child defilement stories in the newspaper**

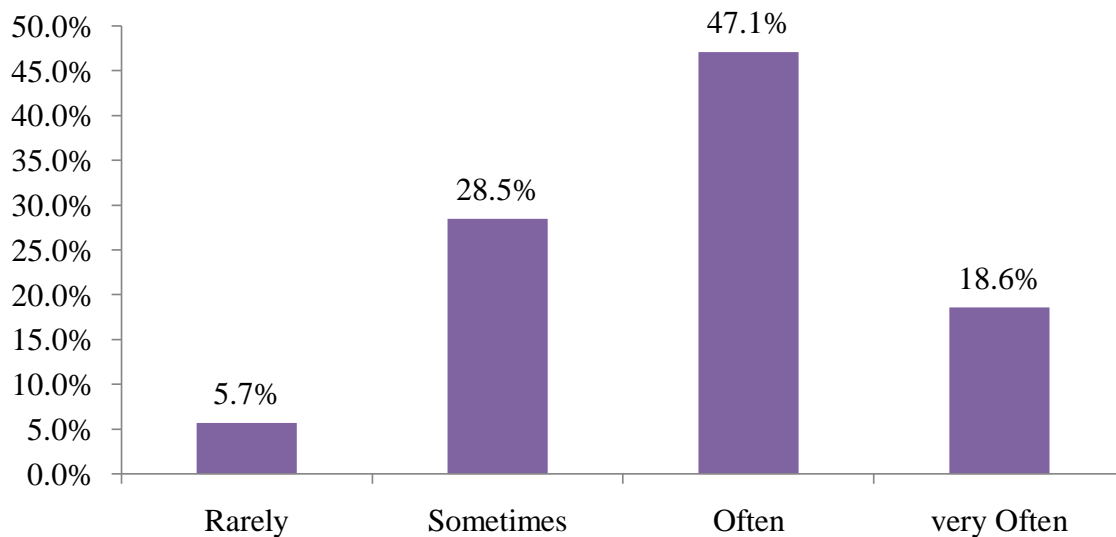


Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Figure 4.2.4 showed that many respondents read child defilement stories on the newspaper often (47.1%), this is followed by those who did sometimes (28.5%), and very often (18.6%); while 5.7 percent rarely read such stories. This suggested

that the readership and monitoring of child defilement stories on the newspapers was high, as such, there is no way the stories will be reported and the respondents will not come across them.

**Figure 4.2.5 Frequency at which respondents listen/hear child defilement stories on Newspapers review on television/radio**



Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Figure 4.2.5 indicated that majority of the respondents listened to newspapers' review on radio/television where child defilement stories are being read, this is followed by those who sometimes listen to the review (28.5%) and just 5.7% rarely listened to the review on radio/television. This points out that stories on child defilement are also being listened to on newspapers' review as featured on radio/television in addition to those read on the newspapers.

The pre-set level of significance for this study is 0.05. The hypotheses presumed that there was no significant influence between the variables under consideration. If the P-value which indicates the significance or the probability value exceeded the pre-set level of significance ( $p > 0.05$ ), the hypothesis stated in the null form was accepted, however, if the P-value was less than or equal to 0.05 ( $p \leq 0.05$ ), the null hypothesis was rejected.

**H<sub>0</sub>1: Newspapers salience of child defilement does not influence parents' perception of the victims**

#### 4.3 Test of Hypotheses

##### Decision Rule

**Table 4.3.1a Model Summary of Test of Influence of Newspapers Salience of Child defilement on parents' perception of the victims**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2579.464	1	2579.464	114.854	0.000
Residual	13340.434	594	22.459		
Total	15919.898	595			

R = 0.403

R Square = 0.162

Adjusted R Square = 0.161

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

**Table 4.3.1a** Indicates the model summary of hypothesis one

**Table 4.3.1b** Showing the Influence of Newspapers Salience of Child defilement on parents' perception of the victims

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	36.545	1.172		31.190	0.000
<b>Child Defilement Stories</b>	1.618	0.151	0.403	10.717	<b>0.000</b>

a. Dependent Variable: **Parents' perception of victims**

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Tables 4.3.1a and 4.3.1b indicate that child defilement stories on newspapers had a positive significant influence on Parents' perception of the victims (B= 1.618, t= 10.717, p<0.05).

Consequently, the null hypothesis which states that Newspapers salience of child defilement does not influence parents' perception of the victims was rejected.

**H<sub>0</sub>2: Newspapers salience of child defilement does not influence parents' perception of the victims**

**Table 4.3.2a** Model Summary of Test of Influence of Newspapers Salience of Child defilement on parents' perception of perpetrators

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	358.282	1	358.282	38.071	0.000
Residual	5590.005	594	9.411		
Total	5948.287	595			

R= 0.245

R Square = 0.060

Adjusted R Square = 0.059

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

**Table 4.3.2a** indicates the model summary of hypothesis two.

**Table 4.3.2b** Showing the Influence of Newspapers salience of child defilement on parents' perception of the perpetrators

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	31.204	0.758		41.142	0.000
<b>Newspapers Salience of Child defilement stories</b>	-0.603	0.098	-0.245	-6.170	<b>0.000</b>

a. Dependent Variable: Parents' perception of the perpetrators

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Tables 4.3.2a and 4.3.2b indicate that newspapers salience of child defilement had a positive significant influence on parents' Perception of the perpetrators (B= -0.603, t= -6.170, p<0.05). Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected.

ascribed as the major perpetrators. Also, newspapers' salience of child defilement impacted parents' perception of the victims and the perpetrators as majority of the respondents always read about defilement stories on the newspapers as well as listen to such stories on newspapers review as featured on radio and television.

**5.1 Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that people across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria are aware of child defilement as reported by the Nigerian newspapers but they believed the level of the reportage is still low. Also, it can be concluded that defilers are not mainly strangers as parents and neighbours are

Based on the findings, it is recommended that Nigerian newspapers should increase the tempo of their coverage and reportage of child defilement stories as respondents still believed that the coverage level is still low compared to the rampancy of the menace. Further, the reportage should be given proper and critical analysis as

anything being published on the newspapers or read out during newspapers' review on radio and television impacted parents' perception of both victims and perpetrators.

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