



Exploring the Visibility of Child Sex Abuse Stories in Two Nigerian Online Newspapers

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Abstract: This paper investigates how visible news reports on child sex abuse are in two of Nigeria's dominant online news outlets. The significance of this work cannot be overemphasized considering the need to get policy makers and other concerned parties sensitized and oriented toward the actions that help curb the negative practice. The problem becomes complicated owing to the forces of commercialism which have narrowed the thought as well as the space that the media ought to devote to the coverage of child related matters. Critical issues concerning children, it is claimed, have failed to make it to the agenda-setting threshold of both the surface and online media platforms. This work analyzes the contents about child sex abuse in *The Punch* and *Vanguard* - over a three-month period in order to determine how evident they are. Findings corroborate media's neglect of child sex abuse reporting. From a focus group discussion, it turns out that it is not only the media that are not interested. Even their readers!

Keywords: Child Abuse, Sex Abuse, Online Newspapers, *Vanguard*, *The Punch*, Focus Group Symbols, Nigeria.

Introduction

There are several cases of sexually abused children each year, often under concealed circumstances. Child sexual abuse has become a global issue and a serious problem;

so pervasive that it calls for quick intervention. In India, for instance, two children, aged six months and two years were reportedly gang raped on October 16, 2015 which

raised global outcry and condemnation. An opinion poll conducted by the NOIPolls of Nigeria, in collaboration with the Stand To End Rape Initiative, (STER) indicated that almost 7 in 10 adult Nigerians, which is 67 per cent, think there is a high prevalence of child rape in the country, while 3 in 10, (31%), personally knew of a victim of child rape in their local communities (Ochayi,2014).

The 2014 study reported by *Vanguard Online* further revealed that 36 per cent of adult Nigerians claim that, most often, the offenders involved in the incident of child rape are close family relatives and neighbors corroborated by Ochayi's (2014) 33 per cent. Generally, when an event is reported, it exposes the issue and helps generate interest if well positioned. Reporting is therefore critical to expose the evils that associated with child sex abuse and it would not matter too much whether it is online or print media system.

Basically, prevention of abuse may involve changing those individual and community attitudes, beliefs and circumstances which aid abuse. Reacting to the need for child's right recognition, Awosola & Omoera (2008, p.125) observe that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) globally recognizes

the need to protect the child against any form of abuse while a Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child which is an offshoot of the United Nations Convention also, takes cognizance of the socio-cultural peculiarities and protection of the African Child against any form of abuse. But a question arises at this point, how much of these have the media helped readers to know about?

In Nigeria, Section 34(1) of the 2011 Amended Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria centers on fundamental human right and states that:

Every individual is entitled to have respect for the dignity of his person and accordingly, (a) no person shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment; (b) no person shall be held in servitude; and (c) no person shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labor. (p. 39)

The foregoing notwithstanding, children are usually being abused in many ways by some people including their close relatives, guardians as well as strangers, which all goes contrary to the constitutional provision and that of United Nations Convention on the rights of the child. The media, as part of their social responsibility function, must step in and expose the attacks on children and take up the challenge against child sex abuse. This study shows how much of this responsibility has

been performed as two dominant online media in Nigeria are investigated.

Statement of the Problem

From the perspective of Gwirayi (2013, p.1), child sexual abuse (CSA) is a social and public health concern locally and globally and has become a hot topic in the media in recent times. Even at that, Jones, Finkelhor & Beckwith (2010) opined that when the names of child sex victims and other identifying information appear in the media it can, 'exacerbate trauma, complicate recovery, discourage future disclosures and inhibit cooperation with authorities for the children involved'.

The National Sexual Violence Resource center (NSVRC, 2012, 2013) define child sexual abuse as a crime and an abuse of trust, power, and authority that may contribute to serious short- and long-term problems for a child. One in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused before they turn 18 years old (Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis, & Smith, 1990) and children who have been sexually abused may also experience verbal, emotional, or physical abuse (Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod, Hamby, & Kracke, 2009) all cited in (NSVRC, 2012, 2013). But what is the extent of the contribution of the media in exposing child sex abuse cases in Nigeria?

Amnesty International (2006) asserts that conditions such as inactive laws, social stereotyping, political, legal, economic issues and weak law enforcement can create an environment where rape is committed with impunity. This may be part of the reason why child rape is believed to be a common occurrence in Nigeria.

Unimpressively, it is difficult to tell the level of attention the media give child sex abuse stories in their online and offline editions. This paper attempts to figure out, *prima facie*, how often Nigeria's dominant online media have reported child sex abuses cases.

Objective and Significance of the Problem

Therefore, the main objective of this study is:

- To determine how much attention was given to issues of child rape by the dominant online news websites. Knowing the magnitude of attention or inattention in this respect would help the media to know whether they are performing or not, thereby shaping their approach to reporting.
- The objectives are broken down into the following sub-objectives: to determine the number of items published by the dominant media on sex abuse cases in Nigeria.; to establish the direction of stories and the space used for each.; to

know how the stories are positioned.; and to determine the source and tone of the stories.

The objectives are further transposed into the following research questions:

- What is the magnitude of the stories published by the dominant online media?
- What is the bearing of the stories on sex abuses by the dominant media?
- What is the position of the stories published by the dominant online media on sex abuses?
- What is the source and tone of the stories published on sex abuses by the online media?

Theoretical Support

This study is anchored on the development media theory, which among other things, stresses that the media should give priorities to the coverage of those areas that touch on the lives of the people. This implies that media contents should be development-driven. McQuail (1987, pp. 109-134) alludes to this in his robust presentation on the matter but he is not the only scholar in this domain.

According to Kunczik (1988), media role as development agents began to gather momentum in the late 1960's. It also found expression in the UNESCO's McBride Commission of 1980 which McQuail corroborated. However, it is important to note that McQuail is the first scholar who put

this normative proposition in the proper perspective. This theory is one of the two he came up with as an answer to the four normative prescriptions (Siebert et al., 1956), which he claimed did not offer any reasonable development solution for less developed countries.

Child Sex Abuse: A Review

According to the State of the World's Children (SOWC) 2012 report, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989, established the first international treaty that states the full range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of children. It defines a child as every person younger than 18, the age of maturity. Article 3 of the Convention also requires that in all actions concerning children, the interests of the child shall be paramount, and that parties ensure that the child enjoys such protection and care as are necessary for his or her well-being (SOWC, 2012 Report, p.16).

NSVRC (2012, 2013) report also adds that a person is said to have sexually abused a child when he or she exposes the child to sexual acts or behaviors. This report points out some forms of abuses in line with those identified by Finkelhor, Hammer, & Sedlak (2008) and Putnam, (2003). These include sex acts that involve penetration, touching the child's breasts or genitals; making a child touch the

perpetrator's breasts or genitals; voyeurism (when a perpetrator looks at a child's naked body); exhibitionism (when a perpetrator shows a child his or her naked body); showing child pornography or using a child in the production of pornography. Others are child sexual exploitation, such as sex trafficking and Internet-based child sexual abuse, such as creating, depicting, and/or distributing sexual images of children online; or stalking, grooming, and/or engaging in sexually explicit behaviors with children online.

Article 19 of the Child Rights Convention want parties concerned to take all necessary legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who takes care of the child. This protection, along with humanitarian assistance, extends to children who are refugees or seeking refugee status (Article 22). Article 32 recognizes children's right to be protected from economic exploitation and hazardous work while Articles 34 and 35 targets sexual exploitation and trafficking respectively.

Nigeria's Leadership Newspaper special report by Ahman et al (2013)

show that 29 per cent of child sexual abuse offenders are relatives, 60 percent are acquaintances, and only 11 percent are strangers. Children are most at risk from the adults in their own family, and from the adults who are in their parents' social circle. In fact, 90 percent of abusers target children in their own families and children who they know well. Furthermore, research suggests that the risk is across the board as child molesters come from every part of the country. According to Amnesty International (2006, p. 24) Section 357 of the Criminal Code Act (Nigerian Laws Cap 38), applicable in the south of Nigeria defines rape as:

Any person who has unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or girl, without her consent, or with her consent, if consent is obtained by force or by means of threat or intimidation of any kind, or by fear of harm, or by any means of false and fraudulent representation as to the nature of the act, or in the case of a married woman, by personating her husband is guilty of an offence called rape.

Explaining further, Imoukhuede (2007) in Onyejekwe (2008, p. 52), asserts that under Chapter 30, section 358 of Nigeria's Criminal Code, the penalty for rape is life sentence. One condition for identifying rape case under this Code is if the perpetrator has had a carnal knowledge of the victim. In a situation where the

parties are legally married, rape could still occur especially if one party declined interest in spite of their being married. According to Woman Rights Watch (2007) cited in Onyejekwe, (2008) consent can still be driven by force, threat or intimidation fear of harm or through some other dubious means. Rape in this case is usually hard to substantiate under Nigeria's western legal system.

Concerning the provisions of Islamic law, (Sharia) in the Northern states on rape, Onyejekwe (2008, p. 52), citing Amnesty International (2006) affirms that in the 12 states where Sharia Penal Code exists, rape is also a criminal offence, though with some differences. Section 282(1) of the Penal Code defines rape as when a man has sexual intercourse with a girl who is under the age of 14 years against her will, by force; with or without her consent (if the man is not her husband) and when ordinary penetration is sufficient to constitute the sexual intercourse necessary to the offence of rape.

The Nigerian Constitution (2011) as amended does not particularly forbid rape, and there is no federal or state legislation criminalizing rape. Hence, it is difficult getting reliable statistics on rape. Nigeria Police Force has the history of refusal of requests for statistics on matters related to rape. Amnesty International (2006, p. 23) notes that the 1999 Nigerian

constitution does not even prohibit rape but condemns inhuman acts and torture. In Section 34(1) as earlier mentioned it was stated that: "Every individual is entitled to respect for the dignity of his person, and accordingly, (a) no person shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment".

Combating the menace has therefore, become a necessity with the increasing spate of rape cases in the Nigerian society and the concomitant consequences. The absence of no clear understanding as to what constitutes rape further makes it difficult to prosecute cases of child sex abuse. An onus therefore exists for the media to assist in the crusade against child rape.

Child Sex Abuse: Media Reportage and Impact

With advances in new media technology and the growth in Web 2.0 media usage, the traditional media are now seeking newer ways of meeting the demands of its audience. Today's media industry witnesses a radical change due to the overwhelming influence of new media platforms and technologies. This was precipitated in the dusk of the twentieth century and the dawn of the twenty-first, leading to the advent of new forms of journalism whose distinguishing qualities include ubiquitous news, user generated contents, global information access, instantaneous

reporting, interactivity, multimedia content, convergence and extreme content customization. This revolution seems unending and fosters globalization thereby, bringing everybody closer. Describing new media potentials, Chaffee & Metzger (2001, p .369) asserts that:

More than any other technologies for mass communication, contemporary media allow for a greater quantity of information transmission and retrieval, place more control over both content creation and selection in the hands of their users, and do so with less cost to the average consumer.

One of the advantages of the new media over the old is that of interactivity. People are now freer to communicate on social networks and even post their stories without passing through a gate keeper. This has propelled online media to involve citizens in the process of news gathering. The impact is that more news stories are reported and fresher angles are given to news reporting. Talabi (2011, p.18) observes that:

Journalism today finds itself at a rare moment in history where, for the first time, its hegemony as gatekeeper of the news is threatened by not just new technology and competitors but potentially, by the audience it serves. Armed with easy-to-use

web publishing tools, always-on connections and increasingly powerful mobile devices, the online audience has the means to become an active participant in the creation and dissemination of news and information; and it's doing just that on the internet.

Similarly Chaffee and Metzger (2001) opine that, opportunities for self-expression that were once denied by the old media are now celebrated by the new media. In the context of child rape, more victims are coming out to speak especially on social networks and this generates a lot of comments and feedback from readers. This trend epitomizes the pivotal role of the media in setting agendas in a networked society and making us to think about a particular issue of their choice. The challenge still remains that most stories that are posted by citizen journalists are often reliable and notoriously lacking in the requisite ethical standards. Established media still remain the source of credible news. But the question exists: how are the media reporting child sex abuses in Nigeria?

Reports on child rape assaults do exist in the Nigerian media. For instance, a special report by Ahman et al (2013, May 5) on the *Leadership* newspaper online titled: *Child Rape: Who speaks for the Victims?* exposed how a 26-year-old man Felix Ani raped a 4-year-old girl in Lagos. Investigation showed

that he had been sexually abusing the child since she was 3 years old. According to Ahman et al (2013, para. 7) Felix confessed that he was using his hand initially to finger the girl before having carnal knowledge of her recently. Similarly, at an Ikeja Magistrate Court, a 45-year-old commercial motorcyclist, Alabi Bakare was sentenced to five years imprisonment for raping three minors aged three to five (Ahman et al, 2013).

Ahman et al (2013, para. 4) further pointed out a peculiar instance where three men allegedly violated a 7-year old girl named Chideira Jaja. The men Kassim Mohammed, Oluwatobi Daramola and James Aniekan who were aged 43, 21 and 19 respectively abused her between July 2012 and January 2013. Even at that, both the old and young are involved in sexually abusing children as demonstrated in the cases of a 60-year-old man who was arrested for raping a 6-year-old girl and that of 35-year old; 29 year old Victor Nwali who was arrested and charged for abduction and indecent assault on a 3 year old girl in Kaduna and Ben Ariwelo, who was apprehended while raping an 8-year old mentally retarded girl in a public toilet (Ahman et al, 2013).

Some the children have been abused by family members or even parents. Elizabeth Egbe in (Ahman et al 2013) indicated that a middle aged

man, Ayibakuro Joel Lambart, was arrested in January, 2012 and handed over to the police for allegedly raping his 7-year-old daughter. The *Leadership* report further revealed that children are also abused in schools.

According to the report 26 year old, Abubakar Ayuba a motor mechanic from Zaria was arrested by the Kaduna State the police command in 2012 for supposedly raping a 4 year old pupil, though he later pleaded guilty and asked for forgiveness, tagging it the devil's work. The girl was quoted as saying: "He gave me *awara* [soya bean patties] and took me into a room and started to put something into my private part" (para, 17).

In a special report by *Sahara Reporters* titled: *Is Nigeria Fast Becoming the Rape Capital of Africa?* on 13th April, 2013 the writer laments about the spate of child sex abuse:

Nigeria's domestic rape victims are getting younger and this often now borders on pedophilia! How on earth does one stomach the news of the raped babies and children yet undeveloped? Rape victims are also sometimes young girls – usually children of other people - brought to the city from the village as house helps or maids. Why are we so unprepared to make an issue of these atrocities and cry out loud?

Hannatu Musawa in a report on *Premium Times* titled: *The*

Tragedy of Rape. January 31, 2014 reveals that:

There has, however, been various subtle media reports on rape cases with headlines such as, “4 men gang-rape 15-year-old to a coma, 14-year-old boy rapes girl to death, 20-year-old boy brutally rapes a nine-year-old girl, a 27-year-old man rapes mother, 15-year-old boy rapes three kids; including 10-month-old baby”. Then there is the infamous rape and murder of Cynthia Osokogwu by “friends” she met on Facebook that happened in 2012. The list is sadly endless (para7).

In spite of these reports, the probing question remains. Are the reports in the media visible enough to generate the attention needed to make government and concerned parties take action? This study presents the findings from the analyzed online contents on child sex abuse of two dominant media in Nigeria - *Vanguard* and *The Punch*.

Method and Research Design

Contents of *The Punch* and *Vanguard* online newspapers were evaluated within a specified period of three months. The study investigated all reported rape cases— with or without evidence of doctor’s reports. While credence lent by a doctor can make a report more authoritative, a reporter does not have to wait for the attestation of a physician before he or she does the job.

The two media were selected from a random sampling of six dominant Nigerian print media – *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, *This Day*, *Leadership*, *Vanguard*, *Daily Mirror* and *The Nation*. The “dominant” profile was determined from a simple conclusion of top media experts and journalists who the researchers have interacted with over a period of more than 10 years.

The researcher wanted to know if the stories published were informative, educative, entertaining or advocacy. The position of stories refers to whether the story was published on the index page or tucked inside the pages of the website. Source would show if the stories originated from press releases, agency reports, and editorial comments or were sourced by reporters. The tone would tell us whether the story is positive or negative or neutral. Positive stories could be convictions recorded against rapists, functional police strategies against sexual abuses and so forth while negative deals with the ordeals of victims mainly.

With regard to the ethical standards, the two newspapers claim they are fair, responsible and objective in their reporting especially if objectivity is defined as the media’s environment where readers have the right to be heard, seen and react to the published stories without fear (Omojola, 2008, p. 175). The two newspapers’ profile in terms of

litigations is high as they are not too visible defendants in libel or defamation suits. Their claim to be objective and fair can be taken with some element of seriousness.

Selecting and Coding the Sample

Online newspapers were investigated because of the availability of archives which made access to these contents easy. Using keywords, *Vanguard* and *The Punch* new sites were searched for stories on child sexual abuse from July 9th 2015 through October 9th 2015. These three months were chosen because, prima facie, the two media featured more stories compared to the remaining months of the year. A coding protocol to document patterns and themes in the coverage was created. A satisfactory inter-rater reliability (Krippendorff's $\alpha > 0.7$) was achieved. The sampling

carried out did not extend to the comments or letters to the editors which are proof of the interactivity of the online media systems unlike other digital media outlets like cable television in homes, digital screens in visible locations (Morah and Omojola, 2013, p.392) and the like.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the thematic content analysis technique (Marvasti, 2004). It facilitated the process of identifying themes that emerged from investigation. Thematic content analysis also enabled the researcher to identify the reoccurring reports on the rate of child rape and how children can be protected against sexual abuse. Themes that emerged are as shown in the following tables with percentages showing their distribution and visibility.

Findings

Table 1: What is the magnitude of stories published by the dominant media on sexual abuse?

Month (2015)	Online editions		
	<i>Vanguard</i>	<i>The Punch</i>	Total
July 9 – Aug. 8	34	26	60
Aug. 9 – Sept. 8	30	24	54
Sept. 9 – Oct. 9	24	29	53
Total	88	79	167

Table 1 shows that there is much difference between the numbers of stories published each month by each online edition. However, altogether *Vanguard* published more stories on sex abuses than *The Punch* did.

Table 2: What is the bearing of the stories published

<i>Direction of Story</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>Total</i>
Informative	54	62	116
Educative	16	11	27
Entertaining	1	0	1
Advocacy	17	6	23
Total	88	79	167

Table 2 presents the direction of the stories published by *Vanguard* and *The Punch*. *Vanguard* published 54 stories mainly to inform its audience. This is eight stories less than that of *The Punch* which published 62, making a total of 116 stories. Both editions published 27 stories that were educative in nature while only 23 stories were published as advocacy against sexual abuse. Only one story published by *Vanguard* was entertaining and nothing in this regard by *The Punch*. This finding has proved there is nothing entertaining about child rape!

Table 3: What is the position of story published by the two online editions?

<i>Position of Story</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>Total</i>
Index page	85	78	163
Inside page	3	1	4
Total	88	79	167

According to Table 3, most stories appeared as headlines on the index page of the website while a negligible four stories appeared in the interior. This is understandable on the heels of the fact that most stories are promoted on the index page while the story itself is linked to another inside page.

Table 4a: What is the source of story published in the online editions of the dominant media?

Source of Story	Vanguard	The Punch	Total
Reporter's coverage	81	70	151
Press Release	1	2	3
Agency Reports	0	3	3
Opinion	4	2	6
Editorial	2	2	4
Total	88	79	167

Reporters from *Vanguard* and *The Punch* wrote most of the stories from their beats or coverage at 81 and 70 respectively. Only one and two stories were written in *Vanguard* and *The Punch* from press releases while *Punch*'s stories contained only three stories, sourced from agency reports. Each medium produced only two editorials while *Vanguard*'s four opinion stories are twice as many as that of *The Punch*.

Table 5: What is the tone of story published in the online editions of the dominant media?

Tone of Story	Vanguard	Punch	Total
Positive	11	14	25
Negative	71	61	132
Neutral	6	4	10
Total	88	79	167

Some 25 stories, in form of court judgments against rapists, formulation policies, police strategies and so forth were published as positive as shown on Table 5. *The Punch* has 24, while

Vanguard has 11. A total of 132 negative stories, divided into 71 and 61 respectively between *Vanguard* and *Punch* were published. Stories categorized as neutral were six and four for *Vanguard*.

Report on sex abuse has a level of visibility going by the figures published by *Vanguard*, which had a total of 88 and *The Punch* which 79 for a period of three months. This implies that each of the media was publishing almost one story per day. This is an indication that issues about child rape enjoyed some level of attention. The appearance of one story per day corroborates the big concern that sexual abuse has become in the Nigerian society.

While it is a fact that at one story per day per medium, sexual abuse 75 could be said to enjoy some visibility; that visibility itself, becomes an issue if operationalized. For instance, most of the stories published are mainly in the domain of information while figures on advocacy and education are unimpressive. What this implies is that the two online editions did not do much in educating their readers on what sexual abuses and crimes entail as they only reported cases. Their poor showing in educating their readers probably reverberated in the advocacy aspect. This line of argument is corroborated by the very few editorial comments seen. By actively engaging in advocacy, the two media could have demonstrated that it is an issue they were seriously worried about.

Though most stories appeared on the index pages of the two online editions, this does not mean that the

media did justice to the issue at stake. Most of the stories published appeared as headlines and short introductions in some cases. These headlines and introductions have the links from where visitors could navigate to the pages that contained the stories in full. But, it is a fact that the existence of such links does not translate to actual navigation to the interior pages where the stories could be read in full.

The less positive stories compared to negative stories presents a clarion call to the authorities. As already explained in the definition of terms, positive stories have to do mainly with convictions recorded against rapists and *sexual abusers*. Government and their law enforcement operatives should do more to ensure that rape cases are properly investigated and guilty persons are fished out to face justice. More convictions will serve as a deterrent to prospective rapists and other related offenders.








































Focus Group Discussion

The foregoing percentage figures were triangulated with a discussion by a focus group comprising five journalists (*J1, J2, J3, J4, J5*) from other media houses apart from the two investigated. The group comprised three men and two women. One woman and a man were senior editors in their respective media houses while the rest were mid career reporters. A total

cumulative 30 minutes were spent on the five tables. Owing to the little time available for the discussants, they were asked to encapsulate their opinions in not more than three points each on each table. The

discussion was recorded. Using the Omojola’s Symbolic System (Omojola, 2016) of using symbols and shapes to analyze transcripts, the following illustration has emerged.

Figure 1: Symbolic representation of transcripts of the focus group discussion of Tables 1,2,3,4 and 5.

THE FIVE TABLES		J1	J2	J3	J4	J5
	1					
	2	  	  	  	  	  
	3				 	
	4		 	 		 
5						

A total of 44 opinions were expressed on the five tables. For Table 1, all discussants agreed that *Vanguard* published more stories and that shows, *prima facie*, that the newspaper paid more attention to child sex abuse than *The Punch*. This is represented by the explosion symbols. J4 added that he discovered

that a typical online page of *Vanguard* contained more stories than that of *The Punch*, which could explain why *Vanguard* published more in this case. This opinion is represented by the chevron symbol. All discussants agreed on Table 2 that there was nothing entertaining about child sex abuse, sequel to the

extremely low number of entertaining stories published. This opinion is depicted by rectangle. They also agreed that informing a reader was the primary responsibility of the media; hence the 54 and 62 stories recorded for *Vanguard* and *The Punch* respectively, an opinion represented by hexagon. On education, J1 said *Vanguard* published more educative stories (16) in line with its focus on the youth (arrow south) but the other four discussants objected, saying that a comparison of the two sites would not show the preponderance of youth-focused stories on either website (arrow west). On advocacy, all discussants, except J3 and J4 agreed that *Vanguard* had, over the years, earned the reputation of citizens' human rights backer (smiley face). J3 and J4 suggested media commercialism might be the factor responsible for *The Punch's* poor showing in the area of advocacy (triangle).

On Table 3 about the position of story, all discussants agreed that *Vanguard's* preponderant figures aligned with the general sequence of all the stories published child sex abuse, which made the newspaper a bigger publisher. But J4 insisted it was more in the context of *Vanguard's* overall performer as a publisher of more stories (chevron)

in all areas of reporting, child sex abuse inclusive.

J1's opinion that reporters of both newspapers were hardworking (judging from the coverage of their beats as opposed to getting stories from other sources) was echoed by the other four discussants (cloud callout). J2 and J5 advised that that expert opinions and analysis should be intensified (heart). J3 stressed that *Vanguard* failed to justify its position as the publisher of more stories by not subscribing to news agency reports on child sex abuse (arc) adding that *The Punch* performed better in that regard.

All discussants, except J2, were not happy that only 25 stories could be published as positive (parallelogram). J2 objected, saying the newspapers could not be held responsible for this as they were not in control of judiciary or government which jail offenders or formulate policies, adding that if readers were interested in such stories reporters would publish more! (curved arrow).

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is important to state the fact that the less advocacy dimension of the reported stories does not owe much to reporters' inadequacies or acts of irresponsibility. Reporters rely heavily on stories gathered from the newsmakers' end, which implies that the latter's disposition determines considerably the former's

performance. This, however, should not mean that the reporter is inactive in stemming the alarming rate of rape cases. This is why the following recommendations are made:

- Reporters should intensify their reporting in the area of education. They should educate the public on the need for advocacy enhancement as a strategy to control the increasing cases of child abuse. Stepping up in this critical aspect is expected to assist

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- in raising the needed army of advocates.
- Reporters themselves can engage in advocacy. Should it be that an attempt to raise interest in advocacy is not generating the desired results, it may not be too much for journalists to take up this onerous task. If their actions in this direction lead to the desired results, the media would have succeeded in this critical area of social responsibility performance.
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