

# Whose Story Gets Told? Unpacking Factors Behind Newspaper Coverage of Teen Pregnancy by *Punch* and *Vanguard* Newspapers, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This study investigates how two prominent Nigerian newspapers, *Punch* and *Vanguard*, report on teenage pregnancy. It seeks to understand the narratives and frames in their coverage and to identify the underlying social, cultural, and institutional factors that influence editorial decisions. Specifically, the study aims to identify the factors that determine the coverage of teenage pregnancy by newspapers, the prominence given to teenage pregnancy reportage by gatekeepers, the rationale behind the choice and focus of reporting teenage pregnancy issues in Nigeria, and the challenges encountered in covering teenage pregnancy-related issues. Based on the framing theory, the study employs a qualitative research design, utilising in-depth interviews to gather its key data. Interviews were conducted with one key informant from each of the chosen newspapers, namely the editors of *Punch* and *Vanguard*. The findings reveal that health, socioeconomic consequences, and social responsibility are critical factors shaping the coverage of teenage pregnancy in *Punch* and *Vanguard* newspapers. The editors of both outlets underscored the multifaceted nature of teenage pregnancy, identifying it not only as a health crisis but also as a sociocultural and economic concern with serious implications for the girl child. Both newspapers affirmed that editorial direction and corporate social responsibility strongly influence their decision to prioritise teenage pregnancy issues. The study concludes that editorial dynamics and sociocultural forces influence narratives around the reportage of teenage pregnancy in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Media coverage, News framing, News reportage, Teen pregnancy, Youth reproductive health

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Teen pregnancy, defined as conception among girls aged 13 to 19, has become a pressing global concern, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. It disrupts educational pursuits, hinders personal development, and poses serious social, economic, and health challenges for affected adolescents. According to Fleming et al. (2015), teenage pregnancy represents a critical issue worldwide, with countries reporting a high level of adolescent pregnancies annually. The implications are far-reaching, affecting not only the teenage mother but also her child and the wider society (Jan & Bhat, 2025). Teen pregnancy remains a pressing public health and socioeconomic issue in Nigeria, contributing to higher maternal morbidity, school dropout rates, and entrenched gender inequalities (Adesina et al., 2020; Okoli et al., 2022). While numerous studies have focused on prevalence, causes, and consequences, relatively little attention has been paid to how the media, particularly influential national newspapers like *Punch* and *Vanguard*, represent the phenomenon, nor to the forces that shape such representations.

Within the broader literature on media framing, scholars argue that the media do not passively reflect social issues; they

actively construct them by selecting themes, voices, and frames that influence public perception and policy response (Adebayo et al., 2025; Salawu, 2006). A related body of work on gender in Nigerian newspapers suggests that entrenched cultural hegemony often leads to stereotypical portrayals that reinforce dominant power structures (Adeyeye et al., 2023; Amoniyani & Obasi, 2025). Media, as the fourth estate of the realm, plays a central role in shaping public discourse on social issues. Through agenda-setting and framework, the media can influence social perceptions, promote awareness, and mobilise stakeholders to act. Coverage on television, radio, newspapers, and digital platforms has the potential to highlight the alarming increase in teenage pregnancies and push policymakers, institutions, and communities toward intervention. However, the media have been criticised for often presenting these issues in narrow, stereotypical, or sensationalised ways (Ojhi et al., 2023; Sserwanja et al., 2022).

The media have proven to be effective in public health campaigns, including efforts to promote contraceptive use and sexual health education (Rogers et al., 2021). These initiatives aim to raise awareness, dispel misconceptions, and promote behaviour change. However, critics argue that media impacts

are often short-lived and inconsistent (Shehata et al., 2021). Furthermore, the way issues are framed significantly influences how audiences understand and react to them (Scheufele, 1999). Newspapers serve as powerful tools for public participation. Their editorial choices reflect and shape societal values, influencing perceptions and policy priorities (Adeyeye & Salawu, 2025; Okechukwu, 2023). Despite widespread interventions by governments, NGOs, religious institutions and educational institutions, the incidence of teenage pregnancy in Nigeria continues to rise (Alukagberie et al., 2023; Ekefre et al., 2014; Odiboh et al., 2023).

Adolescence is a formative period marked by physiological development, identity formation, and increased social consciousness (Uzun, 2022). It is a time when young people are expected to internalise social norms and values and make critical life decisions. However, a lack of proper guidance during this phase often leads to risky behaviours, including unprotected sex and early pregnancies. Teenage pregnancy is often associated with poor reproductive knowledge, limited access to contraceptives, and societal taboos surrounding sexual education (Arai, 2003; Tohit & Haque, 2024).

Given this background, this study critically examines how two prominent Nigerian newspapers, *Punch* and *Vanguard*, report on teenage pregnancy. It seeks to understand the narratives and frames used in their coverage and to identify the underlying social, cultural, and institutional factors that influence editorial decisions. Understanding whose voices are represented or omitted in media portrayals of teenage pregnancy is essential to inform policy, shape public perception, and support effective intervention. Despite the growing prevalence and socioeconomic implications of teenage pregnancy in Nigeria, media coverage of the issue remains inconsistent, under-researched, and often shaped by stereotypes and moralistic tones. Although the media has significant power in shaping public discourse through formulation and agenda setting, there is limited understanding of how major Nigerian newspapers such as *Punch* and *Vanguard* choose to represent teenage pregnancy and the factors that influence these editorial choices. This lack of critical examination raises concerns about whose perspectives are being amplified, which narratives are prioritised, and whether such coverage genuinely reflects the lived realities of teenage girls or merely reinforces societal biases.

To explore these issues, this study employs qualitative interviews with Editors of the two leading newspapers to uncover the decision-making processes behind the characterisation of teenage pregnancy in these newspapers, revealing the deeper influences that determine how the issue is covered in the Nigerian press. Ultimately, this study contributes to scholarship on media structure, gender representation, and public discourse in Nigeria. It underscores how the question 'whose story gets told' is intimately related to power: Which voices are heard, which are marginalised, and how these editorial decisions shape both perception and policy on teenage pregnancy in Nigeria. Specifically, the study is guided by the following research objectives: to identify the

factors that determine the coverage of teenage pregnancy by the newspapers; the prominence given to teenage pregnancy reportage by gatekeepers; the rationale that determines the choice and focus for reporting teenage pregnancy issues in Nigeria; and the challenges encountered in covering teenage pregnancy-related issues.

### *Brief on Punch Newspaper*

*Punch* is one of Nigeria's leading and most widely read daily newspapers. Established in 1971, the newspaper began publishing in 1973 under the *Punch Nigeria Limited* banner (Jimoh, 2016). Over the decades, it has evolved into a trusted and influential voice in Nigerian journalism, renowned for its comprehensive national coverage and in-depth reporting. Headquartered in Lagos, *Punch* is an independent, privately owned media outlet with a reputation for investigative journalism, editorial independence, and socio-political commentary. It publishes in both print and online formats, covering a wide range of topics, including politics, education, health, business, entertainment, and human interest stories (Owens-Ibie & Aondover, 2025).

*Punch* targets a diverse readership that includes policymakers, professionals, academics, and the public. Its editorial policy is rooted in principles of accountability, transparency, and public interest journalism, which has made it a prominent platform for agenda setting and public discourse in Nigeria. The newspaper has received multiple awards for excellence in journalism and has played a critical role in shaping national conversations on issues such as governance, corruption, youth development, and social justice, including reproductive health and teenage pregnancy (Talabi et al., 2023).

### *Brief on Vanguard Newspapers*

*Vanguard* is one of Nigeria's major daily newspapers, known for its broad national reach and extensive coverage of news, politics, economy, entertainment, and social issues. It was established in 1984. Headquartered in Lagos, *Vanguard Media Limited* publishes both print and digital editions and has become a key player in Nigeria's media landscape. Unlike more ideologically driven outlets, *Vanguard* adopts a centrist editorial stance, often aiming to present a balanced view on contentious issues. Its readership spans across socioeconomic and political divides, including students, professionals, policymakers, and civil society actors (Anyadubalu et al., 2023).

*Vanguard* is recognised for its live online updates in real time, making it one of the first Nigerian newspapers to fully embrace digital journalism. The newspaper also provides platforms for public opinion through its commentary and opinion pages, frequently featuring diverse voices and expert contributors. In terms of content, *Vanguard* is noted for its attention to human interest stories, including gender issues, youth issues, and social development themes such as teenage pregnancy, education, and reproductive health (Akpojivi &

Aiseng, 2022). This positioning gives it a unique voice in shaping public perceptions and framing social issues within the Nigerian context.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies have demonstrated how news coverage and the media have an influence on policy decisions and healthcare coverage. In a related study, Asemah (2015) assessed the influence and prominence of the coverage of the mass media of two selected newspapers (*Vanguard Newspaper and Daily Sun*). The study findings show that the coverage of selected health issues in the media significantly influences the health habits of Nigerians. Further findings reveal that both broadcast and print media in Nigeria are actively involved in the coverage of selected health topics. This study emphasises the important role that the media play in covering health issues. Ayuba and Gani (2012) analysed newspaper reports using content analysis. The results show that teenage pregnancy in the Niger Delta tends to occur among women with a lower level of education attainment, especially those without employment, single and are more susceptible to poor pregnancy outcomes due to insufficient antenatal care, as well as the implications of a higher dependence on official information to serve health reportage in the mainstream media, which results in the absence of historical perspective in narratives to help better understand issues.

Furthermore, Adeyemo and Williams (2010) investigated the inappropriate sexual conduct among secondary school students in Ogun State, Nigeria. The findings indicated that the hazardous sexual habits of the selected adolescents were significantly influenced by independent factors when taken together and with each other. The result has consequences such as hiring experienced and skilled guidance counsellors in secondary schools across the nation, in addition to encouraging and fostering home-school collaborations to improve the holistic growth and emotional well-being of the learners. In a related study, Achema et al. (2015) assessed the learners' opinions on the determinants of teenage pregnancies and how they influence the physical well-being and education of young people. The results show that most of the students (46.7%) acknowledged that poor parenting was responsible for teenage pregnancies. Furthermore, it was determined that the lack of sexual education (13.3%) and the deficiency of control over oneself (36.7%) are the main causes of teenage pregnancies. Most of the students (60%) recognised that the polygamous family structure contributed to teen pregnancy. In terms of their impact on health and education, most of the respondents (60%) claimed that teenage pregnancies could lead to dropping out of school, while a few participants (20%) acknowledged that they could lead to abortions, and 16.7% thought they might experience STIs. Most of the respondents (60.7%) agreed that it could cause hunger, anaemia, and bleeding during the pregnancy period and the delivery process. The study concluded that poor parenting, poor discipline, and inadequate sex education are the main contributors to adolescents' pregnancies. Abortion, dropping out of

school, and sexually transmitted diseases are only a few of the negative medical and academic effects.

Egbe et al. (2020) examined teenage girls in Yakurr Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria, who had experienced domestic abuse. The findings showed that young girls have a high prevalence of sexual misconduct, involving premarital intercourse, illicit sexual activity, rape, and homosexuality. This leads to a significant proportion of teenage pregnancies, a widespread rate of dropping out of institutions of learning, and agitation. Given the results obtained, it was recommended that social workers support indicators such as counselling, awareness creation, sensitisation, behavioural change processes, and constant campaigns should be organised so that they become aware of the risks of illicit sexual behaviour and prevent the negative consequences associated with it. In addition, sex education must be aggressively implemented to change the behaviour of teenage girls.

Eke et al. (2023) examined how health issues in Nigeria's Niger Delta were covered in national newspapers. The study's conclusions showed that The Sun newspaper carried the most stories about Niger Delta health issues; that the three newspapers under investigation tended to portray these issues in a positive light; and that the main health issues covered by the three newspapers were those related to soot. In their report, the three newspapers presented the health problems in the Niger Delta in a favourable light, according to the study findings. Agbese (2021) discovered evidence to back up the claims made by framing theory that journalists offer information to readers using frames. Newspapers in Nigeria used an episodic frame, which concentrated on a specific pair and failed to relate the episodes to the larger population and the social norms that condone and permit violence against women in close relationships in Nigeria. As a result, IPVAW is not framed as a social or public concern by the media in either Western or non-Western nations. This is problematic, particularly in non-Western societies where the media is used to inform the government, expose social problems, and provide answers.

Maseka (2022) found that the problem of teenage pregnancies has been shown to harm the learning process and school environments for the majority of economically disadvantaged countries around the world. Teenage pregnancies have prematurely curtailed the school careers of girls with potential for achievement. Teen pregnancies have increased significantly as a result of policymakers in certain low-income nations not implementing the proper controls to address the problem. Buatsi (2021) found a significant shift away from traditional sources of sex education and information towards media outlets as a primary socialisation and information channel. Two media outlets were observed to convey a lot of sexual content: TV and social media platforms. Teenagers are motivated to participate in sexual behaviour that often results in early pregnancy by having access to such visuals regularly. Despite the growing body of literature on teenage pregnancy and media influence in Nigeria, there is a key research gap in the specific examination of how national newspapers such as *Punch* and *Vanguard* cover and frame teenage pregnancy as a public health and social issue. While studies such as Asemah (2015) and others have addressed the general impact of the

media on health-related topics, and content analyzes have explored health reporting in the Niger Delta and issues such as intimate partner violence, no study has focused on thematic framing, frequency, prominence, and narrative strategies used by Nigerian print media to specifically report teenage pregnancy. Additionally, while Ayuba and Gani (2012) and Achema et al. (2015) discuss the causes and implications of teenage pregnancy from social and educational perspectives, they do not investigate how the media's portrayal may shape public perception or policy response. This study fills that gap by systematically unpacking the factors behind how *Punch* and *Vanguard* newspapers report teenage pregnancy, employing qualitative interviews with journalists to uncover the decision-making processes behind the characterisation of teenage pregnancy in these newspapers, revealing the deeper influences that determine how the issue is covered in the Nigerian press

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### *Framing Theory*

One of the most cited definitions of media framing is from Entman (1993):

*'Framing essentially involves selection and significance. The frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more prominent in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.'*

Although the idea of framing is connected to the tradition of setting the agenda, it broadens the scope of the study by concentrating on the core of the problems rather than a specific topic. The media draws attention to certain occurrences and then situates them within a sphere of meaning, according to the foundation of framing theory (Shah et al., 2009). Abstractions called frames are used to shape or organise the meaning of messages. The most prevalent application of frames is in the context of how the media or news present the information they present. They may be viewed as a type of second-level agenda setting, since they not only tell the audience what to think about (as per agenda-setting theory) but also how to think about that issue (as per framing theory and second-level agenda setting). They are believed to affect the audience of the news.

Druckman (2001) states that it is frequently impossible to explain an event in multiple but equal approaches, particularly when dealing with political concerns. Instead, attention-framing effects describe circumstances in which people are persuaded to concentrate on a certain subset of "conceivably significant factors" during the process of making choices. As a result, the term "framing" for matters of politics typically refers to "characterisations" of a course of conduct wherein a primary notion gives the incident significance (Sniderman & Theriault, 2004). Emphasis framing does not "violate preference invariance" (Druckman, 2001) like equivalency framing effects do. Individual tastes do not alter because of just one piece of evidence variation in the context of emphasis

framing. Here, a change in perspective may occur when a completely distinct consideration is presented.

As an additional aspect of agenda-setting research, framing has been included in some studies that fall within the category of agenda-setting analyses (Maher, 2001; Tsur et al., 2015). Yet, experts, including Scheufele (2000), have contested this and clarified how the two approaches vary. Agenda setting arises due to the frequency with which a topic is covered in the media. It has nothing to do with framing and is unrelated to how the media address a subject matter (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). In contrast, problem-focused messages from other sources might result in radical thoughts in the minds of the audience. This, in turn, may impact how people approach the issues or develop attitudes. Priming, a different suggested media effect which is strongly connected to the idea of framing, is thought to happen by changing the level of prominence or availability of information that is used to construct judgments or assessments. Because agenda-setting theory assumes that the public is passive and consistently accepts the media's priorities, critics contend that it undervalues the audience's capacity to withstand media influence. Furthermore, it ignores the intricate and mutually reinforcing relationship that exists between the media, public opinion, and policy actors, particularly in the fragmented digital media landscape of today (DeCillia, 2017; Grossman, 2022).

The theory serves as a relevant framework because it provides a basis for comprehending the intuition behind how media organisations select, shape, and present information to garner public opinion and influence policy discussions. Framing theory holds that how an issue is presented in the media through emphasis and exclusion can implicitly affect how the media audience reads meaning into those messages and how they respond to them. The theory thus helps to underscore how *Punch* and *Vanguard* newspapers frame teenage pregnancy in their reportage, thus revealing how these media organisations shape the public narrative around this menace and provide society with valid information and mobilise government responses to address the challenge.

### 4. METHODOLOGY

For this study, a qualitative research approach was adopted. The study used in-depth interviews to gather its key data. According to Sobowale (2008), in-depth interviews allow the researcher to go further into the interviewee's innermost thoughts, which supports the interview's efficacy. As a result, unlike on a questionnaire, which restricts responses to specific places and available options, the interviewee is free to express themselves. The editors of the individual newspapers were interviewed in-depth. This indicated that a total of two interviewees from the chosen newspapers were involved. *Punch* and *Vanguard* were specifically selected because of their wide coverage and reach, as well as the number of their daily publications and circulation nationwide in geopolitical zones in Nigeria, giving prominence to news, politics, social and economic issues with a daily production of more than one

hundred thousand copies in circulation, both in hard and soft copies, reaching the targeted segment and satisfying the needs of their readers for information and communication daily.

Interviews were conducted with one key informant from each of the chosen newspapers, namely the editors of *Punch* and *Vanguard*. They are believed to possess the expertise and experience necessary to respond to the questions given for this study because they are editors. Since they are involved in managing the daily activities of the newspapers, the respondents were chosen for their extensive expertise and their ability to provide the essential depth in their responses. To get useful information from the right interviewees, an interview guide was used. The researcher conducted the interviews using a set of questions, which also enabled some follow-up inquiries to dive deeper into the responses of the respondents. The constant comparative technique was used to analyse qualitative data in the form of narratives and words (Bingham, 2023). The interview questions were answered by the respondents. The direct and indirect speeches of the respondents were examined and analysed by the researchers.

## 5. RESULTS

The in-depth interview results showed that several factors, including health and the socioeconomic implications of teenage pregnancy, and social responsibility, determine the reporting of such matters in the selected newspapers. The responses read thus:

Teen pregnancy is one of the broad spectrum of issues that involve women, teens, and the education of the girl child. Especially underage girls being put in the family way by an adult who is not ready to take up responsibility, sometimes being violated and defiled by family members, including their fathers, stepfathers, and their teachers. It is not just related to health, but also to socioeconomic. We understand the implications of these issues. We believe that we owe society the duty to emphasise issues affecting the female child, one of which is teenage pregnancy, and we believe that we have the strength and platform to drive change and social justice (*Punch* Newspaper).

Teen pregnancy is a social problem. It is our responsibility as a newspaper organisation of repute to bring the attention of the government to the issue to deal with, considering the cultural, social, economic, and medical effects, especially the VVF disease in the North. Our top priority as a newspaper organisation is educating and informing our teenagers about the dangers ahead, which will help them not to fall victim (*Vanguard* Newspaper).

In terms of the importance given to the reportage on teenage pregnancy, the results show that similar attention was paid to the reportage on teenage pregnancy in both periods. The *Punch* editor commented thus;

We give equal attention to these issues. As far as *Punch* is concerned, we have never taken issues relating to the Girl Child lightly, likewise the issues relating to the boy-child, because of how vulnerable they are in society. Nothing much influences how we cover or give prominence to these issues as a newspaper of record; we accentuate the matter, we castigate it, we give it broad attention, we bring the issues all out for people to see, and most of the time, we get justice for the victims. We have never shied away from giving it the prominence it deserves. As an editor at the decision-making level at *Punch*, I make sure we pay adequate attention to the girl child's well-being holistically; by extension, the women are prominently covered and reported in such a way that we get results. Prominence is neither here nor there because we have never dropped the ball around coverage of teenage pregnancy and other socioeconomic issues affecting the girl-child and women. So if you go through our website and past papers edition, you will see that we have given huge priority to this issue, particularly in the north-east. I can assure you that the prominence has remained top-notch, and other issues such as forced labour, forced marriage, violence, and rape, we have given these issues massive coverage over the years, and we do not intend to stop (*Punch* Newspaper).

Alternatively, the response from the *Vanguard* editor pointed towards the placement and frequency of stories. The response reads thus:

For us, teenage pregnancy is a big problem. We look at all the associated diseases that come with it, medical and health concerns, especially in the north. So, we usually give our front page to these issues of teenage pregnancy and its associated effects. In *Vanguard*, we do not treat it as a one-time issue in our newspaper; we ensure that we write regularly about this topic of engagement from a health perspective on our health page/desk (*Vanguard* Newspaper).

More so, the editors claimed that reportage of social issues (of which teenage pregnancy is one of them) in society is prioritised in their newspapers to attract policies and social interventions towards the issue. The editor of *Punch* commented thus:

How we report the issues of the girl child versus teenage pregnancy is borne out of the already set agenda of the organisation. There is a broader agenda, a broader corporate policy, and a broader editorial direction that guide the way we approach these issues. We are pro-masses. We give serious priority to problems

and challenges facing very vulnerable people and issues in society. We constantly set agendas around gender issues, crises facing the vulnerable section of society, particularly women and teenage girls. We will continue to set the agenda for policymakers and researchers to help society better understand the problems facing these categories of people and get the government to continue to respond to them. Our reporters are trained. In the power play between the victim and the perpetrator, we naturally pitch our tent with the victims and ensure that we get justice for them and we ensure that we bring these issues to the public knowledge to get help for them from NGO's, and drive policy makers and government to come up with possible solutions that provide soft landing for these young ladies. We have a whole desk called the Metro desk that is dedicated to these social issues. you will see many such stories being adequately reported and with comprehensive coverage all the time, resulting in immediate impact (*Punch* Newspaper).

One of the responsibilities is to regularly set an agenda on this social issue to inform and educate the masses about teenage pregnancy and how to avoid it, inform people about the medical concerns associated with teenage pregnancy and the implications of unguided teenage pregnancy on the population. We put it on the front burner of our newspaper to attract concerns from the policymakers, and as a matter of fact, we at *Vanguard* newspaper have even launched an advocacy campaign around them. Our health desk has partnered with some NGO's on this matter (*Vanguard* Newspaper)

In response to what determines the choice of a reporter on issues of teenage pregnancy in Nigeria, the editors responded that human interest drives a reporter to cover stories about teenage pregnancy. The responses read thus:

As a newspaper of repute, we consider the human-interest angle element in the story, bringing all the 5Ws and H to bear in what we report through our newspaper medium. We look at the traumatic and psychological effects of teenage pregnancy on a girl child, especially cases born out of rape. We try to get justice for the victim due to medical or health challenges associated with premature pregnancies, unsafe abortion, or childbirth. These are some of the reasons why we report and focus on teenage pregnancy issues in our newspaper, the *Punch* (*Punch* Newspaper).

Various concerns, including medical, social, economic, political and policy decisions,

population growth, and food security, determine reporters' interest in teenage pregnancy matters (*Vanguard* Newspaper).

For communication efforts aimed at proffering a solution to teenage pregnancy in Nigeria using their newspaper, the results show that demanding justice for the victims in cases of rape and forced marriages is a major communication intervention carried out by the selected newspapers. According to the *Punch* editor,

As an organisation, we already have an agenda and approach that is to stand against such crimes. We ensure that victims receive help through our articles and contacts. We demand that the perpetrators and abusers of the girl-child face justice and be punished. Our platform helps to accentuate and bring to the forefront. We also ensure that victims are rehabilitated through our report and our advocacy drive that brings results. We follow up with all law enforcement officers to ensure that they do their job. *Punch* Metro focuses on the city, crimes, and the court. We do special reporting on some of these issues and challenges facing vulnerable members of society, including teenage pregnancy and, more importantly, rape of any kind. The page, which is strategically created that pull out for visibility, gets an instant response from concerned agencies and the government. The response is quite significant, and most of the people we feature on that platform receive some form of respite from various organisations, including government institutions, CSOs, and NGOs. We have a network of NGO, human rights organisations and civil society organisations that have formed informal partnership with our reporters, and whenever they come across such cases /crimes that are usually concealed by families and the society, the human right hint our reporters who swing into action by reporting and getting to the root of the case and is escalated for the police to take over which is also a major effort on our part. Therefore, this is one of the efforts we make in terms of communication and advocacy efforts (*Punch* newspaper).

The *Vanguard* editor said;

Some of the communication efforts that *Vanguard* Newspaper has deployed include an editorial report in which we highlight how teenage pregnancy increases the population and decreases food circulation to create food insecurity and scarcity, highlighting the economic, social and medical factors to their implications on medical facilities and Medicare in our feature stories and partnering with NGO's for advocacy programmes. Yes,

policymakers do listen and react to our outcry (*Vanguard* newspaper).

However, the results show that secrecy due to stigma and stereotypes, as well as legal restrictions regarding coverage of a minor victim of sexual assault, constitute huge challenges for reporting on teenage pregnancy matters in Nigerian newspapers. According to the *Punch* editor,

Some challenges hinder teenage pregnancy reports. These include shame and social stigma especially where fathers, step fathers, uncles, cousins, drivers someone close or related are responsible for the pregnancy or where the perpetrators cannot be identified most especially during gang rape, police involvement which makes the case more formal and serious, families decision to settle the teenage pregnancy matters on their own, protection of family name and honor and protection of the minor from the prying eyes of the media, as well as inadequate knowledge on the issues and their implications to effectively and efficiently write outstanding reports and article, feature and special focus reports (Editor, *Punch* Newspaper).

Regarding my thoughts, it is an excruciating psychological trauma to see a teenager being pregnant and probably poorly managed or sometimes unmarried and abandoned or rejected. These are the challenges that one does not want to face, but because of the nature of the job we do, we have to highlight them and launch campaigns because of the implications to society. It's not fun to face such challenges every day, but because of the job we do, we are faced with them. Therefore, our homes should add values that should be embraced to stop the increasing rate of teenage pregnancy in society. If the family is together, it will curb teenage pregnancy; if the economy is good, if people go to school when they are supposed to go to school, and if the family is well placed, it will curb teenage pregnancy. Rape is an exception to the rule. There are relationships between teens on the streets that are not based on rape; minors are getting pregnant, because consent is not the issue now. We are having more such cases now due to the economic situation in the country (*Vanguard*).

## 6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The in-depth interview findings reveal that health, socioeconomic consequences, and social responsibility are critical factors shaping the coverage of teenage pregnancy in *Punch* and *Vanguard* newspapers. Editors from both outlets underscored the multifaceted nature of teenage pregnancy,

identifying it not only as a health crisis but also a sociocultural and economic concern with serious implications for the girl child, particularly in Northern Nigeria, where cases of Vesico-Vaginal Fistula (VVF) are prevalent (*Vanguard* Editor). This aligns with prior findings from Ayuba and Gani (2012), who emphasised the poor maternal outcomes and the lack of antenatal care in teenage pregnancies, particularly among underprivileged populations.

Both newspapers affirmed that editorial direction and corporate social responsibility heavily influence their decision to prioritise teenage pregnancy issues. The *Punch* editor emphasised the organisation's deliberate agenda-setting role, which seeks to amplify the voices of vulnerable populations, particularly adolescent girls, by spotlighting stories of sexual abuse, forced marriage, and abandonment. This mirrors the findings of Asemah (2015), who noted that Nigerian media play a significant role in shaping public discourse and influencing health-related behaviours through their coverage strategies. Similarly, the *Vanguard* editor highlighted the newspaper's commitment to advocacy journalism, stressing its partnerships with NGOs to amplify awareness and push for policy action, echoing Bannerman-Afful's (2020) assertion that the media has replaced traditional channels as a dominant source of sexual education and public awareness.

Regarding prominence, both editors stated that teenage pregnancy is not treated as a marginal topic. *Punch* reportedly maintains consistent attention to the issue, leveraging its Metro desk to bring stories of abuse and teenage motherhood to the forefront, while *Vanguard* noted regular front-page placements and coverage at the health desk. This level of editorial commitment supports previous scholarship, suggesting that newspaper framing significantly impacts public understanding and the perceived importance of social issues. Furthermore, the human-interest dimension is a key motivator for coverage. Both editors cited the emotional, psychological and physical toll on teenage victims as compelling reasons to cover these stories, especially when rooted in abuse or systemic neglect. This resonates with Maemeko et al. (2018), who found that teenage pregnancy severely disrupts education and emotional development, particularly in poor contexts.

In terms of communication and advocacy, both papers actively deploy their platforms to demand justice for victims and advocate for systemic interventions. The *Punch* editor detailed a collaborative ecosystem involving civil society organisations, legal authorities, and NGOs that aims not only to report but also to resolve these cases, highlighting a move from traditional journalism to advocacy-based reporting. The *Vanguard* editor reinforced this by citing the newspaper's focus on linking teenage pregnancy with broader social challenges such as population growth, food insecurity, and strain on healthcare systems, reflecting the findings of Longjohn et al. (2020), who emphasised the sociodemographic underpinnings of the problem.

However, challenges persist. Editors cited stigma, secrecy, family interference, and legal restrictions around reporting on minors as major barriers to effective reporting. This is consistent with findings from studies on intimate partner violence as Agbese (2021) observed that Nigerian newspapers often adopt episodic frames that do not link individual cases with structural issues, thus limiting the potential for broader social impact. Furthermore, as the *Vanguard* editor noted, increasing economic hardship contributes to consensual, but premature, sexual activity among minors, complicating the moral and legal discourse surrounding teenage pregnancy.

In general, the study findings reinforce existing literature while offering new insights into how editorial policy, advocacy, and media characterisation interact in the Nigerian context to shape public narrative and policy attention around teenage pregnancy. They also underscore the crucial role of journalism not only in reporting social issues but also in catalysing justice, public awareness, and institutional response. The framing theory is sacrosanct to the findings of this study, showing how the choice of media's language, sources, and angles has greatly shaped the public perception of adolescent pregnancy. Framing theory shows that the way an issue is presented affects how the audience understands and responds. In this study, both newspapers often stressed teenage pregnancy through a moralist, sensational, or crisis-oriented lens, emphasising shame, deviation, or social threat rather than systemic reasons such as poverty, lack of education, or insufficient sexual health resources. This selective framing not only marginalises the voices of adolescent girls but also leads public discourse away from structural solutions. The ramifications are profound, and by using stereotypes in this way, the direction of policy can be influenced, and social stigma can be eliminated instead of encouraging compassion, understanding, or progress.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that editorial dynamics and sociocultural forces influence narratives around the reportage of teenage pregnancy in Nigeria. *Vanguard* and *Punch* newspapers, in addressing the menace, adopt frames that speak to institutional biases, reflect society, and journalistic practices rather than relying on the experiences of teenagers. The coverage of teenage pregnancy by these media outlets reflects the voices of governments, religious organisations, non-governmental and experts, marginalising the opinions of the girls most affected. It confirms a top-down approach to tell the story, where adolescent pregnancy is often painted through morality, public health crises, or lenses of social deviations, rather than a complex, versatile social issue such as gender inequality, education interval, poverty, and insufficient breeding health services. In addition, the study highlights the effect of commercial pressures, editorial agenda, and cultural sensations on story selection and framing. The result is a form of media coverage that can be tarnished instead of inadvertently educating or empowering. Finally, the question of "whose story is told" underlines the need for a change toward more inclusive, sympathetic, and evidence-based

reporting that gives voice to the groups of the margins and promotes deep public understanding. Media houses have an important role in shaping public discourse and policy, and their narratives should reflect a commitment to social justice, especially when reporting on vulnerable populations such as adolescent girls

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