

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PRINT MEDIA'S CREDIBILITY IN NEWS  
DISSEMINATION AND THE MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHT ABUSES IN  
NIGERIA**

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**NOVEMBER, 2022**  
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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS  
COMMUNICATION, SCHOOL OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION  
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**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF  
HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA (HND) IN MASS COMMUNICATION**

**NOVEMBER, 2022**  
**DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this project titled “**An Assessment of the Print Media’s Credibility in News Dissemination and the Management of Human Right Abuses in Nigeria**” was written by me and it is the record of my research. To the best of my knowledge, it has not been presented in any previous application for an academic award. All sources of information have been acknowledged using references.

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**Airuedomwinya Abiemwense Abigail**

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**Date**

## **APPROVAL**

This project is approved based on the student's declaration and its compliance with the requirement of the Department of Mass Communication, Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi; in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of Higher National Diploma (HND) in Mass Communication.

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**Mrs. Agboh Chioma**  
**(Project Supervisor)**

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**Date**

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**Mr. Joseph Ikerodah**  
**(Ag. Head of Department)**

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**Date**

## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to God almighty for his loving kindness and care towards me and also to my parents for their support and love throughout my studies and love throughout my studies I am forever grateful.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Firstly, I acknowledge God Almighty the giver of life, wisdom, and understanding, protector and provider for His consistency in my life. All thanks to Him for his faithfulness in my life and for giving me the strength and knowledge to be able to write this project.

My special thanks go to my supervisor, Mrs. Agboh, Chioma whose advice and constant encouragement helped in fine-tuning this project work. I thank her for her informative suggestions, corrections, and guidance.

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### **ABSTRACT**

The place of the mass media in the promotion of human rights in any given society cannot be overemphasised; the mass media generally, can be used to bring about positive attitudinal change in the individuals. Thus, the study assessed the print media's credibility in news dissemination and the management of human rights in Nigeria. This study explores the various ways through which the media can be used to promote human rights in Nigeria; some of the various ways identified in the study are: through editorials, features, news commentaries, discussion programmes. The study identifies the basic human rights to include: right to life, right to dignity of human beings, right to personal liberty, right to fair hearing, right to compensation from property compulsorily acquired, right to private and family life, right to freedom of thoughts, conscience and religion, right to peaceful assembly and association, right to freedom of movement, among others. The study discovers that the Nigerian populace does not enjoy these rights, as these rights are still trampled upon in most cases. More so, the paper identifies that the mass media have not really been effective in the promotion of human rights in Nigeria. Thus, it proposes that the media should be used to promote the issue of human rights in Nigeria, so that people will know their rights.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. Background of the Study**

Human rights have suffered a lot of violations from the state of nature, through the colonial and military period down to this present democratic era. Human rights are freedoms, immunities and benefits that, according to modern values, all human beings should be able to claim as a matter of rights in the society in which they live. In the same vein, Craston, (2007) sees human rights as something of which no one may be deprived of, without great affront to justice. There are certain deeds, which should never be done, certain freedoms, which should never be invaded; some things which are supremely sacred.

In March 2010, BBC One aired a Panorama programme titled “Chocolate: The bitter truth”. In the programme, the investigative reporter travelled to the West African countries of Ghana and Ivory Coast where he posed as a cocoa dealer. He successfully traced the supply chain involved in the process of delivering cocoa sold in the United Kingdom (UK), and also discovered that the issue of child trafficking and what was referred to as “child slave labour” still thrive. What does this development portend for the media? To what extent does it make the media a human rights actor? This is an interesting case of a human rights issue in which the media have made an input in exposing human rights violations, if not stopping them. It exemplifies the role of the media in the promotion of human rights issues because of the coverage it gave to human right abuses.

Human rights are generally moral rights claimed by everyone and held against everyone, especially against those who run social institutions (Orend, 2002). With the formation of the United Nations (UN) in 1945 and the subsequent adoption of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948, the concept of human rights has turned out to be one of the most contemporary issues across the globe. The UN Charter, which was adopted in 1945, was the first international document to recognize the protection and promotion of human rights as an obligation to be carried out by individual, as well as collective states (Langley, 1999). The main reason behind the adoption of the charter was, according to Smith (2007) to forestall the reoccurrence of the horrible events caused by two devastating world wars which were caused by massive violations of human rights and unbridled breach of territorial integrity.

In addition to the effort of the UN, the governments of various nations have basically been seen as the main actor in the promotion and protection of human rights. Unfortunately, these governments, according to Hakemulder et al (1998), are often the very abuser of the

rights of the citizens they are required to protect. However, it should be noted that though the government bears the primary responsibility in issues of human rights, other organs of the society, such as corporations are included in the protection of human rights (Addo, 1999).

Although there are international human rights instruments which the UN has produced to serve as common standard of achievement for all people as countless human rights violations and abuses occur across the globe. These violations could be committed by non-state actors through direct involvement or indirectly when they consent to such violations. Non-state actors such as individuals, groups, informal or organised, ad-hoc or continuous, may pose as violators, protectors or intermediaries. Consequently, it is imperative that they be examined so that they could be held accountable for these violations. It is also important to ascertain the reasons for state inability to safeguard human rights (Arat, 2006). The concept of human rights is now widely recognised in several parts of the world, and human rights violations are reported by journalists (Nickel, 2007). However, the 1990s witnessed an increase in the use of the term (Ramos et al, 2000). The importance of the attention given to human rights by the media is noteworthy because their coverage highlights the level of abuses occurring throughout the world (Cole, 2000). Human rights violation is an issue which should be given due attention. This is in line with Orend (2002) who argues that the violation of human rights is a vicious and ugly phenomenon indeed and it is something we have overriding reasons to resist and remedy.

In recent time, the print media supports have been instrumental in global awareness about human rights by providing publicity to intergovernmental actions and supporting non-governmental organisations and individuals who function as worldwide watchdogs and whistle-blowers. The relationship between the print media and human rights makes it essential to know how human rights are reported in the print media. Studies that examined print media coverage of human rights simply looked at frequency of coverage and focused more on the international news media (Geyer and Shapiro 1988; Hanson and Miller 1987; Pritchard 1991; Ovsiovitch, 1993).

With a growing evidence of repressive conditions in democracy – where the print media are expected to be freer and able to cover human rights situations without interference – it is similarly important to examine the pattern of media coverage in democratic regimes. There is a need to understand print media conduct and performance regarding respects for human rights in democracy, especially when it is characterized by repressive conditions. Therefore, this research hopes to add to our understanding of the relationship between media and human rights in democracy and human rights coverage in a national media. Since another

change of regime to multi-party democracy in 1999, Nigeria is characterized by crises of many dimensions, providing impetus for serious repression and disrespects for human rights (Adejumobi, 2010).

Human rights were protected in Nigerian constitution and the country is a signatory to most international treaties guaranteeing human rights (Egede, 2007). The media in Nigeria are also considered important partners in monitoring human rights abuses (Asemah, Edegoh & Ogoh, 2013; Pate, 2011) and have been constitutionally empowered to uphold the fundamental values of democracy and "...uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people" (Section 21 of the 1999 Constitution). Previous studies that examined media human rights coverage in Nigeria only examined media coverage during military regimes (Pate, 2011; Olatunji, 2011). It is therefore important to also understand the performance of the media in ensuring human rights are protected in democratic regimes in Nigeria.

McQuail (2005) describes the mass media as the organised means for communicating openly and at a distance, to many receivers within a short space of time. Murphy (1999) as cited by Daramola (2005) sums up societal impacts of the media in different ways: as oil, glue and dynamite. As glue, social cohesion is maintained by communication. Murphy contends that the media give all of us, including strangers, something to talk about, by setting agenda of discussion. He likewise describes the mass media also as dynamites that can rip society apart. Milton (1983) as cited by Egbon (1995) agrees with Murphy when he says the media is capable of making or destroying government given the appropriate conditions: it can cause war or create peace. It can promote development or create difficulties in the way of development. Merrill (1995), cited by Asemah (2011) says the media possess the power to work against it. The media can oil and ease the economic wheel of a country or bring them to maintain social equilibrium, facilitate change or to seek radical alternatives.

Human rights violation in most developing nations has become an issue of utmost concern. Human rights law has been developing in an unprecedented way and has become part of international law as a whole. International human rights law serves as a standard against which to measure national behaviour. This is found in the human rights protection system of states, international institutions, transnational professional associations, corporations, trade unions, churches, nongovernmental organisations and other bodies, who respond to distress signals from abroad on the basis of these instruments. With the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, efforts are being made to develop a rationalized framework within which human rights should be promoted and protected (Dakas, 2002).

According to Pam (2005), human rights as a concept have gone through many stages of development. They are unique virtues highly cherished and valued from time immemorial. The realisation of human rights dates back to spiritual awareness. That is, the natural law created by the will of God. However, the modern day desire for the realisation of human rights dates back to Greek antiquity. It started from the time philosophers started to pick interest in the relationship between states and societies. The emphasis on the rights of individuals led to the emergence of the theory of rights. Pam (2005) notes that in a bid to realise human rights, philosophers held that, laws could be classified into natural laws, which are natural, unchangeable and universal in application and the positive laws, which are derived from the arbitrary will of human authority, they are contracts not to be violated, concluded by state and citizens to preserve the rights of men in the society.

If it can be argued that the media can set the public agenda by reporting one news story in place of another, then, the media can take up the human rights agenda by publishing or broadcasting human rights programmes. In the words of Apodaca (2007), “the print media can disseminate human rights information, mobilize human rights NGOS, strengthen popular participation in civil society, promote tolerance, and shine a light on government activity”.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Human rights have enjoyed tremendous attention and expansion at the global level. To concretize and energise human rights protection at national level, virtually all national constitutions embody human rights either in their preamble or substantive provisions. In Nigeria, human rights are embodied in two separate chapters, encapsulating both the civil and political rights and the economic, social and cultural rights.

Today, human rights issues have not only become a global concern but remarkable interest aimed at protecting and promoting universal respect for, and observance of, human rights has continually been shown at the international, regional and national levels. Indeed the issue of human rights in the recent past, has penetrated the international dialogue, become an active ingredient in interstate relations and has burst the sacred bounds of national sovereignty.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was unanimously adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations through the General Assembly Resolution 217A(111) on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December, 1948. Since its declaration, it has become fashionable for most countries of the world (Nigeria inclusive) to entrench the catalogue of rights in their national constitutions. Regrettably, in Nigeria and indeed in Africa, people are usually subjected to

physical and mental torture. Adenrele and Olugbenga (2014) states that cases of accidental discharge, domestic violence, detention without trial, kidnappings, and police brutality are common occurrences and it violates human rights.

In short, the Nigerian experience has shown the level at which peoples' integrity and dignity are not respected and protected in the society. This is because contrary to democratic ethos, the state is still largely authoritarian in leadership and security operations (Akhaine and Chizea, 2011). Other forms of human rights abuses in Nigeria include motorists' harassment and extortion by security personnel, political assassinations, undemocratic imposition of candidates in leadership and intimidation of political opponents (Akhaine and Chizea, 2011); rape, child abuse, education denial and domestic violence (Adesupo, 2013).

All of these abuses of human rights have been variously reported by several media organizations in Nigeria, especially the broadcast media. The questions that tend to come to one's mind at this juncture are; do the print media give adequate coverage to human right abuses? Are journalists objective in the coverage of human right abuses? How credible is the print media in news dissemination and management of human rights in Nigeria? These and many more the researcher hope to answer in this study.

### **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

The following are the objectives which this study hopes to achieve;

- i. To ascertain the level of prominence given to print media coverage of human rights in Nigeria.
- ii. To determine the level of the effectiveness of print media coverage of human right abuses in Nigeria.
- iii. To ascertain the level of journalists' objectivity in the coverage of human right abuses in Nigeria.
- iv. To determine the credibility of print media in news dissemination and management of human right abuses in Nigeria.

### **1.4. Research Questions**

Based on the above objectives, the following research questions were formulated to serve as a guide for this study.

- i. What is the level of prominence given to print media coverage of human right in Nigeria?

- ii. What is the level of the effectiveness of print media coverage of human abuses in Nigeria?
- iii. What is the level of journalists' objectivity in the coverage of human right abuses in Nigeria?
- iv. How credible is the print media in news dissemination and management of human right abuses in Nigeria?

### **1.5. Scope of the Study**

This study assessed print media credibility in news dissemination and the management of human rights in Nigeria. Due to the nature of this study, it is imperative that the study should be limited to a scope. It is in the light of this that the researcher limited the scope of this study to print media audiences in Auchi metropolis.

### **1.6. Significance of the Study**

Having learnt from the field of mass communication that the media educate and inform the public, and also perform the role of agenda-setting which makes mass media audience to consider as important any issue which the media concentrate on, this study will be important to the field of human rights because it will help in proposing a strategy for human rights programmes to stand a chance of being given priority in an era when different media programmes are vying for attention.

The study will also provide a viable strategy for engaging in human rights activism through the act of reporting on human rights issues. This research will make a contribution by highlighting the intricacies of media's involvement in promoting human rights. It will show that in one way or the other, everybody might either wilfully or otherwise be complicit in human rights violations.

### **1.7. Limitation of the Study**

Every research work definitely has its limitation; therefore, this is not an exemption. One of the limitations encountered during the course of this study was sourcing for adequate and related materials for the study. Also, some of the respondents did not also help matters because some of the questionnaires given to them were not returned while few of the questionnaires were wrongly filled. Apart from the undisputed fact that the researcher limited

by time, the most serious limitation to this study is the lack of sincerity on the part of some respondents to the questionnaires administered.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1. Review of Relevant Literature**

Quite importantly, every academic discourse requires an input from what is already in existence. This is usually in the form of citations, where particular emphasis has been on how relevant this is with what is currently being studied. Therefore, it becomes imperative to say that human knowledge is undoubtedly an elevation of the construction of previous findings in which case the later acts as a foundational framework of the former.

This study, therefore, beams its focus on available works with bearings on the following issues:

- Concept of Human Rights
- Historical Basis of Human Rights
- Constitutional Provision of Human Rights
- Accounts of Human Right Violations in Nigeria
- Threats/Violations of Human Rights in Nigerian Society Today
- The Role of the Media in the Promotion of Human Rights
- Factors Militating against Mass Media Coverage of Human Rights Violation

#### **Concept of Human Rights**

There is no generally acceptable definition of human rights. This is perhaps because scholars have different opinions about the concept. It is something which is owing to every human being simply because he is human. Human rights are freedoms and benefits enjoyed by individuals in the society in which they live. To Bryan (2004), human rights are freedoms, immunities and benefits that, according to modern values, all human beings should be able to claim as a matter of rights in the society in which they live. In the same vein, Craston, (2007) sees human rights as something of which no one may be deprived of, without great affront to justice. There are certain deeds, which should never be done, certain freedoms, which should never be invaded; some things which are supremely sacred. The Supreme Court of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in the case of Ransom Kuti vs Attorney General of the Federation held that fundamental rights are human rights guaranteed to everybody by the Constitution. The rights are immutable to the extent of the non-immutability to the Constitution itself.

From the foregoing, human rights can be seen as all those rights that every citizen of a state ought to have without any deprivation. They are those inalienable rights of every individual, whether old or young, poor or rich, male or female. They are not given to human beings as gifts. This explains why Arinze (2008) argues that human rights are not gifts from men to women or other men that are open to withdrawal or cancellation at the whims and caprices of the giver. Human rights are not subject to withdrawal or to be held at the pleasure of anybody or granted when it pleases the giver. Eze (1995) cited in Gasiokwu (2003) sees human rights as that which represents the demands or claims, which individuals or groups make on society, some of which are protected by law and have become part of “Lex Lata” while others remain aspirations to be attained in the future.

Gasiokwu (2003) avers that some human rights provisions have been enacted into various national constitutions of the world in some of which are being referred to as fundamental rights. Perrett (1999) cited in Gasiokwu (2003) argues that if the fundamental rights being asserted is intended to be legal rights, such rights are properly called fundamental when they are expressed in or guaranteed by laws, which are basic or pre-eminent laws of the legal system in question. For example, rights which are specified in a written constitution or in judgements of a legislature designed to render the constitution more specific in certain areas. Some other legal rights may be called fundamental where, although the rules containing them are not all constitutional, in the sense that they are or closely appertain to the rules that Kelsen (2008) would call ‘part grundnorms or Hart, the basic rules of recognition, adjudication and change of the legal system. Nevertheless, these rights are legally basic in the sense that their existence and content is essential to the existence and content of many other lesser rights of the system.

Corroborating the above view, Oduah (2011) notes that there is a great difference between fundamental rights and human rights. Oduah (2011) notes that due to the development of constitutional law in this field, distinct difference has emerged between Fundamental Rights and Human Rights. It may be recalled that human rights were the wider concept of natural rights. They are rights which every civilised society must accept as belonging to each person as human being. These are termed “Human Rights”. When the United Nations made this declaration, it was envisaged that certain rights belong to all human rights, irrespective of citizenship, race and religion, etc. This has now formed part of our international law. They are fundamental because they have been guaranteed by the fundamental law of the country that is, the constitution.

From the foregoing, fundamental human rights may be seen as such freedoms, which are expressed in or guaranteed by basic or pre-eminent laws. These rights are usually referred to in some constitutions as the rights to freedoms of thought, conscience and religion, right to freedom of press and speech, right to freedom of movement, freedom from discrimination. The freedom of information law that was signed into law in Nigeria recently is a fundamental human right. Thus, in this context, fundamental rights are tied to fundamental freedoms.

In a nutshell, Human rights are rights which people have simply as human beings irrespective of their nationalities, religion, citizenship, marital status, occupation, income or any other social or cultural activities. In other words, human rights are of universal application and implications. Obed (2007) contends that human rights are the cornerstone of a viable and visible democracy, giving hope to all in society: the strong and the weak, rich and poor, great and small.

### **Historical Basis of Human Rights**

Social theorists, as well as philosophers, have sought to establish a free and fair society where the aspiration of man (spiritual, intellectual, social, economic, etc.) could be achieved without artificial hindrances to them, Hence rights had existed under the auspices of synonyms of “natural right, inalienable rights, inviolable rights, absolute right, and fundamental human rights. Among such notable social thinkers and philosophers were Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau.

Thomas Hobbes in his notable book “The Leviathan” argued that every man in the primitive society is born with an innate natural right of self-preservation. The threat to this natural right of self-preservation resulting from the war of all in which case the strong had his way against the weak necessitated that men (both the strong and the weak surrender their individual rights to an absolute ruler who was to ensure that the right of his subjects especially the rights of self-preservation (or right to life) was protected and held in trust. Hobbes went further to state that the social contract will ensure that there would be peace and absence of violation of rights of the weak by the strong in the society as the freedom of society member would be yield to a powerful sovereign who will enforce the promise of protection of individuals (Obed, 2007)

John Locke in his political writings asserted that the state’s function was to uphold the superiority and inalienability of individual’s innate or natural rights to life and liberty. He stressed the need for the state to protect these inalienable and natural rights In Locke’s state

of nature, individuals are free but their liberty was not synonymous with freedom to do whatever one wanted. Rather it was limited by the self-evident, God given laws of nature which prohibits a man from committing suicide (since God created man to live without his natural life span), and from harming other people (since God created us as equals not to be debased by one another).

Jean Jacques Rousseau in his book “the social contract” sympathized with the pitiable state of man in the society by saying that “man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains” how can he live in a free society, where protection of life and properties will be guaranteed? Rousseau envisaged a society where our natural freedom or rights becomes part of our humanity, for him it is a democratic society where the general will prevail over the will of all.

Thomas Aquinas of the natural law school, sought through his writings to present before the state what would allow for peaceful coexistence and the good life. Here he stated that the precept of natural law was to “do good and avoid evil” which will help men in keeping their natural and fundamental rights, Thomas Aquinas saw a strong relationship between natural law and natural rights.

Modern theologians, who are interested in human rights, draw inspiration from the writings of naturalists such as Aquinas. They believe that God is ceaselessly active in history, liberating human beings from all that enslaves and oppresses them; from the exodus to the liberation struggle today God is freeing people, not just from sin and death but from oppressive system and structures (Blackburn et al, 1991).

The resistant position and disposition to absolutism and the concern for free society was instrumental to proclamation of the rights of man by distinguished western European philosophers in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. It coincided with the period of extreme political and social upheavals, which resulted in the English, American and French revolutions. The consequences of agitating for human rights were abolition of slave trade, introduction of universal suffrage, democracy and liberation of man from oppressive feudalism. Furthermore it has in the reformation and amendment of laws, constitution and ACT.

### **Constitutional Provision of Human Rights**

It can be rightly asserted that one of the greatest objectives of the post-independence Nigerian Constitutions is the protection and promotion of human rights. The preamble to the 1999 Constitution unmistakably set the tone by dedicating itself to promote “good government and welfare of all persons on the principles of freedom, equality and Justice”.

Apart from the preamble, Chapters two and four of the Constitution extensively deal with human rights issues. While Chapter two is captioned **Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy**, Chapter four is entitled, “**fundamental rights**”. Under the Fundamental Objective and Direct Principles of State Policy, the second generation rights, consisting of economic, social and cultural rights are extensively set out in sections 13 to 21. These rights are predicated on the necessity for the material well-being of the citizenry with the state playing a pivotal role. These rights which are essentially equalitarian and egalitarian in character are rooted on the belief that the attainment of certain level of social and economic standard is a necessary condition for the enjoyment of the civil and political rights. Accordingly, these rights require affirmative governmental action for their enjoyment. It is not considered imperative to discuss or set out the full text of the rights guaranteed under the Chapter. Accordingly, the rights will merely be spotlighted. First however, it is significant to note that the obligation of the state towards the effectuation and realization of the rights is fully captured by section 13 which provides that: It shall be the duty and responsibility of all organs of government, and of all authorities and persons exercising legislative, executive or judicial powers, to conform to, observe and apply the provisions of, (the fundamental objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy).

The first fundamental objective enacted in Chapter two is the political objective which is that Nigeria shall be a state based on the principles of democracy and social justice. An important section to the present exercise is section 16, which entrenches the economic objectives of the nation.

It guarantees, among others, the right to any person to participate and engage in any economic activities, subject to necessary restrictions, and obliges the government to protect the right of every citizen to engage in any economic activities outside the major sectors of the economy. The section further provides that the state shall direct its policy towards ensuring; among others – “that suitable and adequate shelter, suitable and adequate food, reasonable national minimum living wage, old age care and pensions, and unemployment, sick benefits and welfare of the disabled are provided for all citizens.” By Section 17, the state is obliged to “direct its policy towards ensuring that all citizens, without discrimination whatsoever have the opportunity for securing adequate means of livelihood as well as adequate opportunity to secure suitable employment. Further, the state is obliged to ensure that the conditions of work are just and humane and that there are adequate facilities for leisure and for social, religious and cultural life and that the health, safety and welfare of all persons in employment are safeguarded and not endangered or abused. Government policy is also

required to ensure that there are adequate medical and health facilities for all persons and that there is equal pay for equal work without discrimination on account of sex, or on any other ground whatsoever. By section 18, Government is obliged to direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels and Government shall as and when practicable provide free, compulsory and universal primary education, free university education and free adult literacy programme. Section 21 which deals with cultural rights provides that the state shall protect, preserve and promote the Nigerian cultures which enhance human dignity and are consistent with the fundamental objectives provided for in the constitution.

Unlike Chapter two, Chapter four of the 1999 Constitution, guarantees a catalogue of enforceable fundamental rights. The fundamental rights guaranteed under Chapter five are essentially, the civil and political rights guaranteed in major international human rights instruments. The civil and political rights form the bedrock of the first Generation Rights. These rights are libertarian in character as they relate to the sanctity of the individual and his rights within the socio-political milieu in which he is located. The rights seek to protect and safeguard the individuals, whether alone or as a group, against the abuse of power, especially by political authority.

The rights contained in Chapter four of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 in Sections 33 to 46, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights are rights that are enforceable in our courts of law in Nigeria. These rights that are contained in Chapter four are first generation right. They include:

- Right to life - Section 33;
- Right to dignity of human person - Section 34;
- Right to personal liberty - Section 35;
- Right to fair hearing - Section 36;
- Right to private and family life, Section - 37;
- Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion - Section 38;
- Right to freedom of expression and press - Section 39;
- Right to peaceful assembly and association - Section 40;
- Right to freedom of movement Section - 41;
- Right to freedom from discrimination - Section 42;
- Right to acquire and own immoveable property anywhere in Nigeria - Section 43;
- Compulsory acquisition of property - Section 44;

Finally, to give concrete expression to the rights, section 46 empowers any person who alleges that any of the rights has been, is being or is likely to be contravened in relation to him to seek redress in any High Court and the court has the jurisdiction to make an appropriate order and issue such writs and give such directions as it may consider appropriate for the purpose of enforcing or securing the enforcement of the rights.

The violation of human rights is not a strange experience in Nigeria. This sad situation has been attributed to decades of military rule in the country (Ahmadu, 2001)), which had attracted sanctions and all sorts of condemnation from the international community. Sadly, however, the end of military rule, and the consequent enthronement of democratic rule has failed to eliminate, or at least, reduce the cases of violations of human rights in Nigeria. The majority of cases of violations of peoples' rights being carried out by the Nigerian police force. Provable incidences of extrajudicial killings, brutality of innocent citizens, use of force to elicit confessional statements from suspects, blatant corruption, et cetera continue to be characteristic of the Nigerian police in our promising democracy. Thus, the lack of trust and confidence in the police by the Nigerian citizens continues to exist irrespective of the hypocritical posters and television advertisements by the police authorities to create a positive image for the Nigerian Police, as the force has become more of an instrument of oppressions and coercion against innocent citizens, and a willing tool in the hands of the rich and powerful in society to intimidate and victimize the common man.

### **Accounts of Human Right Violation in Nigeria**

Contrary to widely held views that human rights violations in Nigeria were initiated at the inception of the military in politics, the problem actually has its historical origin traceable from pre-colonial to colonial era in 1849 with the imperial activities of John Beecroft, the British Crown Consul in Nigeria. It was John Beecroft who introduced the concept of gun-boat diplomacy in Nigeria, through which he compelled questionable agreements and treaties upon local rulers in the area, offering them protection in exchange for allowing British traders special and unlimited access to trade and economic activities in their domains (Nwachukwu & Aghamelo, 2014). Some of the kings that refused to comply with his selfish rule were extended with gun-boat diplomacy and it resulted to violence and low-intensity war. These rulers were hounded, nuzzled and their domain torched. They were either dethroned or exiled. It was in this context that violence and inhuman treatment came into Nigeria.

Another earlier indulgencies of human right abuse was Brinsmen crisis with the Royal Niger Company at Akassa in 1895, it was recorded that much harm was done to property and

many lives were lost. Although it was alleged that the actual extension of British authority over many of the coastal and land tribes was partly due to human right abuses by some of the pre-colonial chiefs in 1817 for instance, the consul dethroned the king Pepple of Bonny for making war on other chiefs and misruling his country. Also, in 1887, Jaja of Opobo was turned out for checking the trade of British merchants with the inland tribe; and in 1893, a Jekri Chief, Nana, who still kept on slave-raiding and ill-treating other tribes was also conquered and put down.

From these records it is evident that the British influence on the geopolitical entity of Nigeria began as imperial enterprise whose sole target was exploitation of the economic resources, the institutionalization of violence and the use of coercion as instrument of political control.

The understanding here is that the British political, social and economic policies were formulated and executed to the extent that they served British interests and left Nigeria with no basis for economic and political structures for the future developments of the Nigerian State because of self-interest of the colonialist, human abuses was institutionalized in Nigeria, even after the declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations.

Human rights issues received legal backing with statutory provisions made in the 1999 Constitution of the federal Republic of Nigeria. Section 33 to 43 of Chapter IV specifically covered the fundamental human rights that the government and society not only acknowledge, but also guarantee to protect from infringement (Constitutional right project, 1997). Previously, however, the human rights record in Nigeria particularly under military era from 1985 to 1998, which covered the Generals Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida and Sani Abacha regimes, witnessed high levels of human rights abuses and violations in the country.

There was military brutality against the civil populace, case of extra-judicial killings soared, access to justice by ordinary Nigerians was severely restricted, international passports and other travelling documents of individuals and officials were seized with impunity to prevent opposition and cow articulate critics of the juntas into submission.

To worsen matters, the unconstitutional practice of arresting relations in lieu of accused persons-whether factual or fabricated-among other vices, intensified the level of insecurity in the country. There were waves of baffling and unresolved assassinations as well as recurring incidents of bomb explosions in several parts of the country. Extra-judicial killings, arbitrary arrests, unlawful and prolonged detention, brutal torture of accused person and degrading treatment bordering on dehumanization of critics and opponents of the military regimes became a common scene in the country (Ayobo, 1994).



Thus, human rights and national security are intricately interwoven to such extent that one reinforces the other, and a decline in one is a direct threat to the other, which consequently results in general societal retrogression. Component of human security include right to life, right to dignity of the human person, right to persona; liberty, right to fair hearing, right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, right to freedom of expression and the press, right to peaceful assembly and association, right to freedom of movement, right to freedom from discrimination.

### **Threats/Violations of Human Rights in Nigerian Society Today**

Nigeria is among the countries where human right abuses are recorded daily and virtually in all human endeavours. Below are some of the routinely abused human rights in Nigeria.

#### **a. Unlawful Violation of Civil, Political and Moral Rights (First Generation Rights)**

Nigerian citizens had their political rights violated through intimidation, undemocratic imposition of candidates for political offices, assassination and the huge finances on prebendal political environment (Akhaine and Chizea, 2011). Specifically, the violations of civil, political and moral rights include;

##### **i. Abuse of Right to Life**

This human right violation is mostly found in torture and extra-judicial killings by government security operatives. For instance, Ero (2009) reported that over 20,000 civilians were massacred with other 50,000 displaced from their homes as a result of the brutal handling of the Niger Delta crises by the Joint Military Task Force (JTF). Earlier, the death of about 50 persons on 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2008 was caused by the Nigerian police in Ogaminana outskirt of Okene in Kogi State. Akhaine and Chizea (2011) reported that 17 people were shot dead by security forces during a protest in Kaduna state on 17<sup>th</sup> April and another 118 killed on 27<sup>th</sup> April in the same state with several houses burnt. Abbah and Adetayo (2013) further observed that over 300 people were killed in the Fulani/Farmers clashes that lasted for five months in Nigeria.

Reuters (2012) noted the brutal killing of more than 700 people in Bauchi, Maiduguri and Damaturu as a result of the Boko Haram rootless attack on the civilians. Furthermore, in a latest report on Boko Haram activities, Osun Defender (2014) submitted that civilians in Nigeria are paying heavy prices as cycle of human rights violations and reprisals gather momentum because according to the 2014 Amnesty International report, “more than 1,500 deaths in three months indicate an alarming deteriorations...in the face of extra-judicial

executions, attacks on civilians and other crimes committed on a mass scale”. Even though, the Amnesty report observed the rising number of Boko Haram attacks as truly shocking but it also noted the reaction of Nigerian security forces as brutal with both serving as acts that may constitute “war crimes and crimes against humanity” calling for immediate investigation and prosecutions (Amnesty, 2014).

## **ii. Abuse of Right to Freedom of Movement**

This human right violation is found in kidnapping and disappearance which has been on the increase in Nigeria. The situation is worst in Abia State due to cases of all forms of kidnapping: including kidnapping of children, women and other civilians (Kaluge, 2013). While Oyewale (2010) acknowledged the daily occurrence of domestic terrorism (brutal kidnapping) in the Niger Delta between 2006 and 2009, Azania (2013) equally reported how Edo varsity lecturers lamented daily affairs kidnapping of their colleagues. This worrisome physical human right abuse is even preponderant all over Nigeria today. Criminal groups continued to abduct civilians in the Niger Delta and Southeast.

Other parts of the country continued to experience a significant number of abductions. Prominent and wealthy figures were often targets of abduction. Kidnappers rarely announced political motives for abductions. Forced disappearances of young men in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe States continues as Boko Haram conducts large-scale abductions in those states.

## **iii. Abuse of Right to Freedom of Religion**

Contrary to the provision of secularity in Nigeria constitution, Adeniji (2008) and Oyeweso (2013) reported frequent human right abuses among cleric fundamentalists. According to Adeniji (2008), over 1,000 reported cases of clashes between the Christian and the Muslim adherents were recorded in Nigeria between 2001 and 2008.

## **iv. Abuse of Right to Freedom of Assembly**

The Nigerian government is known to oppose anti-government protest and demonstration. For instance, on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2009, police in Okeagbe, Ondo State allegedly killed and wounded some youths who demonstrated against local police extortion. Equally, political killings were reported by Ariyibi (2013) in Ekiti following clashes between rival political parties while Ayodeji (2013) reported that rioters stripped a ruler naked after severe beating by angry mobs in Ogun State. Indeed, Akhaine and Chizea (2011) reported that some

politicians in Nigeria maintain a retinue of thugs that often perpetuate acts of violence against their opponents.

**b. Unlawful Violation of the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Second Generation Rights)**

The citizens' entitlements violated under this kind of human right abuses are:

**i. Violation against children's rights**

The Child's Rights Act (2007) defines a child as one who is below the age of eighteen years. It categorically provides that such a child's best interests shall remain paramount in all considerations. A child shall be given such protection and care as is necessary for its wellbeing, retaining the right to survival and development and to a name and registration at birth. The Child Right's Act 2003, passed into law in the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja), defines a child as a person who has not attained the age of eighteen years.

People and children with disability are the least cared for and discrimination against them, both within the family and in society in general. They live on the margins of society, often ignored, neglected and mistreated; they remain targets for abuse and exploitation. As in other African countries, disabled children are often considered taboo, because disability is associated with bad luck. The population of people with a disability continues to increase alarmingly, but the country's social services, including the sector providing assistance to disabled children, remain poor. There are few specialised institutions for disabled persons, but most of them are run by NGOs and lack appropriate facilities, in spite of some governmental funding. Reasons for disability in Nigeria do not only include birth defects, which can be caused by poor living conditions or malnutrition, but also accidents and the environment in which people are living. Vending or begging, communal and military violence, early pregnancy or female genital mutilation is cause of disability. But it also recognizes that these efforts are inadequate and that awareness in the situation and plight of disabled children is lacking. It also admits that financial allocation for this special group of children is low and that training of professionals/caregivers have not been encouraged by the government over the last years. However, the report does not provide information on how the government intends to tackle the problem, since the Committee already expressed concern about the absence of proactive measures to combat discrimination against disabled children.

## ii. **Violation against women**

The following are the ways through which the rights of the women are violated:

- **Gender discrimination:** Although, the Constitution provides for gender equality, cases of violations of women's rights and gender discrimination are alarming. Women and girls are subject to violence at domestic and public levels.
- **Harmful traditional practices and early marriages:** In Nigeria, due to inconsistencies in legislation and the absence of any stipulation of a minimum age for marriage before the adoption of the Child Rights Act in 2003, early marriages continue to take place, in many cases as a means to preserve chastity. Section 18 of the Marriage Act allows persons under the age of 21 to get married, provided that parental consent is given. The official report admits that the age of marriage is a highly controversial issue and varies from place to place. The federal authorities seek however to make 18 the minimum age of marriage, not only in law, but also in practice. Nevertheless, customary positions on that issue differ and important parts of the population are still not aware of the negative effects early marriages can have on girls. In most cases, it limits the opportunities for girls to accede to education, putting them in a disadvantaged position. But, even more worrying, early marriage can also be detrimental to girl's physical, mental and emotional health. Apart from the fact that it deprives girls from their rights to have control over their body and reproductive health, it puts them in a position of complete dependency from their husband. For instance, in Northern Nigeria, where the majority of girls face the prospect of early marriage, this has resulted over the years in a large number of cases of vesico-vaginal fistula, a condition caused by giving birth when the cervix is not well developed. It occurs because the pelvic bones have had insufficient time to develop to cope with child-birth.
- **Female genital mutilation:** Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is still practised in some parts of the country and among all religious groups. The age of mutilation varies from 3 months to 17 years. Any state interference into the practice of FGM is considered as a violation of the right to privacy. Yet, many girls face several health risks through this, including that of HIV infection, due to unhygienic methods that accompany the practice, which in itself, is a public health issue.
- **Access to education:** Another area of concern with regard to discrimination against girls is their access to education. If the government has officially been more

concerned about girls' schooling for the last few years, the rate of girls attending school is still much lower than that of boys in large parts of the country. This is particularly true for the Northern part of the country, where the highest rate of illiteracy (70%) was registered and where girls attending schools are very few. As explained above, this is partly due to harmful traditional practices, such as child-marriage. But it also highlights the high degree of boy preference in the Nigerian society and underlines the need for policies, promoting girls' education and status.

### **iii. Violations of Right to Standard of Living**

It is regrettable to note that this violation is been caused by the quantum of corruption in public services. Corruption has generally eaten deep into the fabric of Nigerian society. It is an abuse of the citizen's rights to have corrupt leaders in the public services. According to Adetoro (2012) Nigeria as a cesspool of corruption still suffers denial to cheaper availability of fuel products arising from fuel subsidy scandal that led to over-invoicing of imported petroleum products. This happened in a country where over 70 percent of the populace lives below 1 dollar per day (UNDP, 2011).

### **c. Unlawful Violation of Solidarity or Community Rights (Third Generation Rights)**

#### **i. Abuse of Right to Clean and Healthy Environment**

Certain segments of Nigerian society have been deprived of the right to safe, clean and healthy environment. For instance, the conflict in the Niger-Delta region is partly as a result of an abuse of environmental right. It is on this light that the environmental activists like Ken Saro Wiwa along with others were extra-judicially hanged by the government in 1995. Furthermore, Awah (2009) noted how the rights of women were frequently abused in Nigeria under trafficking circumstances. Equally, it was observed that out of about 8 million children destitute in Nigeria. 7 million of them constitute street beggars known as Almajirai in Northern Nigeria (Ahmed, 2007).

#### **ii. Prison/Prisoner's Rights**

The Nigerian prison system is nothing but a living hell. Those who came out of it after serving their sentences hardly get reformed; in fact they become hardened recidivists. Among the problems of the Nigerian prison system is the existence of a large population of

those awaiting trial. This always leads to congestion in the prison cells as a result of deficit in prison infrastructures (Ndifon, 2013). These conditions are outright acts of violation of the human rights of the inmates. Equally, prisoner's right to court is impeded by failure to provide vehicles to convey them to court and inadequate medical care is impeded by shortage of health facilities.

### **iii. Abuses of the Right to Self Determination**

The struggle for freedom or self-determination has been at the frontline of most agitators from different ethnic nationals in Nigeria. This right to self-determination has been the major agitation by the Niger Delta people, the Movement for the Actualization of the sovereign states of Biafra (MASSOB) and indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB). The struggle often leads to armed conflict resulting to loss of lives and properties among others. Indeed, the Human Rights Watch (2014) observed that more than 15,700 people had been killed in inter communal, political and sectarian violence 2010-2014. Today, the casualties figure would have been doubled due to the insurgent activities of Boko Haram.

### **The Role of the Media in the Promotion of Human Rights**

According to McQuail (2005), emphasis is laid that a belief in the power of mass media was initially based on the observation of their great reach and apparent impact, especially in relation to the new popular newspaper press. The popular press was mainly funded by commercial advertising, its content was characterised by sensational news stories and its control was often concentrated in the hands of powerful press barons.

The media are a collective means of communication by which general public or populace is kept informed about the day to day happenings in the society. The media are also said to be an aggregation of all communication channels that use techniques of making a lot of direct personal communication between the communicator and the public. While talking of mass media however, the word mass means a large number of people or a collection of organs of communication and information dissemination that reaches out to a large number of people. The information circulation is not only confined within members of the public but the media also serves to coordinate the information flow between government and the public and vice versa, in our own case, between leaders and the led and vice versa.

The media have a very crucial role to play in the promotion of human rights in any country. The media, according to Asemah (2011), are agents of social change that can bring about positive attitudinal change in the audience; they set agenda for the people to follow in

any society. The mass media are crucial to opinion formulation and eventual outcomes of events. The media are champions of human rights. They act as the eyes, ears and voices of the public, drawing attention to abuses of power and human rights, often at considerable personal risk. Through their work, they can encourage governments and civil society organisations to effect changes that will improve the quality of people's lives. Journalists, photographers and programme-makers frequently expose the plight of children caught up in circumstances beyond their control or abused or exploited by adults. It is equally important to consider the children's angle in more conventional news coverage. A good way of testing the value of changes in the law or fiscal policy, for example, is to consider the extent to which children will benefit or suffer a consequence. The way in which the media represent or even ignore children can influence decisions taken on their behalf and how the rest of society regards them. The media often depict children merely as silent victims or charming innocents. By providing children and young people with opportunities to speak for themselves about their hopes and fears, their achievements and the impact of adult behaviour on their lives, media professionals can remind the public that children deserve to be respected as individual human beings. Media professionals have an obligation to respect children's human rights, in how they operate and how they represent them.

The International Federation of Journalists (2005) notes that all journalists and media professionals have a duty to maintain the highest ethical and professional standards and should promote within the industry, the widest possible dissemination of information about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its implications for the exercise of independent journalism. Media organisations should regard violation of the rights of children and issues related to children's safety, privacy, security, their education, health and social welfare and all forms of exploitations, as important questions for investigation and public debate. Children have an absolute right to education, the only exceptions, being those explicitly set out in these guidelines. Journalistic activity, which touches on the lives and welfare of children, should always be carried out with appreciation of the vulnerable situation of children.

Furthermore, by providing children with opportunities to speak for themselves about their hopes and fears, their achievements and the impact of adult behaviour and decisions on their lives, media professionals can improve the representation of children's issues. The challenge is to cover these issues within the context of journalist independence and in a manner, which respects the ethical issues involved.

The media as the watchdog of the society have a crucial role to play in promoting and protecting human rights in Nigeria. The media serve as an effective network for educating and informing the people of human rights and also, making those who often trample on people's rights to know that they are doing the wrong thing. The media generally, could be of immense assistance in this direction. The role of the media in safeguarding human rights cannot be overemphasised. Through the media, the people can be aware of their fundamental human rights and the constitutional protection of their rights. Through constant vigilance on infringement of human rights and by exposing police brutality and repression, the media have caused a significant rise in public awareness of these issues.

The media can be used to fight against child tracking and women tracking in Nigeria and the world beyond. This implies that the media can create awareness about gender issues. In societies where human abuses are rampant, the media can be used to raise international and national awareness of human rights. Only the media can presently fulfill this watchdog function of promoting human rights. Pate (2011) argues that the role of the press in the protection and advancement of human rights within the context of its social responsibility in the society includes:

- exposing cases of human rights abuses and violations;
- to expose perpetrators of human rights abuses for moral condemnation and legal actions;
- to publicise the plights of victims for people to know or see, so that they could wake up, react and demand for justice;
- to discourage human rights abuses.
- to help secure redress or compensation for victims;
- to enlighten and sensitise the general public on possible human rights violations;
- to assist law enforcement officials and human rights groups to track down cases of human rights abuses; and
- to educate the people on how to use appropriate communication channels to articulate their views and give expressions to their aspirations.

### **Factors Militating against Mass Media Coverage of Human Rights Violation**

The inclusion of human rights issues as news stories is said to be better than how it used to be. Although human rights issues sometimes make it to news stories, Ovsiovitich



(1993) argues that as a newsworthy topic, only little attention is being given to them by the media. Research indicate that human rights as a concept often fails to be used as a subject in the heading of media stories, though some specific terms often used point to human rights indirectly. However, this is problematic as they do not enhance a comprehensive understanding of human rights.

The inability of journalists to comprehend what human rights are, as well as the contents of human rights instruments has resulted in them seeing human rights from the perspective of war. The lack of knowledge of these human rights instruments instills in them the fear of being labeled as politically biased should they incorporate human rights issues in their news stories. Unknowingly to some journalists unaware of human rights issues, they do in reality come in contact with such issues every day. There is a skewed notion about the places where human rights violations occur, such that western journalists reason that these violations only happen outside their countries, without knowing that there are similar issues right around them. Space constraint limits the treatment of human rights issues in-depth by the media (ICHRP, 2002). Other constraints include the dearth of journalists to cover human rights news and the danger posed in a conflict situation impedes the coverage of human rights reporting as in the case of Congo (Schimmel, 2009).

Heinze and Freedman (2010) note that pressure to attract reader interest, and to respond to the most topical and controversial issues overpower any priority that might be placed on comprehensive human rights coverage. Another problem with human rights coverage by the media is the prioritization of civil and political rights over economic, social and cultural rights, which are hardly reported (ICHRP, 2002). For instance, Henny (1997) notes that there was no information on the survival of the culture and heritage of numerous indigenous people[s] living in remote areas around the globe. It is only since the United Nations year of the World's Indigenous People[s] (1993) that some information has begun to trickle through the media about the threats under which Indigenous People[s] live around the world.

Perhaps, this might be as a result of the notion that news organisations do not have the inherent obligation to report every aspect of human rights; they only choose what to report, as they have no duty to privilege human rights stories over other stories. Journalists believe they have interest in human rights reporting as long as the stories are newsworthy. Besides, there is the notion that human rights do not rate high in readers surveys (ICHRP, 2002).

Even if some human rights issues do not qualify to be newsworthy, the question is: are the media not supposed to make them newsworthy, going by the fact that they are

specially trained professionals? It is the stand of this research that the media are expected to put their skills to good use by making human rights issues attention getting news stories, no matter how insipid they might appear to be.

## **2.2. Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the agenda setting theory.

Anorue, Obayi, Onyebuchi, Odemelam, Ekwe (2012) noted that agenda-setting theory refers to the media's capacity to cause an issue to be elevated in importance in the mind of the public through repeated focus or coverage. This statement was supported by Anyadike (2009), who opined that "the basic principle in the agenda-setting theory is the ability of the mass media to restructure the audience thinking and perception of events". Izuogu (2009, p.32) observes that;

Considerable evidence has accumulated that editors and broadcasters play an important part in shaping our social reality as they go about their day-to-day task of choosing and displaying news... In short, the mass media may not be successful in telling us what to think but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about.

One of the powers or effects of the mass media is agenda-setting. McCombs and Shaw quoted by Griffin (1991) explain that the "mass media have ability to transfer the salience of items on their news agenda to the public agenda. We judge as important what the media judge as important. Media coverage of issues confers importance on them and helps the audience to treat certain issues as also being more important than others. The conferment consequently influences the attitudes or decisions of the audience towards the subjects on the agenda. The setting of agenda by the media implies that people look up to them for cues to issues of salience. People want the media to assist them to determine 'reality' and influence norms. The media often choose and emphasize certain topics, thereby causing the public to also choose and emphasize these issues Griffin (1991). According to McQuail (2003), the media help to establish an order of priorities in a society about its problems and objectives.

McQuail and Windahl (2003), quoting McCombs and Shaw, state that "audiences not only learn about public issues and other matters through the media, they also learn how much importance to attach to an issue or topic from the emphasis the mass media place upon it." The basic idea is that amongst a given range of issues or topics, those which get more media attention will grow in their familiarity and perceived importance over a period of time and those which get less will decline correspondingly. Brosius and Weimann (2002) point out that

“even though the media may not be very successful in telling us what opinions to hold, they are often quite effective in telling us what to have opinions or what not to think about.” By paying attention to such issues and neglecting others, the mass media will have an effect on public opinion. People will tend to know about these things which the mass media deal with and adopt the order of priority assigned to different issues. Cassata and Asante (1998) also explain that the agenda-setting theory assumes that a direct, positive relationship exists between media coverage and the salience of a topic in the public mind. The relationship is stated in causal terms: by conferring status on an issue, the media structure what is important.

Thus, the media set the agenda for discussion about human right abuses. According to Folarin (2002), the following are some of the tools responsible for media agenda setting:

- The quantity or frequency of reporting.
- Prominence given to the reports-through headlines display, pictures and layout in newspapers, magazines, films, graphics, timing on radio and television.
- The degree of conflict generated by the reports; and
- The Cumulative media-specific effects over time.

On the other hand, Aneato, Onabajo, and Osifeso, (2012) and Daramola (2003) provide the following as the assumptions of the theory:

- The mass media, such as the press, do not reflect social reality because news is filtered, chosen and shaped by the newsroom staff.
- People get their news from limited sources because people do not pay attention to all outlets, thus they rest on the mass media.
- Few media agenda which were chosen by professional gatekeepers lead people to perceive given issues as important.
- There is a relationship between news coverage and public perception of the importance of the issues.

The theory is therefore relevant to the study because the media can be used to set the agenda of human rights in Nigeria, so that the people will think along that line.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research Design

This study adopted survey research design. Survey is highly useful in the field of social and behavioural sciences and indeed, in any study that has to do with human action and studies that have individual as unit of analysis. This method was considered appropriate for this study since, it provided all demographic and psychographic information, judgmental views and opinions from respondents on the topic that was investigated.

#### 3.2. Population of the Study

Population, according to Nworgu (1991) is the limits within which the research findings are applicable. It is defined in such a way that the results of the investigations are generalized". Wimmer and Dominick (2003) defined population as a group or class of subjects, variables, concepts or phenomena. Dermer and Nicholas (1989) lend credence to this by saying that population is the group or elements about which you are planning to make your generalizations while Obaze and Onosu (2009) define population as a theoretically specified aggregation of survey elements.

Therefore, the population used for this study are residents of Auch. The population is estimated at 150,000 (National Population Commission, 2006). The justification for using this figure as the population of the study is due to the fact that the figure was arrived at during the last census held in 2006. Till now, there have not been any census to ascertain the current population of Auch.

#### 3.3. Sample Size

The sample size for this study is 400 which were drawn from the population. This sample size is made up of individuals who have been selected randomly from the population.

In getting the sample size of 400, the researcher employed the Taro Yamane's formula;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(0.05)^2}$$

n = sample size

N = Population

0.05 = Margin of error

$$\begin{aligned}
n &= \frac{150,000}{1 + 150,000 (0.05)^2} \\
&= \frac{150,000}{1 + 150,000 (0.0025)} \\
&= \frac{150,000}{150,001 \times 0.0025} \\
&= \frac{150,000}{375} \\
&= 400
\end{aligned}$$

### **3.4. Sampling Procedure**

The random sampling method was used in this study. The random sampling is a scientific technique whereby every element within a population has an equal chance of being selected. The random sampling is best for this study because it allows the researcher to objectively select his sample.

### **3.5. Validity of the Instrument**

Questionnaire was the valid instrument used for the study. The survey questionnaire was rightly structured to measure the independent and dependent variables identified in the research questions. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions appropriate to elicit the desired information. The questionnaire was chosen as a valid instrument for this study due to its ability to standardize the research questions to ensure uniformity of answers from respondents. The questions were brief and direct for easy responses allowing approximately 30 seconds for each question.

### **3.6. Reliability of the Instrument**

The measuring instrument was constructed in a way that the items in the questionnaire were used to measure the research questions and relevant variables which led the respondents to answer the questions in the instrument. Therefore, the test-retest method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. The research instrument was pre-tested among twelve respondents in order to ascertain whether they understand the questions raised in the questionnaire or not.

### 3.7. Method of Data Collection

Data was collected by use of structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to ask respondents to tick only the options that best agreed with the survey questions asked as well as indicating their opinions in writing where necessary. The questionnaire for the study consisted of both closed and open ended questions. Four hundred (400) copies of questionnaires were distributed for the purpose of this study. Out of the 400 copies of questionnaire that was administered for the purpose of this study, 20 were invalid, making the return rate of copies of questionnaire distributed 380, representing a response rate of 95% percent of the respondents.

### 3.8. Method of Data Analysis and Discussion

The data collected were analysed using the simple percentage analysis and were presented with the aid of tables. The simple percentage data analysis was adopted to enable the researcher fully explore and plain the data that were collected and collated from the questionnaire without the use of complex mathematical models which are generally not easy to grasp.

Below, is the formula for calculating simple percentage which was used;

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{actual response}}{\text{total sample size}} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

Where actual response = number of respondents.

Total sample size = total number of respondents.

The data were measured in terms of the frequency and percentage distribution of the different categories of variables that were displayed in the tables. The percentage method was adopted for presentation of data that was analyzed with regards to its efficiency, wide use and ease of understanding.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.1. Preamble

This chapter is concerned with the presentation and analysis of data collected through the use of questionnaire.

During the course of this research, 400 copies of questionnaires were printed and distributed to the respondents. Out of the 400 copies of questionnaires that were administered to the respondents, 20 copies were wrongly filled and 380 copies were returned. Therefore, the data collected is shown in the tables below

#### 4.2. Analysis of Respondents' Bio-Data

**Table 1: Gender of the Respondents**

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Male	217	57
Female	163	43
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2022**

**Table 2: Age Range**

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
18-25	111	29
26-45	200	53
46 and above	69	18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2022**

**Table 3: Marital Status**

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Married	179	47
Single	201	53
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2022**

**Table 4: Educational Qualification**

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
FLSC/SSCE	17	4
OND	130	34
HND/BSC	209	55
Others	24	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2022

**Table 5: Occupation of Respondents**

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Students	109	29
Civil Servants	217	57
Self Employed	54	14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2022

#### 4.3. Presentation and Analysis of Psychographic Data Collected

**Table 6: Have you ever read any story on human right abuses in any Nigerian print media?**

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	380	100
No	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2022

**Table 7: In which of the following print media are human rights stories reported the most?**

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Magazine	27	7
Newspaper	353	93
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2022



**Table 8:** Has the print media been effective in the coverage of human right abuses in Nigeria?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	214	56
No	166	44
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2022

**Table 9:** How would you rate print media coverage of human right abuses in Nigeria?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Excellent	214	56
Good	61	16
Moderate	45	12
Poor	23	6
Very poor	37	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2022

**Table 10:** Are journalists always objective in the coverage of human right abuses in Nigeria?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	105	28
No	275	72
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2022

**Table 11:** Do you agree that ownership of the media militates against the effective coverage of human right abuses by journalists?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly agree	284	75
Agree	28	7
Strongly disagree	12	3
Disagree	56	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2022

**Table 12:** Which slant do the print media usually take in the reportage of human right abuses in Nigeria?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Favourable	116	31
Unfavourable	213	56
Neutral	51	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2022

**Table 13:** How do you perceive the credibility of print media in news dissemination and management of human right abuses in Nigeria?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Excellent	214	56
Good	61	16
Moderate	45	12
Poor	23	6
Very poor	37	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2022

#### 4.4. Discussion of Findings

All the data collated for the purpose of this study shall be discussed here;

**Research Question 1:** What is the level of prominence given to the coverage of human right abuses in Nigeria?

The objective of this research question is to ascertain the level of prominence given to the coverage of human right abuses in Nigeria. The data on Table 6 and 7 were used to answer this research question. The data on Table 6 shows that all the respondents have read a story on human right abuse in a Nigerian print media. The data on Table 7 shows that 27 respondents (7%) noted that human right stories are mostly reported in magazine while 353 respondents opined that human right stories are mostly reported in newspaper.

Based on the above, the level of prominence given to the coverage of human right abuses in Nigeria is relatively high as majority of the stories are found in newspapers.

**Research Question 2:** What is the level of the effectiveness of print media coverage of human abuses in Nigeria?

The objective of this research question is to determine the level of the effectiveness of print media coverage of human right abuses in Nigeria. The data on Table 8 and 9 were used to answer this research question.

The data on Table 8 shows that 214 respondents (56%) answered in the affirmative that the print media has been effective in the coverage of human right abuses in Nigeria while 166 respondents (44%) answered in the negative. The data on Table 9 shows that 214 respondents (56%) rated print media coverage of human right abuses in Nigeria as excellent; 61 respondents (16%) rated it as good; 45 respondents (12%) rated it as moderate while 23 respondents (6%) rated it as poor and 37 respondents (10%) rated it as very poor.

Based on the above, it is evident that the print media has been effective in the coverage of human right abuses in Nigeria.

**Research Question 3:** What is the level of journalists' objectivity in the coverage of human right abuses in Nigeria?

The objective of this research question is to ascertain the level of journalists' objectivity in the coverage of human right abuses in Nigeria. The data on Table 10 and 11 were used to answer this research question.

The data on Table 10 shows that 105 respondents (28%) answered in the affirmative that journalists are objective in the coverage of human right abuses in Nigeria while 275 respondents (72%) answered in the negative. The data on Table 11 shows that 284 respondents (75%) strongly agree that ownership of the media militates against the effective coverage of human right abuses by journalists; 28 respondents (7%) agree while 12 respondents (3%) strongly disagree and 56 respondents (15%) disagree.

Based on the above, it is evident that journalists are not objective in the coverage of human right abuses in Nigeria due to factors such as ownership of the media.

**Research Question 4:** How credible is the print media in news dissemination and management of human right abuses in Nigeria?

The objective of this research question is to determine the credibility of print media in news dissemination and management of human right abuses in Nigeria. The data on Table 12 and 13 were used to answer this research question.

The data on Table 12 shows that 116 respondents (31%) opined that the print media took a favourable slant in the reportage of human right abuses in Nigeria while 213 respondents (56%) noted that the print media took an unfavourable slant and 51 respondents (13%) said that the broadcast media took a neutral slant. The data on Table 13 shows that 214 respondents (56%) perceive the credibility of print media in news dissemination and management of human right abuses in Nigeria excellent; 61 respondents (16%) perceive it as good; 45 respondents (12%) perceive it as moderate while 23 respondents (6%) perceive it as poor and 37 respondents (10%) perceive it as very poor.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1. Summary**

In recent time, media supports have been instrumental in global awareness about human rights by providing publicity to intergovernmental actions and supporting non-governmental organisations and individuals who function as worldwide watchdogs and whistle-blowers. The relationship between media and human rights makes it essential to know how human rights are reported in the media.

With a growing evidence of repressive conditions in democracy – where the media are expected to be freer and able to cover human rights situations without interference – it is similarly important to examine the pattern of media coverage in democratic regimes. There is a need to understand media conduct and performance regarding respects for human rights in democracy, especially when it is characterized by repressive conditions. Therefore, this research hopes to add to our understanding of the relationship between media and human rights in democracy and human rights coverage in a national media. This studied news media in Nigeria. The country, since another change of regime to multi-party democracy in 1999, is characterized by crises of many dimensions, providing impetus for serious repression and disrespects for human rights.

Human rights were protected in Nigerian constitution and the country is a signatory to most international treaties guaranteeing human rights. The media in Nigeria are also considered important partners in monitoring human rights abuses and have been constitutionally empowered to uphold the fundamental values of democracy and “...uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people” (Section 21 of the 1999 Constitution). Previous studies that examined media human rights coverage in Nigeria only examined media coverage during military regimes (Pate, 2011; Olatunji, 2011). It is therefore important to also understand the performance of the media in ensuring human rights are protected in democratic regimes in Nigeria.

The power of the media in enhancing human rights through the nurture of democracy is considered a sine qua non for the respect of human rights. This highlights the symbiotic relationship between the media and democracy. However, though the media are considered important in the promotion of human rights, which is a positive aspect of the media, the same media have often been entangled in human rights violations at various times.

## **5.2. Conclusion**

The findings from this study have demonstrated that media reports focus on a very limited definition of human rights and therefore, while the media reports can serve as a supplemental source of information, they do not provide a satisfactory means of understanding systematic human rights abuses in Nigeria. By implication, when journalists do not understand these rights and have been unable to recognize violations, it will affect how human rights abuses are exposed and how much people know about them and ultimately, how the relevant bodies responsible for human rights protection may be pressurized to act. This level of poor coverage of human rights by the media as one of the principal actors in rights monitoring and reporting regimes can affect compliance to human rights and humanitarian laws in Nigeria.

The media play an important role in promoting and protecting human abuses. This is because, they are agents of information and they can educate the public on the fundamental rights. These rights are numerous; they, among others, include: right to life, freedom of expression, freedom of association, etc.

The media have been shown to play a dual role - as a promoter of human rights in view of their coverage of human rights abuses, and, as abuser of human rights as shown in the Rwandan genocide. Should the media then stay put in the promotion of human rights in view of the power they wield, or, should they stay out of human rights because of their occasional violations of human rights? But it seems the positive role of the media far outweighs any violations which might have marred their role. As indicated by the action of the BBC in producing a documentary on child labour in Ghana and Ivory Coast, the media will continue to be important in human rights promotion because they are needed to enthrone and nurture democracy which is in turn needed to guarantee respect for human rights. The media, in addition, create awareness on human rights and human rights abuses to help individuals whose rights have been violated to seek redress.

## **5.3. Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;

- The media should be massively employed to promote the issue of human rights in Nigeria, because they are persuasive in nature.

- The media must know the values that are non-negotiable; one these issues is the issue of human rights. The media must address these fundamental issues to be able to practise its delegated duties effectively and efficiently.
- To fight against human rights, the media can work with non-governmental organisations to strengthen human rights and the media can also be used to wage war against gender discrimination and religious extremists and can also oppose violence against women and children.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **APPENDIX A**

Department of Mass Communication,  
School of Information and Communication Technology,  
Auchi Polytechnic,  
PMB 13,  
Auchi

Dear Respondent,

I am a final year student of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi and I am currently carrying out a research on **“An Assessment of the Print Media’s Credibility in News Dissemination and the Management of Human Right Abuses in Nigeria”**.

This study is in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of Higher National Diploma in Mass Communication. Therefore, to accomplish this research work, you are expected to kindly help the researcher by responding to these questions. This is purely an academic exercise and the confidentiality of information you give is assured.

Thanks for your cooperation.

Yours Faithfully

---

**Airuedomwinya Abiemwense Abigail**  
**(Researcher)**

## **APPENDIX B**

### **INSTRUCTION**

Please tick appropriately in the space provided. The questionnaire is divided into two parts namely: Section A which consist of your personal data and Section B.

### **SECTION A: PERSONAL DATA**

#### **1. Gender of Respondents**

- a) Male ( )
- b) Female ( )

#### **2. Age Range**

- a) 18-25 ( )
- b) 26-35 ( )

#### **3. Marital Status**

- a) Married ( )
- b) Single ( )

#### **4. Educational Qualification**

- a) FLSC/SSCE ( )
- b) OND ( )
- c) HND/BSC ( )
- d) OTHERS ( )

#### **5. Occupation of Respondents**

- a) Student ( )
- b) Civil Servant ( )
- c) Self Employed ( )

## **SECTION B**

**6.** Have you ever read any story on human right abuses in any Nigerian print media?

- a) Yes ( )
- b) No ( )

**7.** In which of the following print media are human rights stories reported the most?

- a) Magazine ( )
- b) Newspaper ( )

**8.** Has the print media been effective in the coverage of human right abuses in Nigeria?

- a) Yes ( )
- b) No ( )

**9.** How would you rate print media coverage of human right abuses in Nigeria?

- a) Excellent ( )
- b) Good ( )
- c) Moderate ( )
- d) Poor ( )
- e) Very poor ( )

**10.** Are journalists always objective in the coverage of human right abuses in Nigeria?

- a) Yes ( )
- b) No ( )

**11.** Do you agree that ownership of the media militates against the effective coverage of human right abuses by journalists?

- a) Strongly agree ( )
- b) Agree ( )
- c) Strongly disagree ( )
- d) Disagree ( )

**12.** Which slant do the print media usually take in the reportage of human right abuses in Nigeria?

- a) Favourable (    )
- b) Unfavourable (    )
- c) Neutral (    )

**13.** How do you perceive the credibility of print media in news dissemination and management of human right abuses in Nigeria?

- a) Excellent (    )
- b) Good (    )
- c) Moderate (    )
- d) Poor (    )
- e) Very poor (    )