

Analysis of Newspapers Coverage of Child Health Issues in Nigeria: A case of The Guardian, Vanguard, and Daily Sun

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Abstract

Child morbidity and mortality have continued to be a global health issue especially in Nigeria. Media coverage is vital in providing information on child health. This is more so because information provided through the media is of paramount importance to caregivers and to the public as it increases awareness about health practices which promote healthy living for these children. This study examines the coverage of child health issues in selected Nigeria newspapers. The major focus is on frequency, prominence, source and nature of news report on child health issues in selected Nigeria newspapers. The study is a content analysis of three purposively selected nationally circulated newspapers –The Guardian, Vanguard, and Daily Sun. The findings revealed that the selected newspapers did not give sufficient coverage to child health issues within the period of study. Findings also disclosed lack of prominence given to child health issues as most of the stories were placed in the inside pages of the sampled newspapers. Consequently, it was discovered from the study that other issues such as autism, congenital brain diseases, sickle cell, disabilities, cleft lip issues, cancer, kidney, liver diseases, child obesity and measles were most dominant issues published in newspapers. Also the result revealed that the selected newspapers relied more on events or occurrences on that took place within the country for news reports on child health issues. Since the media particularly newspapers are the key channels of information dissemination, they should give more prominence and employ in-depth analysis in covering issues on child health for better understanding of the issues at stake and not only through straight news.

Keywords: Coverage, Child health, Newspaper, Prominence, Issues

Introduction

The Policy Project/Nigeria (2002.p.3) states that “the first five years of life are the most crucial to the physical and intellectual development of children and can determine their potential to learn and thrive for a lifetime”. However, in many developing countries of the world, child health is at stake due to diseases which can be averted. According to UNICEF 2006 report, nearly 10 million children under five die worldwide and from which 4 million die within the first month of life, half of these within the first 24 hours (Mason, 2008). In 2012, 6.6 million children died before reaching their fifth birthday, mostly from preventable causes and treatable diseases, even though the knowledge and technologies for life-saving interventions are available (UNICEF, 2013). Buttressing this point, the report from UNICEF, WHO, World Bank, UN-DESA Population Division (2016) disclosed that about half of under-five deaths occur in only five countries: China, Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Nigeria, and Pakistan. India has (22%) while Nigeria (13%) which when summed together account for more than one-third of all deaths of children under the age of five. From the above report, Africa is the only continent that has seen rising numbers of deaths among children under five since the 1970s (Ogunjimi, Ibe, and Ikorok, 2012), which is an indication that Africa remains the most difficult place in the world for a child to survive until age five.

In the case of Nigeria, child survival is threatened by illnesses, which account for the majority of morbidity and mortality in childhood(Policy project, 2002).Nigeria loses about 2,300 under five years old, making it the second largest contributor to the under-five mortality rate in the world (Hafai, 2016). Sadly, some of the causes of child mortality in Nigeria can be forestalled through immunization, exclusive breastfeeding, oral re-hydration therapy (ORT) and other child health measures. “With a 13 percent immunization rate for children between 12-23 months, Nigeria has the lowest vaccination rate in Africa” (Abiola, 2015). Despite all the health interventions on child health, death rates in Nigeria still remain highest in the world’s record.

- On the part of the media, they play a very important role in generating awareness among the public and also setting agenda on pertinent issues for the development of a nation (Saurav, Kushumand & Shrestha, 2002).Speaking more on this, Oluwadun and Obono (2013) note that information and communication rule the world and without communication the world will be in darkness. According to them, for every person to be well-informed and less ignorant there has to be communication. Oluwadun et al. (2013,p.112) further state “that this is why the people have relied on the media for accurate and well trusted information and therefore, it is the duty of the mass media to provide information on prevalent child health issues in the society”.
 - Newspapers according to Khalid and Ahmedare (2014, p.6) “are the main source of disseminating information and they play a key role as agenda-setters in modern

society”. Oluwadun et al. (2013, p.113) on their part added that “newspapers are generally known for their daily, current, timely information reportage and their easily accessible storage factors”. Therefore, they are, expected to have vital roles to play through its daily reportage on issues in the society (Oluwadun et al., 2013). Mass media particularly the newspapers can report on health issues and make people aware so as to prevent the spread of various diseases because the media have the power to direct audience attention towards certain issues (Gupta & Sinha, 2010) and highlighting various issues to resolve the problem. Nigerian media like any other in the world report on issues of interest to the society, which includes health issues that cut across all ages and gender. They equally “serve as an instrument in breaking the silence that surrounds child health issues” (Tesema, 2012, p.6). Despite the role the media especially the newspapers in Nigeria play in information dissemination on health, there are still increasing cases of child deaths. Then the big question is, are the media not reporting issues on child health? Are they not frequent? Are they not prominent? What are the types of information and what is the source? This study therefore sought to investigate the coverage of child health issues in some selected national dailies in Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

The health of an individual, more especially at the early years, is very crucial for the proper development and performance of such a person, and for the economy as a whole (Yashim, 2014).As stated by WHO (2016) “children represent the future, and ensuring their healthy growth and development ought to be a major concern of all societies as they are particularly vulnerable to infectious diseases”. In Nigeria, child health is threatened by various infectious diseases.

On the hand, the media are powerful because they penetrate every segment of modern day society and effectively influence how people view themselves, their neighbours, their communities and their world. Uwom and Oloyede (2014) pointed out that the media are significant sources of health-related information and can shape the way we think about and discuss health. The media being the major means through which health information get to the masses particularly caregivers of children, have to be at the fore-front of the campaigns to ensure that child health issues are brought to inconsequential level.

Accordingly, several studies by scholars (Saurav, Kushum & Shrestha, 2002; Gupta & Sinha, 2010; Oyero, 2011; Ejima, 2014; Odoemelam, Onumadu & Arua, 2014; Uwom & Oloyede, 2014; Bello, 2015) have been carried out on public health and rights of the child but there seems to be no documented study on child health issues as recorded particularly in the Nigeria print media. Hence, this study intends to fill the gap.

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives are to:

1. Ascertain the frequency of coverage of child health issues in *The Guardian*, *Daily Sun* and *Vanguard* newspapers.
2. Find out the prominence given to child health issues in the three selected newspapers.
3. Determine the type of child health issues most covered in the three newspapers.
4. And the source of news on child health.

Research Questions

1. What is the frequency of coverage of child health issues in *The Guardian*, *Daily Sun* and *Vanguard* newspapers?
2. What is the prominence given to child health issues in the three selected newspapers?
3. What type of child health issues most covered in the three selected newspapers?
4. What is the source of news on child health?

Literature Review

According to World Health Organization (1948) health is a “state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. In other words, child health is a state of physical, mental, intellectual, social and emotional well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (Health Workgroup, 2007, p.1). To Kuo, Etzel, Chilton, Watson and Gorski, (2012) child health is the extent to which individual child, children or groups of children are able or enabled to:

- (a) Develop and realize their potential,
- (b) Satisfy their needs, and
- (c) Develop the capacities that allow them to interact successfully with their biological, physical, and social environments

Key issues on child health in Nigeria

The state of child health in Nigeria has been of concern as the country continues to combat with various preventable and curable child diseases. This state of child health has attracted attention from the global health agencies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundations (Bello, 2015). In addition to that, a lot of educational campaigns and media campaigns such as Immunization, Hand washing, ORT/SSS, Exclusive breastfeeding, and Roll back malaria campaigns have tactically been put to use to bring to an end issues on child health, in spite of that, these issues continue to step up.

Child health issues abound, but as stated by UNICEF(2016), preventable or treatable infectious diseases such as malaria, pneumonia, diarrhoea, measles and HIV/AIDS account for more than 70 per cent of the estimated one million under-five

deaths in Nigeria. Buttressing this point, the General Manager, Reckitt Benkisser (RB) West Africa, Rahul Murgai, said “it is sad to note that diarrhea still kills more than 194, 000 children under five annually in Nigeria when it can be prevented with simple hygiene practice” (Vanguard 1st March, 2016). In the same way, malnutrition is another underlying cause of morbidity and mortality of a large proportion of children under-5 in Nigeria (UNICEF, 2015). It accounts for more than 50 per cent of deaths of children within this age bracket. It is also important to note that wide regional disparities exist in child health indicators with the North-East and North-West geopolitical zones of the country having the worst child survival figures (UNICEF, 2016; Hafai, 2016). These avertable and treatable child diseases are major impediments to health of children, and its greatest toll is seen among under-five children as well as expectant women in Nigeria.

Apart from malaria, pneumonia, diarrhoeal diseases and HIV, other impediments to child health include: prematurity, neonatal diseases, birth asphyxia, malnutrition, poor environmental health, low access and utilization of quality health care services and attitude of caregivers. The data obtained from Policy Project/Nigeria (2002, p.10) revealed that a “large proportion (30–40%) of infant morbidity and mortality globally and within Nigeria can be attributed to preventable factors during pregnancy and delivery”. Accordingly, the report also exposed that low-birth weight, which underlies a significant percentage of early deaths in infancy, is mainly as a result of poor maternal weight gain during pregnancy, stem from maternal morbidity caused by malaria and HIV/AIDS, among others. In addition to that, “asphyxia and birth trauma, which also contribute to high infant mortality, occur in conditions of obstructed labour (from cephalo-pelvic disproportion) due to lack of essential obstetric care” (Policy Project/Nigeria, 2002, p.10). Also, infant brain damage can be caused by a variety of ways, including oxygen deprivation, infant jaundice, physical trauma suffered during labor and delivery, and infections in the mother’s body (www.birthinjuryguide.org).

There are several other factors which may affect the health of children, such as the socioeconomic status of the parents. Strengthening this point, Yashim (2014) affirmed that socioeconomic status of parents is a broad determinant, as the income level of the parents determines the health status of the parents, the level of nutrition the child receives, access to sanitation facilities and safe drinking water as well as access to primary health care such as immunizations and vaccinations against diseases including measles, poliomyelitis and others, which all impact on the health of a child. Another determinant according to Novignon (2012) and Yaqub (2002) in Yashim (2014) of the health of a child may be the level of spending on health care both by individuals and by the government. Additionally, “the health and education background of the mother to a large extent influences the health of a child” (Yashim, 2014, p.12).

The report from Health Workgroup (2007) stated that children cannot attain optimal health all alone. They rely on adults in their family as well as in their community to provide them with an environment in which they can learn and grow successfully.

Additionally, maternal health status, habits, and environment during and even before pregnancy greatly impact on the health and well-being of a child. Thus, the good health of a child depends solely on the health and well-being of the mother. This is more so because, when children's health is taken care of or nurtured, supported and there is an absence of physical and mental abuse, or any other deliberate childhood trauma; and there exists chances to gain habits that support good health in childhood, the stage is set for a healthy adulthood who would not have chronic health problems such as overweight/obesity, poor oral health, diabetes as well as other chronic physical and mental health challenges (Health Workgroup, 2007).

Empirical Review

Several studies have examined coverage of specific child health issues to ascertain their level of frequency of coverage, prominence and direction given to such issues in newspapers. In this regard, Saurav, et al. (2002) investigated "Print media coverage on children's issues". The study found vitamin A capsules, polio and HIV/AIDS, as the frequently published issues. Also the study revealed that news/articles primarily dealt with cases, like defective birth of children, tumor cases of children, and personal health problems. Issues such as dysentery, diarrhea, maternal mortality, child mortality, early childhood development, problem of malnutrition, communicable diseases and other aspects which were major health problems in the country were ignored.

Ooko (2014) looked into "Media framing of infectious diseases in Kenya: A case study of pneumonia". The result showed that pneumonia being the leading cause of death in the country; portrayed a bleak scenario of its coverage in the country's print media outlets. With only 43 pneumonia articles in a period of four years was an indication that the disease was not considered newsworthy or significant. They observed that the increased frequency of pneumonia stories in 2011 could be attributed to the government launch of the pneumococcal vaccine (PCV 10) in that year, which was aimed at protecting Kenyan children against a severe type of bacterial pneumonia. The findings also exposed that the coverage of the disease reduced drastically in the subsequent years, once the 'thrill' passed and the vaccine launch became 'old news'. The study also found that all stories pneumonia were placed in the inner pages of the newspapers examined as none made it to the first five pages, even during the launch of the vaccine.

Oyero (2011) examined two newspapers on "How children are reported in Nigerians newspapers: Implication for the realization of the rights of the child". The result showed that the extent of coverage given to children's issues by *The Guardian* and *Daily Times* newspapers showed a gross under-reportage of children's issues. From the result only 97 stories (21.4%) came from *Daily Times* and *The Guardian* had 96 stories representing (21.4%). To Oyero it means that there were several days when children's issues did not feature at all in the newspapers' coverage.

In another research work by Ejima (2014) on the “Contribution of Nigerian online newspapers to public health education in Nigeria: a content analysis of selected Nigerian Newspapers”. Five dimensions of health, namely, physical, social, emotional, spiritual and intellectual dimensions were considered in the study. Specific areas of these dimensions were also considered. These were nutrition, occupational health, Maternal and Child Health (MCH), environmental health, drug education, social/emotional/mental health, family life and sex education, safety education and general health issues. Specific ailments or ill-health conditions were also given consideration. These were cancer, HIV/AIDS, coronary/cardiac diseases and hepatitis/liver diseases. The result of the study indicates that the physical dimension of health was given greater attention in the contributions by the newspapers under review. All the Newspapers gave adequate attention (10.5% and above) to general health issues, Maternal and Child Health, and nutrition except the Leadership newspaper that gave 2.4% and 7.1% to nutrition and Maternal and Child Health respectively which is less than the criterion proportion of 7.7%. The study recommended among others the reading of newspapers for education and nutrition, Maternal and Child Health.

In another perspective, an analysis of newspaper coverage of HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio in Nigeria carried out by Bello (2015) to determine the level of attention Nigerian newspapers have given to these three diseases in their reportage over the years in relation to their high rate of occurrence in the country. The findings showed that Nigerian newspapers did not give adequate attention to HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio in their health coverage. To Bello it implies that this may have contributed to the high prevalence of these diseases in Nigeria. The study suggests for more newspaper coverage of these diseases by Nigerian newspapers and other media channels in order to reduce their prevalence in the Nigerian society.

In the same development, Odoemelam, Onumadu and Arua (2014) looked into “Media coverage of HIV/AIDS: A Content Analysis of two Nigerian Newspapers (*The Guardian and Daily Sun*)”. The study examined the frequency of coverage of the HIV/AIDS in *The Guardian* and *Daily Sun* newspapers. The result indicated that HIV/AIDS information was under reported in the two Nigerian newspapers particularly in *Daily Sun* newspaper. They pointed out that, the low number of news report on HIV/AIDS was surprising given that the period of study covered the month of December when the world celebrated the worlds AIDS day. The study recommended that the coverage of the HIV/AIDS should be placed in strategic pages of newspaper, for easy access by the public, and government should also subsidize the expenses to enable their increase coverage.

Similarly, Uwom and Oloyede (2014) in their study, “Newspaper coverage of health issues in Nigeria (A study of *The Guardian* and *The Punch* Newspapers January 2010 to December 2011)”. The result showed that the single disease that garnered the most media attention was HIV/AIDS, and the most reported genre was straight news story. Findings also revealed that the newspapers did not give prominence to the health issues by way of placement and giving it enough space. They also observed that though

the two selected newspapers provided information regarding health matters some other more controversial issues took the leads. The issues reported were politics, crime, and economy among others.

From the foregoing, it is observed that even though there are studies on public health and children's issues, there is still dearth of studies on child health issues as captured in the Nigeria print media. Hence, this study will explore this gap.

Theoretical framework

This study is anchored on Agenda-Setting Theory and Social Responsibility Theory. Agenda-Setting Theory was first suggested by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw based on their study of the media's role in the 1968 presidential election. This theory states that the media dictate what the people think about, not what the people think. As explained by Ochuodho (2017, p.38) agenda-setting theory entails "placement of articles, especially those that interest the public and placing them prominently on pages, where they can get the attention of the readers or viewers" Nwabueze et al. (2015) affirmed that by frequently covering and giving prominence to issues in the media, the audience attaches importance to those issues more than others and by so doing, the mass media set agenda for public discussion. They noted that the media, through agenda setting role tell the public which issue is important. This therefore means that examination of agenda-setting can present an explanation of why information about certain issues are addressed frequently while other issues are event based to the public, as well as how public opinion is shaped (Tesema, 2012). Linking this theory to health issues it "assumes that if a specific health problem receives constant attention in the media, the population believes that the health problem is an important one" (Ochuodho, 2017, p.38). The relevance of this theory to the study is that, through constant media reportage, issues on child health become important public discourse and the degree of prominence assigned to the issues in Nigeria could be ascertained through media reports. This is more so because the media determine to a certain extent the type, amount and frequency of information that reach the general public.

Social Responsibility Theory on the other is an extension of the libertarian theory of the press. It places emphasis on the moral and social responsibility of persons as well as institutions which operate the mass media (Naji, 2012). In other words, the theory insists that the mass media should permeate and represent all the strata of the society (Stephen, 2014). Other studies in the area of health studies by Igbinoba (2008); Akpor and Clever (2016); William, Layefa and Taiwo (2016) all affirmed that the media must have social conscience, be devoted to public welfare and public service; they should be responsive to problems in the society. Thus, it is the responsibility of the Nigerian press to report frequently on child health issues in Nigeria by providing several media contents through accurate, objective and balanced reports.

Method

The study is a content analysis. Wimmer and Dominick (2011) note that this method evaluates communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner

for the purpose of measuring variables. In other words, this method was found appropriate as it involves examination of the manifest contents of newspapers in relation to child health issues in Nigeria. Three Nigeria newspapers: *The Guardian*, *Vanguard* and *Daily Sun* were purposively selected for this study because of their accessibility and availability.

The study universe consists of editions of *The Guardian*, *Vanguard* and *Daily Sun* newspapers published from 1st January to March 31st; 2016. This covers a period of three months. The reason behind this choice is because child hood illnesses and deaths are more prevalent during the cold dry months (Tagbo, Mwenda, Armah, Obidike, Okafor and Oguonu, 2014).

The universe of the study is made up of the number of editions of newspapers that make up the three months multiplied by three gives the total of 273 (i.e.91x 3 = 273) editions. The researchers used census sampling technique to determine the sample size. This means that all the 273 editions published by the three newspapers (*The Guardian*, *Vanguard* and *Daily Sun*. i.e.91 editions each) were analyzed.

The units of analysis include the following: News, Features, Editorials, and Opinions. Under each of the units of analysis.

The following are the content categories:

- Frequency (number of times each unit of analysis appeared),
- Placement (using Front page, Back page and Inside page),
- Source of news (using Local and International news).
- Types of child health issues (using Malaria, HIV/AIDS, Diarrhoea, Poliomyelitis, Pneumonia, Measles and Others).

Data generated in the course of this research were presented using frequency distribution tables with raw figures and simple percentage analysis.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Out of 273 editions of the newspapers studied; *The Guardian*, *Daily Sun* and *Vanguard*, a total of 73 news stories were generated from the three newspapers. The data on frequency of coverage, placement, story type and source of news items in the newspapers were presented in tables below.

Table 1: Frequency of reports on child health issues in the selected Nigeria newspapers

Newspapers	Frequency	Percentage (%)
The Guardian	25	34
Daily Sun	15	21
Vanguard	33	45
Total	73	100

Table 1 shows the total number of reports from 1st January 2016 to 31st March 2016 from the three selected newspapers. From the table, *The Guardian* covered a total of 25 (34%) news stories, *Daily Sun* had 15 (21%) reports while *Vanguard* provided

more reports on child health with 33 (45%). It is apparent from table 1 that the selected print media report child health issues to the public with *Vanguard* having the highest stories on child health issues.

Table 2: Distribution of data based on story type of newspapers report on child health issues

Story type	Newspapers			Total	Percentage (%)
	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>Daily Sun</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>		
News	18	11	29	58	79.4
Editorial	-	1	2	3	4.1
Features	6	3	2	11	15
Opinions	1	-	-	1	1.3
Total	25	15	33	73	100

Table 2 above illustrates the story format used in covering child health issues by the selected newspapers. From the result, news had a total of 58 (79.4%); editorial recorded 3(4.1%); features 11(15.0%) while opinion had 1(1.3%).

Table 3: Distribution of data showing level of prominence in newspaper coverage of child health issues in Nigeria

Prominence	Newspapers			Total	Percentage (%)
	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>Daily Sun</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>		
Front Page	3	-	-	3	4
Inside Page	22	15	33	70	96
Back Page	-	-	-	-	-
Total	25	15	33	73	100

Table 3 above vividly shows the position of the stories on child health issues in the pages of the selected newspapers. Front page presented an abysmal 3 (4%) of the issues, Inside page recorded the highest with 70 (96%) while Back page had no story recorded.

Table 4: Distribution of data showing issues on child health in Nigeria

Child health Issues	Newspapers			Total	Percentage (%)
	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>Daily Sun</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>		
Malaria	2	2	-	4	5.4
HIV/AIDS	1	-	4	5	7
Diarrhoea	2	1	3	6	8.2
Poliomyelitis	2	1	1	4	5.4

Pneumonia	-	-	-	-	-
Measles	1	1	9	11	15
Others	17	10	16	43	58.9
Total	25	15	33	73	100

Looking at the above table 4, malaria and poliomyelitis had 4(5.4%); HIV/AIDS presented 5 (7%) stories; diarrhoea recorded 6 (8.2%); measles had 11(15%) while other issues on child health recorded the highest stories with 43(58.9%).

Table 5: Distribution of data showing source of news on child health issues by the newspapers

Source of news	Newspapers			Total	Percentage (%)
	The Guardian	Daily Sun	Vanguard		
Local news	22	15	28	65	89
International news	3	-	5	8	11
Total	25	15	33	73	100

Table 5 above represents the total number of reports on source of news on child health issues. From the table, Local news recorded 65(89%) while International news had 8 with (11%).

Discussion of Findings

In this section, the findings are discussed as they provide answers to the research questions and it extends to findings of related studies which either agrees or differs with this study. The discussion is guided by the four research questions.

What is the frequency of coverage of child health issues in the Guardian, Daily Sun and Vanguard newspapers?

The result obtained from the data analysis in relation to the proportion of news stories on child health issues across three months of study show that the three selected newspapers: *The Guardian*, *Vanguard* and *The Daily Sun* gave paltry attention to the issues. It important to note that the number of times an issue is reported over other matters relates of its importance or value and as such gives the readers a clue to its significance. As regards the above research question, the result from the analysis of the data in Tables 1 shows vividly that the selected newspapers did not give sufficient coverage to child health issues within the period of study. Only 73 stories on child health issues were gathered out of 273 editions of newspapers studied. This implies that issues on child health are not regarded as crucial as other issues. It is indication that child health issues are treated with levity. This agrees with the findings of Oyero (2011) that the extent of coverage given to children’s issues by *The Guardian and Daily Times* newspapers showed a gross under-reportage of children’s issues and those children seemed to be invisible in the newspapers’ content. The implication of this finding is that the selected newspapers in carrying out their agenda-setting roles did not give much

coverage to child health issues in Nigeria. Due to the high morbidity and mortality rate as a result of child health challenges in Nigeria, “the press is duty bound to serve public interest by providing” (Johnson et al., 2016.p.7) frequently news reports on childhood diseases to curtail the menace.

What is the prominence given to child health issues in the three newspapers?

Prominence in terms of placement of stories determines to a great extent their visibility. As a result, it determines whether the stories are read or not. Going by the data gathered, analyzed and presented in Table 3, the study revealed numbers and percentages of the placement of stories on child health issues by the selected newspapers. Out of 73 stories published by the selected newspapers, 70 stories on child health issues represented with 96% were placed inside page of the selected newspapers. Only three stories were published on the front page of the newspapers. This explains the fact that that greater part of the stories on child health issues published by the selected newspapers appeared inside the pages of the newspapers. This indicates lack of prominence given to child health issues by *The Guardian*, *Vanguard* and *Daily Sun* newspapers. With the high prevalence of child diseases in Nigeria, it is quite appalling that issues on child health are not given adequate prominence by the selected newspapers. Placement of news stories, particularly those on child health and placing them prominently on pages, where they can get the attention of the readers or viewers as explained by Ochuodho (2017), is one of the major ways of creating awareness on childhood killer diseases. Also, through frequent covering of child health issues by the media, the audience attaches importance and work towards reducing the issue to insignificant level. The result on prominence is consistent with that of Saurav, et al. (2002); Oyero (2011); Ejima (2014)Ooko (2014) which revealed that stories on children’s issues were tucked away in the inner pages of the newspapers and that journalists consider young people to be unimportant in societal decision-making processes.

What type of child health issues most covered in the three selected newspapers?

On the aspect of child health issues most covered by the selected newspapers studied, the data presented in Table 5 exposed that other issues such as autism, congenital brain diseases, sickle cell, disabilities, cleft lip issues, cancer, kidney, liver diseases, child obesity and measles were most dominant issues published in the newspapers. This was observed in the news story published by *The Guardian* newspaper on the 18th of February 2016 with the heading: Childhood Cancer. *Daily Sun* newspaper on their own part captured a news story on 1st January, 2016 with the heading: 100 Children with Cleft Lip Undergo Free Surgery in Kwara. Issues such as malaria, HIV/AIDS, diarrhoea and poliomyelitis were less covered. There was no story on pneumonia from the editions studied. From the study, it could be deduced that malaria, HIV/AIDS, diarrhoea and pneumonia which are the major child killer diseases confirmed by UNICEF (2016) and WHO (2016), have not been recognized by the selected newspapers even when its prevalence as well as the implications are enormous. The result of this study is consistent with that of Saurav, Kushum and Shrestha (2002);

Bello (2014); Ooko (2014) who found out in their separate studies that issues such as dysentery, diarrhea, HIV/AIDS, malaria, polio, child mortality, early childhood development, problem of malnutrition, communicable diseases and others aspects of major health problems have not been given adequate attention in their coverage by Nigeria newspapers. As observed by Ooko (2014) in his study, issue like pneumonia was not considered newsworthy or significant. To Bello (2015) less coverage of malaria, HIV/AIDS and polio which also major child health issues may have contributed to the high prevalence of these diseases in Nigeria.

What is the source of news on child health?

The answer to the above research question is found in table 2 and 5. From the result in table 5, most of the reports on child health issues in the selected newspapers emanated from local news. It was also observed that reports on child health issues increased when there were events or occurrences in the country. This implies that news on child health issues were reported mainly by the selected newspapers when there were epidemic in relation to children within Nigeria. This is evident in the report by the *Vanguard newspaper* on the 26th of February, 2016 with the headline: Measles kill 20 Children in Sokoto. Another story was published by the *Daily Sun* newspapers on 20th of February, 2016 with the heading: Source of Infection that killed 17 Children in Lagos under Investigation. Buttressing this point, table 2 above shows vividly that most of the stories reported on child health originated from news. Fewer stories were recorded via editorial, features and opinion articles. It is important to note that issues on child health are well understood by the public when those issues are reported using in-depth analysis. Looking at the result in table 2, it is quite appalling that editorial being the newspapers' stand or views on contemporary issues, have not adequately presented their views on child health issues in Nigeria. On the other hand, feature articles go beyond the straight news presentation by providing informative stories to the public. In this study feature articles recorded only 15%. The implication is that descriptive and/or investigative stories that will expound or provide in-depth analysis on child health issues in Nigeria were low in *The Guardian*, *Vanguard* and *Daily Sun* newspapers. Thus, issues on child health were not given elaborate analysis for the public to understand the prevalence and the negative effects of child mortality in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The newspapers have remained one of the key channels of information dissemination. They determine to a certain extent the type, amount and frequency of information on child health that get to the public which may serve as the basis for increase public action in combating child health issues. Through news, editorials, features as well as other means of communication, issues on child health can be discussed. The findings of this study revealed that the selected newspapers actually covered child health issues with *Vanguard* newspaper recording the highest. However, they did not adequately give prominence to issues relating to child health as revealed in the study. It was also observed that major child health issues were not recognized by

the selected newspapers even when its prevalence as well as the implications are enormous. Also there was less in-depth analysis on child health issues.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The media should publish more editorials and features or employ more in-depth analysis in covering issues on child health for better understanding of the issues at stake and not only straight news.
2. The media should also give prominence to child health issues by placing stories in prominent positions in order to draw attention of the populace more especially caregivers. This will help to bring the child health issues to insignificant level.
3. To bring child health issues to insignificant level and the newspapers to fulfill their agenda-setting function, issues on child health should be reported frequently. This is more so because the newspapers are germane to people as they are one of the major channels through which information is circulated on different issues on child health.

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