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| **Author 1** | INOMA ANYANWU, OZOEMENA  
PG/MA/05/39763 |
| **Author 2** |  |
| **Author 3** |  |
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Gender Reporting in Nigerian Newspapers: A Content Analytic Study of The Guardian, Vanguard, Daily Champion and Daily Sun
DEDICATION

To my daughters, Ugochi and Nmachukwu, and my son, Chiagozi.
DECLARATION

I, Ozoemena Anyanwu (nee Inoma) declare that the project entitled Gender Reporting in Nigerian Newspapers: A Content Analytic Study of the Guardian, Vanguard, Daily Champion and Daily Sun is not more than 60,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, figures, appendices and references. This project contains no material that has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this project is my own work.

.................................................................
Nnayelugo M. Okoro
Project Supervisor

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Dr. Church Akpan
HOD

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External Examiner
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I wish to glorify the name of the Almighty God for His preservation throughout the duration of this programme and till the completion of this research work despite all the challenges. He has been faithful to His words that He is the author and finisher of my fate.

Really, this work would be incomplete without my acknowledging the support of some people. I wish to express my profound gratitude to my supervisor, Nnanyelugo M. Okoro, for his advice and guidance throughout the course of this study.

My immense gratitude goes to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. C. N. Inoma, and my elder sister, Gei for their support.

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I also wish to say thank you to my husband, Chuks and my elder brother, Onwi for being there during this study.

Finally, I say a big thank you to those inadvertently omitted, for your contributions towards helping me attain this academic pedestal.
This study examined Gender Reporting in Nigerian Newspapers. The primary objective was to analyse how the two gender groups were represented in reported news stories in the Nigerian dailies selected for this study. The study design adopted was content analysis. Four newspapers – The Guardian, Vanguard, Daily Sun and Daily Champion published in 2004 and 2005 were sampled and publications were selected per newspaper for each year using systematic random sampling technique. Coding sheet was used to obtain data for the study and the data obtained was analysed using frequency distribution and percentages. The results showed that the female gender group is under-reported in the selected newspapers compared to the male gender group. In sum, Nigerian journalists should ensure that women are not under-represented in reported news stories. They should be gender sensitive in their coverage of news stories.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Gender matters have been topical issues in recent times all over the world. Gender ordinarily constitutes no social menace. It is, however, the stereotypes which are attached to it that have succeeded in introducing and generating controversies within our society. Studies on these spheres have brought to the limelight the fact that there exists a certain degree of discrimination and inequality as a result of this social construct. This situation is better clarified when one x-rays gender issues in politics, reproductive health, education, amongst others; and media matters are not left out. This is also the Nigerian experience.

It has been said that gender reporting in Nigerian newspapers is tilted to one side, thereby, favouring the male population. The result is a misrepresentation and underrepresentation of women in our society. However, despite the fact that women make up at least one half of the country’s population, “the Nigerian society is traditionally a male-dominated society,” (Andrew Udiugwomen, 2004p.2). This has resulted in marginalization of women traditionally and socially in our country. Udiugwomen, A. (2004:2) further asserts that the nature of our society has resulted “in a good deal of social distance between men and women and that avenues for self-expression and self-realization by women are drastically limited by traditional and cultural practices.”

The implication of the foregoing in the Nigerian society is that women, in contrast to men will not enjoy the same degree of representation in Nigerian newspapers as a result of
the fact that they assume a subordinate stance in the affairs of life in our country; and this situation is caused and perpetuated by the Nigerian culture.

Omololu, A.A. (1972:2) further buttresses this notion when he states that “… throughout the ages, women have been assigned different roles in the society. These roles usually put them in subservient positions to men… in fact, women enjoyed fewer rights than men.” The preceding statement translates to a rather strong social orientation which is held by the society and reflected in Nigerian newspapers. At present, the result is a situation in which Nigerian women are still a long way away from achieving equality with their male counterpart in societal activities.

It is of paramount importance to recognize the role of the Nigerian culture in entrenching balance or imbalance in news reporting with regards to gender. Our culture plays a vital part in the daily lives of the people and it is one in which “the idea of superiority of the males is deeply ingrained… and it is within this cultural context that gender roles are defined and women’s participation delimited or precluded in certain key spheres reserved for men,” (Omenugha, K., 2006 p.2). Going by this statement, it implies that there seems no way a balance would ever be maintained in roles performed by men and women in our society since there will always be a greater number of men involved in a given societal activity than women. This is a “scenario which continues to widen the gap between men and women in access and participation in all facets of life, and the Nigerian media seem to be caught in this web of discordant culture,” (Omenugha, K., 2002p. 2) further stated.

According to Christine Anyanwu (2001:69), “news making itself is gender – biased.” This is as a result of the make-up of the prominent positions in our society which is largely
constituted by men. This yet boils down to the influence of the Nigerian culture, which has succeeded in placing women second to their male counterpart. To this end, Christine Anyanwu (2001:68) notes that “… at the heart of this practice is tradition…”

It is, thus, alleged that what is largely observed in Nigerian newspapers, as result of the foregoing trend, is a minimal coverage of issues concerning women. According to Nwagbara, G. (2005:35), “stories read about women concern mainly the wives of political office holders, the few women who occupy political offices, and the images of those portrayed as sex objects or even the fashion crazy.” The result of which is a minimized focus on the involvement of women in the political and economic arena, which serves to increase the vulnerability of women and gives them little voice in our society. Another trend that will be seen is the looming image of men which has dominated the news media (a situation reinforced by the Nigerian culture) and the dominance of their views in what constitutes news and reporting of news itself.

Christine Anyanwu (2001:68) aptly captures the disheartening situation of newspaper reporting of women (which are also a typical assessment of gender reporting in Nigerian dailies) in the following words:

The Punch, the widest circulating daily in Nigeria, did something savvy October 20. On the cover, Stella, the gorgeous wife of President Obasanjo, was stepping out for an occasion with two equally gorgeously dressed women. There was no detail on where they went; no words heard from them. No stories. Just big colour pictures. In this edition, women made the cover, back page, and seven other pages... A content analysis of mainstream media in Nigeria reveals one dominant orientation: women are largely seen and not heard. Their faces adorn newspapers. However, on important national and international issues, they fade out. Even when the news is about them, the
story only gains real prominence if there is a male authority figure or newsmaker on the scene.

The amazing influence of the mass media can never be over-emphasized in determining what constitutes gender reporting. The Nigerian newspapers have a great task to perform in order to ensure that news stories will not just depict an equal representation of the two gender groups, but reflect a positive portrayal of the image of both men and women. Rather than bombarding the minds of the people with innumerable advertising images of women and publishing stories about women who cannot support themselves, or even the women who are either forgotten, being exploited, used for cheap labour or fund raising purposes, Nigerian newspapers should focus more on how to restore the dignity of women in this male-dominated society.

In as much as there is largely an obvious alienation of women from politics and decision-making processes in Nigeria, it does not imply that the media should disregard the situation. That is not to say that newspapers do not report stories about the few women political office holders in the country, but then the newspapers should strive at creating a balance in reporting gender issues. The mass media still need to recognize the equal value and dignity of men and women in our society.

Ogundipe–Leslie (2003) argues that “the stance taken by the media, specifically the Nigerian press should focus on improving the lot of the portion of the population who have traditionally been relegated to second place as the weaker sex and report stories about how their activities contribute to the national development.” The Nigerian press is charged to regard stories concerning women seriously just as they do that of men. They should
conscientize women of their potentialities and the importance of their contributions to the task of nation building rather than presenting them only in the context of love and marriage.

The Nigerian press, therefore, faces a great challenge in ensuring that there is a transformation in not only the cultural practices of the Nigerian society, but also in the institutional structures of our society which have excluded women from enjoying equal opportunities and rights with the men. Reported stories should not be inclined to favour a given gender group simply because our traditional practices permit such. For proper development to take place, there is need for gender roles in the Nigerian society to be balanced and scholars in gender issues advocate that the onus basically lies in the hands of the press to ensure that this fundamental transformation occurs because of the indispensable position they occupy as agents of change.

In view of the fact that information is power, the Nigerian press has a prime task to perform in influencing public opinion and creating public consciousness in order to detach women from the clearly inimical position our culture has placed them in as a result of gender inequality. Gender is merely a social construct and should be addressed as such. It should not be allowed to generate the degree of disparity it does in our society despite the influence of the Nigerian culture in preserving the stereotypes associated with it, neither should it be permitted to filter into news making or news reporting in the mass media operations.

1.2 Statement of Problem

In as much as Nigerian women are no longer regarded as commodities bought by men with bride price or slaves for purposes of more productive farmland operations as was
the common experience in the yester years, they still seem to be a long way away from attaining equality with their male counterpart in today’s world. Even in ordinary everyday life, there is generally a great deal of distance in relationships between spouses – a situation initiated and strengthened by tradition and cultural practices which firmly define and restrict women’s roles to “welfare activities,” (Mwendamseke, N. 1990 p.66).

The mass media seem to play an active role in the reinforcing the existence of stereotypes which serve to infringe on women’s right to equal representation in the Nigerian society. Affirming the foregoing claim, Trusha Reddy (2003: 2) notes that:

Traditional laws and religion are both elements of gender formation in society and methods by which oppression and subjugation of women are expressed and perpetuated … the traditional roles of women as mothers and producers were fostered through the society and perpetuated through the media.

The implication of this view is that, firstly, the dominant images of women portrayed by the Nigerian media are that of dependency on men and “domesticity,” (Omenugha, K., 2006 p.4). Secondly, as a result of the fact that there are few female participants involved in government activities, there seems to be a minimal representation of women than men in events covered by the media.

This study sought to examine the claim that the Nigerian newspapers which were used for this research covered stories which concern men more than women with the result of an under-representation(or inadequate representation) of women in the Nigerian dailies.
Secondly, the research had the obvious task of examining the claim that stories carried by the Nigerian newspapers misrepresent women more than men (thus the higher reporting of stories that portray women in negative light).

Thirdly, bearing in mind the role of the mass media as the fourth estate of the realm because of their influence on public opinion and public consciousness, this study examined how well the Nigerian newspapers- The Guardian, Vanguard, Daily Sun and Daily Champion- which were used for this research showcased equally the different points of view of men and women in news reporting; thus recognizing and maintaining the equal rights of both gender categories in contributing to national development.

It is alleged that the communication rights of women are infringed upon by the mass media, of which the Nigerian press are a part of, as “issues of representations are inextricably tied with communication rights: the right to be heard, the right to participate, the right not to be misrepresented,” (Omenugha, K., 2006 p.4).

One of the tenets of development communication is participation. NkereuwemUdoakah (1998:18) emphasizes this when he writes that: “To get citizens to participate in development, those to benefit should be given the opportunity to contribute to the decision on the project.” How then can development programmes succeed or meaningful development take place when an important part of the country’s population is not heard and not even given the opportunity to contribute to matters affecting their wellbeing since very few of them are privileged to be government officials unlike the males?
The foregoing calls to mind the more the disparity that exists in reporting stories about women and men in Nigerian newspapers. Women are alienated from the media since they are represented less in societal activities. The research, therefore, looked into the alleged under representation of women in the mass media by examining gender representations in the following four Nigerian dailies – The Guardian, Vanguard, Daily Sun and Daily Champion.

1.3 Research Questions

The essence of this research was to determine whether there was balance in reporting news stories on the male and female gender groups in Nigerian newspapers and also to validate whether any form of misrepresentation existed in reporting issues concerning either men or women.

This study, therefore, addressed the following research questions:
1. Are men and women equally represented in news stories published in the Nigerian newspapers?
2. What is the nature of stories reported about men and women in Nigerian newspapers?
3. Are men or women misrepresented in any way in news stories contained in Nigerian newspapers?

1.4 Purpose of Study

Gender stereotypes have not merely created a huge distance between men and women, but have succeeded in perfectly placing women in an inferior status- a position that has deprived them the opportunity to enjoy equal rights with men. Florence Igbinigie–Erhabor (2002:28) aptly captures this situation when she wrote that “...these factors (gender stereotypes)... put women’s place firmly in the home (enslavement)...” The result
is the near absence of women in politics and decision-making process that constitute the bulk of the serious affairs of life carried by newspapers. This status quo has filtered into the Nigerian newspapers and has resulted in what could be referred to as an alienation from the media scene or under representation of women in published news stories.

One of the primary objectives of this study was to critically appraise how much this social construct has affected news reporting in the Nigerian newspapers that were used in this research. This was examined in the light of the quantity of news carried by the newspapers about men and women. Stories about women make headlines when they are portrayed in a negative light – the suffering, helpless and deprived women, the criminally minded women or women of easy virtue. The few women who attract some measure of positive attention from the media are the wives of the rich and powerful or political office holders.

Against the preceding backdrop, and based on the fact that unlike women, men are always involved in and “comment on issues of national importance.” (Christine Anyanwu, 2001 p.68) as a result of the number one status tradition has endowed on them, this research assessed the quality of news covered by these Nigerian newspapers about men and women – whether the news were such that promoted the dominance of men over women, thus, increasing gender inequality and reducing women’s empowerment and emancipation from the vicious shackles of dependency and domesticity.
This study also examined the extent to which the Nigerian newspapers have aided the perpetuation of women’s subjugation by the men in the Nigerian environment.

1.5 Scope of Study

The focus of this study was to examine the following four Nigerian newspapers – The Guardian, Vanguard, Daily Champion and Daily Sun.

The study was delimited to only news stories contained in these newspapers and looked at editions of the newspapers published in the months of January to December 2004 and 2005.

It appraised the representation of men and women in the news contents of the newspapers in order to further explore the concept of cultural hegemony.

1.6 Significance of Study

Observations made in past and recent times indicate that development – be it social, economic or political comes as a result of communication, and communication is “a process through which needs, emotions, desires, goals and sentiments are expressed among human beings... it is a process in which survival relations and development is rooted,” (Nkereuwem Udoakah, 1998 p.1).

If communication is perceived to satisfy the foregoing process, then it is expected that the Nigerian mass media, since they are communication channels, should aid the equal expression of interests of both males and females in our society.
Development is a process which involves participation and this can be achieved only through communication, which in turn includes an adequate representation of the interests of those involved. And going by what is obtainable in the Nigerian environment, it has been purported that the Nigerian mass media have not been efficient in fulfilling the prescribed functions of communication with regard to gender representation in the media. What we have is a minimal representation of women compared to that of the men.

It is, therefore, necessary to note that meaningful development in our society includes carrying along both men and women equally and an equal expression of the needs, interests, desires, goals of both gender; and the responsibility lies with the Nigerian mass media to ensure the satisfactory fulfillment of this goal. In the light of the disparity that exists in representing the male and female gender groups – a situation that depicts the subservient role of women in this male dominated society, this study hopes to point out the need for the mass media to work towards changing the status of women in Nigeria.

The culture of the Nigerian society is one that has, from time immemorial, preserved and upheld the preponderance of males over females. This has affected the way women are perceived in our society – as an opinionless, subordinate and defenseless part of the society. The result is the perpetuation of women’s exclusion from matters which obviously affect them as much as they affect the men.

To the society, the research hoped to point out the fact that for true development to take place, there is need to carry along the women- who are that part of the nation which make up half of the population, empower them and get them involved in economic, political, social and other developmental issues.
To the males who hold power and are capable of causing change in issues that perpetuate gender disparity, this study will conscientize them and make them uphold the right of women to participate in developmental matters; and to the mass media, the study will reveal to them the need to present to women avenues for self expression, thereby, upholding their right to equal representation in the media.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This study was based on the theory of cultural hegemony. Hegemony is the domination of one state, country or class within a group of others. Cultural hegemony facilitates the predominance of one class within a group; and regarding gender, Femia, J. V. (1981:24) argues that this “predominance is obtained by consent rather than force of one class over the other class.” Thus, in the traditional Nigerian society, the females willingly consent to their dominance by the males.

Also, Maria Len-Rois, Shelly Rodgers, Esther Thorson and Doyle Yoon (2005:153) argues that in culture, “hegemony is sustained through socialization (for example learning stereotypes) and also by societal structures (for example work hours, child care duties) which both work to preserve the class or group in power.” In other words, these stereotypes define women as the weaker sex; confer on them the role of domesticity and aid in perpetuation of women as being more communal while men are more instrumental. Therefore, men are viewed as more assertive, dominant, aggressive and have higher status in power position while women are sensitive, giving, caring and with a lower status.

Cultural hegemony has also defined the roles assigned to women within the society, especially with regards to their placement in public offices. The theory reinforces gender
stereotypes—confers more power on men as masters of the mind and keeps women in subordinate roles which are largely tied to the womb.

In the light of the foregoing, men are represented more in societal issues in life than women; and so when journalists cover political and societal news stories, they tend to reproduce societal norms privileging men. Therefore, news may often reflect and reinforce symbols of gender disparity.

This research, therefore, appraised how the theory of cultural hegemony influenced gender reporting and sustained gender disparity, if any, in the Nigerian newspapers under study.

1.8 Definition of Terms

1. **Gender**: this is the state of being male or female. It is a social construct which defines roles in terms of masculinity and feminity in a given culture. Gender enables differences between men and women.

2. **Culture**: this is the ideas, customs and art of a particular society. It is the learned behaviour of members of a given social group. “Culture is the learned socially acquired traditions and lifestyles of the members of a society including their patterned and repetitive ways of thinking, feeling and acting,” Harris (1983:5) in Baran, S. J. (2004:9). Culture is historically transmitted pattern of meanings by which people within a given society communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about issues and attitudes towards life.
3. **Hegemony**: this is the domination of one class within a group over others. Hegemony here refers to the domination of the female group by the male group. It is obtained by consent of the female group in the society for the male group to dominate them.

4. **Masculine Cultural Hegemony**: this is hegemony that is initiated and sustained by culture which supports the domination of the feminine by the masculine.

5. **Gender stereotypes**: they are standardized mental pictures which provide sexist judgments about women such that their subordinate status within a patriarchal society is symbolically reinforced.

6. **Gender roles**: these are stereotyped roles assigned to males and females as a result of gender. Gender roles define the way men and women are perceived within the society and serve to keep women in subordinate roles while men hold most of the power.

7. **Gender reporting**: this is the representation, misrepresentation or under representation of men and women in news contents.

8. **Gender inequality/ disparity**: it refers to non-uniformity in quantity, value and intensity of provisions made for men and women.

9. **Gender group**: this refers to a specific gender category, type or unit; that is the male gender group or the female gender group.
1.9 Limitations of Study

This study had some limitations especially with regards to paucity of literature. The content analysis method adopted in this study has great relevance in media studies. It is an appropriate method for this study as it explored the points of view of a wide range of interests (media practitioners, scholars in gender studies and the general public) on the subject matter within the Nigerian socio-cultural environment.

In terms of sample population, this study sampled four national newspapers. Some editions of the sampled newspapers were unavailable and this reduced the number of editions that the researcher studied. Any other research should increase the scope to be studied.

The researcher experienced some difficulties in the search of literature for this work because not much has been written on gender and media studies in Nigeria. However, it is instructive to note that though this study faced the foregoing limitations, the quality of the work is not affected in any way.
REFERENCES


CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter, works on issues that are related to the subject of discussion are reviewed in order to put this study in a strong academic footing.

2.1 Gender

Western feminist theories have highlighted that gender refers to the biological differences between female and male. According to Hom, Sharon and Chunying (1995: 142 – 147), gender means “the socially and culturally constructed perceptions, expectations, requests and evaluations based on the differences between the two sexes.” The concept gender clearly shows that sex stereotypes are not a natural result. Rather, it is shaped by culture and society.

In another vein, gender refers to learning the differences between men and women which is determined by social and cultural values. To support this definition, Keller (1991: 153) asserts that gender “is a cultural construct that distinguishes the roles, behaviour, mental and emotional characteristics between male and female, developed by society; gender is social meaning given to biological sex difference.”

According to Okoro (2005), the term gender “is used to describe those characteristics of men and women which are socially determined in contrast to those which are biologically determined. These differences are reflected in roles, responsibilities, access to resources, constraints, opportunities, needs, perceptions and views e.t.c. held by both men and women.”
Gentry (2003: 1) states that gender “is the symbolic role definition attributed to interpretations of the nature, disposition and role of members of that sex. It differs from a classification based on sex in that there is little evidence to suggest that gender differences are only sociologically inevitable, and that ‘inevitability’ may diminish with time.”

Creedon (1993:4) also explains that gender “is a verb, the act of naming someone or something.” It is imposed and constructed by society; therefore it is learned and not innate. She buttressed that “gendering, the gerund, is the process that begins the moment a baby takes its first breath of cultural pollution.” Thus, masculinity and feminity can then be examined as “a set of social expectations, created and maintained in a patriarchal society,” (Craig, 1992 p.2).

Supporting the fore-going definitions of gender, CIRDDOC (2001: 1) states that it is “a system of roles and relationships between women and men that are determined not biologically but in the social, political and economic context.” Gender can equally be seen as the process by which individuals who are born into biological categories of male and female become the social categories of men and women through the acquisition of locally defined attributes of masculinity and feminity. It is pertinent to note that beyond biological differences, all other differences between men and women are socially constructed and have no logical relationships with their biological compositions. Therefore, gender is a social construct used in the classification of roles and relationships of men and women in a given cultural setting. It is anchored on sociological stereotypes which is different from biological make-up.
2.2 Female Stereotypes and Models

Martin and Nakayama (2000: 128) note that stereotypes are those “widely held beliefs about a specific group of people.” Stereotypes are usually based on prejudice which can be detrimental, especially if they are negative. Stereotypes may be useful because they help people to know what to expect from others and once they are adopted, it becomes extremely difficult to change. To this end, Hamilton, Sherman and Rurvo (1990) state that “people actually tend to remember information that support a stereotype, but may not recall such that contradicts their stereotype.” That is to say that stories which contain, sustain and reinforce the subordinate status of women in our patriarchal society and the influential, decisive and more superior roles men play in our society are highly evident in reported news stories. These are the kind of information people remember.

The mass media are replete with several female stereotype representations ranging from the “bra-burning feminists to house-proud housewives, from sex-crazed seductresses to neurotic career women,” (MacDonald 1995 p.13). Each of these representations carries a negative image, a kind of stigma which are actually different forms of condemnation. The media tend to largely promote limited fashion role models of women by presenting them as incompetent workers, people who are preoccupied with beauty and fashion trend, not involved in decision making processes in the society or playing active roles in developmental processes, but rather dependent on men who nature and creation have conferred a higher status. Such portrayals of negative images of women reduces the quality of what an ideal women represents and leaves a shallow and distorted picture of the womenfolk.
As Mannes (1973) points out, “the continuous portrayal of women as sex objects, teenage girls whose sole function is to provide sexual satisfaction and healing to their sole function is to provide sexual satisfaction and healing to their male counterparts, or matrons whose only duty is housekeeping would delude the woman into believing that the most they can accomplish in life is becoming housewives, mistresses or house makers.” Such representation can also lead them into viewing themselves as incapable of making significant contributions to societal growth. Consequently, the women will be negatively affected and limited in their capacity for personal and collective development.

In as much as the media also portray stereotype representations of men such as the “macho man” and “new man,” it will be observed that these images receive some measure of applause and acceptance from the media audience contrary to that of their female counterpart which attract condemnation and elicit unfavourable response. Thus, rather than demeaning the image of men and weakening their ego, it serves to reinforce male power and poise.

A critical look at models assigned to women in advertisements reveals that female roles are largely tied to domesticity. The advertisements on OMO detergent, Dettol soap and antiseptic liquid, Ariel detergent, JIK bleaching agent, Harpic toilet cleaning gel and a host of other products portray women as major actors who do the cleaning, washing and scrubbing, thus implying that these are not manly duties. An advertisement like JIK even portrays a wife who does not only do her child’s dirty laundry, but even that of her husband. Such media representations buttress not only the domestic roles assigned to women in the
society, but even reinforces the subordinate roles they play, and serve to further alienate the womenfolk from major decision making processes.

Furthermore, the pattern of activities in newspapers has continued to reveal the imbalance in male and female representation in mass media advert programmes. Many of them reveal a predominance of male images over that of the female, except for products such as house cleaning agents, sanitary products, washing powders, baby things which are classified as feminine or some luxury goods targeted at men which need an element of sex appeal added to them.

The under representation of women is so visible that male images are used for spot publications which are considered very important. Therefore, it is only male images that will depict the command, power, urgency and importance of the information being disseminated. In addition, in many radio stations, disc jockeys are still dominated by the males despite the fact that there is no proof as to whether men are better informed in music than women. A close look at media houses in Nigeria reveals that men still monopolize desks such as sports, foreign affairs, security and business. This is a situation which clearly depicts that women are not considered ideal for such beats.

One obvious question that begs for an answer when the afore-mentioned situations are considered is: what is the justification for marginalizing women to this extent by media practitioners?

A good appreciation of why this situation abounds in mass media operations starts with understanding how gender identities are acquired. People acquire masculine or
feminine identities through the biological nature of human existence. In other words, biological make-up creates male and female differences and predisposes us to act or behave in some prescribed manners.

Secondly, people acquire gender identities through learning or imitating other people, and through the interaction between our experience of the world and our capacity for reasoning. However, psychologists believe that the categorization into male and female helps us to evolve socially appropriate patterns, develop our expectations about our lives and interpret our experiences.

If the media have built their action, that is female representation on the idea that sex difference is a fixed variable or that human classification into male or female are two irreconcilable camps, then the discovery of androgyny among humans makes such conclusions questionable. Besides, Kohlberg and Ullian as cited by MacDonald (1995: 19) believe that “people are capable of simultaneously balancing two competing sets of ideas about the world,” that is “how people perceive the world from their observation, and how they think the world is a major obstacle to women advancement,” Ziyambi (1997).

When the mass media continuously portray women and issues affecting them in a negative manner, they (the media) may not realize how oppressive and destabilizing such actions are on the women. More often than not, mass media reports about women on certain sensitive issues such as sexual and physical abuse are either trivialized or sensationalized, thus making the stories to lose the true value they deserve. It is an obvious fact that women form the bulk of models used in advertisements and the majority
of these adverts carry negative female stereotype images. The consequence is that women are basically portrayed as inferior and unserious minded.

It must be noted that the negative portrayals of women in the mass media persist because, besides societal reinforcement of gender disparity, men still dominate the media industry. Much to the chagrin of female media practitioners, their male counterparts are the major news definers since the men are the ones who are considered most qualified to conduct those exclusive interviews with the people that matter in our society and carry out other sundry duties which are considered very challenging in the media. Moreover, they are the ones who make the hiring and firing decisions in most media outfits.

A critical assessment of beats assigned to journalists reveal that female reporters are mostly asked to cover stories such as fashion and beauty, charity events, food and home and other such stories tied to the womb which are not as deep as that of their male colleagues.

Mildred Mutenga, a Zambian female journalist says this about her media organization: “They have denied me interviews because they say women should not be seen as social agitators or commentators. They should be in the background, leaving the men folk to discuss politics, tradition and even women’s rights. It is frustrating to see competent, hardworking female journalists being sidelined on the basis of gender,” (http:www.africannews.org).

Going by Mildred Mutenga’s experience in her organization, one may wonder if there is any rationale for such an unfavourable environment to exist in a working place. Most
women journalists have received more like actions in the pursuit of their career, and these have certainly not given them the room and encouragement they need, either structurally within the media administration or psychologically. The result of which, therefore, is a misrepresentation or under representation of women in media content.

From the discussions so far, it can be deduced that women have been in a disadvantaged position for a very long time, a position which is strongly reinforced by the patriarchal nature of our society. The traditional roles of women as wives, mothers and producers are fostered through certain societal practices, propagated through the mass media and further strengthened in the traditional media through songs, proverbs, dances and others. Even marital practices are also patterned along such lines that relegate women and place men in the position of control, including authority over their women’s sexuality. Apart from the influences of Nigeria’s diverse traditional practices on gender issues, our different religions are imbued with principles that support the suppression of women by the men.

The mass media operates within a society with set ideals, and it is these principles that have filtered into media operations, thus acting to restrict female roles more to welfare, household and family activities while their male counterparts occupy the spheres of public domain, work and politics. This allocation of tasks is sustained by an in-built office and that is by and large still “aman’s world,” (Mwendamseke, 1990 p. 68).

Consequently, the mass media in Nigeria derive their operating principles from that of our patriarchal society which reinforces gender stereotypes, confers more power on the men and keeps women in subordinate roles. In the light of the foregoing, however, one
cannot but wonder whether the mass media which are rightly referred to as the watchdog of
the society and crusader of the common cause of man do not serve as institutions which
strengthen and perpetuate some undesirable female stereotypes and role models. Thus,
they act as means of either misrepresenting or under representing the female gender.

2.3 Female Representations in the Mass Media

Female representation in the mass media has been a recurrent issue of mass
communication studies in the recent past. It is a popular belief that media treatment of
women issues has been most unfair. From advertisements to films, television to radio
programmes, newspaper to magazine coverage, women have really not been given the
proper and adequate representation they deserve. This imbalance is both quantitative and
qualitative.

Since 1954 through 1975 when the earliest systematic analysis of television content
began, researchers have observed that there was male dominance of the television screen.
Tuchman (1995) supports this when he writes that “with the exception of soap opera
(although men are still in the majority of the fictional population), a given television
programme has shown and continues to show two men for every women.

In Nigeria, women are marginalized in terms of how much, how often and in what
ways they are represented in media stories and programmes. Stories about women and
their contributions to development hardly make headlines. Rather, “when women are
featured, they are as wives of government officials or political appointees,”(Oyebanji,
2004)or worse still suffering women and their children during conflict and disaster situations
or women involved in unfavourable and unpleasant activities.
The disparity in female portrayal is reinforced by the treatment of the few women who appear on television or pages of newspapers or magazines. Whenever a television programme shows someone’s occupation, the worker is most likely to be a male. Women hardly appear in core professional areas such as medicine, engineering, law, banking and finance, law enforcement, security, and others. Rather, when women are shown working, they are usually portrayed as incompetent or inferior to their male counterparts.

It is ironical that in real life, the number of women engaged in these professions cited above keeps rising by the day. However, despite this increase, images portrayed of them by the media appear to be “distorted and ambiguous,”(Loevinger, 1968) and do not fully capture the women’s achievements and contributions to societal development. To this end, it must be noted that although the content of the media or the final output to the society should have actually been pictures, information and input the media get from the society, they nonetheless have the prerogative of choosing what cues to disseminate to the public. This choice goes beyond “what” to disseminate. It also includes “how” the information is brought to the attention of the public. In other words, the perspective or slant given to the information is entirely the mass media’s decision. As such, it is expected of the media that in choosing their symbolic representations of women, they should be balanced and adequate. Unfortunately, the contrary is the case.

In 1986, Lichter, Lichter and Rotheman carried out an analysis on the themes and characters on American Prime Network Television over 31 seasons from 1955 to 1986. Their findings indicate that the female characters were less in evidence than males, and were in several ways portrayed as the weaker sex. The women were shown as less
educated than the men, held lower status jobs and their activities centred on the home, personal relationships and sexuality. Recent studies do not indicate any major shift from the findings above. These findings can be generalized because a critical assessment of the work arena in Nigeria also reveals that what applies in the American situation relates to the Nigerian experience. Female representation has continued to reflect gender insensitivity. According to Lewis and Boswell as cited in Soola (2003), women in 1995 made up only 17 percent of news stories across the globe and by the year 2000, there was a minimal increase of 1 percent, making it 18 percent coverage.

This poor representation of women seems to persist despite the adoption of the Beijing Platform of Action, Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and other efforts by the United Nations towards attaining gender equality. Women constitute more than half of the world’s population. Ironically, they are treated as the minority, a group of persons who clamour for some special attention because of their subordinate and disadvantaged position. One often hears of specific programmes targeted at women. There seems to be no other national explanation to these apart from biological reasons that women are the weaker sex and are handicapped in decision making processes, even when the decisions to be taken affects them. Ostergaard (1994) buttresses the foregoing when he equates being a female with suffering from an irreversible handicap which only perpetuates male dominance and female subordination.

Asking for a more realistic female representation in the media, the women are actually complaining and criticizing “the lack of diversity in portraying and defining their lives and desires, not necessarily a hall of mirrors,” MacDonald (1995). In this regard, the mass
media should play a strong ideological role basing their definition and talk about reality on what the society considers normal and acceptable. This goes beyond the media’s approach to reality which appears rather illusory. Although the mass media’s representation may seem to typify the real world, more often than not, their presentations are either an exaggeration or an understatement of reality. It is as if this is a deliberate act by the media especially when one considers the fact that the media have various audiences whose interest must be sustained if they hope to stay in business. On one hand are the advertisers or commercial sponsors whose fees keep the media organizations afloat – their version of reality is conjured to sell a product, and on the other hand are the political office holders who are predominantly males and without whose patronage the media houses cannot sustain the existence of their various organizations and programmes.

Caught in this web, the loyalty of the media tends to be divided between who pays the piper on one hand and what is right on the other. The pull will definitely be stronger from the side that contributes more to the survival of the outfit. According to Baran (1998), “Money has a way of altering communication, making advertisers stronger than the other audience members.” The advertisers and commercial sponsors may be on the minority, but are more likely to make huge contributions to the final programme output, and their ideas, ideals and values may dominate and serve as resources for programme development.

It is against the preceding backdrop that this paper argues if there is an under representation or complete absence of women in the mass media stories or whether female representations in media stories come in the form of condemnation, thereby trivializing
women’s contributions to societal development and reducing them to merely home managers or unintelligent objects of pleasure.

If the foregoing is the case, there is an obvious misrepresentation of women in reported stories in Nigerian mass media. It as well implies that “women are symbolically annihilated,” (Gerbner, 1972). Thus, there is definitely need for a change in this trend. As was earlier stated, the mass media do not operate in isolation; they are a part of the society. As societal values change, the expectation is for there to be a commensurate change in media output. Of recent, there have been adjustments going on in the country to attain equal representation of both genders in all spheres. If the society is making adjustments, then the media should equally make some shifts in the images of the society they represent in their outputs or programmes.

2.4 Female Representations in Newspapers

Fink and Kensicki (2001:331) have asserted that when women receive media attention, they are usually portrayed as “sex symbols” as opposed to “powerful, talented athletes” (which is an image perceived for men) and are also shown as being in supportive roles rather than participatory roles. It, therefore, seems a natural trend in our society that when women make news, they do so either as appendages to men, that is the wives of rich and powerful men or politicians, as sex symbols or as victims of criminal acts. Omenugha Kate (2005:3) emphasizes the afore-stated when she notes that “the media too do not miss any opportunity to criminalize poor women.” Nwagbara Grace (2005:56) also supports the foregoing when she writes that “stories about women make headlines when they are portrayed in a negative light – the
suffering, helpless and deprived women, the criminally-minded women or women of easy virtue.”

A good example of such news stories is the women and child trafficking in which the victims or perpetrators featured on television and newspapers are predominantly women when in the real sense of it the main culprits are yet to be apprehended. The truth is that we cannot rule out the fact that men are as well involved in these criminal acts but as a result of the traditional roles assigned to women in our society, they become the major point of focus. These traditional roles include wives, mothers, daughters, sisters-in-law and mothers-in-law and as such their lives revolve around the men and the men define their success. Thus, when they receive media attention, “the story only gains real prominence if there is a male authority figure or news maker on the scene,” Anyanwu Chris (2001:68). Reinforcing this point, Grace Nwagbara (2005:56) writes as well that “the few women who attract some measure of positive attention from the media are the wives of the rich and powerful or political office holders.”

According to Okunna (2004:7), ten weekly issues of each of the following newspapers published in May, 2002 were used for a study on gender representation in Nigeria. The Guardian, Post Express, Champion, Vanguard and Daily Times. A total of 566 stories in the major news pages were analyzed over a two-week period. The findings showed that news reporting was predominantly the men’s work. Out of the 101 reporters whose by-lines appeared in the 42 newspaper stories, 92 (that is 91%) were males while 9 were females. Nevertheless, as low as this figure was, it represented a slight improvement
on the GMMP 2000 figure of 5% participation of women as news reporters in Nigeria’s mass media generally.

Furthermore, Okunna notes that women are also not featured in prominent news stories and photographs. From the 61 photographs which appeared on the cover pages of the newspapers studied, only 6 photographs (10%) were women. In addition, out of the 263 photographs that accompanied the other news reports in the papers, 30 photographs (11%) were women while the rest was that of men. It was, therefore, concluded that going by the fact that there was very low representation of women in the findings of the study, news making in Nigeria was a man’s prerogative. While for the women, they are either invisible or represented negatively.

Ogundipe–Leslie (nd:52) argues that “the mass media portray women and issues affecting them in a manner that is predominantly negative and ‘special’ as though women were not part of a ‘normal’ society.” The stance taken by the mainstream media, especially the Nigerian press, has translated into a covert mental oppression of women. Also, this position does not give women the opportunity they need to operate either positively and structurally within the media administration or psychologically in the society.

Despite the early presence, courage, sophistication and intelligence of women like Theresa Oguntiyi, Lara Morel and a host of others, they still found themselves shunted to the back pages of newspapers and magazines. The Nigerian media have found a way of making a woman’s position and contributions less important when compared to that of a man who occupies the same position. According to Mutume and Wanyeki (1996:14), “the media trivializes or sensationalizes the situation of women.” These authors are of the
opinion that the biggest problem associated with media representation of women is that women are portrayed in the media very differently from the way they see themselves. The mass media perpetuate violence against women through the reinforcement of negative stereotypes of domesticity and subordination.

From Creedon’s (1993:13) point of view, the root of the problem may lie in the hard core economic facts of the situation or position in which the mass media find themselves. Mass Communication is a profit-driven and advertising–supported practice. In other words, it is he who pays the piper that dictates the tune. In Nigeria, the payers are predominantly men. Therefore, they control the hiring and firing decisions of most media houses. In as much as many women have ventured into the field of Mass Communication, their entrance has not offset the power of these relationships nor determined news definers. The editors are still mostly males, and work place routines and norms also compel reporters to conform to dominant values rather than act on adjusting unfavourable values to empower the female gender group.

The newspaper stories are positive only when glamorous or powerful women are involved. However, this shift has only been of recent when women began to agitate about the media’s neglect of women in news stories. Nevertheless, the basic attitude cannot be applauded because the press represents women negatively most times. Opubor (1996:20) supports the preceding view when he notes that “women make front page news when they are portrayed in a negative light, otherwise their stories are buried in the middle pages.”

Another factor which influences the representation of the female gender in newspaper stories is embedded in the conflict amongst women themselves in reporting
women issues and activities, resulting from the direct effects of their workplace. Rodgers and Thorson (2003) in their study of the representation of women in news stories amongst small, medium sized and large newspapers discovered that the female reporters working in larger newspapers were more socialized than those in the small and medium sized outfits and, as a result, they reported stories about women in a more similar manner to their male colleagues. If this is the case, therefore, there would definitely be an imbalance in newspaper reporting of stories on both gender types. Rodgers and Thorson as well found out that female reporters used female sources more often than male reporters. Notwithstanding, this has not in any way balanced reporting of the two gender groups in news stories for reasons which have been discussed earlier.

2.5 Media Representations of Men

Beynon (2002:43) examined for a three year period (1999 – 2001) how masculinity was discursively constructed by the British press and in books such as FaludiStifed’s The Betrayal of the Modern Man and Clare’s Masculinity in Crisis. Beynon reported that four distinctive themes ran through the media content and the two key ones were:

1. “Men running wild” such as bad or absentee fathers who were avoiding responsibility for their children and male atrocities in places such as Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, and

2. “Emasculated men” portrayed in men behaving badly and in TV commercials where men were depicted as “utterly incompetent and infantile.”

Beynon (2002:143) concluded that men and masculinity were presented in an overwhelmingly negative light and as “something dangerous to be contained, attacked, denigrated or ridiculed, little else.”
While agreeing that women were objectified for decades in men’s media, advertising and pornography, Gauntlett (2002:187) notes that “nowadays several women’s magazines objectify men using the same kind of language and imagery as men’s magazines.”

A comprehensive analysis of the content of the new men’s magazine was undertaken by Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks, and published in Jackson et al (1999:353-368), Stevenson et al (2000:369-388) and Jackson et al (2001) in the book *Making Sense of Men’s Magazines*. These authors observed that men were objectified in the mass media. Gauntlett (2002:173) is of the view, however, that both women and men are objectified in their different magazines when he writes that “men’s magazines are often accused of trying to re-assert sexism and male dominance, and are said to be part of a ‘backlash’ against feminism” meanwhile women’s magazine publish photographs that portray male objectification and trivialization as quoted earlier in Gauntlett (2002:187).

Furthermore, early gender-oriented studies in the media conducted through a feminist lens in order to examine women’s relative position to men found what they termed a “message environment of androcentrism” (that is male domination).

Considering the number of studies done on gender role portrayals in the mass media, Neuendorf (2002:202) notes that there is a clear case of reports about men outnumbering that of women “with males heavily over represented in sheer numbers and routinely given more important roles and sex stereotyping.”

At this juncture, it is pertinent to point out that limited studies on representation of men in the mass media other than the feminist studies discussed above have been
conducted as noted in Chapter One of this work. However, in the 1990’s and early 2000, some researchers began to look specifically at men and their issues. Some of the studies conducted during the past few years are briefly reviewed and their key findings are also summarized in the ensuing sub-topics.

2.6 Men on Television

A pioneer study of media representation of men by Askew and Ross (1990) as cited in West (1995) reported that “most of the male heroes in comics and on television, whether goodies or baddies, are violent.” Katz as cited in Newbold et al (2002:291) reported that “violence on screen, like that in real life, is perpetrated overwhelmingly by males.”

One of the most contemporary and cogent analysis of modern mass media representation of men was provided by Nathanson and Young (2001:10) who used an art-historian approach of formal analysis to examine mass media treatment of men and male issues, particularly on television and in movies. Nathanson and Young pointed out the TV programmes such as *The Simpsons* in which the father, Homer was lazy at work, chauvinistic, irresponsible and often stupid while the son, Bart was mischievous and rude compared to the mother and daughter who were presented as thoughtful, considerate and mild in nature.

Another media programme cited by Nathanson and Young is *HomeImprovement*. They reported an interview which a star from the show, Tim Allen had with *TV Guide* critic, Loudon who wrote that “some would argue that *HomeImprovement* is all about men being jerks,” and added that “it is really a celebration of how smart and tolerant women are.” Tim Allen who objects to this notion argues that the programme is a combination of the two
views. Just as some women perpetrate negative representation of women, so do some men contribute to and even exploit negative representation of men – the difference in the negative portrayal of men being that it is for purposes of laughter, popularity or success. From Nathanson and Young’s comment about *Home Improvement*, “… men in general are slobs and fools, but can be trained or ‘housebroken’ by women … without the civilizing influence of Jill’s feminist lessons, Tim would be just another barbarian.” They added that “everything specifically identified as ‘masculine’ on *Home Improvement* is overtly mocked, not celebrated … *Home Improvement* propagates exceptionally crude stereotypes of men.”

A British programme which was broadcast between 1996 and 1997 titled *MenBehaving Badly* was the climax in a trend of negative representations of men. According to Nathanson and Young, “as the title suggests, it was a litany of men behaving badly.” MacDonald and Crawford (2002) agree with Nathanson and Young’s analysis of these TV programmes when they state that “TV shows as *The Simpsons*, *Home Improvement* and the British show *Men behaving Badly* – which blatantly says it all – show negative images of men and boys – that men are incompetent.”

In his review of gender in contemporary TV programmes, Gauntlett (2002) cited the following three popular programmes as examples of a “turning of the tide” that has occurred in representation of men and women in the media.

Firstly, the programme *Sex and the City* (1998 – 2003) in which Gauntlett says female ridicule and objectification of men are further enhanced with “male sexual performance” are subject to laughter and scathing review. The four major female characters shown in *Sex and the City* – Carrie, Miranda, Samantha and Charlotte regularly
discuss men in a disparaging manner by rating their sexual performance, objectifying them as ‘studs’ for women’s pleasure and often deriding them as insensitive, shallow and stupid. Feminists, on the other hand, argue that *Sex and the City* celebrates women’s sexual liberation and that they only do what men did in the past. However, there is an evidence of double standard in this. Women argued against such stereotyped and discriminatory portrayals of women, not on the basis that women should have equal access to such roles and forms of behaviour, but on the ground that such representations and attitudes were wrong. As such, it should hold that it is equally wrong for men to be presented in this light.

The second programme *NYPD Blue* (1993 – 2003) provided a particularly rich study of modern masculinity over the years. According to Gauntlet (2002:62), it is centred on the main detective character Andy Sipowicz who was first introduced as “a stereotypical stout, sleazy, bigoted, divorced recovering alcoholic cop.” In this T.V. programme, Sipowicz grieved over the death of his grown up son, showed joy at the birth of his child, Theo; he showed a protective love and loyalty to his professional partners Kelly and Sorenson. However, despite these attitudes in the character that depict humanity, Sipowicz and the other men in the show are portrayed as tightly wound, angry, deficient persons who exhibit traits ranging from alcoholism and gambling to violence.

The third programme, *Veronica’s Closet* is another TV show which is largely about women’s “hunt for men,” Newbold et al (2002:250), and in which men are objectified and trivialized. In this programme, women discuss men as sex objects in crude and explicit terms. This perception of men by women is exact to the view men have long been criticized to hold of women. Nathanson and Young (2002:69) identify television news
magazines as sources of negative portrayals of men. They conclude from their analysis that:

The problem of journalistic bias – and, therefore, of manipulation – has been discussed many times from perspectives of both the right and the left. There is probably truth to complaints from both sides. When it comes to gender and relations between men and women, however, the bias usually favours women. It would be unthinkable for a journalist, except one willing to pay a high price in public hostility, to say anything that could be constructed as unflattering or disadvantageous to women as a group…. but things like that are routinely said about men.

Nathanson and Young (2001:73) cited an instance with an NBC Today Show feature series. *He and She* which interviewed a number of people. According to them, a woman interviewee, MarnaLocastro proclaimed superiority of women in a blatantly stereotypical manner. In her words, “I think that we are more sensitive. I think we are more emotional. I think we are more, more caring. I think we are more dependable than males. I do.” Nathanson and Young reiterated that the statement was made by a woman interviewee and not the programme presenters, and that it is part of the content of news magazines. They conclude that this is typical of statements made about men in popular discourse.

2.7 Men in the Movies

A number of studies and books have reported on examinations of men in movies including Cohan and Hark’s (1993) *Screening the Male*, Kirkham and Thumin’s (1995) *You Tarzan: Masculinity, Movies and Men*, and *Me Jane: Masculinity, Movies and Women*. Also, according to Humm’s (1998), some feminist studies of mass media portrayals of women have included examination of men in movies, including feminism and film. Other
top-rating movies that have been instanced as propagating negative representations of men in studies conducted include:

*The Colour Purple* in 1985 which is based on Alive Walker’s best selling novel in which according to Nathanson and Young (2001:20) “every male character, without exception, is either a hopelessly stupid buffoon, a fiendishly evil tyrant or both. And every female character, without exception, is a purely innocent victim, a quietly enduring hero, or both.”

*Thelma and Louise* in 1991 presented overriding negative images of men. Early in the movie, Thelma is the victim of an attempted rape outside a bar. During their drive to escape a murder charge and save their lives, Thelma meets JD, a young man who asks for a lift. Thereafter, JD seduces her and runs away with her money. While on the same journey, Thelma and Louise met a truck driver who makes lewd gestures at both of them. Feigning interest, they pulled over and gave the man a lecture on sexist behaviour. When the truck driver responded angrily, they blew up his truck and drove off laughing. In the final scene, the two women committed suicide by driving off a cliff rather than live in a man’s world – Thelma with her boorish carpet salesman husband to whom she is unhappily married and Louise with her long time boyfriend, Jim.

*Silence of the Lambs* in 1991 is a programme which, according to Nathanson and Young (2001:158), is “a feminist discourse on male violence.” They note that the programme tells the story of two male killers and addresses gender in, at least, three ways. The first killer, Buffalo Bill kills only women, skins them and clothes himself in their skin, carrying a clear sub-text of violence by men against women and appropriation of women’s
identity. The second killer, Lecter also carries a clear message of male violence against women. The third gender dimension in the movie is portrayed in the relationship between the female lead character and her male colleagues in which her male supervisor lacks confidence in her ability to perform her duty. The officer in-charge-of Lecter in the asylum where he is confined, Dr Chilton is “openly lascivious,” Nathanson and Young note. In summary, all men are evil.

In the contemporary version of Beauty and the Beast shown in 1991, maleness is openly associated with beastliness. This movie was identified in Premiere magazines as one of the ten movies that defined gender in the 1990s. The story of Beauty and the Beast is based on a translation of the 1756 text of Jeanne Marie (Madame le Prine) de Beaumont which, in turn, “is believed to be based on earlier literary works and oral traditions,” Nathanson and Young (2001:162). In the original version, the Beast is an educated and refined gentleman who gives Beauty every comfort she could want.

However, in the 1991 Disney Version, the Prince was selfish and unkind and was punished by a good fairy. He is described overtly in voiceover as “spoiled, selfish and unkind.” Furthermore, the Disney version adds a character, Gaston who is a village bully and braggart. Describing Gaston, Nathanson and Young note that he is “vain, ignorant, arrogant and preposterously macho, Gaston excels at hunting, brawling, drinking and spitting.” So, the story is about two bad men and a flawless woman Beauty, Belle who is compassionate towards the Beast despite his flaws. Belle is intelligent, ambitious and heroic in confronting the Beast. At the end, it was noted that the movie said positive things about women and negative things about men – that maleness confers bestiality.
Nathanson and Young, thus, conclude that “all negativity in the film is projected on to men.”

The movie *Sleeping with the Enemy* in 1991 also contain overt gender discourse which is negative towards men. The male character, Martin is shown cinematically in a scene searching for his wife, Laura at a carnival. He wore a black cape with an upturned collar, against a noticeable hellish background of glowing, swirling flame-coloured lights – a clear metaphor for satan, the devil. Cape Cod is shown in the movie as an alienating world, representing patriarchy while Cedar Falls where Laura travels to is a beautiful little Iowa town of soft images and harmony representing matriarchy. Nathanson and Young (2001:169-179) further point out that sexual hierarchy is not eliminated, but simply reversed. The movie demonizes Martin instead of presenting him as a psychopath in need of treatment, and it manipulates viewers towards anger and revenge against the male character.

*Cape Fear* in 1991 is another movie in which men are represented in highly negative ways. Of the two male characters, one is a convicted rapist who went to prison and the other is his lawyer who buried evidence that could have won his case. On his release from prison, the former rapist sets out to take revenge on the lawyer and his family. He killed his dog, raped the lawyer’s lover and pursued his teenage daughter. Nathanson and Young (2001:186-18.7) conclude that all the major female characters are good, they are victims of male irresponsibilities while the “men have only one thing on their minds; the central theme of Cape Fear is that violence against women is caused by a cultural order created by men obsessed with women.”
The movie *Little Women* in its remake by Gillian Armstrong substantially altered the character of the father from a wise, mature figure of moral integrity who left a deep and positive impression on the young women in the novel to a character incidental to the story. Since the story is about women, women’s roles in the remake were enhanced while the men’s roles were reduced and male characters demonized.

*First Wives Club* shown in 1996 is another film with anti-men overtones. In the movie, three women who are allegedly treated badly by their husbands decide to get even. The movie is a humorous, but vindictive story of how badly men act and how women are superior morally, politically and even professionally in that the three major female characters succeed in taking over and running their husbands businesses which they had no prior experience of in a matter of months.

Nathanson and Young (2001) identify negative representations of men not only in fictional mass media, by they also cite distorted representations. They give as a cinematic example the movie *The Long Walk Home* of 1990. The movie tells of the early days of the civil rights struggle by and for black Americans. While the film is sophisticated and meritorious in many aspects, it represents the civil rights movement that was “initiated, led and fought for by black women” and not by black women and men. It portrays white women as being supportive of black women while “every white man, without exception is both evil and inadequate,” (p.119). This is contrary to documented history which reports that black men played leading role in the US civil rights movement and that many white men and women supported civil rights for black women, while white American suffragists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were anything but eager to secure vote for black women. The
film rewrites history from a particularly political perspective and specifically writes men out of positive roles as protagonists and into negative roles as antagonists.

Nathanson and Young (2001:108) note that media representation besides allegedly reflecting and informing societies today also “project the present – in this case any notion of gender (or even by implication sex itself) that happens to be either fashionable or controversial right now – into the past as ‘history’ and (into) the future as ‘science fiction’ or speculative fiction.” An effect of popular culture not well understood is this long term reshaping of reality through revisionist history and projected agendas. They cite the movie *The Long Walk Home* as an example of mass media representation which rewrites history.

Negative representations of men are similarly projected into the future. In the science fiction movie, *Outer Limits* of 2005, a goddess rules a paradise called Lithia (which means earth in the future) and is assisted by her wise women. There are no men in Lithia since they have been wiped out in the “great war.” Nathanson and Young (2001:108 – 110) note that “little girls are told explicitly in a stereotypically hushed and soothing female voice that the old order was destroyed because of men,” and the narrative in the film reinforces male negative representation when it states “and when the males of the earth had varnished, so too did wickedness and war and hatred.” This statement contradicts the action of the goddess who consigned seven billion men to death despite claims of empathy and compassion.

Furthermore, Nathanson and Young (2001:145) acknowledge that “popular culture presents men in many roles, doing many desirable things. Men are often portrayed as heart surgeons or crusading lawyers... but so are women. And if women can do these
things as well or better than men, how can these images function as indicators of a specifically masculine identity.”

Craig (1993) observes that the “softer” male characters and the so called “reconstructed males” began appearing in *Prime Time Media* in the 1990s. Newbold et al (2002: 294) as well note that “the media representations of men and masculinity(ies) have changed over the years; they are more varied and include for example ‘softer’ images of masculinity. However, as discussed particularly in relation to sport and situation comedies, the representation of hegemonic masculinity still prevails in many media texts.” In a similar vein, they note that gay and lesbian media representations have, for a long while, been minimal and, in most cases, highly stereotypical,” (P.294). Newbold et al (2002:289), therefore, conclude from their studies that “it emerges that non-hegemonic forms of masculinity are being marginalized.”

Many studies show that the media still tend to reinforce the dominant ideology of masculinity and fail to portray the changing cultural norms of masculinity. Where men are not being marginalized, demonized or ridiculed, new age representations suggest that they should become more feminine. Gauntlet (2002:70) cites the 2002 movie *What Women Want* as an example of film which shows a man (played by Mel Gibson) initially as insensitive and sexist, undergoing an epiphany and learning to think like a woman. While the film also contains stereotypical images of women, it nevertheless “assumes that women are emotionally articulate, and asserts that men should be too;” therefore, implying that men lack this quality. The researcher also notes that an analysis of the men’s magazines reveals that the publications are perpetually concerned with how to treat
women, have a good relationship and live an enjoyable life. Even the men’s magazines urge men to become more feminized; more like what women want them to be, rather than attempting to show men how to be real men. Gauntlet (2002:250) emphasizes the foregoing when he writes that “the men’s magazine have an almost obsessive relationship with the socially constructed nature of manhood.” Therefore, while the mass media laud women to be themselves, they advocate the absolute reconstruction of men in their representations.

Though there are numerous negative representations of men in the mass media, Nathanson and Young (2001) point to a proliferation of recent movies and TV series which portray women in hero roles, thus dominating and often objectifying men. These movies include *Wonder Women, Xena, Warrio Princess, Buffy, the Vampire Slayer, Charlie’s Angels, Ally McBeal* (a top-rating programme in US and worldwide) and *Sex and the City* (a worldwide record-breaking TV programme).

In Nigeria, no major studies have been conducted in order to examine female and male representations in movies. However, a host of Nigerian movies have been observed to carry storylines where men are portrayed as irresponsible and mean. Examples of such movies include: *Sleeping with the Enemy* made in 2006 is a film about a man (played by Desmond Elliot) who marries a rich young woman (played by Ini Edo). The major male character besides having an affair with another woman conspires with the same mistress to murder his wife. The movie depicts the meanness of the major male actor, yet his wife was having an affair with his best friend.
The second movie *Games Men Play* has a major male character, Jim Iyke who has a virtuous and docile wife played by Uche Jumbo, but despite all still has a mistress played by Dakore Egbuson who disrespects and insults him at will. In short, the movie is filled with male characters who display various acts of irresponsibility. Others are *Playboy, Accidental Discharge* (2003) with major characters Rita Dominic and Hank Anuku, *Billionaires’ Club* (2003), *Abujaboys* (2004) with major characters Ejike Asiegbu, Rita Edochie, Kanayo O. Kanayo, *American Husband* (2004) which had major characters Osita Iheme, Chidilgiese and Obi Kechere, *Black Bra* (2005) with major characters Uche Jombo, Oge Okoye and Nonso Diobi, *Boys from Holland* (2006), which had major male actors Osita Iheme and Chinedu Ikedieze, *The Scorpion* (2007) with major actors Saint Obi, Dakore Egbuson and Benita Nzeribe. All the afore-mentioned movies had male characters who were behaving irresponsibly at some points as the storyline developed or throughout the movie.


No study of mass media representations can identity all the studies conducted in this field. But some of the main contemporary studies have been cited and their key findings identified in broad terms. What is clear from these studies of mass media representations of women and men to date is that:

1. while representations of women continue to remain a subject of debate, there has been a ground shift during the second half of the 1990s and early 2000s from stereotyped, marginalized, trivialized and objectified representations of women to portrayal of women as superwomen, heroes and in increasingly positive, powerful, autonomous roles and identities, and

2. there is an emergence of a double standard as it has become less acceptable or unacceptable to objectify, trivialize, marginalize or, otherwise, negatively represent women. It appears to be increasingly common place and popular to negatively represent men.

Negative representations of women occur in form of criticisms, letters to editors and producers and complaints to media regulatory bodies. But mocking, trivializing, objectifying and even demonizing men have become common as the studies suggest.

Nathanson and Young (2001: 144) conclude from their formal analysis of mass media that:

at a time when virtually all positive sources of masculine identity have been sexually desegregated, some boys and men will inevitably turn to the remaining negative ones. Because traditional sources of identity for men have been severely undermined or even attacked by a society preoccupied almost exclusively with the needs and problems of women, many men are left with whatever sources happen to be supplied by popular culture.
REFERENCES


Tibaijuka, Anna “Ideological and Psychological Hindrances”


CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design
In this research, the design adopted was content analysis because the study was carried out on newspaper publications.

Content analysis was the only research design that conveniently ensured that reliable data was gathered from newspapers especially in this study where it was necessary that the researcher effectively assessed the quality and quantity of representation of men and women in news stories published in the Nigerian dailies used for the purposes of this research work.

3.2 Population of Study
The population of this study included all the editions of the Nigerian daily newspapers – The Guardian, Vanguard, Daily Champion and Daily Sun.

3.3 Sample Size
The sample selection was made as a result of the fact that it would not be possible to study the entire population which comprised all the 365 publications of the Nigerian dailies published in 2004 and 2005.

The sample studied was fourteen publications of each newspaper per year. This summed up to fifty-six editions of the four newspapers for each year. Thus, a total of one hundred and twelve editions for the years 2004 and 2005 were examined.
3.4 Sampling Technique

Systematic random sampling technique was used to select the sample that was studied in this research.

Using this technique, the researcher made up the sample size the following way: for each newspaper, fourteen issues of the dailies were needed per year. That summed up to about 1/23rd of the 365 issues in a year. The researcher chose any number from 1 to 23.

In other words, the researcher selected the fourteen issues of each newspaper needed for analysis per year by marking off 1/23rd out of three hundred and sixty-five issues that were published in a year.

So, from January 1st, 2004 the researcher counted twenty-three days and marked out the first publication. The second was chosen after counting off the next twenty-three days from January 23rd. Subsequent selections were likewise made till the end of the year to obtain fourteen issues of each newspaper.

The dates of publication that were used for analysis for the four newspapers in 2004 included:

1. 23rd January, 2004
2. 15th February, 2004
3. 9th March, 2004
4. 1st April, 2004
5. 24th April, 2004
6. 17th May, 2004
7. 9th June, 2004
For 2005, the same method of sample selection was adopted. However, there was an alteration in the dates of issues used since 2004 had 29 days in February while in 2005, it had 28 days. The dates of publication for analysis in 2005 were therefore:

1. 23rd January, 2005
2. 15th February, 2005
3. 10th March, 2005
4. 2nd April, 2005
5. 25th April, 2005
6. 18th May, 2005
7. 10th June, 2005
8. 3rd July, 2005
9. 26th July, 2005
10. 18th August, 2005
11. 10th September, 2005
12. 3rd October, 2005
13. 26th October, 2005
14. 18th November, 2005

The sample size for 2005 was also fifty-six. This amounted to a total sample size of one hundred and twelve issues of the four newspapers for the two years.

3.5 Instrument for data collection
The researcher used the code–sheet as instrument for collecting data in this study. The code- sheet was the only instrument which could be used to describe and represent the content categories of the data that was generated in this research.

**Coding outline**

A. **Media**
   1. Guardian
   2. Vanguard
   3. Daily Champion
   4. Daily Sun

B. **Gender**
   1. Male
   2. Female

C. **Year**
   1. 2004
   2. 2005

D. **Story covered**
   1. News stories

E. **Topics covered**
   1. Education
   2. Security
   3. Social
   4. Government
   5. Crime
   6. Food and Agricultural activities
   7. Politics
   8. Sports
   9. Health and Welfare
   10. Arts and Culture
11. Finance and Economic activities
12. International Bodies (UNDP, WHO etc)
13. Security
14. Religion

F. Direction
1. Neutral
2. Favourable
3. Unfavourable

H. Story Placement
1. Front Page
2. Inside Page
3. Back Page
4. Sports Page
5. Centre Spread

I. Illustration
1. Photograph
2. No photograph

J. Story Length
1. 1” – 15”
2. 16” – 30”
3. 31” – 45”
4. 45” – 1 page

3.6 Technique for data analysis
The researcher used the quantitative method of data analysis to analyse the data that was gathered in this research. Quantitative data analysis technique enabled the researcher to present statistics which confirmed or invalidated the thesis and answered the research questions that were posed in this study.
The data the researcher gathered was broken down into nominal variables so that tables of frequencies and percentages could be used to explain the research findings.
REFERENCES


CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter provided the detailed analysis of the data obtained through the instrument. Frequency distribution and percentages were used for analyzing the data.

Table 1: Distribution of news stories content in the selected newspapers according to gender group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanguard</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Sun</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>241</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of Table 1 show that the total number of news stories reported on the male gender group are 241 in 2004 and 345 in 2005. The variation in terms of newspaper type in 2004 is: Champion 72, Vanguard 67, Daily Sun 58 and The Guardian 44, while in 2005 the variation is as follows: The Guardian 107, Vanguard 97, Daily Sun 73 and Champion 68. On the other hand, the number of news stories reported on the female gender group is 35 in 2004, which include Daily Sun 19, Champion 11, The Guardian 3 and Vanguard 2. Then in 2005, the total for Champion is 7 and Vanguard 4. From the table, it means that news stories reported on male gender group outnumber those reported about their female gender group.
Table 2: Distribution of the news stories content in the selected daily newspapers according to their story length

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Story length</td>
<td></td>
<td>Story length</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Guardian</td>
<td>792.31</td>
<td>28.42</td>
<td>1,076.65</td>
<td>104.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanguard</td>
<td>696.5</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>865.3</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion</td>
<td>673.75</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>628.7</td>
<td>58.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily sun</td>
<td>507.61</td>
<td>147.2</td>
<td>473.25</td>
<td>61.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,070.17</td>
<td>267.02</td>
<td>2,003.85</td>
<td>253.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of Table 2 show that the length of news stories reported on the male gender group amounted to 3,070.17 inches in 2004 (that is The Guardian 792.31, Vanguard 696.5, Champion 673.75, and Daily Sun 507.61) while the total length of the new stories reported on the female gender amounted to 267.02 (Daily Sun 147.2, Champion 62.6, Vanguard 28.8, and The Guardian 28.42). In 2005, the total length of the new stories reported on male gender totaled 2,003.85 inches (with The Guardian 1,076.65, Vanguard 865.3, Champion 628.7, and Daily Sun 473.25) while news stories reported on the female gender totaled 253.6 inches (with The Guardian 104.7, Daily Sun 61.8, Champion 58.4, and Vanguard 28.7). These imply that the length of the news stories (measured in inches) reported on male gender in both 2004 and 2005 are much longer than that reported on the female group.
Tables 3: Distribution of the news stories content in the selected daily newspapers according to their news types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>News Types</td>
<td>News Types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanguard</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily sun</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>News Types</td>
<td>News Types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanguard</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily sun</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of Table 3 show that the news stories reported on the male gender group according to news type in 2004 totaled: politics 79, government 47, security 35, sport 26, religion and international 19 each, law 16, social 12, and economics 1, while that of the female gender group amounted to: security 5, politics 7, sports 7, international 6, social 5 and government 1. In 2005, the categories of news stories for the male gender group amounted to: politics 93, government 73, security 37, sports 32, international 32, religion 25, social 22, economics 13 and law 13, while that of female gender group amounted to
security 10, religion 5, politics 5, sports 4, social 2 and government 2. These indicate that the types of news stories reported on the male gender are highest in politics, followed by government in 2004 as well as in 2005. However, in the case of the female gender, the news types that have high number of occurrences are security, politics, sports, international and security in 2004, while security, religion and politics are higher in 2005.

Table 4: Distribution of the news stories content in selected daily newspapers according to their illustration categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2004</th>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>NP</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>NP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanguard</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily sun</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results from Table 4 show that news stories about the male gender group with illustrations in 2004 reveal thus: non-picture (NP) 173 (that is Champion 50, Vanguard 48, The Guardian 45, Daily sun 30) and picture (P) 71 (i.e. Daily Sun 33, Vanguard 21, The Guardian 11, Champion 6). In 2005, the news stories reported on the male gender group according to illustration amounted to non-picture (NP) 270 (that is The Guardian 78, Daily Sun 70, Champion 62, Vanguard 60) and picture (P) 11 (that is Champion, Daily Sun 3, The Guardian 2). For the female gender group, non-picture (NP) is 28 (with The Guardian 12, Daily Sun 10, Champion 5, Vanguard 1), while picture (P) is 5 (that is Daily Sun 3, Champion 2). These imply that the news stories without accompanying pictures for the two
years are high. However, they are more in stories that concern the male gender group than that of the female group.

Table 5: Distribution of the news stories in the selected daily newspapers according to placement on pages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2004</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Placement</td>
<td>Placement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>FP</td>
<td>IP</td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanguard</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champions</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Sun</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Placement</td>
<td>Placement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>FP</td>
<td>IP</td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanguard</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champions</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Sun</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of table 5 show that placement of news stories on the male gender group in 2004 amounted to: inside page (IP) 188 (that is Daily Sun 63, Champion 46, Vanguard 41,
The Guardian 38) and front page (FP) 50 (that is Champion 26, The Guardian 13, Vanguard 9) while that of the female gender group amounted to inside page (IP) 32 (that is Daily Sun 14, Champion 9, The Guardian 5, Vanguard 4) and front page (FP) 2 for Champion. In 2005, the placement of news stories on the male gender group amounted to inside page (IP) 247 (that is The Guardian 82, Daily Sun 61, Champion 54, Vanguard 54) and front page (FP) 62 (The Guardian 24, Champion 16, Daily Sun 12, Vanguard 10) while that of the female gender group in this same year amounted to inside page(IP) 23 (The Guardian 9, Daily Sun 8, Champion 5, Vanguard 1) and for the front page(FP) 10 (that is Daily Sun 5, The Guardian 3, Champion 2). These indicate that the majority of news stories about the male gender group were placed on the inside and front pages compared to that of the female group.

Table 6: Distribution of news stories content in selected daily newspapers according to direction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direction</td>
<td>Direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanguard</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champions</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Sun</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of Table 6 show that the news stories reported on the male gender group according to direction in 2004 totaled 166 for neutral (N), 65 non-favourable (NF), 21 favourable (F) while that of female gender group totaled 19 for non-favourable (NF), 17 favourable (F), 1 neutral (N). In 2005, the direction for the male gender group is thus: 219 neutral (N), 73 non-favourable (NF), 38 favourable (F) while that of the female gender group totaled 14 for favourable (F), 12 non-favourable (NF), 14, and 6 neutral (N). From the Table, majority of the news stories reported about the male gender group in 2004 are neutral, followed by non-favourable, while that of the female gender group is higher for non-favourable (NF). In 2005, the non-favourable news stories are higher for the males than the females.

### 4.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

- **Research Question 1:** Are men and women equally represented in news stories published in Nigerian newspapers?

Amongst the news stories studied in the selected newspapers, it was observed that men appeared almost five times more often than women who played central roles in news
stories. This is a clear indication that women were often marginalized within the newspapers and rarely appeared on front pages. The results showed an absolute dominance of men over women in published news stories. In fact, female representation in newspaper stories was poor compared to that of men. This is basically as a result of the fact that the world is seen, interpreted and reconstructed through the pen of male journalists, and this situation is reinforced by the nature of our society which is such that the men occupy the central positions.

- **Research Question 2: What is the nature of stories reported about men and women in Nigerian newspapers?**

  It is instructive to note that there is a crucial difference between a person who occupies a central role in a story (that is if the story is about the individual or if he/she is the main actor in the story) and a person who is merely one of the characters mentioned in the background or as the story line develops (that is when the activities of the person is dependent on the actions of the main actor.) Therefore, when analyzing the representation of the two gender groups in thematic sections of the newspapers, we exclusively focused on the distribution of the gender groups in relation to the central position they occupy within the articles/news stories. Findings from the study indicated that there was clear evidence of male dominance as earlier noted. However, in sections on culture, art and entertainment, it was observed that women had central roles compared to the men.

  In other words, findings from the study of the selected Nigerian dailies indicated that women are allowed access to roles which are traditionally regarded as female duties (like entertainment, art and culture) while the more serious roles are assigned to men.
Besides, the positioning of gender groups in specific thematic sections has another dimension attached to it in that specific sections/news stories belong to or are published on specific pages of the newspaper. The front pages carry stories on politics, government, foreign affairs and business while the back pages carry stories on entertainment and other matters that are normally perceived as less serious. This way, the importance of content is diversified such that “serious stuff” belongs to the front pages. This has an important implication on the construction of gender identities and roles in media discourse because men are assigned roles on “serious and important” issues while women are assigned duties on areas which are less important and less serious. The implication being that men appeared in the front pages of newspapers as a result of the nature of areas of life they are involved in while women are relegated to the back and middle pages. Therefore, we can state that the positioning of women in the daily newspapers analyzed in this study suggested a systematic marginalization of females which obviously strengthens stereotypical images of gender relations and reconstruction of social power relationships and roles.

Results obtained from the study also confirmed that there is imbalance between the two gender groups when used as sources in newspaper stories. The main source(s) of information is mostly males and, of course, occupy majority of the spaces in newspaper.

In newspapers, a photograph visually supports an article by offering additional information and attracting the attention of the reader. As Roland Barthes quoted in Gambles (1998:30) observed, it is an object that has been chosen and treated according to “professional, aesthetic or ideological norms which has so many factors of connotation.”
This study reveals that women photographs rarely appear on newspaper, thus they are hardly visible in political and economic issues which are stories that “make the news.” Rather what are seen in the newspapers analysed in this study are pictorial representations of women without accompanying textual messages in the spheres of fashion, culture and other social issues. And of course, if these pictures have no relevance with the stories, it naturally follows that their appearance on newspaper pages has a direct implication on the sales of the publication. Thereza Straford (2004:134) further clarifies this when she writes that “the phenomenon and idea of the inclusion of partly or completely nude women has nothing to do with the news itself but might be in direct relationship with the sale of the paper and the need for higher circulation figures.”

- Research Question 3: Are men and women misrepresented in any way in news stories contained in Nigerian newspapers?

Though there has been a record of an increased participation of women in mass media operations in the recent past, there is still an obvious dominance of men in management positions. This situation is largely reinforced by the patriarchal nature of our society which confines women to “soft” issues and assigns “serious or hard” roles to men. Thus, the criteria for news worthiness is consequently understood through the gender lens, and gender stereotypes can greatly hinder women’s opportunities to assume decision – making positions on serious issues in our society. In other words, from the findings there seems to be more unfavourable publications about women than men.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provided the conclusion which is based on the results obtained from the research. Recommendations that could address the findings of the study and suggestions for further studies were made.

5.1 Conclusion

There is a clear imbalance in the representation of both gender groups in reported stories in the selected newspapers used in this research. Men appeared more often in published stories. This is obviously expected since men occupy most of the important public positions, while there is an underrepresentation of women as they are involved more in the private and domesticated spheres of life. Thus, women are systematically positioned in the back pages most times which is where marginal stories belong.

Women rarely have the central role in newspaper stories and are hardly the main source of information when compared to their male counterpart. They are rather relegated to the background, are passive and usually not regarded as a voice of authority or expertise like the men. The competence of women in their profession or career is usually under-valued. It is common place and more natural to discuss the female gender group in the context of family relations, reproductive issues and other household duties.

There is also a great deal of male representation in photographs compared to that of women. While photographs of men appear more in front and inside pages where important stories occupy, that of women appear more to attract the readers’ attention by depicting
style and bodily characteristics or they will be on pages where fashion, culture, art or other entertainment issues are published which are obviously not the front pages. This experience yet revolves around the fact that there is limited representation of women in serious positions in our society, whether within the media or in government.

It is clear that newspapers systematically reconstruct and reconfirm dominant gender stereotypes in Nigeria. Moreover, the media still ignore gender issues as an important topic worthy of coverage, neither do they recognize the need to equally represent or balance gender perspectives when dealing with different socially related issues. The daily newspapers in Nigeria construct a gender-based, discriminatory media discourse which is the domain of men. The general imbalance in the frequency and diversity among the representatives of different gender groups in the media does not, however, mean a distortion of reality and social facts, but more likely points to a process of negotiation and construction of social power relationships and social identities.

Media discourse as a domain of men is, therefore, constantly being constructed or reconstructed by employing various techniques of reinforcing and nurturing symbolic gender inequality in the world of the old, dominant, fixed and homogenous identities and relations. Within these, power, competence, production, authority and visibility belong to men while silence, dependence, family, reproduction, entertainment and sexuality are the women’s place.
5.2 Recommendations

The image of women inside and outside the newsroom can be changed and made more visible by the media. It is the duties of Nigerian journalists to encourage women to tell their stories and make them (i.e. the women) know that stories about them are of relevance. It is necessary for mass media practitioners to reject caricatures of women which seem to be the most usual trend in publications about women. Young reporters should be sensitized about those repressive and inimical cultural norms which serve to relegate women to the background and affect the way women are perceived in the society. Thus, there is need to encourage gender sensitive journalism, gender sensitivity in terms of sources, context and language used in writing the stories. If this is done, it implies that no gender group would be misrepresented or underrepresented in newspaper stories.

Furthermore, consistent and sustained capacity building of all members of the media institutions – reporters, editors, producers, etc on gender issues will not only raise awareness on the complexities and implications of gender dynamics and power relations within this field, but will also broaden the base of experts who work on these issues meaningfully. More space and airtime would be allocated to women-related issues, a break away from the usual areas traditionally regarded as “women stuff.” A concrete example is an increase in portrayal of women as significant contributors to the society, leaders, workers and positive thinkers, not just as sex objects, victims in misconducts and the images behind the successful husbands or male bosses.
Organizations and bodies concerned about fair portrayal of both gender groups through the media – the absence or marginalization of females, simplifying and stereotyping of gender relations should make concerted efforts to develop a set of guidelines or policy which may be used to improve media portrayal of women. The assumption is that policy is a necessary condition for such an improvement.

Finally, there is utmost need for women to work on themselves. This includes women inside (media practitioners) and outside media houses. The women folk need to build confidence in themselves because if they do not say “I am” nobody will say “You are.” Thus, there is need for the journalists to work on the women and they (the women) work on themselves as well for the media to achieve that equal representation of both gender groups that is desired.

5.3 Suggestions for further studies

This study has not exhaustively researched on gender reporting in Nigerian newspapers. So, based on the findings of this study, the researcher lists topical issues that are related to this study which can form the focus for further research below. They are:

1. Media portrayal of women in the Nigerian society,
2. The impact of gender insensitivity and language used by mass media practitioners on the image of women in Nigeria,
3. Gender mainstreaming in Nigerian mass media: implications for women empowerment, and
4. The impact of gender bias on recruitment in Nigerian mass media.
REFERENCES


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