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## CONTENT

### SECTION A: LANGUAGE

Pragmatic Analysis of Tones and Tonal Patterns in Igala Language <b>Abdul, Mohammed Adem</b>	<b>1</b>
Process Choice Analysis of President Muhammadu Buhari's 2015 Inauguration Speech <b>Mohammed Maikiyari, Ph.D and Ramatu Tijani Oziti</b>	<b>12</b>
Quantifiers in English and Izhia: A Minimalist Investigation <b>Maria-Helen Ekah, Ph.D and Chibueze Egbe Aleke</b>	<b>26</b>
A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Images of Banditry in <i>Daily Trust Newspaper</i> Cartoons <b>Umar Uba Abubakar, Ph.D., Benjamin Iorbee, Ph.D and Queen Nguhemem Jebe-Tume</b>	<b>42</b>
Critical Discourse Analysis of Persuasion in Donald Trump's 2024 Victory Speech <b>Hauwa Giwa-Ali, Ph.D</b>	<b>60</b>
Political Discourse Analysis of Selected Plenary Speeches of Nigeria's Senate President Godswill Akpabio <b>Ahmad Musa Saleh and Abdul'aziz Bako, Ph.D</b>	<b>73</b>
Rethinking Social Order: Racism within and After Covid-19 Pandemic <b>Abaya, Henry Demenongo</b>	<b>84</b>
Irregularities In The Grammar of the English Language: Blindspots for Pedagogical Attention in ESL Classrooms <b>Cecilia Folasade Ojetunde, Ph.D and Osipeju, Babasola Samuel</b>	<b>105</b>
An Analysis of Lexical Cohesive Devices in Governor Ahmadu Fintiri's Inauguration Speech <b>Muazu Hassan and Hauwa Giwa-Ali, Ph.D</b>	<b>121</b>
Non-observance of Grice's Maxims: A Study of Some Selected Dialogues in the Play – Harvest of Corruption <b>Abdulkadir Adamu and Usman Maigari Malala</b>	<b>140</b>
The Morphology of Personal Names in English and Ebira Languages <b>Amina Salisu Aliyu, Ph.D, Ahmadu Mohammed Dauda, Ph.D and James Jarafu Jawur</b>	<b>153</b>
Impact of Gamification on Vocabulary Acquisition and Retention among Private Secondary School English Learners In Lagos State, Nigeria <b>Adedokun, James Adekunle and Olabode, Adeyinka Ayoola, Ph.D</b>	<b>169</b>

The Expansionist Approach to the Teaching of the English Grammatical Categories: Examples with the Naming Category <b>Khabyr Fasasi</b>	<b>187</b>
Digital Media Learning and Postmodernist Classroom Innovations in Nigerian Universities <b>Maggai Tsokwa and Fatima Inuwa</b>	<b>201</b>
The Pronunciation of the New English Native Speakers in Nigeria <b>Ngor, Cornelius Iko-awaji</b>	<b>210</b>
Lexico-Semantic Analysis of ASUU-FGN Impasse In Nigerian Newspapers <b>Awoniyi Olalekan Ogundeji and Happiness Uduk, Ph.D</b>	<b>222</b>
A Critical Stylistic Analysis of a Channels Television Show, 'Politics Today' <b>Waliyah A. Akeju and Muhyideen Kolawole Ayuba</b>	<b>237</b>
An Investigation on Functionality and Usage of Language Laboratories for Teaching Oral English in Colleges of Education in Bauchi State <b>Bakoji Mohammed Fema, PhD, Alhaji Abubakar, PhD and Fatima Mohammed</b>	<b>249</b>
A Pragmatic Investigation of the Speech of Former President Muhammadu Buhari on Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020 <b>Habu Yusuf</b>	<b>262</b>
Rhetoricity In Orality: An Analysis of Muhammadu Dan'Anace's "Shagon Mafara" <b>Garba Adamu, Ph.D and Ashiru Abdullahi</b>	<b>277</b>
A Semantic Analysis of Selected Mwaghavul Proverbs <b>Danji Sabo and Kyetu Mandyen Danlami</b>	<b>286</b>
Investigating Linguistic Features of North-East Nigerian Suicide Notes <b>Yunana Ahmed, Ph.D and Danladi, Daniel Boyi</b>	<b>300</b>
A Morphological Study of Derivational Patterns In Android Smartphone Terminologies <b>Ahmadu Mohammed Dauda, Ph.D and Abdulkarim Musa Yola</b>	<b>315</b>
Lexical choices and Ideology in Nigeria's Security and Development Discourse in the Nigeria's Media <b>Murjanatu Sulaiman-Shika</b>	<b>326</b>
Syntax and Semantics Interface <b>Mohammed Gambo, Ph.D</b>	<b>346</b>
Colonial Legacy in Tunde Kelani's <i>Saworoide</i> : Language, Power, and Resistance <b>Okunnuwa, Sunday J. Ph.D, Ibrahim, Wahab Adegbayi, and Sobande, Olukayode Olukemi</b>	<b>355</b>



## SECTION B: LITERATURE

- An Appraisal of Cult Symbols In The Selected Songs of American POP Artists  
**Tanimu, Abubakar (Prof) and Adekunle, Joseph** 365
- Enlightenment for Empowerment: A Feminist Reading of Safiya Yero'S Najah  
**Manta G. Yadok and Ishaya: Bilyaminu Salman** 381
- Arab-Muslim Immigrants and the Limits of Cultural Citizenship in H.M. Naqvi's *Home Boy*  
**Olamiposi Oyeleye, Ph.D., Oladiran Damilola Peju, Ph.D. and PatrickbCharles Alex, Ph.D.** 395
- The Artist and Leadership Failure In Africa: A Study of Ngugi Wa Thiong'O'S Wizard of The Crow  
**Dr. Manasseh Terwase Iortyer, Prof. Jeff Godwin Doki and Bizuum Godwill Yadok** 411
- Narratives of Conflict: A Literary Exploration of Boko Haram's Impact in Politics and Security in Nigeria's Northeast Since 2009  
**Markus Ishaku** 421
- Literary Creativity and the Condition of the Nigerian Writer in the Age of Globalization and Capitalist Economy  
**Adebayo, Abidemi Olufemi, PhD and Bukola, Olubunmi Iyabo, M.A** 431
- Amali's Faces of Shame as Reflection of Leadership at the Altar of Ethics and Decorum  
**Isah Ibrahim PhD** 442
- Of Mothers as Mistresses: Jocasta Complex and Transference in Abubakar Adam Ibrahim's Season of Crimson Blossoms.  
**David Mikailu Ph.D.** 452
- Stylistic Explorations of Love: Conceptual Metaphor In Mariama Bâ'S So Long a Letter and Zaynab Alkali'S The Virtuous Woman  
**Anwar Danjuma, Maryam Mukhtar Abdullahi, Muntari Babangida and Sulaiman Harisu** 462
- The Influence of Nigerian Folktales on National Identity and Values  
**Jimoh, Olumide Yusuf, Ph.D. and Adedokun, James Adekunle** 474
- Discontents and the Quest for National Rebirth in Karen King-Aribisala's Kicking Tongues  
**Okache C. Odey** 487
- An Assessment of Performance of Bauchi State Senior Secondary School Students in Literature-In-English  
**Professor Asabe Sadiya Mohammed, Dr Alhaji Abubakar and Haruna Shuaibu Hardawa** 496



Betwixt And Between Colonial Hegemony and Contemporaneity: Examining The Voyage of Transmutation In African Drama

**Andrew Aondofa Nyikyaa** 508

Investigating the Educational Advisory Roles of Tera Proverbs

**Alheri Bulus** 527

## SECTION C: COMMUNICATION

The Media Influence on Economic Development Through Addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

**DANGO, Salamatu Eshi and ABDULLAHI, Hussaina Abaji** 535

Social Media Discourse and Peace Negotiations in Contemporary Nigeria

**Peter Ochefu Okpeh, Ph.D., Theodore Shey Nsairun and Okpeadua Sony Okpeadua, PhD** 546

When Robots take over Journalism: systemic Considerations for Artificial Intelligence and Practical Realities in Nigerian Television Newsroom

**Maggai Tsokwa and Tebrimam Useni Andefatso** 560

Mitigating Fake News Through Media Literacy Education: The Perception and Experience of Masaka Market Traders in Karu

**Ben Ita Odeba, Ayuba Ummah Ibrahim and Desmond Onyemechi Okocha, PhD.** 574

An Assessment of Adherence to Journalism Code of Conduct among Journalists in Plateau State

**Dorcas Agabison, Prof. Greg H. Ezeah, Maggai Tsokwa and Orya Theophilus Tertsea** 597

An Assessment of the Two-Way Communication Model of Public Relations Used During the University of Jos School Fees Increase in 2023

**James E. Amad, Evaristus J. Ugboma and Chidimma Precious Okechukwu** 616

An Assessment of the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Business Communication in Lafia, Nasarawa state and Makurdi, Benue state, Central Nigeria

**EIMOGA Audu** 632

## SECTION D: CREATIVE WORKS/BOOK REVIEW

Poems for Savannah Journal of Language, Literature and Communication Studies

**Ismail Bala** 647

The Loss-Land

**Fatima Inuwa** 652



Dustbins and Dreams <b>Abdulkadir Mubarak</b>	<b>657</b>
The Desperate: Desire of a Feminine Soul <b>Faith Nkeri Aliyu</b>	<b>664</b>
Gumakan Zamani: A Book Review <b>Mohammad Abubakar M.</b>	<b>667</b>



## The Media Influence on Economic Development Through Addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

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### Abstract

*This research examines the pivotal role of the media in influencing economic development in Nigeria by addressing gender-based violence (GBV), focusing on how the mass media shape public perceptions, norms and values, drive policy change and promote equality. Using the Agenda Setting theory and the Gender and Development (GAD) as theoretical frame work, the study explores how media coverage of the GBV can act as a catalyst for economic growth by fostering societal norms and enhancing the participation of women in the Nigerian economy. Some of the mechanism for reducing GBV and fostering sustainable development include the media's ability to highlight the economic cost of GBV, advocate for legal reforms and support for educational and empowerment initiatives. Through case studies and theoretical analysis, the paper argues that the media plays a significant role in economic development and it has the potential to address GBV issues, which mitigate economic progress of Nigeria. The findings of the paper suggest that utilizing the media can lead to effective economic development by empowering women, reducing inequality and promoting inclusive growth. However, challenges such as media bias and sensationalism are pointed out as potential barriers to economic development and curbing GBV. This research can contribute to existing knowledge and gives a deeper understanding of the nexus between media, gender-based violence, gender justice and economic development in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Mass media, Gender-based violence, Economic development, Women, Gender-Justice.

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### Introduction

Recently, the mass media is flooded with stories of gender-based violence against the male and female gender. The mass media covers gender-based stories such as issues related to sexual assault, sexual molestation, emotional blackmail, physical abuse, economic abuse etc. this is not just a

Nigerian problem but a universal phenomenon. The mass media plays a pivotal role in shaping public perception and influencing societal policies, norms and values particularly in the areas with deep societal impact such as GBV. Gender-based violence especially against women is fueled by several factors



such as culture, religion and media (Action Aid 2015; Oche et al. 2020). Research has showed that one in three women experience violence before age 15 (Sutherland et al 2019). The mass media serve as an instrument of information dissemination and social change, the mass media can highlight societal norms that foster GBV and influencing economic development in Nigeria. GBV hinders women from proportionately participating in full economic activities such as accessing loans to start businesses, owning landed properties, holding top managerial positions in some organizations and absenteeism from work due to violence. According to a report by World Bank in 2019, GBV is one of the most oppressive forms of gender inequality. It hinders both men and women in equally participating in social, economic and political activities. The report added that GBV “includes intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual assault, female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation and abuse, child abuse and child marriage”. These violences hinders equal participation in economic development outcomes. Many studies have highlighted women to be victims of GBV than men. Exposure to intimate partner violence can lead to women health-related issues like fistula, gynae issues, unplanned abortions, miscarriages, depression and even death.

According to the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in

or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to woman, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” Afu, (2021). In Nigeria for instance GBV is fuel by religion and culture, some religious organizations preach against divorce, therefore so many women stay in abusive marriages and relationships due to this ideology. Some cultures in Nigeria suppress women; women are seen as weak and frail, some men beat women in act to “correct” and discipline them. some men in Nigeria face GBV especially from their wives but they are ashamed to speak up due to stigmatization and fear of being perceived as “weak”. Action Aid (2015) cited in Oladepo et al. (2011) observed that many religious and social cultural factors impel GBV including men to naturally terrorize women and to demand subservice from them.

The mass media can help foster economic outcomes by addressing GBV through Campaigns, investigative reporting and advocacy. The mass media can also promote an environment that encourages gender equality and contribute to economic growth in Nigeria. This research explores the intricate relationship between media coverage of GBV and subsequent effect on economic development, emphasizing how the mass media narratives can shift public attitude, affect policy making and facilitate economic empowerment especially for women in Nigeria through addressing GBV.



### Statement of the Problem

Gender-based violence has gain recognition over the years as one of the most critical issues hindering economic participation and empowerment of vulnerable populations particularly women. As a result of this issue both Government and Non-governmental organizations have floated various media platforms with campaigns, programs and initiative to fight this menace eating deep into the Nigerian society. The media which holds the potential to shape public opinion and influence public policy, has consistently portrayed GBV as a socio-economic issue. Yet there is still a widespread of GBV in the Nigerian society. There is need for comprehensive research to understand how mass media coverage of GBV can contribute to reducing violence and fostering economic development by promoting gender equality and safety in the society.

The research aims to explore how media can be utilized to address GBV, examine its economic impacts and serve as a yard-stick for promoting gender equality and economic development in Nigeria. This research tends to fill in the gap in understanding the relationship between media coverage of GBV and economic development in Nigeria and recommends strategies on fostering media involvement on the issue.

### Research Objectives

This research is guided by the following objectives:

- i. To examine the role of the Nigerian media in covering gender-based violence (GBV).
- ii. To explore the economic impacts of gender-based violence
- iii. To access how media coverage of GBV influences policy making in Nigeria
- iv. To identify strategies for fostering media effectiveness in addressing GBV and promoting economic development in Nigeria.

### Research Questions

- viii. To what extend does Nigerian media covers issues of gender-based violence?
- ix. What are the direct and indirect economic impacts of gender-based violence?
- x. In what ways does media reporting on GBV influence government policies and advocacy?
- xi. What are the strategies that can aid media effectiveness in addressing GBV and promoting economic development in Nigeria?

### An Overview Of Gender Based Violence In Nigeria

According to World Health Organization, GBV is “any act of gender-based violence that results in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women whether occurring in public or private life”. GBV is not restricted to women only, it includes men as well. Klugman,



Hanmen, Twigg, Hassan, McCleary-Skills and Santa-Maria in Martins (2021), defines GBV as “an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person’s will and is based on socially ascribed gender difference between males and females”. Violence becomes gender based when it is targeted to an individual because of his or her gender (Martins, 2021).

In Nigeria, GBV is widespread and has eaten deeply into the Nigerian society affecting mostly women and girls, although men and boys are also impacted. It encompasses various forms of violence including domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriages and harmful widowhood practices. This violence is mostly driven by patriarchy culture, religion and inequalities. Talking about domestic violence, women are often subjected to physical, emotional and psychological abuse by their intimate partners and in the Nigerian society sometimes tolerate these acts. We have cases of intimate partners killing their spouses due to GBV. Sexual violence and rape are other forms of GBV found in the Nigerian society. According to reports by International Organizations, most of these cases go unreported due to fear of stigmatization, fear of reprisal or lack of confidence in the justice system. In southern Nigeria, we have cases of female genital mutilation (FGM), it is estimated that over 20million Nigerian women and girls have undergone FGM with the highest percentage in southern Nigeria. When it comes to early marriages, Nigeria

has one of the highest rates globally, with a significant number of girls getting married before the age of 18, this is a common practice in the northern part of Nigeria. With the rise of Boko haram terrorist group, young girls have been kidnapped and forced into early marriages by the group in Nigeria, cutting them off from their families, education and a chance to leave a free life. This was shown by the abduction of Chibok girls (2013), Dapchi girls and so many other unreported girls forced into early marriages in Nigeria by terrorists. This practice exposes girls to early pregnancies, health risks and limit their opportunity to acquire education. Trafficking and exploitation are another GBV found in Nigerian society. Sex trafficking and forced labour has been recorded in Nigeria. NAPTIP has recorded activities of human and sex trafficking in Nigeria especially women and girls being the primary victims.

The Nigerian government has taken steps to address GBV through laws and policies yet GBV has remained a menace in the Nigerian society. The Violence Against Persons (prohibition) Act (NAPP) of 2015 is a landmark law that seeks to prohibit and criminalize various forms of GBV including domestic violence, harmful traditional practices and sexual assault. However, many states are yet to adapt it, it is only effective in FCT and Lagos state. Additionally, laws add easing forced and early marriage, FGM exist but are not enforced strongly especially in rural areas where traditional and cultural practices are dominants.





## Empirical Review

Obayi, Paul Martin carried research on “The mass media and gender-based violence in Imo state, Nigeria: A critical analysis” the research revealed the extent to which residents of Imo state are exposed to the media report and programs on gender-based violence is high at 44%. The study also found out that media report has been able to include perceptive/altitudinal change on gender-based violence positively. This is so because the respondents perceived GBV as a threat to human, family, societal and nation development. This study highlights the role of the mass media as a strong tool for addressing GBV in Nigeria and fostering national development.

Similarly, Okafor, Anorue, Obay and Chima (2023) researched on the “knowledge and attitude toward media campaigns against gender-based violence among Nigeria women in south east Nigeria”. The study revealed that social economic facets like academic achievements, religion, cultural factors among others affect attitude towards gender based-violence. They recommend that a clear understanding of the relationship between dominant cultures and suppression of women should inform future campaigns on gender-based violence.

Another study conducted by Dauda B (2018) on mass media messages and domestic violence in Nigeria, the study revealed that socio-cultural factors among others contributes to domestic violence in Nigeria; the study also highlighted that most

women who experience any form of domestic abuse in Nigeria prefer to stay quiet than report to appropriate authorities. They study also reveals that the mass media has been very instrumental in creating awareness on domestic violence through jingles and mass media programs.

Additionally, Igbolekwu, Arusokwu, Nwogu, Rasak, Asamu & Osueke (2021) conducted a study on domestic violence against women in the Nigeria rural context, the study revealed that most of the respondents believed that physical violence against women is acceptable in some communities because there are times women deserved to be beaten in other to put them in check. The study also found out that most women in rural Nigeria communities are trained to stay and tolerate abusive marriages and relationships, that is an attribute of “patient women” and men on the other hand have the right to punish their wives. The authors further recommended that advocacy organizations should leverage indigenous languages and local media to express consequences of domestic violence against women in Nigeria and South Africa in other to empower women and promote national development.

In contrast, Orji, Anyanwu, & Emeana (2021) in their study about “perception of the influence of television broadcast in the campaign against discrimination and violence among women in Mbaitili local government, Imo state”, recorded that the level of awareness about campaigns involving discrimination and violence against women based on





their exposure to TV is minimal at 50%, and that the campaigns is perceived to be unsatisfactory at 46.1%. this means that exposure to TV broadcast do not adequately influence women's participation in the campaign against discrimination and violence against women among them at 44%.

With the advents of information communication technology and raise if social media platforms; several research has shown that social media platforms could be leveraged to curb violence and sexual harassment in Nigeria a study by Arikewuyo & Abdulbaki (2017) about the role of social media in eradicating violence among young Nigeria female reveal that poverty is one of the determinants of sexual and physical abuse among women and girls in Nigeria. Study have shown that social media is an effective tool which women use to fight for their rights and speak up against abusers and also serve as catalyst for proper campaigns and enlightenment about GBV especially women.

Mitel & Singh (2020) studied gender-based violence during the covid-19 pandemic, the study found out that the during the covid-19 pandemic, there was an increase in GBV due to the lockdown. They added that other factors that contributed to GBV during covid-19 pandemic were alcohol, economic hardship and insecurity.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study hinged on the feminist standpoint theory and agenda setting theory of the mass media.

### **Feminist standpoint theory**

Feminist standpoint theory posits that social positions, particularly those of marginalized groups helps understands knowledge in the society. This theory argues that people who occupy marginalized positions such as women and other oppressed groups, have a different and unique perception into social realities due to their life experiences. These marginalize perspectives helps in understanding social structures and relations. Feminist stand point theory is a critical social sciences feminist philosophy that traces its roots to scholars like Dorathy Smith, Nancy Hartsock & Sandra Harding in the 1980s. They argued that traditional patriarchal system favours men and overlook the perspective of marginalized and oppressed groups like women.

This theory is relevant to this research because it gives insight on how marginalized people like women in the society can give unique perspective about GBV that is often inaccessible by those in dominant position. The theory also provides epistemic privilege which implies that marginalized and oppressed groups like victims of GBV, by the virtue of their experiences may understand social inequalities more clearly because they lived with and navigate these circumstances on daily bases. It encourages amplification of voices



that have historically been marginalized and oppressed.

### Agenda Setting Theory

Propounded by McCombs and Shaw (1973) when they first studied the US presidential elections. The theory that there is a relationship between news and public perceptions of important issues (Alvemia, 2019) the level of attention given to an issue by the mass media determines the level of prominence people will regard the issue. Agenda setting theory refers to how media coverage of an issue determines the level of attention it gets from the public. The theory is relevant to this research because it explains how the mass media can give prominence to issue like GBV and draw public attention to it by frequently reporting cases of GBV and also relevant champagnes. The media can highlight GBV issues and make it the focus of public attention there by enabling relevant stakeholders, researchers and government make informed policies to curb GBV and foster nation development

### Research Method

For this study, qualitative case study method was used. This approach allows for an in-depth analysis of specific cases of GBV that received wide spread of media attention across Nigeria and have contributed to public awareness via campaigns policies amendment and economic implications. This study will analyze three (3) cases of GBV in Nigeria that spark public debate and attention and also draws media extensive coverage.

This research will explore how each case influenced public opinion and potentially impacted economic development by addressing GBV.

### Case Study 1

The case of Uwa Omozuwa (2020).

In 2020, an undergraduate student of Microbiology at the University of Benin Nigeria was brutally raped and murdered in a church in Benin, Edo state. UwaOmozuwa22 years old was found dead lying half naked in a pool of blood at a church where she has been a member of the choir for years (CNN, 2020) the violent nature of the crime and her young age drew significant media coverage which spark public outrage across Nigeria.

**Media Coverage:** This incident gained wide coverage in Nigeria and was reported on various platforms including TV, radio, newspaper and social media, especially with the hashtag #Justicefor Uwa# and #Saynotorape#. It was also covered by international media such as CNN high lightening the rampant cases of GBV in Nigeria.

**Economic and Social Impact:** The attention led to protests both online and physical. Some protesters to match to Benin police station demanding justice for the student. This led to the arrest of a suspect whose finger print was found on the fire extinguisher used in the murder scene. (CNN, 2020). This led the Nigerian government under pressure to implement the new GBV laws and increased funding for the course. The coverage given by the media in this case helped framed GBV as a barrier



to women's educational, economic and professional growth.

### Case Study 2

The case of Iniobong Umoren (2021).

In 2021, Iniobong Umoren a graduate of Philosophy from the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom was lured, assaulted and murdered while going for a job interview in Akwa Ibom. Iniobong Fphiaim Umoren posted online on April 27, 2021 that she was in need of a job while awaiting NYSC on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021 her friend Umoh Uduak posted online to announce that her friend is in trouble and she needs help. Her friend added that Iniobong went for a job interview at airport road and has not returned since then. This spark online interactions and hashtags that pressured the Akwa Ibom police to investigate the case leading to the arrest of one Uduak-Abasi Akpa after finding Iniobong Umoren's dead body in a shallow grave at his residence (BBC pidgin, 2021). The case highlighted the risks women face while seeking economic opportunities, especially in Nigeria.

**Media Coverage:** Mainstream media and social media gave the case attention with the hashtag on social media #justiceforHinyHumoren#. This coverage sparked spurred calls for accountability especially the dangers young women face while seeking employment in Nigeria

**Economic And Social Impact:** The pressure from the public due to the wind spread of coverage given to the case by the media pushed the Nigerian government to regulate online job ads and improve security

around employment recruitment. The attention given by the media to this case created awareness about how vulnerable young women become when seeking employment opportunities in Nigeria.

Uduak Akpan was sentenced to death by hanging for the murder of Iniobong Umoren by Akwa Ibom high court in August 2022. (BBC, 2022)

### Case Study 3

The case of Ochanya Ogbanje (2018)

Elizabeth Ochanya Ogbanje is yet another victim of rape in Nigeria by father and son in Makurdi, Benue state. The victim died of vesical-vaginal fistula disease due to sexual molestation. (Punch 2018). Ochanya who came to study with her aunty Felicia in Makurdi in order for her to school, starting experiencing sexual assault from her aunt's son from age 9 till 13years. His father also joined in the assault till Ochanya became sick and died. This case shook the nation, bringing child sexual abuse to a forefront of Nigerians attention.

Media coverage using the hashtag #justiceforOchanya# the Nigerian mainstream media and social media gave extensive coverage to this case of GBV involving a minor. This led to increase conversations about child protection laws because it is common in Nigeria couples to bring underage girls from the village to serve as house helps which most of them end up getting sexually abused or physically assaulted.



**Economic And Social Impact:** The attention giving by the mass media to the case of Ochanya called for child protection policies and punishment for sexual abuse. Its case illustrates how GBV prevent girls from completing their education, makes them vulnerable to sexual disease and cause untimely death thus impacting their long-term economic prospects and cut their dreams of becoming productive members of the society.

### Discussion of Findings

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does Nigeria media cover issues of gender-based violence? The case of Uwa Omozuwa, Iniobong Umoren and Ochanya Ogbanje shows that the Nigeria mass media gave sufficient coverage especially social media citizen journalist gave extensive attention to these cases and moved government to action and also influenced public opinion.

**Research Question 2:** What are the direct and indirect economic impact of gender-based

These cases illustrate how GBV have direct and indirect economic impact especially on women. GBV restricts economic opportunities for women such as unsafe job seeking, interrupted education. Indirectly, it reduces the number of females in the work force and increases legal health fees.

**Research Question 3:** What ways does media reporting on GBV influence government policies and advocacy? In what ways does media reporting on GBV influence government policies and advocacy?

These cases shows that the mass media can pressure the government into taking actions through reporting and influencing public opinions, government can make policies such as child protection laws, improving safety regulations and bringing justice for victims. Public engagements especially on social media and hashtags can make government take quicker action and enact policies.

**Research Question 4:** What are the strategies that can aid media effectiveness in addressing GBV and promoting economic development in Nigeria

This can be done through frequent and accurate reporting of GBV cases, partnership and advocacy groups, training journalists and media practitioners on GBV reporting, utilizing social media platforms are strategies that can be use in addressing GBV and fostering economic development in Nigeria

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates the important role the mass media play in addressing GBV in Nigeria and its implication on economic growth.

Through the cases of Uwa Omozuwa, Iniobong Umoren and Ochanya Ogbanje. Nigeria media did not only create awareness about GBV but also pressure the government to take action in reforming it policies and increase advocacy. The economic implication of GBV in Nigeria which limit women from getting an education and also employment underscore the need for the mass



media to report GBV as a barrier to economic development in Nigeria. Strategies to curb GBV includes training the media personal in GBV reporting and giving extensive coverage to cases of GBV, this can foster a safer environment for women, empower women and contribute to the economic development of Nigeria.

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