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2022/2023 PhD Thesis Abstract

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RT: Nigerian Newspaper Representation and Lagos Audience Perception of People with Disabilities (Pwds)

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AB: Discrimination against Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) reinforced by misrepresentation by some newspapers, has been heightened globally, especially in developing countries where people perceive them as burden to the society, condemned as never-do-well and described as the manifestations of God's curse on human race. The implication of this for the society is that it creates social disharmony among citizens which is contrary to the charter of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted by 177 countries, including Nigeria. The media, which is supposed to mirror the society, have the capacity to influence audience perception. There is dearth of research focusing on providing empirical evidence for the influence of newspapers representation on the perception of PWDs in Nigeria. Therefore, this study examined the representation of PWDs in the Nigerian newspapers and Lagos audience perception of PWDs.

The study adopted correlational research design. The population comprised 2,920 editions of *The Punch*, *Vanguard*, *New Telegraph* and *Nigerian Tribune* published between 2017 and 2018, and 18.27 million literate Lagos residents. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill formula was used to derive 540 editions of the four selected newspapers and 1,755 sample size of Lagos State newspaper audience. A systematic sampling technique was used to select specific editions to be analysed while multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the respondents. A validated coding guide and questionnaire were used to collect data. Holsti's inter-coder reliability result for the

coding guide was 75% while Cronbach's alpha reliability co-efficients for the constructs in the questionnaire ranged from 0.85 to 0.93. The response rate was 90%. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential (correlation) statistics at 5% level of significance.

The study showed that *The Punch* newspaper (47%) had the highest coverage of the stories reported during the study period while *Vanguard* (20%), *Nigerian Tribune* (18%), and *New Telegraph* (15%) reported fewer stories. All the newspapers also did not give prominence to the issue of PWDs as reported stories were only placed in inside pages. The study discovered that the newspapers presented PWDs in their reportage from perspectives of advocacy, persuasive, pity and derision. Lagos audience did not perceive people with disabilities as sinners being punished by God (4.36 ± 1.16), but saw them as burden to their families (2.24 ± 0.95). The respondents did not perceive PWDs as people endowed with special abilities (3.14 ± 1.23) and that they were not better equipped to deal with adversity than able-bodied persons (2.58 ± 1.17). The study showed there was a weak positive significant effect of framing of disability stories by the newspapers on the perception of the audiences on PWDs ($r(1580) = 0.213$).

The study concluded that Nigerian newspapers' representation have positively shaped Lagos State audience perception of PWDs. Therefore, it is recommended that Nigerian newspaper editors should improve in framing their news and editorial contents in a way that will give prominence to issues on people with disabilities.

Keywords: Lagos audience perception, Media agenda setting, Media framing, Newspaper representation, People with disabilities

Word Count: 482

Abbreviations: *RFN: Researcher's Full Name, RD: Researcher's Department, RS: Researcher's School, RE: Researcher's Email, RAE: Researcher's Alternate Email, RP: Researcher's Phone Contact, RT: Registered Title, MS: Main Supervisor, ME: Main Supervisor's E-mail Address, SP: Main Supervisor's Phone Contact, CS: Co-Supervisor, CE: Co-Supervisor's E-mail Address, CP: Co-Supervisor's Phone Contact, AB: Abstract*

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