

5. PRESS AND PERCEPTION OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT CAMPAIGN IN NIGERIA Ifedayo Akinwalere & Daniel Gbolahan Akinrinola

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Abstract

This study examined media coverage of women's employment campaigns in Nigeria using agenda-setting theory, content analysis, and in-depth interviews. A total of 27 articles were analysed from The Punch and Vanguard newspapers between November 2023 and March 2024, with The Punch accounting for 56% and Vanguard 44%. Most reports (59.3%) were news analyses, followed by news reports (25.9%), features (11.1%), and editorials (3.7%). Only 3.7% appeared on the back page, showing low visibility, while 96.3% were placed within the newspapers. Coverage was limited in scope, with 70.4% of reports occupying a quarter page, and only 1.6% of The Punch reports used a full page. The study found that coverage was mostly neutral in tone, lacking prominence, and driven by human interest, conflict, and tragedy. While The Punch emphasised investigative journalism, Vanguard leaned towards advocacy. Structural, financial, and policy-related challenges limited media effectiveness. The study recommends more frequent, prominent, and diverse reporting formats, especially features and editorials, to enhance awareness and advocacy for women's employment.

Keywords: Employment campaign, Nigeria, perception, women, media coverage

Introduction

The Nigerian media has struggled to integrate its monitoring function into reporting, despite efforts to promote gender equality. As a result, preconceptions and biased depictions of women in the workforce are frequently maintained (Okpara, 2010), gender-inclusive workplace initiatives are weakened, and constrictive social norms are reinforced by inadequate and biased media portrayal on television, radio, print and digital channels. Despite accounting for 49.2% of Nigeria's population, women's labour force participation remains far lower than men's—23.2% against 56.4% (NBS, 2020). High rates of underemployment, informal employment and lower pay for women exacerbate this gender disparity (Ajaere et al., 2016).

The media has a big impact on the gender employment gap in Nigeria since it shapes public opinion and social standards. However, serious problems remain in how the media covers women's employment. Women's economic positions are frequently underrepresented in business and economic news coverage, according to Aladi and Okoro (2021). When women are included, they are often depicted in home roles rather than as professionals or entrepreneurs, which discourages women from entering the formal labour market and reinforces the idea that they are secondary earners.

Furthermore, by employing language, imagery and framing that links success to masculinity and places women in subservient roles, media narratives frequently reinforce stereotypes that portray women as less capable or aspirational than men (World Bank, 2013). These representations deter women from pursuing jobs in industries with a preponderance of men and lead to unconscious bias in hiring. Furthermore, sensationalised issues like harassment and discrimination are frequently highlighted in coverage of women's employment, but success stories are not always as prominent. This might distort perceptions and discourage women from entering the profession (UN Women, 2015).

The digital gap significantly exacerbates the fact that metropolitan areas in Nigeria receive more media coverage than rural populations. This imbalance increases employment gaps by limiting the information and opportunities available to women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The media's failure to highlight successful female professionals and entrepreneurs is a major issue since it denies young women role models and perpetuates the notion that some professions are inappropriate for women (UN Women, 2019).

The under-representation of women in key media roles influences editorial decisions and agenda-setting, often overlooking the viewpoints and experiences of women in the workplace. This lack of representation hinders the creation of inclusive narratives that could challenge existing power structures. As a result, the media landscape in Nigeria remains a significant obstacle to women's economic independence and full employment. Addressing these disparities through increasing diverse media coverage, eradicating stereotypes, and highlighting success stories is necessary to create a more welcoming atmosphere that supports women's professional goals (UN Women, 2019). This study examined how women's job campaigns are covered by the Nigerian newspapers *Vanguard* and *The Punch* in light of these concerns.

Objectives of the study

Objectives of this study are to:

- Investigate factors hindering the performance of mass media in enhancing women empowerment campaigns in *The Punch* and *Vanguard* newspapers;
- Investigate the role of the press in reporting women's employment campaigns in Nigeria;
- Investigate the degree of responsiveness of women's employment campaign by the *Vanguard* and *The Punch* newspapers;
- Examine the frequency of reports of the women's employment campaign in Nigeria in *Vanguard* and *The Punch* newspapers;
- Analyse story format in which the women's employment campaign appeared most often in *Vanguard* and *The Punch* newspapers;
- Investigate the level of prominence given to women's employment campaign in *Vanguard* and *The Punch* newspapers; and
- Analyse the depth of reportage given to women's employment campaign in Nigeria in *Vanguard* and *The*

Punch newspapers.

Literature Review

A number of factors, including educational achievement, career choices, and persisting discrimination, contribute to the gender pay gap, which is still a chronic problem worldwide (Blau & Kahn, 2021). The under-representation of women in leadership positions, which is sometimes ascribed to gender bias and the "glass ceiling" effect, is a serious matter. According to Hoobler et al. (2022), in order to support women's advancement in the workplace, business cultures and organisational practices need to change.

Women's employment outcomes have been shown to improve with flexible work arrangements; however, these advantages depend on the presence of supporting workplace policies (Chung & van der Horst, 2023). Another important factor influencing how women participate in the labour market is government policy. For example, well-designed parental leave policies can encourage women to work continuously, according to Olivetti and Petrongolo (2023), but effective results require consistent policy implementation. To understand women's experiences in the workforce, an intersectional perspective is also necessary. Crenshaw's (2021) seminal work on intersectionality emphasises how diverse groups of women face unique obstacles due to overlapping social identities, including gender, race and class. This framework emphasises the necessity of focused, sophisticated approaches to successfully address the various obstacles that prevent women from obtaining jobs.

Women's engagement in the workforce in Nigeria has changed significantly in recent years, as more women are breaking traditional gender roles and entering paid employment. As a result, the number of dual-career households has increased, and women now have more options in life (Degun, 2012). But many obstacles still stand in the way of these advancements. Although growth has been uneven, women's workforce engagement has been driven by the quest for economic equality and a more balanced relationship between paid and unpaid labor (Ainabor et al., 2014; Degun, 2012).

Education and professional achievement have improved, but this hasn't always translated into more decision-making authority or a workplace that fully supports women (Mordi et al., 2010). Women's access to formal work prospects is still restricted by discrimination in hiring processes, which is frequently based on gender bias. Perception-shifting awareness campaigns and focused policy actions are necessary to overcome these obstacles (Ainabor et al., 2014).

Persistent preconceived notions regarding women's administrative aptitude contribute to their continued severe under-representation in leadership roles. Organizations must prioritize gender diversity and create career advancement opportunities for women (Ainabor et al., 2014). Establishing a favourable work environment is also crucial, and important elements like flexible work hours, maternity leave regulations, and work-life balance are crucial in determining how women experience their jobs. Promoting family-friendly, inclusive policies remains essential to achieving real gender parity in the Nigerian workforce.

In Nigeria, the frequency and type of media coverage of women's employment initiatives strongly influence how society views gender equality. Media content frequently perpetuates traditional gender norms, with less focus on women's professional achievements, according to Ogwezy-Ndisika et al. (2023). Research shows that Nigerian newspapers continue to provide comparatively little coverage of women's employment drives. For instance, Falobi (2022) discovered that during the 2019 general elections, female candidates garnered substantially less media coverage than their male counterparts. This pattern also holds true for job-related campaigns.

The gender composition of newsroom employees and dominant social norms significantly affect how Nigerian media portray women's employment. Eshiet (2017) points out that instead of being shown as professionals or leaders, women are usually depicted in traditional roles like homemakers. Such representations may undermine the goals of employment campaigns that support gender equality.

Positive or negative media coverage significantly shapes public opinion and policy direction. Limited or stereotyped coverage may lessen the impact of initiatives promoting women's employment and impede development, whereas supportive and balanced media can increase their visibility and credibility (Ogwezy-Ndisika et al., 2023).

In recent years, some positive changes have emerged, including a slow transition to fairer reporting and a rise in the prominence of women's careers in certain media. However, inequalities still exist, and ongoing work is required to

guarantee equitable representation (Ogwezzy-Ndisika et al., 2023). Fostering a media landscape that promotes gender-inclusive storylines and encourages women's involvement in the workforce requires addressing historical, cultural, and institutional impediments.

Public discourse and perceptions surrounding social issues, especially gender equality and employment, are greatly influenced by the media. Despite continuous efforts to promote gender parity, women are still under-represented in Nigerian media, particularly when it comes to employment campaigns. Ogwezzy-Ndisika et al. (2023) point out that women are often depicted in traditional roles, which reduces the visibility of their professional contributions and successes compared with their male counterparts. This representational imbalance is also evident in certain sectors, such as agriculture, where Fawole and Olajide (2012) found that while women's roles in agriculture are occasionally acknowledged in Nigerian newspapers, male contributions receive significantly more coverage. These disparities can undervalue women's abilities in one of the nation's most important employment sectors.

Reporting is influenced by the makeup of media workers. Ibru (2023) examines the development of women in Nigerian journalism, noting their transition from support roles to more prominent positions. There is increasing possibility for more inclusive and equitable coverage of work concerns as more women become prominent figures in the media. But difficulties still exist, especially for urban women who must contend with obstacles including restricted access to technology, poor literacy rates, and constrictive socio-cultural norms. These factors make it harder for them to access and benefit from media coverage of job openings.

Although there has been noticeable improvement in the portrayal of women in Nigerian media, large discrepancies remain. To address the intricacies of gender representation in the media and promote more inclusive portrayals of women in employment narratives, more study is required (Ogwezzy-Ndisika et al., 2023; Fawole & Olajide, 2012; Ibru, 2023).

Advancing gender equality in the workforce depends on women's employment campaigns, and how the media depict these efforts has a major impact on public opinion and legislative decisions. As powerful media outlets, Nigerian media have a duty to cover these efforts in a way that encourages gender inclusion. However, studies show that women remain under-represented in media content, including coverage of employment campaigns, and are frequently shown in conventional roles (Ogwezzy-Ndisika et al., 2023). This under-representation hinders the advancement of workplace equality and perpetuates gender stereotypes.

In Nigerian newspapers, women's employment campaigns are covered in various ways. Some use a narrative style that emphasises personal success stories, while others present employment statistics in a data-driven manner. However, this reporting frequently lacks depth and consistency, leading to superficial coverage; for instance, Fawole and Olajide (2012) found that media coverage of women's roles in agriculture, a major employment sector for women, was both limited and given low prominence in newspaper layouts. This marginalisation lowers the visibility and significance of these campaigns in public discourse.

The quality and strategic significance of these tales, in addition to their frequency and placement, create a range of reporting challenges. Traditionally responsible for establishing development agendas, Nigerian media frequently neglect women's employment concerns, relegating them to less influential portions of their publications (Fawole & Olajide, 2012).

Narrative stories can be inspirational and emotionally captivating; however, they often ignore structural issues. Data-driven reporting, on the other hand, can draw attention to systemic problems, but it lacks the personal element audiences find compelling. The advancement of gender equality in Nigeria depends on the amount and caliber of media coverage of women's employment initiatives (Fawole & Olajide, 2012; Ogwezzy-Ndisika et al., 2023).

Women's employment in Nigerian media is a significant research issue because it reflects societal norms and influences public opinion and policy. Media representations of Nigerian women have historically reinforced traditional gender norms by primarily presenting them in domestic settings rather than in the workplace (Ogwezzy-Ndisika et al., 2023). To comprehend how women's portrayal in the media has changed throughout time, one must be aware of this historical background.

The way women's employment in the media is framed is greatly influenced by the gender makeup of editorial teams and prevailing social norms. For instance, Falobi (2022) notes that media coverage of female candidates in the 2019

general elections was substantially lower than that of male candidates, underscoring the ongoing challenges in increasing women's visibility in both the public and professional spheres.

Additionally, studies show that stereotypes are commonly used to frame women's employment efforts, portraying them as homemakers or carers rather than professionals or leaders (Ogwezy-Ndisika et al., 2023). By restricting the public's understanding of women's participation in the job, such representations undercut the goals of employment campaigns that aim to advance gender equality.

How these campaigns are portrayed in the media significantly influences public opinion and policy change. Regular and favourable coverage can boost the credibility of women's employment programmes and encourage wider social support. On the other hand, inadequate or unfavourable representation could hinder the success of these initiatives and perpetuate current disparities.

In media studies, the portrayal of women in the workforce has long been a crucial topic, especially in relation to how well-known newspapers portray women's employment. By relegating women's issues to ancillary sections that prioritised home duties over professional accomplishments, newspapers have historically helped to reinforce traditional gender roles (Steiner, 2017). This strategy strengthened the idea that a woman belonged in the home, not the workplace.

However, editorial leadership has been a key element in changing these narratives. Newspapers with female managing editors were more likely to feature articles showcasing women's professional accomplishments and workplace struggles, according to Beam and Di Ciccio (2010). Gender prejudices in society are still reflected and reinforced by the under-representation of women in media coverage, especially in fields like politics and business. According to the Women's Media Center (2016), when women are highlighted in these settings, the focus often shifts from their professional skills to their personal lives or physical attributes, which reduces their perceived authority and significance in the workplace.

Media reporting significantly influences public perception and can shape policy discourse. Historically, the development of women's pages between 1895 and 1935 marked a modest step toward greater media attention to women's issues, although these sections still often operated within limited scopes (Golia, 2017). In the contemporary media landscape, despite increased awareness and some progress, disparities remain in how men and women are represented in employment-related news.

Fair representation is nevertheless hampered by structural obstacles in the media sector. For instance, Volz and Lee (2013) emphasized that female journalists find it difficult to obtain professional recognition, including the Pulitzer Prize and other prominent honors. These difficulties are a reflection of persistent systemic injustices that also influence the framing and selection of women's job narratives. Despite significant advancements, major barriers remain to women in the workforce being represented in the media. To guarantee more inclusive and equitable reporting in well-known publications, the relationship between gender and the media must be further studied and reformed.

Media play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing societal attitudes through their reporting (Runderkamp et al., 2022). Newspapers use a variety of narrative formats to convey information, arouse feelings, and stimulate discussion on women's employment initiatives (Ogwezy-Ndisika et al., 2023). Opinion pieces, human-interest articles, and hard news and feature stories are some examples of these story categories. Hard news stories are timely, factual, and uncomplicated reporting that offer crucial details about current affairs. They usually follow the inverted pyramid structure, which places the most important information first, and are written objectively. Hard news articles are frequently utilised to report on important events, policy changes, government initiatives, and statistical data pertaining to women's employment campaigns (Aaldering, 2020).

In-depth pieces that go beyond hard news reports are called feature stories (Pas et al., 2022). They often incorporate context, analysis, personal stories, and background information to help readers better understand the topic. Human-interest tales on women's employment campaigns emphasize women's individual experiences, challenges, and successes in the workplace. By humanising the problem, they hope to make it interesting and relatable to readers.

In Nigeria's workforce, women's employment initiatives are essential to advancing gender equality. The media's coverage of these efforts, particularly in prominent publications like Vanguard and The Punch, which shape public

opinion and policy, has a major impact on their effectiveness. But the way women are portrayed in Nigerian media frequently perpetuates stereotypes and traditional gender norms, which undermines the purpose of these efforts (Pas et al., 2022).

While the global conversation has shifted toward advancing gender equality, Nigerian media still portrays women in antiquated roles, limiting the visibility and effectiveness of women's employment initiatives (Pas et al., 2022). This trend aligns with research by Van der Pas and Aaldering (2020), whose meta-analysis showed that media bias reduces women's prominence in political reporting, a phenomenon that also shapes narratives about employment. Another obstacle is media availability, particularly for metropolitan women who frequently face restricted access to inclusive content, education and digital tools. These restrictions constrain their capacity to participate in or benefit from employment initiatives (Pas et al., 2022). Furthermore, it is impossible to overestimate the media's capacity to shape Nigeria's political and cultural environments. According to Tejumaiye (2003) and Iruonagbe, Imhonopi and Ahmadu (2013), the media have a significant impact on national development, governance and societal attitudes.

Nigerian mainstream media include traditional channels like print, radio, and television, as well as modern digital formats like blogs and social media, all of which are crucial instruments for mass communication (Buckingham, 2003; Luhmann, 2000). They significantly shape discussions of gender and work because of their broad reach. Despite improvements in the media landscape since the 19th century, systemic problems with representation persist, calling for constant reform and critical media engagement.

According to Walter Lippmann's original agenda-setting thesis, people rely on the media to help them understand the large and complicated world around them, which shapes public opinion (Sheafer & Weimann, 2005). Expanding upon Lippmann's concepts, McCombs and Shaw (1972) established the formal agenda-setting hypothesis, arguing that the media significantly influences political discourse by identifying the topics that the general public deems significant. Their groundbreaking research during the 1968 U.S. presidential election showed a robust relationship between voter views of important campaign topics and media coverage. Wimmer and Dominick (2000) further emphasize that the public's concerns and discussions are largely influenced by the topics that media outlets prioritize. Agenda-setting theory highlights the dynamic relationship between media content and public opinion, showing that the prominence of issues in the media can directly affect their perceived importance among audiences (Meriläinen & Vos, 2011). This theoretical paradigm is especially pertinent to analyzing media coverage of Nigerian women's employment drives. It implies that how frequently these topics are covered and how they are framed in the media greatly affects how society views gender equality and how public and policy responses are influenced.

Campaigns to encourage women's employment and economic engagement have increased in Nigeria in recent years due to the realisation that gender inequities in the workforce still exist (Aladi & Okoro, 2021). Initiatives to support women in leadership and entrepreneurship have been started by important stakeholders, including NGOs, civil society organisations, and governmental agencies (Omontese, 2023). Prominent initiatives such as the Nigerian Women Trust Fund (NWTF) and the African Women's Entrepreneurship Program (AWEP) provide financial support, mentorship, and training to female entrepreneurs. In order to empower women in leadership roles, civil society organisations like Women in Management, Business and Public Service (WIMBIZ) have organised workshops and seminars (Omontese, 2023).

The media strongly influences how society views gender roles. According to psychological models that demonstrate how media affects behaviour, such as the "Werther effect" and the "Papageno effect," it can either promote positive change or reinforce stereotypes (Niederkrotenthaler *et al.*, 2010). According to Asemah (2009), the media shapes public discourse by establishing agendas, making it a potent force for social change. To combat gender inequity and advance women's economic contributions, this role is essential.

Nigerian media frequently downplays women's professional accomplishments, despite their potential, in favour of conventional household duties (Aladi & Okoro, 2021; Ogwezy-Ndisika *et al.*, 2023). These representations restrict women's visibility in economic narratives and reinforce stereotypes. Nigeria is not the only country where women still struggle with media representation (Ola & Ojo, 2007). Research shows that newspapers are powerful media outlets that, depending on what they choose to publish, can either promote or impede gender equality.

Furthermore, structural obstacles like the "glass ceiling" and gender bias still prevent women in Nigeria from advancing in their careers. According to Hoobler et al. (2022), undervaluing women's contributions, discriminatory hiring, unequal compensation, and restricted mentorship are all common issues that call for organisational and societal changes.

Methodology

The study used a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. In-depth interviews and content analysis approaches were used in the study. Content analysis examined representations in Nigerian newspapers. Content analysis serves as a data collection and analytical tool to measure the frequency of specific elements in a set of messages (Ekeanyanwu & Olaniyan, 2010).

The sample frame comprised Punch and Vanguard newspaper editions released between November 1, 2023, and March 30, 2024. These two publications were purposively chosen because of their extensive nationwide readership and impact, especially regarding concerns about women's unemployment. In addition to content analysis of 300 newspaper editions (150 from each outlet), six senior editors (three from each newspaper) were purposively selected for in-depth interviews.

Data analysis and interpretation

The in-depth interviews revealed a complex range of variables that impede the efficacy of mass media in promoting women's empowerment campaigns.

Factors hindering the performance of mass media in enhancing women's empowerment campaigns in *The Punch* and *Vanguard Newspapers*

One major factor hindering mass media's role in women empowerment campaigns is media ownership and editorial bias. Many media houses in Nigeria, including *The Punch*, are owned by individuals or corporate entities whose interests may not align with women empowerment causes. This often leads to inconsistent coverage or prioritization of these issues in mainstream media.

One key barrier is the inadequate representation of women in media leadership positions. In many Nigerian media houses, including *Vanguard*, men dominate decision-making roles. This affects content direction, as stories on women's empowerment may not be given the prominence or urgency they deserve.

Another significant challenge is limited funding and commercial pressure. Women's empowerment campaigns often struggle to attract sponsorship compared to other mainstream topics like politics and entertainment. Because media houses rely heavily on advertising revenue, they tend to focus on content that guarantees profitability rather than advocacy efforts that may not bring in substantial income.

Cultural and societal norms also play a huge role in limiting the effectiveness of mass media in promoting women's empowerment. In Nigeria, deep-seated patriarchal beliefs influence media narratives, making it difficult to challenge gender inequality effectively. Many journalists, even unconsciously, reflect these biases in their reporting, thus weakening the impact of empowerment campaigns.

Government policies and censorship also limit media efforts in promoting women's empowerment. Journalists covering gender issues sometimes face subtle restrictions or backlash from authorities, particularly when reporting on sensitive topics such as gender-based violence and reproductive rights. This discourages consistent media advocacy.

The rise of digital misinformation and online harassment has further hindered media performance. Women advocating for empowerment frequently face cyberbullying, and journalists covering these issues are often attacked online. This creates a chilling effect where some media houses avoid controversial gender topics to prevent backlash. Each of the stated perspectives highlights the structural, financial, cultural and policy-related challenges limiting the effectiveness of mass media in advancing women empowerment campaigns.

Role of the press in reporting women's employment campaigns in Nigeria

The Punch highlights women's employment campaigns by investigating policies, tracking government initiatives, and giving a voice to women who are breaking barriers. *The Punch* platform constantly demands accountability from policymakers and ensures that gender equality in employment remains a national discussion.

Through in-depth feature stories, *The Punch* spotlights the struggles and successes of Nigerian women in the workforce. Whether it is covering labour discrimination, workplace policies, or entrepreneurship, the media outfit ensures that the challenges women face in employment are not ignored. Our interviews with stakeholders, from market women to CEOs, help drive awareness and action.

The media platform's editorials push for structural reforms, urging both the public and private sectors to implement policies that promote women's employment; by analysing employment data, critiquing government efforts, and advocating for solutions that create an inclusive job market for women in Nigeria.

Vanguard focuses on uncovering the realities of gender-based employment disparities. Our investigative reports expose industries with poor female representation, workplace discrimination, and loopholes in employment policies, ensuring these issues remain at the forefront of public discourse.

The media engage with government officials, labor unions, and advocacy groups to track policy progress. By reporting on legislative debates, government programmes, and corporate initiatives, we ensure that women's employment campaigns are not just promises but actionable commitments.

The media's role is to provide thought-provoking analysis on women's employment campaigns by writing opinion pieces that challenge stereotypes, highlight success stories, and call for cultural and legal changes that empower women to thrive in Nigeria's job market.

Both *The Punch* and Vanguard play crucial roles in shaping public opinion and pushing for change in women's employment campaigns. While *The Punch* leans towards investigative and data-driven journalism, Vanguard emphasizes advocacy and policy tracking.

Degree of responsiveness of women's employment campaigns by *The Vanguard* and *The Punch* Newspapers

The Punch newspaper has consistently demonstrated a high degree of responsiveness in covering women's employment campaigns. Through in-depth reports, editorials, and special features, we highlight policies, corporate initiatives, and government efforts aimed at promoting gender-inclusive workplaces. However, challenges remain in ensuring that advocacy translates into tangible employment opportunities for women."

The Punch recognises the importance of employment equality for women. The coverage includes investigative reports exposing workplace discrimination, opinion pieces advocating for gender-friendly policies, and interviews with female professionals breaking barriers. While our efforts are commendable, we must increase follow-up reports to track the real impact of these campaigns.

Women's employment campaigns receive considerable attention in *The Punch*, especially in relation to policy discussions and economic reforms. However, the extent of responsiveness depends on societal engagement. While we report on corporate diversity programs and governmental initiatives, the impact largely depends on implementation and sustained advocacy beyond media coverage.

Vanguard has played a vital role in amplifying women's employment campaigns. From highlighting success stories of women in male-dominated fields to pushing for policy reforms, we ensure that these issues remain on the national agenda. Our investigative reports on workplace inequality further emphasize the urgency of this cause.

The media actively promotes women's employment through extensive coverage of policies and advocacy programmes. Vanguard has been a strong voice in calling for enforcement of labor laws that protect women against workplace bias. We also engage stakeholders in roundtable discussions, bridging the gap between policy and action. While *Vanguard* has been responsive in championing women's employment, more is needed in investigative journalism and sustained advocacy. *Vanguard* has covered corporate and government interventions, but the challenge remains in ensuring that policies are not just enacted but also effectively implemented to improve women's economic participation.

Both newspapers have shown a strong commitment to reporting on women's employment campaigns, but their

responsiveness varies in depth, follow-up, and sustained impact.

Table 1: Frequency of reports of women's employment campaigns in Nigeria in Vanguard and The Punch newspapers (n = 150)

Frequency of reportage	Vanguard	The Punch	Total (%)
November 2023	2(16.7)	2(13.3)	4 (14.8)
December 2023	1(8.3)	0(0.0)	1(3.7)
January 2024	6(50.0)	5(33.3)	11(40.7)
February 2024	1(8.3)	1(6.7)	2(7.4)
March 2024	2(16.7)	7(46.7)	9(33.3)
Total	12(100.0)	15(100.0)	27(100.0)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Results in Table 1 reveal that the total reportage of the women employment campaign in both The Punch and Vanguard newspapers from November 2023 to March 2024 was 27 reportages, with 12 reportages (44%) from Vanguard newspaper and 15 (56%) reportages from The Punch newspaper.

Table 2: Story format in which women employment campaigns appeared most often in Nigerian Vanguard and The Punch newspapers (n = 150)

Story format of reportage	Vanguard	The Punch	Total
News report	2(16.7)	5 (33.3)	7(25.9)
Features	1(8.3)	2(13.3)	3(11.1)
News analysis	9(75.0)	7(46.7)	16(59.3)
Editorial	0(0.0)	1(6.7)	1(3.7)
Column	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
Total	12(100.0)	15(100.0)	27(100.0)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Results in Table 2 reveal the story format in which the women's employment campaign appeared most often in Nigerian Vanguard and The Punch newspapers. Findings show that 59.3% of the total reportages were news analyses, 25.9% were news reports, and 11.1% were features, while only 3.7% were editorials.

Table 3: Level of prominence given to women employment campaigns in Nigerian Vanguard and The Punch newspapers(n = 150)

Level of Prominence of reportages	Vanguard	The Punch	Total
Front page	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
Inside page	11(91.7)	15(100.0)	26(96.3)
Back page	1(8.3)	0(0.0)	1(3.7)
Total	12(100.0)	15(100.0)	27(100.0)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Findings in Table 3 show the level of prominence given to women employment campaigns in Nigerian Vanguard and *The Punch* newspapers. Findings reveal that 96.3% of the total reportage on women employment campaigns appeared inside the newspaper pages, while only 3.7% appeared at the back of the newspaper. This implies that the prominence given to reportage on the women employment campaign was insufficient.

Table 4: Depth of reportage given to women employment campaign in Nigeria in *The Vanguard* and *The Punch* newspapers (n = 150)

Volume of reportage	<i>The Vanguard</i>	<i>The Punch</i>	Total
Full page	0(0.0)	1 (6.7)	1(3.7)
Half page	2(16.7)	4(26.6)	6(22.2)

Quarter page	10(83.3)	9(60.0)	19(70.4)
Not up to quarter page	0(0.0)	1(6.7)	1(3.7)
Total	12(100.0)	15(100.0)	27(100.0)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 shows the volume of reportage on the women's employment campaign in Nigeria in *The Vanguard* and *The Punch* newspapers. Findings show that 70.4% of the total reportage was reported on a quarter page, with 83.3% in *The Vanguard* and 70.4% in *The Punch* newspaper. Only 1.6% of *The Punch* newspaper used a full page to report the women's employment campaign.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings indicate slightly higher engagement from *The Punch*, suggesting a potential editorial focus on women's employment issues. Research indicates that the media plays a crucial role in shaping public perception and discourse around gender equality. Jonah and Nnanyelugo (2020) highlight that women's representation in Nigerian media often skews towards entertainment and domestic roles, rather than economic or political empowerment. This trend raises questions about the effectiveness of media campaigns aimed at promoting women's employment, as the framing of such issues can influence societal attitudes and policy responses.

The disparity in reportage between the two newspapers may reflect differing editorial priorities or audience engagement strategies. *The Punch's* higher output could suggest a more proactive stance on women's employment issues, potentially aligning with broader societal movements advocating for gender equality. Conversely, *Vanguard's* lower reportage might indicate a need to focus more on women's economic empowerment in its editorial content. Moreover, the representation of women in leadership roles within media organizations is critical. A report by Adams et al. (2024) notes that women hold only 24% of top editorial positions across various media outlets, despite constituting a significant portion of the journalism workforce. This underrepresentation can perpetuate biases in how women's issues are reported, affecting the depth and quality of coverage on employment campaigns.

The analysis of media reportage on women's employment in Nigeria reveals a concerning trend: most articles are reported in neutral or negative tones. This pattern is particularly significant given the high levels of unemployment among Nigerian women, which are often exacerbated by entrenched gender inequalities.

This disparity not only reflects but also reinforces existing gender biases, contributing to a societal narrative that undermines women's capabilities in the workforce. The prevalence of negative reporting can be attributed to broader societal attitudes towards gender roles in Nigeria. Despite improvements in women's educational attainment and labor force participation, significant barriers remain. According to Adejugbe and Adejugbe (2018), women face systemic discrimination that limits their access to employment opportunities and advancement in the workplace. This discrimination is often perpetuated by media narratives that emphasise traditional gender roles, portraying women as less competent or suitable for leadership positions. Moreover, the media's focus on unemployment among women often lacks a nuanced understanding of the structural factors contributing to this issue. The World Bank (2016) notes that women in Nigeria face significant obstacles, including limited access to education and job opportunities, compounded by cultural norms that prioritize male employment.

The distribution of reportage on women's employment campaigns in Nigerian newspapers, particularly the observation that most articles are found within the main pages while only a few appear at the back, raises important questions about media prioritization and the framing of gender issues. This trend suggests a nuanced approach to how women's employment is represented, reflecting both visibility and the potential marginalisation of these narratives.

According to McCombs and Shaw (1974), the media not only informs the public but also shapes the agenda by highlighting certain topics over others. In this context, placing most articles in the main sections of newspapers could imply recognition of the importance of women's employment issues. However, the limited coverage in the back pages may suggest that while these issues are acknowledged, they are not prioritized to the same extent as other news topics.

Furthermore, mainstream media representation of women's employment is often influenced by societal attitudes toward gender roles. Adebayo et al. (2024) highlight that media narratives frequently reflect prevailing gender stereotypes, which can lead to the underrepresentation of women's contributions to the economy. This underrepresentation can perpetuate the notion that women's employment is less significant than other economic issues, thereby affecting policy discussions and public awareness.

Article placement also affects the effectiveness of employment campaigns. Karam and Jamali (2019) suggest that visibility in prominent sections of newspapers can enhance the impact of advocacy campaigns, as it reaches a broader audience and fosters greater engagement. Therefore, while articles on the main pages are a positive sign, the overall limited coverage may hinder these campaigns' potential to drive substantial change.

The findings indicating that 59.3% of the total reportage on women's employment campaigns consisted of news analysis, 25.9% were news reports, 11.1% were features, and only 3.7% were editorials highlight significant trends in media coverage and its implications for public discourse on gender issues in Nigeria.

The predominance of news analysis suggests a deeper engagement with the complexities surrounding women's employment. News analysis typically provides context, interpretation, and critical insights, which can help readers understand the multifaceted nature of gender inequality in the workforce. According to McQuail (2010), analysis pieces often aim to inform and educate the audience, moving beyond mere reporting to explore underlying issues and implications. This approach can foster a more informed public discourse, essential for addressing systemic barriers faced by women in the labor market.

In contrast, the relatively lower percentages of news reports and features indicate a more straightforward presentation of facts and events, which may lack the depth necessary to provoke critical thought or inspire action. Entman (1993) emphasises that the framing of news stories significantly influences public perception and policy responses. Editorials often reflect the newspaper's stance on issues and can play a pivotal role in shaping public opinion and advocating for change.

Conclusion

The study concluded that reportage on women's employment campaigns in Nigeria was limited, with *The Punch* publishing slightly more articles than *The Vanguard*. Most articles were neutrally toned, lacked prominence, and appeared primarily as news analyses, with human interest, conflict, and tragedy as dominant values. While *The Punch* focused on investigative, data-driven journalism, *The Vanguard* emphasised advocacy and policy monitoring. However, structural, financial, cultural, and policy-related barriers still hinder the media's effectiveness in promoting women's employment, highlighting the need for more consistent follow-up, deeper engagement with policymakers, and action-oriented reporting.

Recommendations

- Newspapers should increase the frequency of reportage on women's employment campaigns to enhance awareness and advocacy.
- Media outlets should strive for more balanced and positive coverage to highlight the importance of women's employment initiatives.
- Editors should prioritise placing such reports on prominent pages to draw more attention to the issue.
- A greater variety of formats, including editorials and feature stories, should be used to provide in-depth analysis and diverse perspectives.

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