

**T.C.**

**YAŞAR UNIVERSITY**

**INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**FACULTY OF COMMUNICATION**

**MASTER THESIS**

***A PATRIARCHAL ASSAULT ON GENDER:***

**REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS**

**Farouk Musa ISA**

**Supervisor:**

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Melek ATABEY**

**İzmir - TURKEY**

**2014**

**Approval Page**

Supervisor..... Sign.....

Dean..... Sign.....

Student..... Sign.....

**Attestation**

I ..... do hereby declare and attest that this work is my independent research work.

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to the entire members of my family: mum, dad, my brothers and my sister for their unflinching love, patience and kindness. Thank you all. Without you I would be lost.

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## **ÖZET**

**Yuksek Lisans Tezi**

### **TOPLUMSAL CINSİYETE ATAERKİL BİR SALDIRI:**

#### **NIJERYA BASININDA KADININ TEMSİLİ**

**Farouk Musa Isa**

**Yasar Üniversitesi**

**Sosyal Bilimler Entitüsü**

**İletişim Yüksek Lisans**

Nijerya basınında kadının sistematik bir biçimde negatif temsili yönetici sınıfın kadınların bedenini denetleme arzusunu tatmin etmek amacıyla ortaya çıkmış olan geleneksel prototipler ile belli bir uyum içinde işlemektedir. Bu çalışma, hegemonya ve feminist eleştirel yaklaşımlarından yola çıkarak Nijerya basınında yer alan suç haberlerinde kadının nasıl temsil edildiğini incelemektedir. Araştırma, bu temsillerde yerleşmiş olan gizli ideolojik anlamları ortaya çıkarabilmek ve gazete haberlerinde toplumsal iktidarın istimarının, egemenlik alanlarının ve eşitsizliğin nasıl sergilendiğini keşfedebilmek amacıyla Nijeryada en çok okunan iki tabloid gazetede 12 ay boyunca yer alan haberleri eleştirel bir bakış açısıyla analiz etmektedir.

Araştırma bulguları Nijerya basınındaki haberlerin kadınlara karşı tutarlı bir biçimde olumsuzluk içerdiğini, kimi zaman ise düşmanca ve nefret içeren bir söylem taşıdığını ve kadınları suçlayıcı bir dille temsil ettiklerini göstermektedir. Bununla birlikte, inceleme sonuçları Nijerya basınının kadına yönelik eskiden beri gelen ‘zayıf’ ve ‘kırılgan’ gibi tanımlamaları değiştirme konusunda çok az bir ilerleme gösterdiğini, ve bunun yerine aslında varolan ataerkil algı ve yargıları pekiştirdiğini ortaya çıkarmaktadır.

Sonuç olarak, bu çalışmada incelenen gazetelerdeki kurbanlaştırmaya ilişkin temsillerin büyük bir oranda kültürel basmakalıplara dayandığı gözlemlenmektedir. Kadının suç haberlerinde kurbanlaştırılmasına ilişkin söylemler ve çerçeveler kadını güçsüzleştirme, kadının kırılganlığını pekiştirme ve kadınlar arasında ‘korku kültürü’ yaratmaya yöneliktir, çünkü bu gazeteler kadının kurbanlaştırılmasındaki sorumluluğu kadını ezen toplumsal sisteme yüklemekten çok, bunu kadının bir suçu olarak görmektedir.

**Anahtar sözcükler: Toplumsal cinsiyet temsilleri, Suç haberleri, Kurbanlaştırma**

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Master Thesis**

## ***A PATRIARCHAL ASSAULT ON GENDER:* REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS**

**Farouk Musa Isa**

**Yasar University  
Institute of Social Science  
Master of Communication**

The systematic negative media portrayals of women in Nigerian press are orchestrated by and work out according to the conventional archetypes of the ruling elites in order to quench their patriarchal obsessive desire to ‘control the bodies’ of the female folks. Drawing upon hegemonic approach and feminist critical theories, this study examines the ways in which Nigerian newspapers portray women in crime stories. To uncover the hidden ideological meanings embedded in these depictions and explore the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted and reproduced in such newspapers, this research critically analyzed two most widely read Nigerian tabloids for the period of 12 months.

The findings shows that the newspaper coverage in Nigeria has been consistently negative and, at times, hostile and hateful toward women accused of violent crimes. The study also found that the Nigerian press does little to challenge the age-old impressions of women as ‘weak’ and ‘vulnerable’, instead they actually reinforce these preexisting patriarchal perceptions.

Finally, it’s discovered that the newspapers analyzed in this study rely heavily on cultural stereotypes in their portrayal of victimization. Their formats of presenting victimization of women in crime stories are meant to disempower women, reify women’s vulnerability, and promote the ‘culture of fear’ among them, because these newspapers attribute victimization of women to the victim’s behavior rather than the social systems that may oppress women.

**Keywords:      Gender      Representations,      Crime      News,      Victimization**

## **Chapter One**

### **1. WOMEN, MEDIA, AND CRIME IN LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

#### **1.1.1 Introduction**

#### **1.1.2 Ideology about Crime**

Marxist scholars argue that the ruling elites formulate ideologies in order to legitimize and maintain their control on society. By reinforcing such dominant ideas and beliefs, however, the dominant social groups could be able to reproduce their social and economic dominance. Karl Marx sees culture a repressive, a method of coercing the masses to obey, while Antonio Gramsci and other Frankfurt School theorists understand it as part of the control apparatus of industrial capitalism. This effort of retaining influence by those in power is what Antonio Gramsci called 'hegemony,' referring to the dominant worldview and the indirect way that culture can be used to control people.

As a process by which the dominant ideology was able to naturalize issues of how society is organised and is practiced through the control of cultural practice (Taylor & Willis, 1999:29-34), and the term “hegemony” suggest that culture is a site of class conflict where capital manipulates people by turning freedom into a commodity. Signs of class and class struggle appear in the media output, and media output is influenced by the process of production. However, media houses (and also movie firms) are owned by corporations and such media organizations and movie companies are representing society in some particular ways as desired

by their owners –a group of people Karl Max called “bourgeoisie”. The media’s portrayal of women in crime stories is deliberate and calculative, and this is solely to help governments at all levels and their institutions, such as police and courts, to achieve their political aim of controlling the society.

As a tool of propaganda, mass media play significant role in promoting dominant ideas and beliefs. Media promote socially-constructed ideologies (Furia & Bielby, 2006) and these ideologies are not always economic (i.e. material gaining); they can be social such as lifestyle, sexuality, health and so on. The evidently established power of the media has inspired many critical studies in areas such as gender, culture criminology, and sociology. Such researches in media studies have revealed biased, stereotypical, sexist or racist images in texts, illustrations, and photos. Among the “common” dominant ideologies that circulate in both fictional and news media nowadays include gender stereotype where males are portray as superiors and stronger than females. That is why men are mostly featured as leading characters in action movies, while women are portrayed in supporting roles, which are mostly used to “entertain” the “action doers”. It is “uncommon” and didn’t “make sense” for a female, either in fictional or in real life, to commit a serious or violent crime. It was this assumption of “male superiority” and “female weakness,” as demonstrated in an article entitled *Gender in crime news: A case study test of the chivalry hypothesis*, that makes female criminals to “receive more lenient treatment in the criminal justice system and in news coverage of their crimes than their male counterparts” (Elizabeth, 2004:4-6).

Feminist scholars criticize media for constructing biased women victimization. They also challenge media’s depiction of women as powerless and the marginalization of women

experiences. In the process of creating these negative portrayals of victims and perpetrators, media draws from cultural stereotypes. The media, whose aim is to improve the lives of women and that of people in general, end up in constructing victimization (Hernandez, 2006:1). As a daily practices in patriarchal society, women are seen both in media and in reality as weak and emotional. These socially constructed stereotypes associated with women suggest that women are unlikely to commit crimes, especially violent ones, and whenever a woman is involved in a crime, whether as a victim or a perpetrator, such story receives so much attention from both media and the audiences. The crime story receives wider coverage due to a number of reasons. Crime news mostly gains popularity if the victim is famous, or if the victims are many, or if the victim or the villain is unusually attractive or wealthy. Crime story also become sensational if the method of the crime is unusual or horrifying.

Despite this dominant perception about women and violence, history proved the fact that women had been involved in several violent political (with religious overtones) movements. For instance, in July 1793, Charlotte Corday had tried to change the course of the French Revolution by assassinating Jean-Paul Marat, one of the leaders of Montagnards. In Russia, Vera Zasulich, shot and wounded a St. Petersburg police chief in 1878 for his maltreatment of political prisoners (Bloxham, 2011). When “People's Will”, the first Russian terrorist party, was formed in 1879, it had ten women in its original executive committee of 29, and throughout the 1880s women of “People's Will” party participated directly in its terrorist activities, sharing the dangers and responsibilities equally with their male counterparts. After a decade or so of peace, terrorism was revived in the early 1900s by the Socialist Revolutionary (SR) Party, where it found many adherents among Russia's radical female element. During the period from 1905 to 1908 alone,

eleven individual terrorist acts were committed by SR women. In the defunct West Germany, two-third of terrorists wanted by the police in August 1977 were females (Knight, 139-159).

In 1985, a 16-year-old girl, Khyadali Sana, who was recorded as the first female suicide bomber, drove a bomb-laden truck into an Israeli Defense Forces convoy, where she killed two soldiers. It was a woman called Dhanu, a member of Tamil Tigers, who assassinated India's Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 by hiding a bomb in a basket of flowers (Sternadori, 2007; Zedalis, 2004). There are female suicide bombers spread across several countries such as Sri Lanka, Israel, Egypt, Turkey, Morocco, Iraq, and Russia. The most notably militia organizations that use female suicide bombers are the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), Chechen rebels (also known as the "Black Widows"), Syrian Socialist National Party (SSNP/PPS, now merged into the "Free Syrian Army"), Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Palestine National Liberation Movement (Fatah, alias the "Army of Roses"), Hamas, and recently Al Qaeda Network. Karima Mahmud was the first female suicide bomber used by SSNP/PPS in 1987. By attacking Turkish army in 1996, Laila Kaplan was recorded as the first PKK female suicide bomber, and the world's first pregnant suicide bomber. Hawa Barayev was the first Russian "Black Widow" who acted on behalf of Chechen rebels in June 2000. In Israel, Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade was the first militia organization that used female bomber in January 2002. The suicide bomber, Wafa Idris, who was a paramedic, detonated a 22-pound body bomb in a shopping district, killing one person and injured more than 100 people. A 19-year-old student, Hiba Daraghmeh, was the first PIJ bomber. Hamas used a woman bomber for the first time in January 14, 2004. The bomber, Reem al-Reyashi, who was 22-years-old at that time, killed four Israeli soldiers in a checkpoint.

Using female suicide bombers provides militia organizations with numerous advantages, namely tactical, economic, psychological, as well as propaganda benefit. After Fatah's second female bombing in March 2002, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, the then spiritual leader of Hamas rejected the idea of using female suicide bombers for reasons of modesty. But Hamas position dramatically changed in January 2004 when the organization used female in carrying out a bomb attack for the first time. Sheikh Yassin defend Hamas act saying that male fighters are facing obstacles, but females can easily reach the targets. He further describes women as Hamas' "reserve army, where they will be use in case of necessity (Zedalis, 2004:7). Due to the assumption and the stereotypical perception held by the society that females are non-violent, female bombers can easily assimilate among the people and carry out attacks. This is tactical benefit to militia organizations. Such unexpected bomb attacks carried out by women produce element of surprise. The devastating shock the female bomb attack created served as another advantage to such organizations: an increase in publicity. The increase in publicity, however, resulted in increase of recruitment: another added advantages for the fighters.

The patriarchal dominant ideas and beliefs on how women are suppose to behave concerning violence in the Middle East led the U.S. Senate to pass a resolution, stating that "The involvement of women in carrying out suicide bombings is contrary to the important role women must play in conflict prevention and resolution" (al-Ashtal, 2009, 1-5). Women terrorists, as Sternadori (2007) noted, are subjected to different media stereotypes such as the technically "unskilled suicide bomber," the "attack bitch" seeking revenge, the "failed mother," the "brainwashed victim," and the "sexy babe with personal issues" (Sternadori, 2007:1-2).

### **1.1.2.1 News Media and Crime**

The ensuing debate on media portrayal of crime is largely dominated by two different schools of thought: the radical, and the liberal pluralists. Mass society theory and behaviorism firmly suggest that human beings are vulnerable and open for external influences. The two aforementioned theories—the former from sociology, while the latter from psychology—gave birth to the much-talk-about media ‘effects’ theories. Going by the interpretation of mass society theory on the influence of media on the audience, individuals are exposed to the harmful effects of the mass media through atomizing and isolating them from traditional bonds of locality and kinship by the ruling class. This community fragmentation, through dismantle of the traditional ties, together with absorbing the media content hook, line and sinker brings about an increase in crime and antisocial behavior.

Due to the human nature for the love of dramatic events, such as law-breaking activities, crime has potential for mythmaking and sensationalism, unlike other forms of news. It is not surprising that for as long as mass media have existed, crime news has been and would be a focal point in both print and broadcast media. Scholars of communication, criminology, cultural studies, psychology, and sociology show a lot of interest in crime coverage, and have studied crime reporting from many different angles. A lot of studies conducted established the fact that crime stories offer a valuable opportunity to systematically observe gender politics. Commentaries by the academia of communication and other related subjects on the impacts of crime news in enhancing the hegemonic understanding of media power of elite interest and the pluralist idea of an open media market place are overwhelmingly increasing. The ever-increasing interest in media portrayal of crime led this researcher to ask the following questions:

- Do media contents (especially on crime stories) portray reality?



- How does the mass media ‘manufacture’ crime news?
- What role ideology plays in reporting and in defining crime news? What are the criteria used or followed in defining crime news?

This research attempts to answer the above questions by looking at the available previous studies conducted on this issue. Before the review of the previous studies, let’s look at the background of the study.

### **1.1.3 Background of the Study**

#### **1.1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Study**

The main aim of this research is to examine the representation of women in the Nigerian tabloid newspapers. In order to do so, this study analyzed the ways in which Nigerian tabloids portray women in crime stories based on the following objectives:

- To try to reveal the ways in which Nigerian women are depicted in crime news stories.
- To try to investigate whether women are represented positively or not in such news stories. That is, to see if they are portrayed just like their male counterparts, not as subordinate.
- To examine whether Nigerian press reinforce gender-based stereotypes by portraying women in mass-mediated texts as “sexual objects” or “objects of desire”.

### **1.1.5 Research Questions**

This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- How does the Nigerian press portray women in crime news stories? How do Nigerian media portray women in crime stories reported as victims? How women are depicted when they are perpetrators of crime?
- Does mass media portray women on workplace roles or on domestic roles? If women are portrayed in crime news stories as professionals by the Nigerian press, then in what professions the media portray them? Do women play roles on active professions such as corporate executives, high bureaucrats, politicians or scientists, or they are merely depicted on passive roles such as clerks, secretaries, nurses and so on?
- Do Nigerian tabloid newspapers biased in covering women involved in crime stories in terms of power structure, gender, and class? Does the Nigerian press generally reinforce patriarchal dominant ideas & beliefs about women?

### **1.1.6 Research Justification**

Conducting a research on media representations of women in Nigeria in particular, and the world in general, became imperative as the need for gender equity and gender equality is increasing globally. Additionally, positive media portrayal of women would greatly help in achieving this gender equity and equality. It is important, moreover, to study media representations of Nigerian women because women in Nigeria constitute almost half of the country's population. And, as in anywhere, patriarchy is a problem in Nigeria that needs to be questioned.

For some years, Nigeria is facing challenges concerning security issues, in which the rate of crime is increasing. Some of such security challenges affect the whole country in general, while other crimes are mainly restricted to some part of the country. For instance, the notorious activities of the *Boko Haram* insurgents, such as bombings, abduction and raping women became alarming in the North; robbery, female trafficking for prostitution, ‘baby factory’ business and commercial kidnapping threaten South-South (also known as Niger Delta) and South-East regions; while advance fee fraud/scam, drug trafficking, killing human beings (as scarifies) by ritualists are know a daily practice in South-West.

In light of the above ugly situations concerning national security in Nigeria, it is important to look at the ways in which the country’s media reports such issues, especially those crime stories that directly affect females (as victims or as perpetrators), to see how such affected females are depicted by the media, so as to suggest changes in the narratives and discourses of the media for a more equal and just news coverage.

### **1.1.7 Limitations of the Study**

Due to number of reasons, this study is limited to selected newspapers in Nigeria. Similarly, the research is also limited for the period of only one year (January – December 2012).

## **1.2 Research Design**

### **1.2.1 Method**

### **1.2.2 Introduction**

Our daily activities such as speaking or writings don't portray the true reality of the world, but we can "create" and "represent" the reality. Reality, however, is always represented from "a certain point of view and through the values of a certain culture, paying particular attention to certain qualities of it and, at the same time, disregarding others" (Tiainen, 2009:4). Based on this notion, this researcher argues that media contents contain overt and covert ideological messages which affect this depiction of reality. Feminists, anthropologists, sociologists, criminologists, communication researchers as well as gender scholars use various methods of textual analysis, such as semeiotic analysis, rhetorical analysis, ideological criticism, and so on, in order to understand and reveal the latent meanings of these ideological messages of the mass media.

### **1.2.3 Language, Discourse, and Ideology**

In order to any make sense of the world, language must be seen as the tool with which reality is divided into meaningful parts. "With language, we give meaning to the world around us," writes Minna Tiainen (2009:4). "We can have no knowledge outside of language," she says. The divisions and meanings in languages are created according to certain rules, and such rules are known as "discourses." Discourses are accepted ways of representing the world through language, notions and ways of speaking that are identified as common sense in a certain culture.

When discourse is widely accepted, it has great impact on the way we perceive reality and the way we interpret it (Donnelly, 2000:33).

The duo concepts of “ideology” and “discourse” are highly inter-related (Tracy, 2007:5-6). Language creates and mirrors ideologies (p. 24). Although ideology is a complex term which a times has contradictory meanings, yet we can defined it here as a common sense assumption that aims at legitimizing existing social relations. In other words, ideology is the way in which the dominant social groups reproduce their social and economic power through formulating and perpetuating dominant ideas in order to maintain the status quo (Taylor and Willis, 1999:29-30). Discourse, on the other hand, is a way of representing certain objects and phenomena. As unavoidably sources and carriers of ideologies, discourses “represent the world from a particular point of view that is beneficial to some and very likely harmful to others” (Tiainen, 2009:4). As an ideological analysis, this study used critical discourse analysis, as a method for textual analysis, to analyze the portrayal of females in crimes stories in Nigerian newspapers.

#### **1.2.4 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

It is a fact that media messages contain covert ideological meanings, and these messages, as Arthur Berger (2000) clearly argued, shape the consciousness of those who receive them. As such, it is the responsibility of ideological critics to “point out the hidden ideological messages in mediated and other forms of communications” (Berger, 2000:73-82). Critical discourse analysis (CDA), as the name implies, is one of textual analysis methods where researchers critically analyze the ideological meanings embedded in the media contents. CDA is one of the ways of conducting ideological criticism studies, because it “provides an opportunity to examine not just language itself, but the ideology or discourse that the language reflects and creates” (Tracy,

2007:25). In its broadest sense, ideological criticism, Berger (2000) perceptively noted, is a form of criticism that bases its evaluation of texts or any other political or socioeconomic phenomenon, which is of interest to a particular group of people (Berger, 2000:71).

CDA, moreover, attempts to reveal the underlying discourses embedded in language use (Donnelly, 2000:39-40) and therefore uncover the ways in which power is exercised in a society. The main aim of doing critical analysis on media contents is to attempt to bring changes for the betterment of the society. To put it in another way, the intention of carrying out CDA is to provide alternative ways of looking at the world from different perspective and to give voice to those who are marginalized by the dominant discourses. This could be done by closely examining journalists' language use in covering news stories, because "language contains and hides assumptions that significantly influence the way we perceive reality and give meaning to the things and people around us" (Tiainen, 2009:3). In support of this argument, Tracy Williams warns that there is no single or specific way of conducting CDA. She further stress the importance of CDA, saying that this method:

Helps us understand how speakers use familiar patterns of lexicon and grammar to evoke familiar lines of thought, while at the same time it shows how this repetition serves to reinforce that line of thought. On a larger level, discourse analysis seeks to identify these lines of thought, or ideologies, as larger sociological ideologies. Through examining language, and uncovering a discourse, one can also identify an ideology (2007:27).

The undeniable power of the media has inspired many critical studies in many disciplines which discourse studies is a part. Critical media studies have revealed biased, stereotypical, sexist or racist images in texts, illustrations, and photos (van Dijk, 2001:359). In order to

analyze patterns and meanings of the mediated representation of females in crime stories reported in Nigerian tabloids, this researcher employed the use of CDA as a research method. Teun van Dijk (2001) defined critical discourse analysis as an analytical research that “primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (van Dijk, 2001:359). This study was conducted based on Teun van Dijk’s (1988a) understanding and interpretations of discourse analysis. In the process, all the two categories or levels of discourse analysis of news – the macro and micro structures – were used.

#### **1.2.4.1 Macrostructures**

At the macro-level of ideological analysis of news, this study analyzed the representations of females and institutionalized relationships in society such as power and dominance, because “ideologies were traditionally often defined in terms of the legitimization of dominance, namely by the ruling class or by various elite groups or organizations” (van Dijk, 1998a:35). Power is defined here as the mental control one group has over (the actions of the members of) another group. As the tools for maintaining power, ideologies are the basis of dominant group members' practices, and they provide the principles by which these forms of power abuse may be justified, legitimized, or accepted.

#### **1.2.4.2 Microstructures**

Under microstructures, this research looked at the overall meanings embedded in the news or topics discussed in the headline, lead, and in the main body of the news by examining the language and discourse used in the news stories. To put it in different way, the local structures of words, clauses, and sentences of the news stories, published by *The Sun* and *National Mirror* in 2012, were scrutinized.

### **1.2.4.3 News Schemata**

The main aim of communicating dominant ideas in the new stories and other media articles is not only for a reader to perfectly understand the message, but to accept the message, to believe the assertion of the ruling elites, and perform the actions requested (van Dijk, 1988a:82). We analyze media contents, such as news articles or other related materials, based on our prior experiences. These previous knowledge for particular situations is organized into categories known as schemata. Normally, news schemata are categorized into: summary (headline and lead), story (situation and comments), episode (main events and consequences), backgrounds (context and history), and verbal reactions (expectations and evaluations).

In order to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality embedded in Nigerian press, which are the central aims of critical discourse analysis, this researcher used two theoretical frameworks, namely feminist critical theory and hegemony theory. But before discussion on those theories, let us look at research sample.

### **1.2.5 Sampling**

Two English-language Nigerian tabloid newspapers, *The Sun* and *National Mirror*, were chosen for this study. Tabloids newspapers were chosen because traditionally they carry more sensational news such as crime and violence stories and this study deals with such kinds of news stories. Additionally, *The Sun* and *National Mirror* newspapers were chosen because they are the most widely read tabloid newspapers in Nigeria.

#### **1.2.5.1 *The Sun***

Initially established in January 18, 2003 with weekly editions, after few months *The Sun* newspaper became a daily publication. *The Sun* is similar in design with the popular UK *Sun*



newspaper and also adopts the ‘British Tabloid’ style of journalism. The “king of the Nigerian tabloids” as it is popular called, *The Sun* and its online version reports mainly entertainment, politics and other semi-dramatic stories. According to Leah McBride Mensching (2009), in Nigeria “*The Sun* was the most popular paper with those aged 45 and above and was the most popular newspaper overall with a 21.4 percent share of the market. The Punch had the second largest readership with 16.7 percent” (Mensching, 2009).

#### **1.2.5.2 National Mirror**

Founded in 2006, with currently daily circulation figures around 40 - 45, 000, *National Mirror* is one of the leading tabloids in Nigeria. According to Country Code website, “The newspaper, popularly called “*Mirror*”, is a daily tabloid that enjoys cult-like following all over Nigeria” (<http://countrycodes.boomja.com/index.php?ITEM=41864>). According to the paper’s website,

*National Mirror* was acquired in 2008 by the billionaire lawyer and business man, Barrister Jimoh Ibrahim (OFR). His first task upon acquisition of the newspaper was its complete refocus, giving it proper direction. He then acquired six states-of-the-art printing machines. The intention is to site the machines in each six geo political zones in the country.

The machines are specifically to be located in the cities of Lagos, Abuja, Akure, Owerri, Kano and Maiduguri. With that, every part of the country gets to read the newspaper earlier than any other newspaper, considering the fact that each of the printing locations is about four hours to the final sales destination. Not only that, emphasis is given to the local news in the arrangement (“About Us”, <http://nationalmirroronline.net/new/about-us/>).

This study covers a period of one year, from January 1 – December 30, 2012. As a rule in a research of this nature, the sampling must be adequate and representative (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011:87). Using simple random sampling technique, the researcher draw the sample from the two tabloids mentioned above using six days interval. The dates chosen for the newspaper editions started from January 1, then 7, 13, 19, and so on. Below is the table that shows how the random numbers were generated.

Table 1.1: Random Numbers Table (January – December 2012)

<b>Month</b>	<b>Days</b>					
January	1	7	13	19	25	31
February	6	12	18	24	-	-
March	1	7	13	19	25	31
April	6	12	18	24	30	-
May	5	11	17	23	29	-
June	4	10	16	22	28	-
July	4	10	16	22	28	-
August	3	9	15	21	27	-
September	2	8	14	20	26	-
October	2	8	14	20	26	-
November	1	7	13	19	25	-
December	1	7	13	19	25	31
<b>TOTAL: 12 Months/62 days x 2 newspapers = 124 copies</b>						

Additionally, any edition that falls within the dates randomly selected was chosen, without considering whether it was daily, Saturday, or weekly editions. This statement has been made for the sake of clarification, because almost all newspapers in Nigeria have both daily, Saturday, and weekly (i.e. Sunday) editions.

### **1.2.5.3 Unit of Analysis**

Only news stories, editorial, and articles written by columnists concerning females that involved in crimes, either as victims or perpetrators, were examined. These units of news items

were drawn from 124 copies of two newspapers under study (62 copies from each newspaper) over this period under study. The total numbers of 164 news items were analyzed during this period. Similarly, the researcher analyzed only text items; photographs, tables, charts, and images such as cartoons were excluded.

### **1.3 Theoretical Framework**

In analyzing patterns and meanings in the mediated representation of the Nigerian women in crime news stories in this study, the researcher used two approaches of ideological criticism as theoretical frameworks: the “feminist critical theory” and the “hegemonic theory”. Theoretically, this research is conducted by using hegemonic theory and by drawing upon multiple approaches of feminist criticism of media and communication, with emphasis on radical feminism whose main argument is based on the patriarchy as the cause of women’s oppression.

#### **1.3.1 Feminist Critical Theory**

The feminist criticism of media and communication mostly revolves around four key issues: First, feminists and other activists criticize the roles assigned to women by the mass media which, as feminists scholars argue, are contrary to the actual women’s roles in real life. The second issue of concern here is centered on women’s exploitation by the media in which they are negatively depicted in mass-mediated messages as males’ sexual objects of desire. The third item addresses the issue of exploitation of women in workplaces and the males’ dominance in other aspect of lives such as sexual relationships and domestic violence. The last point stresses the need for women to wake up and challenge all these problems that are facing the entire womanhood (Berger, 2000:82).

Perceptively, all feminists divisions have different understanding concerning some issues, but agreed upon other things (Berger, 2000:82). For instance, Marxist feminists, together with socialist feminists, believe that class system created by capitalism is the cause of women's oppression, while the liberal feminists believe otherwise. But all the three categories of feminists mentioned above – liberal, socialist, and Marxist – unanimously agree that patriarchy is present long before capitalism.

Furthermore, socialist feminists and liberal feminists have different perceptions concerning the influence of media on individual attitudes and behaviors. Unlike liberal feminists whose approach mainly revolves around the individuality feminism, Marxist feminists draw attention primarily to the way “media portray or represent women and how the media and communication affect society as a whole rather than this or that woman” (Berger, 2000:82). While radical feminists focus on how the media affects culture and society in general, socialist feminism, on the other hand, draws attention to the centrality of media in constructing ideologies, which include the ones that suggest and depicts women as subordinate. Huriye Toker (2004) succinctly summed it all:

Radical feminism focuses on male violence against women and seeing men as a group as responsible for women's oppression; Marxist feminism, in contrast, sees women's oppression as tied to forms of capitalist exploitation of labor. Finally liberal feminism is distinctive in its focus on individual rights and choices, which are denied women, and ways in which the law and education could rectify these injustices, on the other hand, socialist feminism believing that women's liberation and socialism are joint goal (Toker, 2004:17).

### **1.3.2 Hegemonic Theory**

As discussed in Chapter One, the ruling elites are usually acquire and retain power through getting people to believe in particular views of the world, and by succeeding in giving meanings to certain representations (Tiainen, 2009:4). In order to maintain their control over the society, the dominant groups need the services of communication mediums such as schools, arts, mass media, and so on. As a powerful tool of transmitting ideological messages, the mass media greatly affects our beliefs, perception, and interpretations of events. Based on this devastating impacts of media on our lives, this researcher used hegemony as a theory in analyzing the representations of women in crime news, with the aim of understanding and exposing the hidden ideological messages contained in the Nigerian newspapers.

As a theory, hegemonic approach is suitable for conducting a research on ideological analysis like the present study, because it is “directly concerned with providing a casual analysis for the ways in which representations play a key role in either maintaining or sometimes contesting the existing social divisions in society” (Taylor and Willis, 1999:47). Additionally, content analysis fails to address the relationship between representations and the social structure which produce them; it is also unable to create ways of understanding the reason why certain social groups are represented in specific ways. Hegemonic theory, on the other hand, “provides a way of understanding how, at a particular historical moments, dominant social groups are successfully able to govern and rule economically, socially and culturally” (Taylor and Willis, 1999:47). The subordinate groups are willingly led to accept and believe the claims of dominant ideas which suggest that social divisions are natural and unavoidable.

## **1.4 Literature Review**

### **1.4.1 Construction of Crime in the Media**

Media texts are not reality but a reflection of reality that is determined by culture (Jewkes, 2004:37), and this depends on two related factors. First, the media image of reality is determined by the production processes of the news organizations and the structural determinants of news-making which some or all of them may influence the image of crime, criminals and the criminal justice system in the minds of public. Such determining factors include over-reporting of crimes which judgments has already been passed and resulted in conviction; the assigning of reporters to security installations, such as police, and criminal justice-related institutions, such as courts, where they (journalists) are likely to get interesting stories; the need to produce news stories which fill the space or time schedules available for news production; the concentration on specific crimes for the sake of casual explanations, and the consideration of personal safety; and an overreliance on official source for information (Jewkes, 2004:37).

The second factor that shapes news production deals with the media professionals' assumption about the audience, where the former "Sift and select news items, prioritize some stories over others, edit words, choose the tone that will be adopted (some stories will be treated seriously, others might get a humorous or ironic treatment) and decide on the visual images that will accompany the story" (Jewkes, 2004:37-40). This process of selecting what 'is' and what 'is not' news by journalists and editors, also known as agenda-setting, provide the media practitioners with the opportunity to "Select a handful of events from the unfathomable number of possibilities that occur around the world every day, and turn them into stories that convey meanings, offer solutions, associate certain groups with particular kinds of behavior, and provide 'picture of the world'" (ibid). In a study on television news coverage of crime and its effect on the

viewers in Washington DC, Kimberly Gross stated that crime is among things TV viewers learn from the media (Gross, 2006:2). Although crime rates in most U.S. cities have been on the decline for a decade, yet:

Local newscasts still seem to operate under the mantra, “if it bleeds, it leads” (Downie & Kaiser, 2002; Hamilton, 1998; McManus, 1994). An analysis of local television news in 50 markets from 1998-2002 found that one quarter of all stories dealt with crime and that two fifths of lead stories dealt with crime (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2004). These findings are consistent with a large body of previous research. A number of studies have concluded that crime news dominates local television coverage and is more likely than other topics to lead the newscast (Gross, 2006:2-11).

The early media portraits of criminals in movies and novels allowed audiences to identify with the criminals until the end where the criminal was usually shot and killed (Surette, 2011:2). Such media images of criminals encouraged audiences to savor the danger and sin of crime yet still see it ultimately punished. Significant social concerns with the popular media described crime as originating in individual personality or moral weakness rather than being due to broader social forces. “The portraits of crime and justice produced during this time are surprisingly similar to those found today,” writes Surette (2011), “both present images that reinforce the status quo; promote the impression that competent, often heroic individuals are pursuing and capturing criminals, and encourage the belief that criminals can be readily recognized and crime ultimately curtailed through aggressive law enforcement efforts” (Surette, 2011:2-3).

What added to the negative impacts of media portrayals of criminals in the news and more especially in the popular media is the depictions of criminals as active decision makers who went after what they wanted, be it money, sex, or power. They controlled their lives, lived well, and decided their own fates. When certain types of individuals are overrepresented as criminals or crime victims, scholars suggest that media consumers adopt that view (Armstrong,

2008:7). In Ray Surette's (2011) book, *Media, Crime, and Criminal Justice*, Todd R. Clear, the book's series editor, criticizes the way media depicts crimes and criminal justice:

Everyone who studies crime and justice shares a sense of frustration about the way media depictions dominate the common viewpoint on crime and criminal justice, often in ways that distort reality. The television show CSI, for example, is great entertainment but hardly fits the way 99 percent of crimes are solved. So-called real police stories follow some officers as they go about their duties, but even though the film is real, the portrait of police work is distorted by the focus on chase scenes and angry encounters. Judge Judy bears little resemblance to actual judges in demeanor or behavior. The Practice always presents cases with some sort of twist, but such cases are the exception rather than the rule. The nightly news covers crime with an eye to generating high ratings, not great insight. American culture has an affinity for crime as a source of stimulation and even entertainment, but the result is that what we think we know about crime and justice from the way our media portray it often corresponds poorly to the everyday reality of crime and justice. For those who are professionals in the business of criminal justice—those who wish to reform or improve justice practices and crime prevention effectiveness—the media portrayals are often an impediment. It is not so much that the media get it wrong as that they focus on aspects of crime and justice that are, in the scheme of things, not so important. Of course we all want to apprehend serial killers and stop predatory sex offenders, but they are uncommon in the life of the justice system. The more pressing themes of improving the effectiveness of treatment programs, youth prevention systems, crime control strategies, and so forth can get lost in the way the media focus on images of crime that are much more engrossing to the everyday citizen (Todd R. Clear, Series Editor of *Media, Crime, and Criminal Justice: Images, Realities, and Policies*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 2011, p. xiv).

The portrait of criminals found in today's media in the United States has almost no correspondence with official statistics of persons arrested for crimes (Surette, 2011). The typical



criminal portrayed in the entertainment media in U.S. is mature, white, and of high social status, whereas statistically the typical arrestee is young, black, and poor— what they have in common is that both are male (Surette, 2011:53). Female offenders are primarily shown linked to male offenders and as white, violent, and deserving of punishment. They are paradoxically portrayed as driven by greed, revenge, and often love. In general, the image of the criminal that the news media propagate is similar to that found in the entertainment media:

Criminals tend to be of two types in the news media: violent predators or professional businessmen and bureaucrats. Furthermore, as in entertainment programming, they tend to be slightly older than reflected in official arrest statistics. Overall, the news media underplay criminals' youth and their poverty while overplaying their violence. Although other types of criminals are periodically shown, the violent and predatory street criminal is what the public takes away from the media's constructed image of criminality. If there is a single media crime icon, it is predatory criminality—a construction that frames and dominates the media crime-and-justice world (Surette, 2011:53-4).

#### **1.4.2 Types of Crimes Found in the Media**

Crimes that are most likely to be found in the media, as Surette discovered, were those that are least likely to occur in real life. While property crime is underrepresented, the violent crime is over-represented:

Through the twentieth century, murder, robbery, kidnapping, and aggravated assault made up 90 percent of all prime time television crimes, with murder accounting for nearly one-fourth. In contrast, murders account for only one-sixth of 1 percent of the FBI Crime Index. At the other extreme, thefts account for nearly two-thirds of the FBI Crime Index, but only 6 percent of television crime. Due to the multimedia web and the constant recycling of content, entertainment

media content greatly overemphasizes individual acts of violence, even during periods when new content is less violent. The content of crime news reveals a similarly distorted, inverted image. Violent crime's relative infrequency in the real world heightens its newsworthiness and leads to its frequent appearance in crime news. Thus, crime news focuses on violent personal street crime such as murder, rape, and assault, with more common offenses like burglary and theft often ignored (Surette, 2011:58).

According to one study, cited by Surette (2011), murder and robbery deem for around 45 percent of newspaper crime news and 80 percent of television crime news. The news media constantly take the infrequent crime event and turn it into the common crime image. Moreover, the relationship between the trends that frequently occur concerning the amount of crime reported in the news and the trends in societal crime is insignificant. Both the content and the total amount of crime news didn't reflect changes in the crime rate. While only a small percentage of stories deal with the motivations of the criminal or the circumstances of victims, crime news focuses heavily on the details of specific individual crimes. In the news, media focuses on entertaining crimes with dramatic recitations of details about individual offenders and crime scenes.

#### **1.4.2.1 Predatory criminality**

As Surette found, the media construct predatory criminality in entertainment, news, and infotainment components —criminals who are animalistic, irrational, and innately predatory and who commit violent, sensational, and senseless crimes—as the dominant crime problem in the United States. Comparable to the hunting down of witches by the medieval Christian church, researchers have found that modern mass media have given massive and disproportionate attention to pursuing innately predatory criminals as the prime crime-and-justice goal. Dominating the media's content are repeated claims that crime is largely perpetrated by

predatory individuals who are basically different from the rest of us and that criminality stems from individual deficiencies.

According to the findings, for over hundred years ago media portraits have shown criminals as more animalistic, irrational, and predatory and their crimes as more violent, senseless, and sensational. The media have successfully raised the violent predator criminal from a rare offender in the real world to a common, ever-present image in the media-constructed one. The public are led by the media to see violence and predation between strangers as an expected fact of life. Although terrorists are currently also popular predatory villains, yet the serial killer is the stronger predatory image in the media social construction of the ultimate predator.

The social construction of the serial killer as a significant new type of criminal began in the 1980s and took off in the 1990s. The media portrait of serial killers demonstrates the media's crucial role in the social construction of criminality (Surette, 2011:54). With the construction of serial killers, the media depicts predators as animalistic, dangerous killing machines or gothic monsters than human offenders. Such portraits also implied that these serial killers were everywhere and were the perpetrators of most violent crimes:

Historian Philip Jenkins, however, reports that although there is evidence of a small increase in the number of active serial killers, in reality serial killers account for no more than 300 to 400 victims each year, or 2 to 3 percent of all U.S. homicides whereas domestic violence accounts for about one-third of all murders. However, media coverage of serial murderers and the success of fictional books and films about serial killers have swamped the picture of criminality the public receives. The result is that serial killers are commonly perceived as the dominant homicide problem in the United States and as symbols of a society overwhelmed by rampant, violent, incorrigible predatory criminality (Surette, 2011:54-5).

The media focus and immense public interest in violent predatory criminality is ironically tied to a socially palatable explanation of crime. While constructing crime as a frightening (and hence entertaining) phenomenon, predator criminality also presents crime as largely caused by individual deficiencies. This individual-level explanation frees mainstream society from any causal responsibility for crime. Such a perspective puts the individual offender, rather than the system, as the main problem. Predatory criminals are depicted as springing into existence, unconnected to any larger social, political, or economic forces. This construction suggests that the predatory killer is divorced from humanity and society. In contrast, while criminals are often portrayed in depth in the media, their victims frequently are not. In other words, unlike criminals, victims of crime occupy a surprisingly low profile in the media.

#### **1.4.2.2 Domestic violence**

On a study on the press coverage of domestic violence in U.S., researchers Megan Ward, Therese Lueck, & Heather Walter (2011) found that non-fatal acts of domestic violence remain under-reported as crimes. Only about one-fifth of rapes, one-fourth of physical assaults, and half of stalking incidents committed against females are reported to law enforcement; these incidents are reported even less when committed against a male. Approximately 85 percent of those victimized have been women. When mediated reality draws on cultural myths for its gendered narratives, powerful stories can reinforce patriarchal heritage (Ward, Lueck, & Walter, 2011:2).

Despite the biased coverage of the domestic violence by the U.S press, the little media attention provided had helped to “generate awareness about this social issue, such as the coverage of the murder of Nicole Brown Simpson and news coverage of the assault of singer Rihanna by Chris Brown” (Ward, Lueck, & Walter, 2011:2). Since the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s, the trio researchers noted, awareness of domestic violence has increased.

Building on the findings of the feminist media scholar Marian Meyers' research on how gendered news narratives can promulgate damage on the reality of women through their pervasive structuring of stories from a male perspective, Ward, Lueck, & Walter (2011) assert that reliance on cultural myths that were crafted to support patriarchal values and the hierarchy of power was prevalent in coverage of domestic violence. Through textual analysis of news stories, Meyers revealed that the use of cultural myths stripped the perpetrator of blame and cast that blame on the victim of the violence. With regard to gender, as noted in a study of war coverage that when women made an unanticipated appearance in the news purview in Mideast conflicts, the journalists who were covering the events reverted to use of archetypal figures drawn from mythology, such as the "woman warrior" and then the "terrible mother" in order to incorporate the women into their battle stories as subjects.

Researchers noted that reporters in Milwaukee, Wis., considered homicides more newsworthy if suspects were male and victims were female. In other words, the newsworthiness of an event was upgrade if the crime had a female victim, and portrayed females' roles as mother and nurturer, suggesting that killing a female had a higher degree of cultural deviance than killing a male (Ward, Lueck, & Walter, 2011:6).

Similarly, they observed that information concerning the victim(s) generally take longer to emerge from the media due to complex social aspects of a homicide, such as the nature of the victim's relationship with the suspect. "As a result," they write, "reporters tend to judge newsworthiness on the basis of the first facts they get (e.g., race, gender, and age, especially of the victim)" (p.7). Journalists typically do not have the time to wait for such information, so they just make their evaluations on the basis of the verified facts they have on hand.

Relying on feminist media scholars Meyers and Carolyn Byerly as sources, Ward, Lueck, & Walter (2011) noted that widespread journalistic practices in covering domestic violence continued to trivialize the crime. Although many scholars who studied media coverage of domestic violence have found that such domestic violence is a cultural issue, their researches revealed that journalists have patently not displayed that perspective in their stories:

...A textual analysis of three Australian newspapers in the late 1990s found that in coverage of domestic violence the papers perpetuated cultural myths, with the author concluding that the coverage acted as a warning to women to watch their behavior. In U.S. newspapers of that same time period, Cathy Ferrand Bullock, who has come to study domestic violence rather extensively over the intervening years, found that newspapers across Washington State overwhelmingly reported domestic violence as isolated incidents instead of indicative of a larger social problem. In Utah newspapers, Bullock then found that most domestic violence stories were framed through the conventions of patriarchy. Nevertheless, in a subsequent study, she determined that coverage of domestic violence in the Utah newspapers relied heavily on official sources (Ward, Lueck, & Walter, 2011).

By not sourcing domestic violence advocates, the media coverage constructed an event as an isolated incident and not as part of the broader social problem. Media had been found employing the “practice of constructing domestic violence, murder or assault as an isolated incident rather than a pattern of domestic violence,” and this “perpetuates the patriarchal devaluation of violence on the domestic front and develops a false sense of safety for its victims.” According to them, the “news of domestic violence is constructed through the repetition of journalistic narratives that rely on cultural myths of gender roles and relations, with journalists focusing on the domestic violence incident rather than contextualizing the story as a broader social issue or a story that has been developing over time.”

Similarly, Brian Spitzberg and Michelle Cadiz found in their research that “the news production process can distort the image of crime, creating confusion and resulting in messages different than originally intended” (Ward, Lueck, & Walter, 2011). The lack of general information about domestic violence and local services for victims of domestic violence, even when patently newsworthy, sends the message to domestic violence victims that there are media is not willing to help them. And the one-dimensional nature of the coverage, prove the fact that the “other side” of the story was absent.

Another myth Ward, Lueck, & Walter found in media reports of domestic violence is victim blaming. They studied the media reports of Feb. 9, 2009, about Chris Brown, an American singer, who assaulted his partner, Rihanna. Meyers identified the cultural myth of victim blaming from such media coverage. They discovered that Rihanna was described as a “clingy” girlfriend. They equally noted that Brown’s actions were justified by the media because Rihanna was “clingy.” This paints a picture that Rihanna had this coming for depending on Brown and being clingy. “Prominence,” moreover, has been found as news-judgment factor in crime news coverage, such as domestic violence. For instance, domestic violence incident that involves celebrities such as Brown and Rihanna 2009 incident do not have to rise to the level of murder to capture media attention (Ward, Lueck, & Walter, 2011:2).

#### **1.4.2.3 White-collar crime**

Surette (2011) surprisingly discovered that white-collar crime as another area of crime that has large social impact but enjoy little media attention. Notwithstanding the fact that it produces a different range of acts that cause significant social harm, Surette noted that white-collar crime has not been a media focus and the crime’s social impact does not always equal its news value. It was documented that news about white-collar crimes and criminals is ignored by

the media because it is difficult to generate and maintain moral panics. Subsequently, media portraits of economic crimes are few and when produced are framed in celebrity-focused stories or formatted as infotainment and differentiated from “real” crime.

Therefore, although of a specific white-collar crime can receive an extensive media coverage—for instance, if there is some newsworthy link such as a significant fine, prosecution, or company liquidation—and recurrent films dealing with white-collar crime are produced, white-collar crime remains a tiny part of total news and entertainment media content. News reports, it was found, continued to not attribute criminal wrongdoing to corporations, instead focusing on harm, charges, and probes, not on corporate criminal liability. Overall, white-collar crimes are treated by the mass media as what Surette called “infotainment”. Corporate scandals and corporate predators, who disguised as executives, according to Surette, are constructed to fit a predatory criminal icon and thus to better match the wider construction of crime and criminality found in the media.

### **1.4.3 Criminality in Today’s Media**

The most popular narrative of criminality to be found throughout the media, according to literature observed, is the psychopathic criminal, usually depicted as super-villains in order to create seemingly indestructible murderous super-criminals popular in slasher and serial killer movies. The uncommon but still popular narratives in today’s media are those of business and professional criminals. They are characterized through media portrayals of organized crime as shrewd, ruthless, often violent, ladies’ men. If psychopathic criminals are mad dogs, as Surette argued, these criminals are cunning wolves. The core message sends by the media here is that crime is simply another form of work or business, basically similar to other careers but often more exciting and rewarding if, perhaps, more violent (p.64).



#### **1.4.4 Criminogenic Media and Its Impacts**

As early as 1908, the media (then newspapers and books) were criticized for creating an atmosphere of tolerance for criminality and causing juvenile delinquency (Surette, 2011:66). More than two out of three Americans feel that television violence is a critical or very important cause of crime in the United States, and one-fourth feel that movies, television, and the Internet combined are a primary cause of gun violence in the country (ibid).

Researchers explored a number of causal mechanisms through which the media could cause aggression. According to the findings of such researches, the presentation of crimes in the media results in people copying those crimes. The most commonly advanced mechanism media audience acquired from the media in copycat crimes involves imitation, in which viewers learn values and norms supportive of aggression and violence learn techniques to be aggressive and violent, or learn acceptable social situations and targets for aggression (Surette, 2011:66). There has been a great deal of research regarding this, however, and most researchers today conclude that the media is a significant contributor to social aggression and as good a predictor of violence as other social factors.

In the research literature on terrorism, the media motivate copycat terrorist acts and a substantial number of terrorist events are aimed primarily at garnering publicity. The resulting competition for media attention causes terrorists to escalate their violence because more violent and more dramatic acts are necessary to gain news coverage as the shock value of ordinary terrorism diminishes. For instance, occupation of a building no longer gets world or even national coverage in many occasions. As with general copycat crime, there is much anecdotal evidence that terrorist events occur in clusters. These copycat effects are especially strong following a well-publicized successful terrorist act, such as kidnappings, bank robberies in which

hostages are taken, plane hijackings, planting altitude bombs on airplanes, suicide bombings, or beheadings of hostages (Surette, 2011:79-81).

Surette found out that in their efforts to construct reality of crime and justice from the real world of crime and justice, media organizations increasingly blur the line between news and entertainment, and between fact and fiction. In the process, however, crime stories have become a mainstay of hybrid infotainment programs and new media content (Surette, 2011:205-7). This disparity has developed because the media converge on a single image of crime —an image of rampant, predatory criminality. And commercial, organizational, and cultural forces drive the media to construct and perpetuate this predatory crime-centered image.

#### **1.4.5 Gender Construction in the News Media**

Being institutional as well as fundamental part of social interactions, people and groups are constantly using gender to evaluate other people and groups. In everyday social relations a person's gender influences conversations, behaviors and attitudes of others. As mentioned earlier, studies affirmed that gender is socially constructed and that the media's treatment of women assists in the process. Gender is also embedded extensively into media content. Therefore, women are mostly underrepresented in the media, and portrayed in stereotypical roles. Just like in the society, sex-based stereotypes are common in the media. Mediated portrayals of women tend to coincide with such stereotypic beliefs, where women are portrayed as weak, passive, dependent on men, nurturing, and emotional:

Behaviors are often sexually related, and professional women are depicted by the media as manipulative, aggressive, impulsive, and selfish. Occupationally, mediated women are often in domestic roles or if they are employed outside the home they tend to hold stereotypical positions (Vande Berg and Streckfuss 1992). Research on music videos

and advertising has found that women are often designated as sex objects for men to use at their own discretion (Baker & Helou-Brown, 2007:2-3).

As cultural representations of women are produced and reproduced through media discourse, audiences are exposed to socially constructed concepts of women, appropriate gender roles, social identity, and acceptable behaviors in the society. These covert media representations may not be easily comprehension to the casual receiver, but still they substantially affect individual attitudes and perceptions. Receiving and digesting such media messages that have hidden meanings results in a prevalent sense of socially constructed gender, a powerful idea that has an overwhelming influence on the overall status of women. In the political arena gender plays important role where women are often denied positions of power as a result of biased ideas that women are poor negotiators. In employment sector, women are paid less when compared with men.

#### **1.4.6 Gender in Crime News**

Media treat crime stories differently based on the identities – such as gender, sexuality, race, or class— of those involved in the events, whether as victims or as perpetrators of the crime. For example, the media portrayal of a black American as a perpetrator of a crime could be different from the treatment a white American will receive from the same media (Gross, 2006:5-6). The media representation of female victims, as well as perpetrators of crimes, is subject to public debate. Nevertheless, works by feminist criminologists has demonstrated that female criminals who commit “unfeminine” acts (e.g., behave violently or victimize children) are treated much more severely than their counterparts whose illegal activity conforms to the standards of womanhood (e.g., stealing food for one’s family). Women who are covered by the

media in such on such cases “tend to be involved in welfare abuses, infanticide, or other offenses which defy the feminine stereotype of the Madonna,” and:

Newsworthiness is dependent on their cultural violations rather than their criminal actions. Also, these representations tend to frame the stories in terms of their effect on children or as an indication of the failing nuclear family instead of an ongoing crime problem (Surette 1992). Many female criminals receive increased media attention that highlights their nontraditional behaviors, which in turn allows the discourse to criticize them in terms of the fallen woman who needs to become a better mother, caregiver, and homemaker (Baker & Helou-Brown, 2007:3).

Therefore, petty crimes committed by women are often overlooked by the media, while violent women are publicly demonized to serve as a warning to other women. The mass media’s treatment toward women involved in crime is enforcing stereotypical female sex roles that perpetuate patriarchy. Thus, it will be acceptable if this researcher argue that media representations play a significant role in reinforcing the dominance of men over women, particularly through stories of crime and violence. As an exercise in norm setting and social typing, violence is the key to the rule of power. It is the cheapest and quickest dramatic demonstration of who can and who cannot get away with what, against whom.

According to a paper written by Maria Elizabeth *et al* (2004) and presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, “Print media tended to be chivalrous toward female criminals, because they present female offenses as a result of circumstantial factors beyond individual control, including being the pawns of male criminals”. Several researches show that crime type and the motivation for committing crime are important dimensions in probing the latent differences in how men and women criminals are framed in crime reporting. To put it in another way, the type of crime women committed significantly

affected how they were treated in news coverage. For example, Naylor (2001), cited in this paper, found that violent women were often portrayed by the press as irrational or emotional. Women who committed petty crimes are often overlooked (or given “chivalrous” treatment) by the media, while violent female criminals receive harsh portrayals. Women who committed violent acts are depicted in news and even in movies as ‘liberal crooks’ whose actions were linked to ‘women’s liberation.’

News media representation focuses on the disparate media coverage of men and women, where a woman’s portrayal generally differs from and, is often dependent upon, the role of men within content (Armstrong, 2008:3). This dominance of males and the lack of female portrayals in the media were called the “symbolic annihilation,” (Armstrong, 2008:4). A study of television coverage from 1954 to 1975, cited by Cory L. Armstrong (2008), found that at least two men were shown onscreen for each woman and suggested that when women were portrayed onscreen, “their roles were trivialized, demoralized or just tangential to the main issues of the media coverage” (Armstrong, 2008:5). According to the findings of the study, not only newspaper contents have demonstrated similar reliance television portrayals on male sources. “Using a content analysis of three southern U.S. daily newspapers from 1986 to 1996, researchers found that seven in 10 sources were male. Sports coverage continues to hold the distinction of the largest gender disparity” (ibid). Additionally, the male mentions were dominant across front page, local news, sports and lifestyle pages, and:

...The disparity between the two was the smallest on the lifestyle pages. Research in political movements found women were often described with pejorative labels or unfavorable terms when discussing the women’s movement (Ashley & Olson, 1998). Similarly, in political news, discussion of “female” issues—child care, education, women’s rights and

health care—is more elaborate in stories with women candidates, while male candidates portrayed in newspapers were more likely to be linked with “male” issues, such as foreign policy, defense spending and economic concerns...(Armstrong, 2008:5).

Feminist theorists suggest that the media coverage of violence involving women crosses the boundaries between the public and private sphere. Conversely, other issues are covered through the lens of the private sphere, where the coverage instead focuses on family values and interpersonal norms—using individualistic explanations instead of discussing the role of outside forces that contribute to the situation (Armstrong, 2008:6). The narrative frame, however, typically conforms to cultural expectations of domesticity instead of offering a subversive point of view. This differentiation is often noticed in coverage of violence, as often news frames examine violence from an individualistic or episodic standpoint, without examining the contributory societal factors.

Armstrong (2008) found three factors that influence the media coverage of women and violence. The factors, according to her, are audience focus, story theme, and source selection (Armstrong, 2008:7). She suggests that differences exist in how women are portrayed within news coverage based on the story frame and topic, along with the sources selected (Armstrong, 2008:12). For audience focus, Armstrong discovered that media organizations generally focus on a target audience within their circulation area, and content is generally geared toward the organization’s perception of that target audience.

Story topic or theme is the second element that has been found that to be affecting gender representations when examining how women are portrayed within news coverage (Armstrong, 2008:9). For instance, the genre of news story was a predictor of the number of female sources

appearing within the story. When examining the relationship between gender and crime news, as researchers discovered, most studies focus on framing:

A 1998 study of domestic violence cases in Washington stated that much of the coverage focused on the episodic frames, based on police work and the use of official sources (Bullock & Cubert, 2002). A similar study of Utah newspapers found that most coverage supported male-dominated institutions, such as law enforcement and the court system, by focusing the individual incidents instead of the over-arching problem of domestic violence (Armstrong, 2008:9).

Apart from traditional framing, some scholars examined larger themes which may predict crime coverage of women. It was argued that the vast majority of domestic violence coverage is framed to connect to the private sphere and, therefore, individualized without examining the broader issues that may contribute to this activity (Armstrong, 2008:10). A 1997 study of homicide coverage in Milwaukee, Wisconsin found that reporters depict women as victims of crime coverage because of their status and cultural deviance—traditionally and stereotypically women, children and elderly are seen as more innocent, weak, and more vulnerable than others, making them more culturally deviant (*ibid*).

Thirdly, Armstrong (2008) found that the sources chosen for a news story can influence the perceived story content. Although, sources alone do not determine the news, writes Armstrong, but they go a long way in focusing the journalists' attention on the social order. Therefore, the sources which appear in print carry some influence over the weight of the story (Armstrong, 2008:11). She found that both the gender and genre of a source are influential in determining the types of sources appearing in print. In other words, the gender of the sources becomes a key component when examining the topic of women and violence in news coverage. She further noted that female sources often serve the role of the witness or the victim in news

coverage, while male sources generally serve the role of the authoritarian or “man-in-charge” (p.11). Reporters are generally quoting women as average citizens, but not as experts, cutting out any opportunities for them to give thoughtful opinions in news coverage. Similarly, women labeled as “feminists” are given more power than other women. As such, if feminists are given more power than other women, it seems possible that women in a more subservient society may be portrayed differently from other women as well.

Works by communication scholars, criminologists, and feminist historians reveal that the representation of violent female criminals as “witches,” “demons” or “madwomen” by the media often comes as result of patriarchal anxiety and its need to control and discipline women. Elizabeth *et. al* have noted that journalists treat stories of violent female criminality as the most deviant, anxiety-producing, and transgressed of all crime scenarios. Studies have shown that interpersonal crimes committed by women are consistently over-reported compared to official statistics (Elizabeth, Grabe, Trager & Rauch, 2004:6-7).

Finally, the aforementioned study concluded that women who commit crimes that violate gender expectations by committing violent crimes and crimes against children receive harsher media treatment than female criminals who do not violate gender expectations in committing crime; women who commit crimes that violate gender expectations by committing violent crimes and crimes against children receive harsher media treatment than male criminals who commit the same crimes; and, lastly, women who commit nonviolent crimes that conform to the standards of womanhood receive more lenient treatment by the media than male criminals who commit the same crimes(Elizabeth, Grabe, Trager & Rauch, 2004:7).



However, another study on the representation of female offenders in newspapers found that media give little attention to women offenders in Ireland (Black 2009). Instead, the Irish media concentrate largely on stories of crimes committed by males, and at the same time ignoring females' crime stories. "Little attention is paid to female offenders," she says, "beyond mere reporting" (Black, 2009:37). Irish newspapers, as Lynsey Black revealed, depicted women offenders as "mothers". Her "analysis show that 11.5 percent of all headlines used either the word "mother" or "mum"; another 5.1 percent used references like 'pregnant' or 'nurse', indicating a maternal role." In total, 16.1 percent of all news stories she analyzed depicted the female offenders either as a mother or in some sort of care-giving role. Twenty-three percent of the crime-related articles dealt with a female victim (ibid).

Black (2009) compared the number of articles relating to female offenders in four Irish national dailies she studied with the amount of female prisoners in Ireland (Irish Prison Service 2009 statistics), and she found that the total number of prisoners in Ireland is 13, 581, and out of these only 105 (2.9%) are females (p.34). This reveals over-representation of female in the press. Murder was highly the most common offence represented in 2008 prison committals and those reported in the newspaper articles, however the research show that atypical crime receives more coverage. The over-reporting of violent crimes has consistently been borne out by research, while the under-reporting of those crimes woman are typically imprisoned was a debatable issue for many feminist criminologists (Black, 2009:37).

In a similar research on four British newspapers for a period of six months, Naylor (2001), as cited by Black (2009), declare that "approximately half of all crime stories featured a female victim, a vast over-representation when compared with statistics". Sensational stories,

Lynsey Black noted, are more appealing to the audiences, and news writers are using larger headlines on stories related to the murder or incest accounts.

Studies were conducted on media coverage of prostitution, and such studies criticize news media for depicting female offenders as prostitutes and HIV/AIDS carriers and transmission agents in spite of medical evidence which proved that HIV transmission sources are many (Burfoot & Lord, 2001; and Hernandez, 2006). Even though medical research shows that prostitutes are victims of HIV rather than spreaders, yet they have been framed as disease transmitters by news media. News accounts of prostitution often promote stereotypical misrepresentations of prostitutes as transmitters of HIV/AIDS. In addition, a study in Canada found that media texts were less sympathetic to health risks faced by female prostitutes.

In exploring how female criminality are highlighted in the news media, Naylor (1995) lists six “common sense” media frames of crime stories regarding female offenders. The categories are:

1. Madonna/Whore
2. Sexual passion/love as an “excuse” for crime
3. Reproduction or madness
4. The figure of evil/the witch-/the monster
5. The criminal woman as “not-woman”
6. The female as devious and manipulative (Naylor, 1995: 81).

The Madonna/Whore duality is an expansive representation that women are either incapable of criminal behavior or are promiscuously involved in deviant behaviors like prostitution. The sexual passion characterization insists that women are victims of “love

madness” and that emotional frailties caused their criminal actions. Also, in this category are women whose deviance is sexualized. These women are inversions of the ideal good mother and are described as oversexed or undersexed and in need of a male figure to control them. A variant on the frailty representation, the reproduction/madness explanation depicts biological imperfections causing mental illness, thereby excusing illegal conduct (Naylor, 1995:81).

The figure of evil/the witch/the monster and the “not-woman” image attempts to illuminate situations that are seemingly inexplicable:

Here, discourse about cases locates female criminals outside of true womanhood, thus allowing them to receive masculine treatment from the criminal justice system. Also, lesbian criminals are placed into this representation with characterizations that emphasize masculine women (Faith 1993; Daly and Chasteen 1997). Often everyday behaviors by lesbians are criminalized in the media by marginalizing their morality as something different than the norm (Faith 1993; Daly and Chasteen 1997). Lesbians may be described as non-maternal, unnatural, and anti-family women who have fallen short of the female standard (Naylor, 1995:81-3).

The Madonna/Whore duality is often attributed to female rape victims where crime news usually starts with sympathetic representations of the victim and then shifts to a critical portrayal Benedict (1992). This occurs by reporting the defense’s legal arguments on the case. Mediated representations of female criminals tend to characterize them as fallen women who are morally corrupt. “Madonnas do not intentionally participate in criminal activity,” a study reveals, “Instead their offending is understood as a consequence of personal or social ills that force

women into criminality by some external source” (P.20). Female criminality is described as a contradiction of gender roles where the offender is either physically or morally deficient. Those representations of violent women are originated in sex-based stereotypes. Media representations of female criminals tend to criticize women for breaking social taboos about femininity and define their actions in terms of “appropriate” gender roles while devalue their actual criminality. Ideologically, these representations are part of cultural structures and mechanisms that create and define meaning regarding gender and “normal behaviors.”

#### **1.4.7 Victimization of Women in the Media**

Although victims of crime sometimes important for determining a crime’s newsworthiness, yet are often ignored in the news media. Several studies reveal that typical crime victim is not a newsworthy or entertaining one. Surette (2011) found that when described, victims tend to be portrayed as female, very young or old, or a celebrity. News coverage, however, routinely depicts criminal violence against females differently from that against males and underplays the victimization of minorities. From the news perspective, the ideal crime victim is a child or pregnant woman. Some crime victims, however, may be increasing in visibility. Since the last decade of the last century, the news’ construction of child murder victims has shifted from their killers’ stories to emotional soft-news stories about the impact on the family of the victims, and the community at large (Surette 2011:55). In this victim-focused news, the families of crime victims are shown as doubly victimized, first by the offender and secondly by the justice system.

Men resort to violence against their female intimate partners to maintain power and control over their partners. In these events, the media may exonerate these men through victim-blaming coverage, which also may encourage such behavior (Meyers, 1994; 1997). According

to researchers, this treatment of women by the mass media is a fundamental problem in society, as it is the mass media that truly educate the public on social issues and transmit these messages intergenerationally. Therefore, it is primarily the media who perpetuate harmful myths and stereotypes about victims of violence against women (Meyers, 1994; 1997).

In order to determine how femicide victims are portrayed in crime news, Rae Taylor analyzed 292 domestic homicide-related articles published by one newspaper from 1995 to 2000. In that study, Taylor discovered that in 150 (more than 50%) out of 292 articles analyzed males were perpetrators of the crimes, while females were victims. In only 18 out 292 news articles, females were guilty of murdering males. The study also revealed an interesting dichotomy concerning victim blame, suggesting victims are blamed both directly and indirectly for their own femicides (Taylor, undated, pp. 4-5):

Direct tactics include using negative language to describe the victim, highlighting the victim's choice not to report past incidences or cooperate with prosecution as contributing to her murder, and highlighting her actions with other men, such as actual and suspected infidelity while married, being seen with another man, being found with another man when killed, and being the mistress of the killer as contributing to her murder. Indirect tactics include using positive, sympathetic language to describe the perpetrator, highlighting the perpetrator's mental, physical, and emotional problems, discussing the couple's financial despair, highlighting the victim's mental or physical problems, and describing domestic violence in terms that assign equal blame to both the victim and perpetrator (Taylor, undated, p. 2).

Additionally, Rae Taylor found that the news media tend to blame victims for their own victimizations, and the media's act of blaming victims of femicide for their own deaths presents a significant barrier to social change concerning femicide. Additionally, this negative portrayal is

then filtered into the perceptions, and then, attitudes and behaviors of members of society. Through this process, the problems associated with this portrayal –including the occurrence of femicide itself –are perpetuated. The exception found regarding victim blame was in cases where the incident was female-perpetrated, where very little victim blame was revealed in those particular articles (p.7). The article, “Rooting for the Serial Killer: Disposition Theory, Justice, and Morality in Showtime’s Dexter,” reveals that the overall message about justice in crime dramas and movies is what it call the “equitable retaliation”, meaning that murderers that kill without a reason deserve death penalty. The article stated that there is no hope for redemption for such kind of killers (pp. 22-3).

Some studies found out that crime victims depicted in the media are shown as innocent and non-contributory to their victimization. Aside from these misleading constructions of victimization, which paint crime as a random unavoidable event, victims are of secondary importance in the media. Such victims in the entertainment media got news media attention only if they transform into crime fighters or have a preexisting newsworthiness, for instance, if they are already famous or a vulnerable child or pregnant woman. Unlike the real world of crime, where existing relationships between victims and criminals are the most significant factor in the generation of violence, in the media-constructed world the strong relationship is mostly between the crime fighter and the criminal. This holds true even in police reality programming where the interactions between the police and offenders/suspects dominate the shows. Overall, most victims in the entertainment media exist only to be victimized; once that ‘mission’ is fulfilled, if still alive, they would be kept aside and concentrate on the central contest between the heroic crime fighter and the evil criminal to be hunted.

In the entertainment media, victims could be normally categorized into two: the “helpless fodder”, and the “wronged heroic avengers” (Surette, 2011:57). Murder victims in particular, according to Surette are marginalized, and homicide often happens to characters who mean little to the other characters or to the audience. As such, the audience is encouraged to react to murders in entertainment not with a “My God, how horrible!” response, but with a “How curious, I wonder how it was done” reaction. Surette (2011) found that entertainment crime victims are predominantly white and male, but the entertainment media also manages to overrepresent young women in excess of their real victimization rates. Entertainment trends in female victimization are fewer female villains, more female assistant heroes, and many more female victims (Surette, 2011:57).

Concerning victim narratives in entertainment media, Surette found three types of crime victimizations, namely: the “Undeserving Victim,” “Stupid Victim,” and lastly the “Lazy Victim.” The “Undeserving Victim,” is one of the first killed to establish the evilness of the villain and justify their violent death at the end. The “Stupid Victim,” often a police officer, who is never smarter than the criminal or crime-fighting hero and ends up stumbling into their death. A good example is the off-duty police officer killed while trying to single-handedly capture the criminals. A final victim narrative is the “Lazy Victim.” This is the victim who got killed while doing something wrong or improperly. A clear example of this is the security or correctional officer watching television instead of their surroundings.

Studies revealed that media representation of women victimization is always centered on the binary opposition such as “men and women”, “dominance and oppression”, and “power and vulnerability” (Foss, 2010:1-6). A study on newspaper coverage of victimization show that press reportage provide more personal information and names for male victims than female victims,

and this creates more sympathy for the male victims. In the paper “Scream Queens in Prime Time: Gender, genre and the captured victims in *Criminal Minds*,” Katherine Foss (2010) studied gender disparities of criminals and victims across the media and found that “Women are most often portrayed as victims, especially of violent crimes in ‘reality’ television, crime dramas, and horror films” (Foss, 2010:1-2). “In exaggerating the frequency of female victims”, Foss stated, “These representations present women as weak and vulnerable, while portraying men as (nearly) unstoppable, powerful assailants” (Foss, 2010:3-4). Without any justification for the crime, the male victims of the crime drama *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* were killed quickly, unlike the female victims who were almost always sexually assaulted. These violent acts emphasize the horrific consequences of the female vulnerability and the dominance of the male assailant over his female victim. The male dominance in reality crime program is usually channeled through using camera angles and male narration (Foss, 2010:5-6).

In fictional (or entertainment) media products such as movies, female victims are usually blamed for negligence especially for rape and sexual assaults, while male victimizations are attributed to chance. Prime-time dramas of the 1980s, according to a study, mostly perpetuated rape myths, suggesting that ‘women, not men, are responsible for rape’. The crime drama, *Law and Order: SVU* intellectually challenges rape myths, and criticizes feminine characteristics for interfering with quality detective work. Apart from celebrating men’s dominance over women where hatred of women deemed acceptable through cultural devaluation of women, fictional media representations of women concerning violent crimes suggested that when a woman is victimized, it was she who did not take measures to protect herself against attack, and mostly she is the one who ‘asked for it’. Example for this could be clearly seen in the movies such as *Taken*, *7 Seconds*, *6 Bullets*, *Alex Cross*, and *The Spy Next Door*, to mention but a few.



## Chapter Two

### 2. WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN NIGERIAN MASS MEDIA

#### 2.1.1 Background of Nigeria

Located in Western Africa, with its recently estimated population of over 170 million and a surface area of approximately 923,800 sq. km (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html>), Nigeria is the most populous African country. Blessed with abundant human and natural resources including oil, natural gas, uranium, and arable land, Nigeria is regarded as the economic mainstay of the Western Africa. It is the second largest economy in Sub-Saharan Africa after South Africa.

The traditional tribal life that existed in Nigeria before the British colonization, tended to differ from one region to another. For example, southeast was predominantly egalitarian and animist society, but most of the north was dominated by the monarchy and the Islamic religion. Nigeria has about 250 different ethnic groups that speak nearly 4,000 dialects. The religious orientation of Nigeria is estimated to be approximately 50% Islam, 40% Christian and 10% traditional religion followers. These differences forced the British colonial administration to implement indirect rule. The indirect rule system calls for using native leaders to administer the masses.

The military has ruled Nigeria for more than 30 of its 53 years of independence. The military regimes came to an end in 1999 after sixteen years of hardship and corruption. However, the civilian administration of the Fourth Republic was also described as corrupt. Due to the

growing influence of the West regarding global issues such as social, political, economic and cultural values in recent years, the nature of Nigerian governments and the social elites have grown increasingly Western and capitalistic. This, therefore, produce a growing tension between the government, business elites and cultural traditionalists. This also gives birth to the rise of activists, critics, and feminists who on a daily basis decry the marginalization and maltreatment of women by society, and their negative portrayal in the mass media.

### **2.1.2 Background of the Nigerian Mass Media**

Historically, the mass media in Nigeria has been heavily influenced by the country's political, economic and socio-cultural values. Nigerian press also reflects the extensive structural, ethical and professional attitudes found in various regions of the country. Since its inception for over one and a half century ago, the Nigerian press has played the role of advocate. For example, during the colonial era, it helped a lot in agitating for independence. Although, in the first decades after independence, the views of the government in power do find their way to the pages of Nigerian newspapers, the mass media is known to endeavor to guard its independence zealously.

Despite attempts by various administrations to take control of the Nigerian press, the media strives hard to maintain this editorial independence. This effort was highly rewarded, as the press produces vibrant news and editorial content — making it one of the freest in Africa and the developing world. As the time goes, the tune changed: the media became regional, tribal, and political sentiment. The degree of independence, news content and editorial stance of the Nigerian press now tends to reflect the policies of the government in power — whether a military dictatorship or democratic pluralism.

### **2.1.3 The State of the Nigerian Women**

In African traditional societies, like in other parts of the developing world undergoing modernization, the role of women is determined to a large degree by inter-related socio-cultural, economic, environmental, religious, political and historical factors. Although males and females in Nigeria have almost equal number, nevertheless, women contribute more than men to the social and economic development of societies due to their dual roles in the productive and reproductive activities (Makama, 2013:116). They represent an estimated 60-80% of the agricultural labor force, producing about two-thirds of the food crop. Similarly, only 15% of Nigerian working women have bank accounts, only 7.2% of them owned land, 20% of the Nigerian women owned formal sector enterprise (British Council Report on Gender in Nigeria, 2012).

The condition of the Nigerian women could be viewed from three different perspectives: materialist approach, radical feminist viewpoint, and postmodernist position. From materialist approach, we can see oppression of Nigerian women, like their counterparts in other parts of the world, as systematic and built into the structure of society. In a class society that is structured in hierarchical patriarchal relations such as Nigeria, women's subordination is based on materialism and has a consequence of capitalism. Here women mostly engaged in unpaid domestic labor outside capitalist relations of production. As a productive labor and a hidden source of profit for capitalism, housework is necessary to oil the wheel of capitalism. And is not only unpaid but is also not computed by economist in calculating the GDP of countries.

If we look at the condition of the Nigerian women from the radical feminist position, we can argue that women's subordination is not linked to the relations of production but it could be traced to specific relations of reproduction and sexuality. According to this approach, domestic

work could be seen as reproducing and not producing labor power. In other words, sex-class, unlike economic class, rooted directly from biological reality: men and women were created different, not equal.

The third viewpoint is the postmodernist perspective. Here, the subordination of women in Nigeria could be understood and related to the cultural construction of who a man or a woman is. The capacity of language to shape our thoughts and desires is very effective. For example, the use of word and language affect our psyche on the definition of men and women.

#### **2.1.3.1 Women and Patriarchy in Nigeria**

Despite the immense contributions from women, it is observed that the womanhood in Nigeria is reduced to a mere infidel and a second-class citizen. This misrepresentation of women started right from the family level up to the larger society. In Nigerian, like in most patriarchal traditional societies, women are usually discriminated in terms of acquiring formal education, in occupying position of decision-making in workplaces, mistreated and perpetually kept as housemaids. In the words of Makama (2013), “The average Nigerian woman is seen as an available object for prostitution, forced marriage, street hawking, instrument of wide-range trafficking and a misfit in the society” (Makama, 2013:115).

In the culture of patriarchy, male dominance over female is ‘norm’: men sit back at home to keep the family name and lineage while women are to be married out; men are being trained for leadership activities, while women are ‘chained’ to domestic chores which are assigned to them by culture, which affect them later in life by making them to lose self confident and have low self-esteem in their career and politics in adult life. This gender discrimination and inequality has reduced an average woman to an inferior commodity. These gruesome images of

the conditions of Nigerian women are prevalent in country's mass media, where it serves as a tool that support, promote and protect patriarchy.

As a daily practice in a patriarchal society, women are victims of different types of crimes, either within their respective family (i.e. domestic violence) or in a societal setting. As state apparatus that are ideologically and strategically formed to serve and protect the interest of the status quo, police and other related security agencies usually ignore such women victims. For example, at the 19th United Nations Session in New York in 1998, Hajo Sani, a former Nigerian Minister for Women and Social Developments, revealed that when women victims of male violence report such cases to the authority, "The law enforcement agents do not readily entertain complaints of domestic violence. They treat such complaint as a minor offence of 'two people fighting' or laugh it off as 'husband and wife problem'" (Makama, 2013:115).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the mass media is a tool used to promote this system of male domination: patriarchy. Mass media is literally said to be a mirror of a society where the media contents reflect the daily life activities of such society. As a result of this development, however, the critical look at Nigerian media outputs will expose the real condition of the country's women folk.

## **2.1.4 Women in Nigerian Mass Media**

### **2.1.4.1 Background**

Despite the huge number of women in Nigeria— which amount to half of the total population of the country —yet the number of women represented structurally in the media is less than five percent (Ochoga, n.d. p.2). This inadequacy of women in leadership positions in the media establishments have contributed so much in the increase of women stereotyping in Nigeria mass media (p.3). Although there are few women who have ventured into the industry,

the percentage of women in the journalism professional in Nigeria is exceptionally low. Those in decision-making capacity are nothing to be proud of. It is shocking to note that in all 57 national newspapers in Nigeria only one actually has a woman as the editor, but some women serve as line editors. Moreover, the few that have been given the opportunity to become part of this 'seclude circle' are facing great resistance. This was a result of what Ochoga called the 'hegemony of the male gender' in mass media, which she defines as 'male continued dominance of the media establishment.'

The women's role in media had been a major concern for many researchers, feminists, as well as activists. The discourse and overall agenda for mass media is set such that women are viewed as 'pretty faces that are suitable mainly for entertainment purposes'. The structure of the media content in Nigeria has continued to promote the notion that women in the media should be 'reserved for roles of sexuality and trivialities'. This subjective representation of women in the media industry of Nigeria is a major source of concern for many reasons. First, it jeopardizes the rights of women and brings inequality regarding opportunities of advancement. Secondly, the relevant topics for women in the agenda of human development are never featured or fully executed in the media content. Thirdly, this also denies the Nigerian society to fully enjoy the potentials and human resources of the women in the national development process.

Historically, gender stereotypes are embedded in gender and media discourses. The history of media establishment in Nigeria clearly shows that women have virtually no influence in determining the way they are portrayed. Therefore, media outputs are designed through the eyes of men and decision makers. And majority of Nigerian women seem to be satisfied with their media-assigned roles such as wives, mothers, and housekeepers, which are the images

mostly depicted on television. Although each media organization has formal policies that govern its outputs, but unfortunately sexism rarely arise in these policies.

The history of mass media in Nigeria spanned over one and a half century with the founding of *Iwe Irohin* as the first newspaper which was in vernacular and established in 1859. The broadcast media came much when the first television station was opened in the western part of the country in 1959. Throughout these years, women in Nigeria have been excluded from the mainstream and are stereotyped by the mass media. Women constituted only 10 percent as the central focus of news in Nigeria's media, while men took the largest share of 90 percent (Spears, Seydegart, and Gallagher, 2000:43). This, the researcher argues, made it easier for women to be stereotyped in the media.

#### **2.1.4.2 Status of Women in Mass Media**

An analytical look at the amount and status of women in Nigerian media institutions reflect “the structural oppression of women” and their “subordination in society.” Mass media in Nigeria has not given women the right position needed either structurally within media administration or psychologically in the representation of women's images. The Nigerian feminist, Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie (1990:52-4), observed that despite the early presence of women in the history of Nigerian media, despite their courage, their sophistication and intelligence, women are still restricted to women's pages. Citing Therese Nweke (1989), Ogundipe-Leslie says that statistically there is no woman in the approximately 100 chief executives of broadcasting stations who are the top decision-makers:

There were only three female editors and one acting editor among the 300 journalists of the *Daily Times*, a quarter of whom are women. There are only 8 out of 127 of (the News Agency of Nigeria, NAN) journalists, none of whom occupies a senior management position after four years of

the inception of NAN. Only one woman sits on the ten-member board of directors of the agency. In the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), despite women being 35 per cent of the total workforce, of the six assistant directors in the senior management cadre, only one is a woman (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1990:54).

The journalism profession is particularly one of the crucial areas in which the exclusion and the marginalization of women have played out most notably in the present Nigerian society. The representation of women in the media in Nigeria has long been an issue of major concern over the way women are seen, fared and perceived by those who set media agenda in particular, and the Nigerian society in general. The issue of the subordination of women is borne out by those who control the mass media. Just like the broadcast, as Ogundipe-Leslie (1990) observes above, in the print media:

The story is not much different though we now have two or three very visible women in top management positions. Still, what is their proportion, thinking statistically? Women are usually not seen as news editors, chief sub-editors or editors. Only the very rare management will consider women to these posts and more likely in positions of assistantship. Yet it is the position of news editor, chief sub-editor and editor which can help and succeed in the reflection and projection of women's media, very importantly because news stories must pass through these officers to get to the masses, the people, 'the children'. A sexist news editor has the power to simply throw away the report, slant or suppress the news (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1990:54).

Agnes Asigo and Ijeoma Ndubuisi (2010) elaborate more on the condition of women in Nigerian media, saying that “The Nigerian men have always believed that Nigeria belongs to them and women are at best the rent-paying tenants”. Holding this erroneous belief, men use all means to subordinate women. “In Nigeria, men produce an overwhelming majority of the



messages in the mass media.” Asigo and Ndubuisi (2010) further revealed, “At the turn of the century, a staggering ninety-five per cent of the journalists reporting the news in the country’s radio, television and newspapers are male”.

Concerning a survey on female journalists in Nigeria, Asigo and Ndubuisi (2010), stated that:

Questionnaires completed by ten female employees from four broadcast stations in Nigeria revealed that, despite some growth in female employees from four broadcast stations in Nigeria revealed that, despite some growth in female employment in areas such as programming, the status of women in the broadcast industry in Nigeria reproduces women’s subordinate status in the broader society. For every one woman employed in the state radio stations and state and federal television stations, there would be seven male employees.

The mass media has created a negative atmosphere for women through paying much attention to negative issues about women. The media seems to be reluctant to support any attempt to enhance the status of women. When reporting sensational stories concerning women, journalists depict them as if they were the ‘ugly, the unusual, the odd, the negative, the conflictual and the disastrous human beings’ (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1990:55). Stereotypes of women are prevalent in the media. Contrary to women's contributions to production like farming, fishing, construction work and commerce; despite their proven mental abilities, women are still generally considered weak, irrational, passive and inferior and therefore not to be trusted in positions of authority. Ogundipe-Leslie blames the Nigerian press for what she called ‘media black-out,’ where “women's presence, speeches and photographs are often ignored or man-handled in reporting public events. What women say or think is not considered material for news or consideration while men are quoted copiously” (p.58).

#### **2.1.4.3 Media Stereotypes of Nigerian Women**

Media has a powerful effect on the audiences, who subconsciously adopt and internalize attitudes, beliefs, and values presented either textually, graphically or both. Publics are unaware of how much media messages manipulate them. For instance, advertisements in all forms of mass media such as television, movies, magazines, newspapers, and radio are trying to sell various products to the audiences. But without fully realizing it, the audiences of such advertisements buy into beliefs and attitudes that govern their lives, as well as their way of thinking (Allam, 2008:1). As such, the power of the media in “making” and “unmaking” cannot be denied or underestimated. This effect of media negatively affects women’s images of the Nigerian women, and this contributes in gender crisis in the country.

Gender relations in Nigeria are characterized by a lot of imbalances, which finally is to be for the disadvantage of women. Tradition, culture, religion and other related factors have continued to widen the gap and segregate between Nigerian men and women, by keeping women in a subordinate position to men. The male subculture and society in general, which mass media is a part, still see women and their aspirations as inferior, resulting in a situation in which the marginalization, trivialization and stereotyping of women are glaring aspects of Nigerian life (Asigo and Ndubuisi, 2010).

When a group is depicted negatively, it is easier to rally against such group. Psychologically, such description makes it easier to discriminate against the members of the group. Less powerful groups such as women are being devalued and stereotyped by the news media outlets. Concerning media and gender, several studies on mainstream media in Nigeria reveal one dominant orientation: women are largely seen and not heard. Their faces adorn newspapers and magazines. Moreover, on important national and international issues, they

dwindle. Even when the women appeared on news, the story get real prominence only if there is a male authority figure or newsmaker on the scene.

The reason why women suffer from these media stereotypes, where their bodies are marketed to sell everything from alcohol to cigarettes to cars, is partly due to the media's tendency to ignore the fact that women are also intellectually capable, great decision makers, business-minded individuals capable of contributing immensely to societal as well as media development. This indifferent and unjustly media treatment derives from the fact that historically Nigeria's media objectives were based not on the cultural needs and values of Nigeria societies, but on its experiences and biases of culturally distant colonial masters –the media system that was designed and forced upon Africans communities.

Despite the fact that women are marginalized in the media, nevertheless, whenever they appear in news as central focus, issues addressed in such stories usually are based on sex roles (i.e. family issues). In other words, news media in Nigeria, like anywhere else in the world, tend to identify women in terms of their marital or family status - as wife or mother or daughter.

The lack of a female voice in news that addressed issues affecting women so centrally emerges in a quite shocking way through the examples provided by very different countries. Of course, those involved in the preparation of some of these news items will respond in the usual ways - there was no time to find a woman, no woman could be persuaded to speak, no suitable female expert was available, and so on. However these and other examples illustrate not just the absence of women's voices in a concrete sense, but the profound lack of attention paid by the news media to women's position generally as citizens (Spears, Seydegart, and Gallagher, 2000:66).

#### **2.1.4.4 Nigerian Women in Crime News**

Throughout the world, differences existed between crimes committed by male and the ones committed female in various stages. Male criminality, for example, is the most important topic in the literary discussion of crime, which gave female criminality little or no attention (Oluwadare and Agboola, 2011:199). Culture and gender-defined social roles play crucial part in terms of crimes men committed and those committed by women. For instance, both men and women tend to steal cloths, food or low items, but men alone are likely to steal books, electronics or high value items. This is not unconnected with the conventional domestic expectation that tie women to shopping for basic household good in supermarkets, while men are expected to shop for luxuries(Oluwadare and Agboola, 2011:201).

The issue of criminality in Nigeria has been a gender issue because the number of women perpetrators is increasing. “They engage in such activities, in which men do, in order to make a living or to control the family especially where the breadwinner had died,” write Oluwadare and Agboola (2011), “Because of the difficulty in achieving these goals, the tendency of criminality becomes paramount in women circle” (Oluwadare and Agboola, 2011:202). The increase in crime rates among female folks, however, draws the attention of both mass media and its audience.

Nigerian consumers of media products, like in other countries, are insatiably interested in and are at times shocked and fascinated by crime and violence as covered in the media. Performing the dual functions of ‘watchdog of the society’ and ‘business enterprises,’ the Nigerian mass media thrives daily on crime news. The mass media’s daily diet, this study argues, is highly deficient. This deficiency, as Ebenezer Soola confirmed, is not unconnected with the media’s “episodic rather than thematic approach, their individual, instead of societal blame, and

cause, rather than solution” (Soola, n.d. p.1). The Nigerian media should focus on their reports on the Nigerian system of justice and the issues and grievances that give rise to crime and violence in the society which believed to be the undercurrents of crime and violence. By doing this as its social responsibility, the media would be able to help in improving the life of the citizenry, especially the marginalized women.

The ways in which cases of apprehended female criminals are reported and sensationalized are unprecedented in the history of media activity in Nigeria. The objective and sympathetic media would dig deeper into to the bottom of issues rather than just speculate. In such a situation like this, media practitioners should have ask themselves the following questions: ‘how do the women get involved?’ ‘What is the nature of their structural oppression here?’ ‘How can the media protect such abused and misled women?’

The only logical reason behind such ‘dehumanization of women through sensationalism’, as Ogundipe-Leslie observe, is the media practitioners’ perception, which was rooted from their own love of their mothers, that women are saints, holy and perfect. “The mother,” Ogundipe-Leslie writes, “is the only female type (not the wife) who is respected and divinized in African culture” (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1990:55-6). Once a woman did not fall into this great category of ‘the mother as the perfect woman’, the journalists go at her with all evil forces for disappointing them and shattering their self-created icon. What should be noted here is that women are neither saints nor devils; they are just human, capable of doing both good and evil.

#### **2.1.4.5 Victimization of Women in Nigerian Mass Media**

Victimization is common currency in mass media (Spears, Seydegart, and Gallagher, 2000:35). The media in Nigeria is reluctant to cover critical issues concerning females such as circumcision or genital mutilation, wife battery, marital rape, sexual harassment, verbal and

emotional abuse, incest, termination of employment as a result of pregnancy, and so on. In fact, such cases are not considered as problematic enough to be highlighted in the news, talkless of taking them seriously. For many years in Nigeria, several cases of violence against women such as acid baths, femicide, rape, and physical assaults, have and continue to occur, but “Unfortunately it is only extreme cases of women’s rights violation which results in death or permanent disability that earns the media attention and the police interests” (Makama, 2013:125).

Most news stories on women portrayed them as the victims – and sometimes the perpetrators – of crime. While some news media outlets depicted them as celebrities and figures from the entertainment world, others interviewed politicians on issues of the day, or presented women officiating at a public event. This, however, “reinforced the impression that the media allow very little space to women, and that they depict a society in which women do not intervene in public space. ... This raises the question of what is news, what makes the news, and why? (Spears, Seydegart, and Gallagher, 2000:65).

Moreover, the media concentrate more on negative portrayal of women than positive or neutral one. This argument was supported by Spears, Seydegart, and Gallagher (2000):

Stories about crime or violence were by far the most frequently cited, and usually women were the victims. The other main category was news about women’s rights within the family. Many of the crime reports were criticized for their lack of context, or for their tendency to sensationalize. For example, a story about the discovery of twelve beheaded Congolese women’s bodies found with placards on them, which made no attempt to explain the murder and offered no information about what was on the placards (p.66).

## **2.2 Narrative Analysis on Crime and Violence in Nigerian Mass Media**

Structurally, news content reflects a relatively limited vision of the world. There are very few exceptions, of course, and the deeply organic nature of this vision, as Spears *et al* (2000) point out, suggest that women's visibility in the news will not be significantly changed merely by increasing either the number of women journalists or the number of women in public life. What is needed here is a more solid transformation in which women's rights –and women's right to communicate –are better understood, respected and implemented by media in particular and the society in general (Spears, Seydegart, and Gallagher, 2000:71).

Reporting on crime and violence has been a 'daily meal' for newspapers since before the penny press. Mass media generate revenue from coverage of crime and violence, as they make and sell headlines and news programs. Crime and violence make news reports attention-catcher: they are sensational, dramatic, and sometimes, colorful. Since media owners are in business to make profit, and since crime and violence sell newspapers and programs, causing circulation figures and program ratings to go high, no media operators are likely to ignore a "juicy rape, commando-like bank robbery, murder, high-profile assassination or a monumental fraud. To that extent, crime and violence are not only attractive, but they are also tempting to media operators" (Soola, n.d. p.1).

Crime and violence news enjoy lavish space and time because they are ridiculously easy to cover. "An unadventurous reporter may choose to sit at a police desk, monitor police radio, or liaise with a court clerk or registrar, while occasionally telephoning smaller police stations and courts in the community to check for new developments. At the approach of the deadline, the reporter calls the newsroom to dictate any newsworthy occurrence for the day" (Soola, n.d. p.4).

## **2.2.1 Coverage of Crimes in Nigerian News Media**

### **2.2.1.1 Coverage of Domestic Violence:**

The gender-based violence (GBV), that is the violence against women has different forms; some are overt in nature, while other types of violence are carried out in covert manner. It can be defined as “any act of gender-based violence that results in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life as systematic rape” (Jekayinfa, n.d. p. 6).

This is the fate of thousands of women in Nigeria. Violence against women is a consequence of the historically unequal power relations between men and women. It is contrary to the women's human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is a national reality existing in all societies regardless of income, class and culture. All women are affected. It is not certain if there is a woman who at one time or another in her life, had not been afraid merely because she is a woman. Simply working in the street after dark or working at night may represent serious personal safety problems for women. It is no more an inevitable part of life than poverty. It arises from the patriarchal system, which since time immemorial has exerted control over women's lives. Violence against women affects all women and girls. Those who are particularly vulnerable are women who live in extremely precarious conditions or who are discriminated against on the basis of race, language, ethnic group (ibid).

The World Health Organization WHO has divided violence against women into three major categories: (1) physical, (2) sexual, and (3) emotional or psychological violence. According to WHO:

Physical violence means a woman has been: slapped, or had something thrown at her; pushed, shoved, or had her hair pulled; hit with a fist or



something else that could hurt; choked or burnt; threatened with or had a weapon used against her (Abama and Kwaja, 2009:24).

Although it has no universally accepted definitions, emotional violence could be understood as an act of purposefully humiliating, downgrading, scaring or intimidating a woman. Sexual violence, moreover, is a condition when “a woman has been: physically forced to have sexual intercourse; had sexual intercourse because she was afraid of what her partner might do; or forced to do something sexual she found degrading or humiliating” (ibid). When a woman encountered any of the above types of violence in the hands of an intimate partner (such as husband) or ex-partner is called “domestic” or intimate-partner violence. Domestic violence is one of the most common and universal forms of violence experienced by women, and its impact is damaging as it:

Essentially denies women equality before the law and reinforces their subordinate social status. Men use domestic violence to diminish women’s autonomy and sense of self-worth. States that fail to prevent and prosecute perpetrators of domestic violence treat women as second-class citizens and send a clear message that the violence against them is of no concern to the body polity (Abama and Kwaja, 2009:23).

In Nigeria, it is estimated that one in every five women experiences some form of violence during her lifetime, the violence in some cases lead to serious injury or death. The media (and most governments) have considered violence against women (particularly domestic violence by a husband or other intimate partner) to be a relatively minor social problem. To drive this argument home, Abama and Kwaja (2009) stated that “Most forms of violence directed specifically against women in Nigeria are met with silence not only by the state but also by much of the human rights community” (Abama and Kwaja, 2009:24). Due to the efforts of women’s

organizations and the evidence provided by research, today violence against women is recognized as a global concern (Abama and Kwaja, 2009:23).

#### **2.2.1.2 Coverage of Rape and Sexual Assault:**

In its logic and purpose, human culture is formed to stimulate and utilize the violent forces unleashed acts of rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and other forms of sexual violence. “In this way,” writes Patrick Dunn (2013), “sexual violence serves as an instrument of cultural order and is recognized, as something routine, natural, and normal” (Dunn, 2013). The female victims of rape in Nigeria usually don’t report the incident. “Many a number of innocent women and girls are today silently mourning their abused pride and womanhood because ‘it is a shame’ for them to discuss it –they fear the attendant stigma that would haunt them for, perhaps, the rest of their lives,” *Leadership* newspaper reported (March 9, 2014).

Only few female victims are boldly enough to report the cases of rape, especially when they sustain physical injuries which make it necessary for their family to understand that something wrong happen to them. A clear example here is the case of the 14-year-old girl, A’isha Rabi’u, who was drugged and (gang-)raped in January 2014 in Kontagora, Niger state. This case received so much from media inside the country and from international media organizations, especially the *Hausa Service* of the *Voice of America (VOA)*, who kept following the development of the case in order to seek justice for the victim (and her family) in particular, and the entire women in general.

Several media reports on the inhuman activities of the notorious militia group, *Jama’atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lid-Da’awat Wal Jihad*, popularly known as *Boko Haram* (a Hausa term, meaning western education is sinful), reveal the gruesome situation the Nigerian females are facing. One of the ugliest situations concerning abduction and raping of females by Boko Haram was

reported by *Leadership* (Sunday edition) of March 9, 2014. The newspaper reported the ordeals of females in the hands of rapists in the Boko Haram camps in Borno state. According to this report, most women who were kidnapped and/or raped by Boko Haram remain silent after the sad incident:

In the past two years, no less than 200 women and girls (both married and single) have been abducted and taken to the camps of Boko Haram, and have probably suffered the agonies of being turned into sex tools by men of the Boko Haram who forcefully defile them or forced them into unholy marriages while being held in captivity.

Many who were later freed have chosen to live in silence with their burning agonies bottled up as they could not confront the world with the shame of being raped, again and again by men of the Boko Haram. Many who were married had unfortunately become divorced because of it (*Sunday Leadership*, March 9, 2014).

The press coverage of female victims of rape and sexual assault in Nigeria depicted female folk in general as weak, helpless and defenseless, who are in need of the protection of men. In some cases, journalists blame women for indecent dressing and other ‘provocative’ behavior. This attitude of journalists in Nigeria is similar to the findings of a study recently conducted in Brazil on the relationship between women’s dressing and rape. The study surprisingly shows that both male and female Brazilians (65 percent of the people interviewed) are of the view that ‘women in revealing clothes deserve rape!’ “58.5 percent of respondents also agreed that ‘if women knew how to behave, there would be fewer rapes,’” the study revealed (*Vanguard* newspaper, March 29, 2014).

The female victims of rape receive sympathy from media when the case is more complicated, for example, when a woman or women are abducted and gang-raped, especially by

cultists or militant groups such as Boko Haram, not one who was ‘just’ raped by a ‘known’ man like her boyfriend, a family member, or her husband. Concerning the rise of Rape in Nigeria and world in general, *Sunday Leadership* revealed that:

A United Nations “statistical report compiled from government sources” in 2005 indicated that “more than 250,000 cases of rape or attempted rape were recorded by police annually and this covered 65 countries of the world. This implies that at least 3800 women are being raped in each country; it also implies that at least 105 women are being raped annually in the 36 states of Nigeria. But shockingly, this global figure is being superceded by the quantum of rape women suffer in the ‘holy’ camps of the Boko Haram, where a woman or a girl would be gang-raped by at least seven men in a night (*Sunday Leadership*, March 9, 2014).

#### **2.2.1.3 Coverage of Femicide:**

Gender violation is a menace which has gained prominence over the years in the Nigerian society. Violence affects gender relations in so many ways. In its less visible, more subtle forms, gender-based violence threatens the physical and emotional integrity of millions of women living in Nigeria. Killings carried out in the name of honor, such as the frequently, merciless massacre of innocent people by Boko Haram are one of the most visible and lethal forms of gender-based violence.

The press coverage of femicide and other related domestic violence mostly revolves around females’ relationship with men, either as their husbands, fathers, boyfriends, or sons. For instance, in March 10, 2014 edition of *National Mirror*, a Nigerian tabloid, Abdul-Warees Solanke (2014), vividly exhibit the negative portrayal of women in Nigerian press. The columnist examines the murder of three young women namely Anthonia Okeke, a graduate of Chemical Engineering of Nnamdi Azikwe University, Awka, Anambra State; Titilayo Arowolo,

a banker in Lagos; and Cynthia Osokogu, Abuja-based businesswoman. The piece associated the three women with dominant patriarchal perception of women: objects of desire. Anthonia, Cynthia, and Titilayo “share similar fate: Their beauty and magnetic names were not enough to save them from horrible men,” writes Solanke. Cynthia was murdered by boyfriends she met online, while Titilayo was killed by her husband, Akolade. And Anthonia was lured into the hands of a cultist, Theophilus Pius.

The phrase “their beauty and magnetic names” offensively show how Nigerian media perceive and depict women as ‘sex toys’ rather than human beings. As if is not enough, Abdul-Warees Solanke further took the entire feminine/womanhood as nothing but ‘child-rearing and care-giving thing’:

Every girl child is so precious, because she is a future mother. Every girl child should be well nurtured and cared for because in her ripeness is beauty that comforts. Every girl child should be eminently educated for she is the best teacher. Every girl child should be carefully groomed, for in being well brought up will she raise cultured and courteous children  
(*National Mirror*, March 10, 2014).

In a slightly different case, the article entitled the “Anatomy of an epidemic: Why are Nigerian men killing their wives in the US?,” published on February 1, 2014 in the same newspaper, analyzes the ‘reasons’, methods or patterns of the murder of Nigerian women living in the US. According to the article, Nigerian men living the US kill their wives because they are tired of being “disrespected” by their wives, whom they (husbands) sponsored their education, but after getting good jobs the wives “took full control” of the households (the family finances) and “overruled” their husbands’ by “controlling” the movements of their husbands. The husbands said their wives came and went “as they liked,” within the US and outside the US.

Usually, a Nigerian man living in the US go back to Nigeria, get a wife and take to the US and enroll her in a school, mostly a school of nursing, so that she would become a Registered Nurse (RN) and get a job. But “When she graduates and makes twice his salary, he begins to feel inferior to her and his macho instincts take control of him, catapulting his emotions over his sense of reason. If the RN wife decides to take a second or third job, she can easily triple or quadruple the gap between her earnings and those of her menial job husband’s,” the newspaper reveals (*National Mirror*, February 1, 2014).

It is common practice for a man in Nigeria to take important family decision without consulting his wife(s); to travel out of town or even abroad without consulting his wife(s). Some do not even bother to inform their wives. “Having been accustomed to the docility, domestication, subjugation and outright terrorization of women back home in Nigeria, many Nigerian men are astounded when their wives assert their financial, behavioral and social independence,” the article stated.

Apart from specific crimes and violence that rendered women alone as victims, such as rape, domestic violence, and so on, the other types of crimes and violence, which affects both women and men, commonly found in Nigeria’s news media are:

#### **2.2.1.4 Coverage of Sectarian, Ethnic and Political Violence:**

Until recently, these forms of violence are uncommon experience among most people, but they are a common feature of media coverage in Nigeria. This study argues that the nature of the country’s multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multi-political, multi-cultural and multi-linguistic society is its vulnerability to violence and crimes. Concerning the outcome of religious/sectarian, ethnic and at times political crisis, women and children are always at the receiving end. In other words, women and children, in most cases, are, directly or indirectly, the victims of such kind of

violent activities. Newspapers are constantly reporting the state of disarray women found themselves during and after such clashes. They can be displaced, raped, tortured, maimed, or even get killed.

For example, the consequence of Boko Haram activities in Borno State is too much for women. They staged a peaceful demonstration. *Sunday Sun* of March 11, 2012 reported the event in page 11 under this headline: “We’re tired of losing our husbands – Borno widows, mothers beg Boko Haram”. *National Mirror* reports that the then governor of Anambra State, Peter Obi, distributed some money to 14 women who lost their husbands in religious attack in Mubi, Adamawa State (*National Mirror*, February 6, 2012, page 10, and *Daily Sun*, February 6, 2012, page 9). Additionally, a woman, Hajara Saidu, was bombed in Jos, Plateau State, 24 hours after escaping Boko Haram in Yobe State (*Sunday Sun* of March 11, 2012, page 9). Moreover, two women, Hadiza and Aisha, also lost their lives when they were caught on alleged crossfire between the Joint Task Force (JTF), the Nigeria’s anti-terrorism military unit, and the suspected insurgents in Zawaciki town, a suburban area of Kano city (*Sunday Sun*, April 22, 2012, page 63).

A part from being the victims of ethnic, political, sectarian and communal clashes in Nigeria, women are also active participants in violent conflicts. Let us cite some examples of such ‘violent’ women. In June 8, 2012, a female suicide bomber has blown herself up outside an army barracks in Gombe, killing at least one soldier (*National Mirror*, June 9, 2014). In July 5 edition, *National Mirror* reports that “Troops in the ongoing military operations against the Boko Haram insurgency group in the North-East, have busted a female terrorists recruitment cartel, as well as captured three suspected female terrorists who have been involved in the recruitment of ladies into the female wing of the terrorists group”. The paper further revealed that the women

arrested, “Hafsat Usman Bako, Zainab Idris and Aisha Abubakar were intercepted while travelling to Madagali from where they were to transit to the forest to reunite with their cohorts”.

#### **2.2.1.5 Coverage of Advance Fee Fraud (or 419) and Money Laundering:**

Scam and money laundering are regarded worldwide as crimes which Nigerians have excelled domestically, regionally and globally. Nigerian scam is an advance fee fraud which is better known in Nigeria as ‘419’, deriving its name from the country’s Criminal Code Act. ‘419’ simply refers to Section 4, Subsection 1, and Paragraph 9 –a section in the Nigerian Constitution which defines and punishes fraudsters. Scammers of this type are simple called ‘419ers’. This high-profile crime is highly celebrated by all forms news media where all the newspapers and magazines carrying banner headlines on such crimes, whilst government and private radio stations report them as major news items. The media and its audiences become excited about such stories particularly at the point of arrest, but after that media provide little update about trial, conviction, discharge and/or acquittal. This shortcoming by the news media leaves potential ‘419ers’ and the general public in doubt about the level of government’s commitment to the war against the crime for which Nigeria has become notoriously famous about it. The news of female fraudster, for instance, was reported by *National Mirror* (October 19, 2012, page 51), where a woman was arraigned in Ikeja High Court alongside her husband and another defendant, as the paper reported, for fraud and obtaining money by false pretences.

#### **2.2.1.6 Coverage of Hard Drug-related Crimes:**

In the early years of the establishing the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Nigeria’s anti-narcotics agency, the reports concerning drug-pushers and drug-traffickers enjoyed full media attention especially when sensational arrests were made. During that period, the sensational media coverage showed suspects brought to the law courts in heavily



guarded 'Black Maria' in the full glare of television cameras and microphones. But as the time goes, both arrests and trials have virtually become shrouded in secrecy.

#### **2.2.1.7 Coverage of Drugs/Medicament:**

Unlike the coverage of hard drugs-related (cocaine, heroin, and marijuana) crimes, drugs/medicament news coverage revolves around manufacturing or importation of adulterated, fake or substandard drugs whose use or intake is considered injurious to health. The Nigerian government had established the National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) in order to regulate the manufacture and importation of drugs. Like hard drugs issues, drugs/medicament-related crimes receives wider coverage from the media.

#### **2.2.2 Construction of Crime News in Nigerian Mass Media**

In most cases, reality is socially constructed through media, so as to provide a way for dominant values in society to be imposed on the people. As an arena used by the powerful institutions of society to disseminate information to a large audience, the news media favors some groups over others (e.g., affluent whites vs. poor inner-city blacks). This favoring of the ideological perspective of the powerful by the media systems is called 'media hegemony' by Antonio Gramsci (1971). In regards to news media, social reality is constructed in two ways. In the first way, reality is constructed through bureaucratic decisions made about which issues to report and how they will be reported. In this level, biases are inevitable. Here, it is also argued that news could not be 'value-free' because a series of value judgments have been imposed on the event along the way. The second way in which social reality is constructed indicates that audiences construct their own reality based on how they understand and interpret the news (Pollak and Kubrin, 2007:60).

On a daily basis people consume the news from different media outlets such as television, radio, newspaper, and the Internet, but few are aware of potential biases embedded in the construction and reporting of news stories. All news, no matter the source, has a constructed newsworthy quality. There are important reasons why one story is selected for coverage over another. On this note, this researcher argues that in determining newsworthiness of a crime story, just like in conventional news story, editors and journalists should make a value judgment based on professional criteria, which are centered on two related but different terms: 'public appeal' and 'public interest.' Public appeal, in one hand, can be measured quantitatively in sales figures and ratings and is frequently used to justify the growing independence on dramatic and sensational stories. Public interest, on the other hand, concerns quantitative assessments of what public should and shouldn't know. This mostly refers to issues related to corporations and, more often, politicians.

In order to understand how news crime is constructed, Yvonne Jewkes (2004) listed what she called 'news values for a new millennium' as follows: threshold, predictability, simplification, individualism, risk, sex, celebrity or high-status persons, proximity, violence, spectacle or graphic imagery, children, and lastly conservative ideology and political diversion (Jewkes, 2004:35-40). On how crime stories become newsworthy, Pollak and Kubrin (2007), citing Jewkes (2004), stated that media focuses on:

several news values specific to crime including the level of predictability of the crime (or how common or uncommon the crime is), risk (or the sense that consumers may be at risk of similar victimization), whether the crime has a sexual aspect to it, whether the offender or victim is a celebrity or high-status person, whether the crime occurred locally, the level of violence, the

presence of spectacle or graphic imagery, and whether youth are involved, among others. The extent to which a story contains these elements influences the likelihood that it will be reported (Pollak and Kubrin, 2007:61).

Additionally, crime news values can change over time (Pollak and Kubrin, 2007:61) and “a story does not have to conform to all the criteria in order to make the news – although events that score highly on the newsworthiness scale (that is, conform to several of the news values) are more likely to be reported” (Jewkes 2004:40).

## **2.3 Discourse Analysis on Women Representations in Nigerian Mass Media**

As agents that construct a general sense of reality, the media also construct a reality of crime. As one of the most important agents, media play key role in the dispersal of criminal conceptions. Crime coverage in the news media affects a person’s rate of the frequency of crime as well as his interpretations of crime. The language used in a news report is very important in constructing the consumer’s reality and perception of crime. The language used in the newspaper (or in a newscast), the facts that is included and the information that are omitted, greatly influence how the audiences perceive crime (Pollak and Kubrin, 2007:61). Therefore, language can be both a reflection and a deflection of reality.

### **2.3.1 The Dominant Themes in Reporting Female Crime Stories**

Generally, media use some keywords in news stories to describe women involved in a crime, whether as victims or as perpetrators. Such words or themes are usually depicting women in a negative way. The common themes Nigerian media used in crime stories are:

### **2.3.1.1 'Ideal' womanhood:**

This revolves around behaviors or actions of a woman that tallied with, and did not deviate from, socially-constructed understanding of how women are suppose to be. Women who harm children, especially their own, are not considered as “normal” or “ideal”. A woman who commits a crime such as theft to provide her children usually receives lenient media criticisms. Women’s composure leads them to come under suspicion. For example, the assumption that women are weak suggests that innocent women mostly broke into tears to prove their innocence. Confidence, therefore, is not considered as appropriate with feminine behavior. The difference between media representation of males and females in this case is that, a man is constructed as bad or evil when he violated a criminal act, while a woman is described as bad or evil or even mad when she violated social construction of gender (Black, 2009:40).

### **2.3.1.2 Motherhood:**

The frequent reference to female offenders and victims as mothers was noticeable in Nigerian media. Associating women with ‘motherhood’ is always either in positive or negative manner. Women who deviate from ‘loving’ motherhood are portrayed in a bad light. As a norm in a patriarchal society, women are expected to be care-givers. When such expectations are challenged by women through committing certain crimes, especially infanticide, the women perpetrators suffer harsh media portrayals. In such instances, women would be depicted either as ‘mad’ or ‘bad.’ In other words, such women would be seen as unnatural because motherhood is considered by the society as ‘one of the ultimate signs of femininity’ (Black, 2009:39). Mothers are depicted in two broad terms – the ‘professional women’ and the ‘good mothers.’

### **2.3.1.3 Professional Women:**

These are the ‘foes’ in patriarchal system. Professional woman is seen by the media as a woman who is obsessed with “promoting self, demonstrating independence, lacking in natural

mothering qualities, and fulfilling her potential in the public sphere” (Johnston and Swanson, 2003:245).

### **2.3.1.3 ‘Good’ Mothers:**

Media’s definition of a ‘good’ mother is a mother who is “selfless, interdependent with children, naturally endowed for nurturing and successful in the domestic sphere.” (Johnston and Swanson, 2003:245). The motherhood portrayals by the press produced four contradictory categories, here is the first one:

Selfish/selfless double-bind messages tell mothers who forsake an identity out-side the mother role that they are good, self-sacrificing mothers but implicitly condemned for being powerless women. Conversely, mothers who seek an independent public-sphere identity are powerful women but implicitly condemned for being bad and selfish mothers (cf. Weingarten, 1997). Ideals of maternal selfishness and selflessness are reflected in the underlying motivations in messages to mothers. For example, are mothers primarily encouraged to be good mothers, good wives, good employees, good to themselves, or some combination of these? Maternal selflessness and selfishness are also reflected in portrayals of mothers’ identities. For example, are mothers’ identities defined independently of others or only through their relationship with others?

Selflessness as a theme is not represented in press as a feminine virtue, but a maternal virtue. Employed mothers are presented in such press with identities that could be defined as relational and independent, but at-home mothers are depicted through serving others or with no self-identity representation. A Mother-child relation is the second double-bind message the press are sending:

Mother–child independence/dependence double-bind messages condemn stay-at-home mothers for being overly enmeshed in their children’s lives,

and employed mothers for jeopardizing attachment (cf. Eyer, 1992). Messages may promote mother–child dependence through expressing an exaggerated need for connection between mother and child, or independence through promoting rigid boundaries and strategies for separation of mother and child.

The frequent media representation of women by associating them with independent identities reinforces a cultural perception that mothers’ independent roles are a threat to good mothering. The third contradictory message Nigerian media sends is the success or otherwise of women:

Success/failure double-bind messages assert that employment leads to success in the public sphere but failure in the domestic sphere, and staying home leads to success in the domestic sphere but failure in the public sphere (cf. Orenstein, 2000; Peters, 1997). Success/failure double binds are reflected in portrayals of mothers’ competence in the domestic and public spheres, messages that promote and value success in one sphere over another, and messages recognizing work/family tension. Work/family tension messages may suggest that success in the two spheres is mutually exclusive or suggest strategies for transcending work/family tension.

Media are associating at-home mothers with ideals of domestic success, representations of self as incompetent in achieving work success, and lack of contribution that would provide the desired changes in the social conditions that bind woman. This reduced at-home mother from being a subject to “an object valued for her service to others” (Johnston and Swanson, 2003:260). Tying mothers with nature is the last in this categorization:

Natural/unnatural maternal double-bind messages maintain that women are natural mothers and men are incapable of mothering, yet simultaneously tell mothers they need a cadre of (typically male) experts—from an operating team to deliver a baby to a bookshelf of

books to monitor development—to mother successfully (cf. Kedgley, 1996). Messages reflecting this double bind suggest women either naturally possess mothering qualities or need professional and expert assistance to be good mothers. Recognition of mothers' innate mothering qualities is also reflected in messages that value mothers' insights and contributions to the public discourse on child care, child development, education, and child welfare. Denial of mothers' innate mothering qualities is suggested in messages reflecting a unidimensional flow of information from public-sphere experts to the domestic sphere.

In a nutshell, the issue of the portrayal of women in Nigerian media is worth study due to their numerous significant contributions to the society. Women represent a number of roles to men: mother, wife, daughter, aunt, and colleague. Females are estimated to be half of the Nigeria's population, this make it quite difficult or even impossible for the country – and any society in the world – to develop without women's contribution. They are an integral part of the nation's development politically, economically, socially, and culturally. Any positive or negative change in the above aspects would affect the condition of women.

Through different types of media, people adopt behaviors, assume attitudes, and build stereotypical images that affect their actions in real life (Allam, 2008:1). The portrayal of women in Nigerian media in general focused mainly on the traditional roles of women, like that of housewife. Moreover, the women's bodies are presented in media as sexual commodities or a vehicle of sexual arousal. In criminal news, women are mostly reported as victims and are often depicted as weak, or vulnerable. As victims of sexual offences such as rape, sexual harassment, sexual assault, etc., females are blame by the media for indecency and provocation. Instead of being part of the solution, Nigerian media rather remain part of the problem of misrepresenting women and perpetuating their ill-deserved second-class status.

## Chapter Three

### 3. ANALYSIS

#### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I analyzed the findings of the study, that's the ways in which *The Sun* and *National Mirror* are depicting Nigerian women in crime news. In the process of this analysis, the chapter has been divided into four major parts: The first part uncovers how female victims as well as perpetrators of crime are depicted in the newspapers under study; in the second part, the researcher examined gender stereotypes. The third section established the fact that, in reporting women in crime news stories, Nigerian newspapers reinforce patriarchal dominant ideas and beliefs; while in the last part of this chapter, the researcher concluded the analysis.

In a general sense, however, *The Sun* and *National Mirror* newspapers are analyzed in this study based on two broad levels of discourse analysis of news, that is, the macrostructures and microstructures. Therefore, the findings of the study are guided by concepts embedded in the macro and micro structures, such as the abuse of social power, social inequality and the dominance of one group over other groups, the use of language in the media, and so on.

#### 3.2 Female Portrayals in *The Sun* And *National Mirror*

##### 3.2.1 The Portrayal of Female Criminals

In overwhelming majority of crime news stories and related feature articles published in 2012 by *The Sun* and *National Mirror* and analyzed in this study, the researcher found that newspaper coverage in Nigeria has been consistently negative and, at times, hostile and hateful



toward women accused of violent crime such as murder. Both newspapers use negative words and phrases in most crime news stories to describe the suspected female criminals. For instance, Hadiza Abutu, who was arraigned before a chief magistrate court in Abuja, along with three other women, for alleged culpable homicide, was described by the *Daily Sun* as the “husband killer” who was “sobbing throughout her stay in the dock” (*Daily Sun*, January 25, 2012, p.13).

In another case where four young ladies were arrested and accused of robbery and prostitution in Awka, Anambra state, the *Daily Sun* ran the story with screaming headline: “Girls from hell, run deadly prostitution and arm robbery gang.” The young ladies were described as “female teenagers’ syndicate” who “combined prostitution with robbery.” Furthermore, the *Daily Sun* unnecessarily called them “school dropouts”, “lesbians,” “cultists” who “smoke Indian hemp and drink alcohol before going for operation” (*Daily Sun* of October 25, p.37).

Additionally, this news story on the criminal activities of the quartet has another latent ideological meaning: female sexual power. According to the paper, the girl-robbers “collect N1, 500 for a round of sex with any man. If they have sex in somebody’s house they would steal handsets and rob them.” What this newspaper was telling its readers here is that women are powerfully sexual “objects” who can “hypnotize” men with their sexual prowess and then rob them. In other words, the *Daily Sun* depicted the ‘quartet robbers’ as manipulative, sex-crazed girls who have an almost supernatural power over men. The aim of the *Daily Sun* here, this researcher argues, is to reinforce the society’s perception about womanhood that suggests women are objects of males’ lust and desire.

Moreover, this researcher discovered that the two tabloids under study tell their readers in implied manner that trivial issues such as jealousy or revenge seeking are mostly the motives that

prompt females to commit violent crimes. It is normal to find a story in *Daily Sun* or *National Mirror* about a woman, for example, who set another woman ablaze because she (the victim) snatch the culprit's boyfriend, or because she (the perpetrator) was suspecting that the victim was sleeping with her husband. The *Daily Sun* of July 29, carried a report in page 11 of a then 25-year-old woman, Ijeoma Amarachi, who was sentenced to 17 years imprisonment for two crimes she committed separately. In the first crime, the paper reported, Amarachi out of envious poured acid on a fellow worker in an attempt to murder him. But in each offence, Amarachi was 'helped' by a different man, and this style of news reportage that shows "men assisting women in committing crimes" implicitly reinforces the dominant belief that women must depend on men!

In the cases where materialism was women's reason for committing crimes, such female perpetrators are depicted as unintelligent who were used by men to achieve their (men's) goals. Such naivety could be detected in *National Mirror* report of two separate incidents where two women drug traffickers were arrested by NDLEA operatives. The first woman was reportedly arrested at the Murtala Muhammed Airport, Lagos trying to board a plane to Malaysia. The second woman, Animasaun Sunbo, a UK-based fashion designer, was found carrying 30 sachets of cocaine weighing three kilogram in her bag. Depicting the woman in line with the patriarchal ideological beliefs, the paper reports that Sunbo told narcotic agents that "she was lured into the drug deal by some barons" and she instantly regretted her actions, describing her involvement in the illicit business as "a big mistake." The *National Mirror* attempted to position her as "indecisive woman" who was "manipulated" and "exploited" by a group of men.

This form of 'controlling' women perpetrators by male crime lords, as exhibited by *National Mirror*, is also among the dominant themes found in the *Daily Sun*'s report on "Girls from hell" (the four ladies that combined robbery and prostitution discussed above) who were

‘controlled’ by a 67-year-old herbalist, Pa Anne Ezumezu, “who harbored and fortified them with charms. He also shared in their criminal loot.” Ezumezu was further reported saying “I used to share from their loot. They also cook for me in my house.” Apart from exploiting females in material form, the above statement reported by *Daily Sun* also exposed another hidden ideological message send to the readers, that is, females alone should cook, while men wait to eat.

### **3.2.2 The Portrayal of Female Victims of Crime**

Critical analysis of depiction of females in crime news stories published by *The Sun* and *National Mirror* newspapers from January to December 2011 revealed that Nigerian newspapers relies heavily on cultural stereotypes in their portrayal of victimization. Analysis of such news reports on female victimization reveals that *The Sun* and *National Mirror* exaggerate in their coverage of female victims of crimes. It also revealed that Nigerian newspapers do little to challenge the age-old impression of “women as weak and vulnerable,” instead they actually reinforce the preexisting perceptions of women victims as either “good girls” or “bad girls.” Both female victims and perpetrators are depicted in newspapers and other forms of mass media such as TV and movies as possessing either “good” or “bad” moral characters, which in turn affect them either positively or negatively. The “good girl” (or ideal victim) is innocent, worthy of sympathy, while the “bad girl” (or non-ideal victim) is “guilty” who deserves blame.

Critical observation of crime news in *The Sun* and *National Mirror* also showed that in order to create a captivating male villain, the newspapers depict women as seductive, vulnerable and naive. They depict men as both protectors and perpetrators by associating them with certain qualities such as strength, rationality, and aggression. In most of these constructions, women are seen as vulnerable to men’s aggression, while at the same time they need men’s protection from

harm. Here, the abduction of Chibok girls would serve as an example. On April 14, the dreaded terrorists group, Boko Haram, invaded an all-girls boarding high school, in a remote village called Chibok in northeastern part of Nigeria, while the students were sleeping. After setting the school ablaze, the insurgents loaded 276 schoolgirls onto trucks and carted them off. On May 5, the armed group claimed responsibility for the abduction of the girls. The leader of the group, Abubakar Shekau, threatens to “sell the girls in the market.”

The girls' abduction resulted in mostly ‘all-female’ protests throughout the country. Initially started by Bring Back Our Girls Movement, these series of protests attract the attention of the international communities and therefore metamorphosed into a “worldwide protests.” Using the popular #BringBackOurGirls slogan written on placards and banners, the demonstrators, including European and American celebrities, as reported by local and international media, expressed their sympathies and pledged their support to the abducted Chibok girls. Moreover, this kidnapping saga and the solidarity rallies that followed it, casted a spotlight on the heinous activities of the militants group, where the US, Britain, France, Israel, and China offered to help Nigerian government to rescue the schoolgirls.

The media coverage of these all-women protests in Nigeria tallied with the argument raised in above about the role of the media in depicting men as strong, while women, on the other hand, as weak and vulnerable. The media reports in Nigeria constructed women as victims of patriarchy, who were victimized by men and, at the same time, seeking help from men. In some accounts during the demonstration, the women marchers were reported “rolling on the ground” and “crying”. On different cases, the marchers were allegedly harassed by the police, and, according to several local and international media reports, the women protesters were even attacked by male hoodlums on May 28 in Abuja.

Based on these representations in Nigerian newspapers, this researcher strongly argues that media generally does not challenge, but rather reinforces and perpetuates inherent cultural perceptions in the society. In addition, this study found that *The Sun* and *National Mirror* attribute victimization to both the victim's behavior and the perpetrator's shortcomings, rather than to social systems that may oppress women. This led us to another issue found in this analysis: victim blaming.

### **3.2.3 The Victim Blaming**

Although they are presented as innocent in the newspapers analyzed in this study, yet the “ideal victims” were blamed for their kindness, selflessness, and obliviousness. Typical example of this kind of depiction is press coverage of Cynthia Osokogu who was murdered by her Facebook “friends” in Lagos in July 2012. From Keffi, Nasarawa state where she was living, Osokogu traveled to Lagos with the sole purpose of meeting two of her male Facebook friends. The two young men Osokogu visited tortured, robbed, and later murdered her in a hotel room. Depicting Osokogu as a “good girl” type of victim, *National Mirror* reported that she was “a very decent and quiet girl who did not even associate herself with anybody” (*National Mirror*, September 7, 2012, p.3). The paper further described Osokogu as “generally a disciplined girl right from the home that she was brought up from.”

In another report published on the same date, the paper blamed Osokogu for her naivety, beauty, and trusting nature which jeopardize her safety and later terminate her life. The article entitled “Lying Cynthia Osokogu to Rest,” exhibited Osokogu's naivety by saying “she took a flimsily-examined decision” which “sadly, she paid the highest mortal price” (*National Mirror*, September 7, 2012, p.34). The columnist, Adenrele Niyi, compared her former younger self with Osokogu's life:

Cynthia, I suspect, may have been like the former me at her age, extremely daredevil, slightly reckless and adventurous with a capital 'A'. However, I admire the deceased lady for two prime reasons: her academic quest and entrepreneurial spirit. At that age, my mind was so lazy that running my life was such a challenge that I couldn't even handle a trading enterprise! I was comfortable receiving daddy's, brother's, uncle's allowances and feeding fat on home food.

Osokogu was first murdered by criminals, and later "murdered" by press, because the *National Mirror* described the heinous act that led to the lost of Osokogu's life as an "experiment." "As Cynthia is buried tomorrow," the paper reported. "We will always remember her for the sacrifice (she) made to help others (to) get wiser." The paper showed contempt toward Osokogu and ridiculed her murder by presenting the case as 'sacrifice.'

The *Daily Sun* also reported another story on this issue of "ideal victim." The story entitled "Evil evangelists: They prayed from me, then chocked me with chloroform –Victim" recounts an attempt by unknown persons to kidnap a woman in Lagos in April 2, 2012 (*Daily Sun*, April 22, 2012, p.8). The suspects, numbering to be four, disguised as Christian preachers who were on house-to-house evangelism. They went to a house where a lady, named Gabrielle Ekukinam, was living with her German boyfriend, who was at the time of the visit was at his working place. The "evangelists" told her that they were there to pray for her. After the prayer, they left. Ten days later, a lady who was among the four "evangelists" visited Ekukinam before, revisited the house but this time with a different man. After exchanging pleasantries, Ekukinam allowed them into the house to "pray" for her again. Once inside, the evangelists-kidnappers attempted to abduct Ekukinam by chocking her with what was believed to be chloroform. They didn't succeed in their mission as Ekukinam's house-help came to her rescue. By allowing the

suspected kidnappers into her compound, Ekuinam had been negatively portrayed by *Daily Sun* as unobservant, someone who trusts too much.

The “bad girls” or “non-ideal victims,” in the other hand, they are depicted by two newspapers as seductive, independent, inferior, lacking intelligence, and, usually, lacking maternal quality. They are explicitly blamed because they always “invite” victimization through the way they act and behave. For instance, a woman (non-ideal victim) could be blame for what happen to her because of her carelessness, provocative dressing, inappropriate actions like visiting places she is not suppose to go, and so on. The damaging effect here is, once the media decide to blame the victim or to portray the perpetrator of a crime negatively, “then society could be confident that the defendant was not only guilty of the crimes but worthless as a woman as well” and, therefore, deserve no sympathy or mercy (Gado, 2008:182).

Therefore, this study discovered that the Nigerian newspapers’ formats of presenting victimization of women in crime stories are meant to disempower women, because such representations and news discourse about female victimization reifies women’s vulnerability and would contribute to what scholars termed the “culture of fear,” where media overstates a world of danger in which we all live that fosters and legitimates women’s fear of their own victimization. Despite men’s heightened risk of being victimized in public settings by strangers or acquaintances, yet the media does not present men as vulnerable. In contrast, women are provided scenarios of victimization that suggest that they are responsible for their victimization and they can evade this by avoiding certain places, interactions, and behaviors. Therefore, the mass media in general made the society to believe that women are the “weaker sex” and should rely on men for protection. To put it in a different way, these negative media representations are indirectly trying to coerce women to comply with “appropriate,” traditional gender roles, and

also “caution” them to limit their use of public space because venturing outside without a man’s protection places them in danger. On this point, *The Sun* and *National Mirror* are “contributing their quota” in reinforcing dominant patriarchal ideas which are permeated with negative female stereotypes. Among the stereotypes found in analyzing those newspapers are gender role stereotypes.

### **3.3 Gender Roles in *The Sun* and *National Mirror***

The news articles analyzed in this study contained stereotypical representations of women. In this section, the portrayal of women based on their professions or occupations are analyzed. In this the process of examining these stereotypes, I borrow from what Pingree (*et al.*) called the “scale of sexism” (Pingree, Hawkins, Butler, & Paisley, 1976:193-200). (The scale of sexism is the categorization of stereotypes of women). Using this scale, it has been found that the stereotypes of females in crime news in *The Sun* and *National Mirror* in terms of professions and/or occupations are divided into three categories:

- Women are housewives (a woman’s place is in the home),
- The professions of women are limited, and working women are inferior or subordinate to male colleagues (women should engage only in “womanly” occupations such as nurses, secretaries, etc), and
- Family issues must be the priority of all working women (a woman may be a professional, but her first place is at home).



### **3.3.1 The Sit-at-home Women in Crime News**

In this category of stereotype, women – both victims and perpetrators of a crime – are mostly depicted as non-professionals, housewives. The *Daily Sun* reported an incident where police shot a man in Lagos, whom they said was a robbery suspect (*Daily Sun*, December 6, 2012, p.34). The paper described how the unfortunate incident occurred and provide information about the deceased. Starting from the headline, *Daily Sun* told its readers the occupation of the deceased. “Puzzle for Police: Was late plumber a robber?” goes the headline. But throughout the report, *Daily Sun* did not provide any detail about the occupation of his wife. The paper merely called her decease’s “widow,” “the nursing mother,” and so on.

In *National Mirror*, the portrayal is much the same. In its October 19 edition, the paper carried a story of two people, a man and a woman, who were arraigned before a High Court in Lagos by Nigeria’s anti-graft agency, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, (EFCC), over fraud allegation (*National Mirror*, October 19, p.51). Although the defendants were a couple ‘partners in crime,’ the tabloids choose to depict the woman as less important by giving more emphasis on the man, reporting him as the culprit who was assisted by his “his wife,” “a nursing mother.”

### **3.3.2 The Professional Women in Crime News**

The articles analyzed in the present study revealed that some news stories gave detailed information about the professions of the women reported there as either perpetrators or as victims of crimes, while others news reports completely lacked any details about women’s occupational status. In the cases where information about the occupations of women was provided, most of the professional women were depicted in supporting roles. For instance, in a story on the arrest of thieves of babies by Anambra State police command, which appeared on

*Daily Sun*, the paper narrated how a two-month-old baby was stole, sold and resold twice (*Daily Sun*, October 25, 2012, p. 39). The paper reported how police went to a hospital in Onitsha to arrest the owner of the hospital, Dr. Ejike, who bought the baby with the intention of reselling him! Although Dr. Ejike fled before the arrival of police, but *Daily Sun* reported the arrest of some staff of the hospital. Using gender role stereotype, *Daily Sun* described the setting in the hospital where Dr. Ejike, a male doctor, had “some nurses and private women who were taken care of the baby since he was two days old...” The *Daily Sun*’s choice of what to and not to include in this news was gender biased by depicting women on supporting roles.

Another example where women were depicted in subordinate roles found was were a then 20-year-old man committed suicide because his then 30-year-old girlfriend aborted her pregnancy and abandoned him (*Daily Sun*, July 27, 2012, p. 10). From journalistic point of view, the story has nothing to do with the parents of both the man and the woman, nevertheless *Daily Sun* found a way of dragging the man’s mother into the story. “The victim (names withheld) was from the Kalabari area of the state and his mother a nurse,” *Daily Sun* told its readers. This irrelevant statement contained two hidden ideological messages. First, the paper reported the career of the victim’s mother because it is considered “normal” for a woman to engage in professions such as teaching, nursing, and so no because of the patriarchal beliefs that women should be submissive to men. The second ideological message contained here is that the above statement tried to create a relationship between the reason behind the suicide (i.e. abortion of pregnancy) and the women. By telling readers that the victim’s mother was a nurse, *Daily Sun* was associating women with sexuality, reproduction, and child-rearing. While child birth (or reproduction) is a sexual (or biological) role, associating women with sexuality and child-rearing are typically gender roles.

### 3.3.3 The Super Women in Crime News

In this point, the present study discovered that *The Sun* and *National Mirror* depicted some few women in dual roles, that is, as working women and at the same time as housewives. The “super women,” as they are fondly called in literature, are portrayed by these newspapers as women who can’t “have it all.” According to the findings of the present study, if a woman combines the dual roles of a working woman or business and being housewife, she hardly succeed at both two aspects of life. If she is successful with her career, then she will be a failure at her marital life. The popular theme the press uses here is a “failed mother/wife.”

For example, in a report concerning a 45-year-old man, Ntufam Udo Ette, who impregnated his 17-year-old daughter in Cross River State, the *Daily Sun* reported the husband saying that the unfortunate incident occurred because of the failure of his wife to carry out her matrimonial duties well. The “randy father” blamed his wife as responsible for his illicit affair. Ette said that his wife was always traveling and as a result of this she was starving him of sex. As such, the paper depicted the wife as a successful businesswoman who frequently travel, but, in the process, neglects her family: her husband, her daughter, and her matrimonial responsibilities. The daughter, *Daily Sun* reported, also viewed her mom as a “failed mother” for not taking proper care of her (the victim’s), reportedly, sex-starved father. To drive its argument home over the failure of the Ette’s wife, *Daily Sun* quoted the victim’s perception about her mother: “If my mother was always at home to take care of my father,” the pregnant girl reportedly said. “This wouldn’t have happened,” she concluded.

If a woman is successful at her home, however, *The Sun* and *National Mirror* would depict her at work, in most cases, as “unskilled”, “inept” and “professionally unsuccessful woman.” The negative media portrayals of the “sit-at-home,” “professional,” as well as “super

women” would, no doubt, promote and reinforce the dominant ideas and beliefs of patriarchy in the society. To project the notions of inequality among the populace, the crime news stories of *The Sun* and *National Mirror* analyzed in this study indicate that the concerns of women from privileged class groups were the only ones worthy of receiving attention. In other words, the crime stories in these newspapers contain a large amount of gender and class discriminations. It has been noted in this study that while the privileged women wanted equality with men of their class, the feminist reformers aimed to gain social equality for women within the existing structure.

### **3.4 Patriarchal Dominant Ideas and Beliefs in *The Sun* and *National Mirror***

#### **3.4.1 The Behavioral Stereotypes in Crime News**

Gendered metaphors and metonymies are used to transfer sets of gendered associations into a single word or phrase. For instance, at times, *The Sun* and *National Mirror* used the word “girls” for adult women, a term that implies immaturity. The example given above show how these newspapers use language to further the course of the patriarchal system: power, dominance, and gender inequality.

Concerning female stereotypes, it has been found that women are represented by the two newspapers under study as dumb, timid, emotional, and irrational. To depict females as hot-tempered, *Saturday Sun* (July 9, 2012, p. 7) wrote a sensational headline on a story of two female university students who had a fight. The headline “Blood at Igbinedion Varsity: As enraged female student stabs friend severally with scissors,” categorically reechoes the female stereotype

of irrationality and short temper. On this point, the paper chose its words carefully –“blood at Igbinedion,” “enraged female student,” “stabs friend severally.” Throughout the story, *Saturday Sun* did not mention the perpetrator’s motive for committing the offence. Instead, the paper covertly depicted the perpetrator, Hope Amadi, as irrational who fights and stabs for no reason. The phrase “enraged female student” indicate that Hope can easily become angry. Another phrase *Saturday Sun* used, “stabs friend severally,” connotes that Hope lack adequate thinking ability, because it is unthinkable for a person to stab his/her “friend.” The choice of the word “friend” by the paper was deliberate in order to create the desired impression in the minds of the readers, so as to reinforce the societal belief about women been “emotional.” Instead of using this word “friend,” *The Sun* could use another word/phrase like “roommate,” or “another student.”

Another issue discovered in this study is “woman-as-timid” stereotype. This analysis elicited that *The Sun* and *National Mirror* depicted women as unusually fearful and extremely weak. “Cruel fate: She missed the robbers’ bullets, only to die at the sounds of their guns,” *Daily Sun* writes about a woman, Joy Amadi, who lost her life during a bank robbery in Orlu, Imo State (*Daily Sun*, October 31, 2012, p. 16). Throughout the report, *Daily Sun* did all it can to draw the maximum sympathy toward the children of the deceased. The report concentrated on the economic hardship they were facing. Joy, who lost her husband three years before her death, left behind three children, a lady and her two younger brothers. Although nothing much said about the male children, the paper concentrated solely on the female child, Onyinye Amadi, who was described by *Daily Sun* as “a job-seeking graduate of Federal Polytechnic, Oko who hast not known peace.” As this was not enough, *Daily Sun* further described Onyinye as “a victim of the sack of teachers employed by the administration of former governor Ikedi Ohakim by the Rochas

Okorocho administration.” To generate more sympathy for Onyinye, the paper reported that “In an emotion-laden voice,” Onyinye narrated her responsibilities of communicating and arranging with her maternal uncles and aunts from a far away village, her paternal uncles and aunts in another village, and the hospital visitations where her mother’s corpse was deposited. *Daily Sun* reported all these details for the aim of showing the weakness of women, which, of course, is a patriarchal stereotype of women.

In a similar incident, *Daily Sun* (of September 25, 2012, P. 6) carries news of a groom who was allegedly killed by police in Lagos merely five days after his wedding. Just like in the case cited above, the *Daily Sun* chooses to select women as its interviewees, despite the fact that the deceased, Ugochukwu Ozuah, had brothers. As a familiar pattern, always the interviewee(s) ‘wept as she/they spoke.’ The deceased sister, the paper reported, ‘fighting back tears that kept streaming down her cheek,’ said: “Ugo represented the father figure in my family. After the death of my father and my second brother, Ugo became the father for us all. He was taking care of us all. He was taking care of us all in all areas. You can imagine how much he meant to us.”

A part from stereotype of females’ attitudes and behaviors, this study, however, found that news stories published by *The Sun* and *National Mirror* showed that having a male child is better than having a female child. As a result of this distorted perception, women are seems to be desperate in searching for male children. Women, according to several news reports in *The Sun* and *National Mirror*, could do everything they can, including committing crimes such as stealing or buying male children, to please their husbands. This reason of preferring a male child over a female, and for human carnival and/or cultism purposes, led some people in Nigeria to engage in illicit act of buying and selling babies, better known as “baby factory business.” In most cases, the women are domesticated in a house, illegal maternity home/hospital, or churches, and there

are men whose job is to impregnate such young women. The “baby factories” owners/operators will cater for the needs of the pregnant women till they deliver. After the pregnant women gave birth, the “baby factories” operators will buy the baby from them and later resell it to barren women or those who don’t have a male child. Or they sell the babies to people who will perform rituals.

A divorced woman called Halima was arrested by police in Bauchi State for allegedly stealing a baby on October 15, 2012. *Daily Sun* reported the incident on October 19<sup>th</sup> edition. Halima who was a mother of five girls, the paper reported, stole a baby boy at the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa Teaching Hospital, Bauchi, because she was unable to deliver a male child, and as a result of “her failure” to deliver a male child, her husband divorced her. Marginalizing the womanhood, *Daily Sun* stated that Halima was disturbed for losing her marriage. “She then decided to steal the baby boy in a desperate bid to return to her marital home.”

Additionally, the female child inferiority, when compared with the male child, is strongly but covertly portrayed in the *Daily Sun*’s report of three prophetesses arrested by police in Aba, Abia State in connection of stealing and selling a day-old baby girl. One of the prophetesses arrested, Sylva, reportedly said that she kept a 23-year-old pregnant woman named Grace in her church until Grace gave birth to a baby girl. The following day, another prophetess, Loreta, from different church visited Sylva who introduced her to Grace. Sylva and Loreta conspired, with the help of another woman named Ijeoma who was a nurse from a different (Matron’s) ministry, conspired between themselves and steal the Grace’s baby girl and later sold her to another prophetess simply called “Matron.” *Daily Sun* revealed that Sylva kept Grace in her “prayer house” with the hope that the new child would be a baby boy and thereafter her husband would marry Grace as a second wife because she (Sylva) had only a female child. The press coverage of

this story by *Daily Sun* indirectly reinforces the dominant perception of superiority of a male child over a female one due to patriarchal nature of the society.

### **3.4.2 The Portrayal of Upper Class Women in Crime News**

As Marxian class theory stated, the history of all existing human societies is full of class struggles, such as between “freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed,” who constantly opposed each other and carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight. The representations of these class struggles could be traced throughout the history of the modern media. The representations of the human struggles could be extended to include the representations women’s struggles and their class structure as portrayed by the media, because the “Class is much more than Marx’s definition of relationship to the means of production,” as Rita Mae Brown (1974) argued in *Class and Feminism*. “Class involves your behavior, your basic assumptions, how you are taught to behave, what you expect from yourself and from others, your concept of a future, how you understand problems and solve them, how you think, feel, act” (Bunch and Myron, 1974: 1-90).

In this sub-section and the one that follows, the researcher analyzed how the power relations are systematically and covertly used in portraying women in crime news with the aim of reinforcing dominant ideas and beliefs among the society. For a long time men held the position of power and women are subservient. For this study, power relations are simply seen as the division of power between the socio-economic classes, such as between the rich and poor, and also between the two genders. It is undeniable fact that there is a wide gap between the rich and the poor in Nigeria, and this sad development leaves the nation with very little and insignificant amount of the middle class people. In Marxists point of view, the “society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly



facing each other — Bourgeoisie and Proletariat” (see “Manifesto of the Communist Party”). Due to this reason, this analysis, in this point, concentrated on the portrayal of women that belong to the upper and lower classes only.

The study, moreover, discovered that women, as prevalently found in other media contents, are depicted in crime news as appendages to their male relations such as their husbands, fathers, sons, and so on. Even from the headlines, the ideological analyst will “feel” the submissive nature of women and the domination of men as portrayed in the two newspapers. The powers that women have are usually acquired through their male relations, mostly their husbands or their fathers, and sometimes from their sons or brothers. In late October 2012, the story circulated in the news media outlets that the Metropolitan Police arrested, a woman named Florence Abiola Ajimobi, who happen to be the wife of the Oyo State governor. The *National Mirror*'s headline run as follows: “Ajimobi’s wife denies arrest by London police,” expressing the men’s dominance over women and, in turn, the women’s dependence on men. Throughout the story, *National Mirror* depicted Florence Ajimobi as if she was a “personal property” to her husband.

In a different story which appeared in *Daily Sun* of December 12, for instance, a similar representation is found where a woman, Titilayo Oluwole Rotimi, was kidnapped by unknown gunmen in front of her company in Lagos. The *Daily Sun*'s account of this case was not much different from other tabloids where the men are considered as protectors as well as perpetrators of the crime. Titilayo’s prominence was derived from her husband, who was a retired army brigadier general and a former governor of Western Region. The kidnappers were men and her kidnapping was successful, according to police, because her driver did nothing to prevent the occurrence of the crime. He just sat in the car and watched the criminals carrying out their

mission. The story painted a picture of “women as weak” who rely upon men for protection. Moreover, the powers women acquired in social setting are part of the men’s powers. This means that woman should be seen or portrayed in the media as someone’s wife, daughter, or sister.

### **3.4.3 The Portrayal Lower Class Women in Crime News**

Careful analysis of *The Sun* and *National Mirror* newspapers revealed that a class difference exist in the portrayal of women in crime news. Both two newspapers used in this research covertly provide their readers with the “images” of socially and economically “divided women.” The messages contained there reflect the struggle between the ruling class and the ruled, the efforts of reinforcing the ruling ideas on masses. The findings of the analysis showed that the portrayals of the ruling class women and the common women are similar in terms of the domination of men over women and the subordinate positions given to the latter.

Although these media representations of both upper and lower classes women are equally biased and simultaneously damaging, yet there are some differences between the way Nigerian tabloids depict the two main classes of women: the privileged and the poor. This research found that the issues that were most relevant to lower class women were never highlighted by the newspapers under study, instead they concentrate in depicting these women –either victims or perpetrators of crime –as weak, so poor, not well-educated, victims of social injustices, and at times manipulated by men. Headlines such as the “agony of a widow: see how policemen murdered my husband,” “Tears of a pregnant woman widowed by policeman over N20: God, how do I survive with my three kids?” “Cruel fate: She missed the robbers’ bullets, only to die at the sound of their guns,” and “I want justice, widow of slain pastor tells IGP,” clearly indicate the vulnerability and the sorry state of women in Nigeria. Such heart-touching stories are mostly

accompanied with the pictures of women, usually crying, or full of self-pity or regret (in terms of crime perpetrators).

On February 9, 2012, a mobile policeman reportedly shot a then-28-year-old commercial bus driver in the neck at close range in Onitsha, Anambra State, and the victim died, leaving behind his wife and children. Five months after the incident, the Nigerian police did not release the deceased's corpse to his family; the *Daily Sun* reported the development on its July 9, 2012 edition. The *Daily Sun*'s report depicted the widow, Mary Eze, in the most pitiful condition. In the story, the paper used emotional words and phrases such as the family who are "exposed to abject poverty and meaningless life" due to the "killing of their pillar" by a "trigger-happy policeman," while in different stories phrases like "I'm dumbfounded," "I've been in tears" were used. The report further said:

The widow, Mrs. Mary Eze, who is eight months pregnant, is crying to President Goodluck Jonathan and the Governors of Enugu and Anambra States, Mr. Sullivan Chime and Mr. Peter Obi respectively to come to her aid, adding that she has been finding it difficult to survive with her children. The widow, a mother of three, who spoke to *Daily Sun*, said that the major challenge facing her was the tradition of Nachi in Enugu State which forbids her from doing anything until her husband is buried.

Additionally, the news report highlighted furthermore the condition of the "heavily pregnant widow," thus:

"Next month, I will be put to bed. And when I finally put to bed, I will be battling with how to survive with my little baby because the little business I was doing was brought to an abrupt end when my husband died, and I cannot start it again unless my husband is buried. From all

indications, there is no sign that the police are ready to speed up the arrangement for his burial. God, how do I survive with my three children and the baby on the way?

“It is five months today and my husband is still lying in the mortuary. The police and everybody seem to abandoned us; they have never shown concern about our welfare or even expedite action on the burial of my husband so that I can go back to my small business and take care of my family,” she lamented.

While the Nigerian newspaper depict the lower class women as both victims of male domination and economically oppressed, the representations of elite groups of highly educated females indicate that such women were happily to be associated and referred to their male relations. Unlike lower class women who were weary of male domination, the privileged women prefer to stay at home rather than do the type of work large numbers of working class and lower-middle class women were doing.

Finally, this analysis discovered that the patriarchal ideology concerning women which *The Sun* and *National Mirror* want their readers to believe is that the class power is more important than feminism, and such class power emanates only from men. Working class women are ought to know that the wages they receive would not sustain them. So, all women –the working and non-working women/housewives, together with upper crust women –should rely on men for economic sustenance and for protection from victimization, and even from committing crimes, because female criminals are seen, from a patriarchal point of view, as people who deviate from the gendered norms.

### 3.5 Conclusion

Media is an excellent tool which, due to its wide accessibility, provides us with a vast of information, knowledge, and entertainment. In spite of its considerable importance, media could also be ‘harmful’ to the society if the media owners and/or journalists didn’t stick to the prescribed law and ethics of communication that regulate the entire journalism career. Following the mandates of fairness, equity, and objectivity in press coverage to the letter is the backbone of getting equal and just representations of all groups of the society. Negative and biased portrayal of any social group is not only unethical and unjust, but it also subject members of such group to humiliation and marginalization. The systematic negative portrayal of a group or groups of people occurs always for a reason. For instance, the obsessive desire to ‘control the bodies’ of female folks in the patriarchal society led the ruling class to orchestrate a systematic – subtly or blatantly – negative media portrayals of females. Unlike Western media, the negative portrayals of women in crime stories in the Nigerian tabloids found in this research are subtly in nature. Although the negativity in the representations of female criminals and victims is there, yet the Nigerian journalists are usually covert and a little cautious in their reports.

Nevertheless, the negative media portrayals of women is really damaging to both female victims and perpetrators of crimes. For this reason, news media must adhere to the ethics of journalism. And media portrayals of gender roles for women must be changed for good. When people do not question media presentations of women, it means that they generally accept these media messages about women which stereotype both the female criminals and the victims by indicating that women are responsible for their victimization. The questions here are: What the woman did to put herself in a position in which she could be hurt? Why don’t media prove “why ‘normal’ men victimize others”?

Apart from psychological manipulation of women (such as female victim blaming, and the creation of the 'culture of fear' among females), the tabloids studied in this research are found to be active participants in systematic marginalization of women socially and economically as well. The depicting of women as housewives and the portrayal of the working women in supporting roles are typical practices of patriarchal societies. It is also believed that Nigerian newspapers decided to support these biased and negative depictions just for the sake of reinforcing dominant ideas and beliefs of the ruling class. The social power abuse, dominance, and inequality reproduced by the mass media could be rejected and resisted through political and social activism, which discourse analysis is a part. In line with the efforts of 'rescuing' women who are unjustly treated and portrayed as a 'powerless group,' studies like this would be a step forward in the right direction.

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