

# IMPLICATIONS OF MEDIA EXPOSURE, YOUTH VIOLENCE AND GANGSTERISM IN NIGERIA: THE AGONY OF A MORALLY DISLOCATED SOCIETY

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**Abstract:** *The influence of media exposure and youth violence has been of global concern. Scholars, researchers, policy makers and implementer as well as social influencers are on their toes trying to find solution to these twin problems because of its effect on the youth and society. This study focused on implications of media exposure, youth violence and gangsterism in Nigeria: the agony of a morally dislocated society. youth violence and gangsterism in Nigeria: the agony of a morally dislocated society. The study adopted qualitative method of data collection. The study was carried out in thirty-two (32) media outfit covering Television, Radio, Print and Online frames. The study reveals that, the media has the role of socializing, educating, entertaining and advertising and these roles keep the public abreast on the latest developments in the society. When these functions are abused or neglected, it tends to encourage youth violence and gangsterism in our society. The study recommended that: Government and media regulatory agencies must through effective law making and implementation addressed the root causes of mismanagement of media content to forestall youth violence in Nigeria. Conscious effort must be made by the government through its agencies to make laws as well as punish violators of uncensored movie content to avoid or reduce its influence on youth violence in Nigeria. Sanction and severe punishment should be meted on agent of sponsored news content capable of inciting youth violence in Nigeria. Selective media contents should be discouraged so as to ease the tension and aggression that leads to youth violence in Nigeria. Training and retraining of media practitioners will reduced the overzealousness of media practitioners` aggressive news content and eventually clamp down on youth violence in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** implications, media exposure, youth violence, Gangsterism, Nigeria

## 1. Introduction

It is a globally known fact that mass media and journalism are the watchdogs of the people. It acts as an intermediary between the people and the government. These media houses frame news contents and air them to the public, thereby engaging in socializing, educating, entertaining, and advertising or marketing goods and services. These global practices/duties have over time been under-performed, over-performed or even neglected. In most countries within the American continent, the media is held with extreme value and inviolability owing to their roles in such societies (Akan, Gbadeyan and Ojizele, 2022). In Europe, the totality of man`s existence hinges on the media for their daily life activities like weather forecast, trading, news, entertainment, studies and equipping members of the public with government policies, guiding the public on norms and values in the society. Most of these, the media does via print or electronics which is often online or offline. The Arctic and Antarctica rely on media coverage and news content for their daily lives, like in all continents of the world. Personal experience and public opinion shows that the media shapes issues about beliefs and attitudes; exerts influence on elite and policy makers and policy outcome. In Africa, there are seen to be involved in surveillance, correlation, cultural transmission and entertainment and there have being communicating their various messages through television, movies, advertising, radio, the internet, magazine and newspapers (Akan and Egbo, 2022). The media in Central, South and

West Africa like their counterparts in other continents engage in information, interpretation, instruction, bonding, diversion and gate keeping function in the society. In the course of doing these, notable violations have struck their functions that attract sanction and revolt from the youths in form of violence. In Nigeria to be typical, some media houses and practitioners` have received bound many times as a form of sanction as well as irate youth revolt in many instances to show their displeasure and dissatisfaction. These incidences are common place among sentimental and profit oriented media houses and their practitioners`. In most part of northern and southern Nigeria, the media have caused or aggravated disorder leading to violence that deprived the citizens and society of peace and other valuables maybe due to selfishness, carelessness, negligence, greed, corruption and or overzealousness (Gbadeyan and Osadola, 2023). All these have compounded to make most members of the public loose interest in media content. Most have criticized the movie and advertisement contents while other hold it that the media have failed woefully in their educative and socialization functions. From public opinion and personal experience, their job entails management of news coverage and airing it, selective/editing news content, sponsored media content, censored news content and providing same to the public. It is seemingly glaring from experience that some media practitioners are over ambitious and overzealous and have gone out of the broadcasting code of conduct in some instances to do their own will and bidding with their pay masters and sponsors. This has not gone well with the media regulatory bodies and have attracted bound and sanction. In another vein, it has arouse tension and anger on the youth in some part of this country (Nigeria) and such youths have always revolted and taken to the streets to express their anger in form of gangsterism and violent activities. This study therefore mandates itself to examine the activities involved in media exposure, youth violence and gangsterism in Nigeria to depict the plight and agony of youths in a morally dislocated society like ours.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Journalism is a global profession that train and prepare manpower in the media industry. Their mandates are universal but with unique practices based on the environment where their services are required. In Developed countries of the world where objectivity, professionalism, technological advancement and media practitioners carry out their duties with less sentiments, there is a tendency for balance reportage though with more raw content exposure than it is the case in developing countries. (Chukudeh and Akan, 2021: 7) opined that in Europe, the media is one of the main sources of socialization, education, entertainment, advertisement and marketing. In Arctic and Antarctica, the media holds the gate way to educating, entertaining and promoting commercials as well as enhancing socio-economic activities. In Africa, the media has greatly carried out its responsibilities and have seemingly achieved a lot. In North Africa for Examples, the media have helped to guide and direct the public on government policies and this has quail tension that would have resulted to violence. In Central Africa media reportage and news content exposure has spur conflicts and violence in most quarters. The picture in Southern Africa showed that media outlets have been fulfilling, specious and wanting in some areas. The experience in most parts of West Africa is that of a media filled with plausibly specious activities. These experiences are more pronounced in Nigeria. The Nigerian media is often referred to as a sensational sentimental and political media. Their activities, news contents and media exposure is flawed with a lot of anomalies. This has caused tension and havoc many times. Most violent demonstration of political, ethnic and religious outlook may have been as a result of poor media coverage, exposure and reportage. However, the media remained one of the most dependable outlets to reach a wider audience in Nigeria and other parts of the world within a short period of time. This especially is noted for its role as agent of socialization, education, entertainment and commercial activities. This study examined media exposure, youth violence and gangsterism with a view to answer bothering questions on: What are the causes of mismanagement of media content on youth violence in Nigeria? What is the influence of uncensored movies content on youth violence in Nigeria? What

is the effect of sponsored news content on youth violence in Nigeria? What is the impact of selective media contents on youth violence in Nigeria? As well as what is the consequence of overzealousness of media practitioners' content on youth violence in Nigeria? To ascertain if the media in the light of providing the aforementioned functions have failed in anyway and how those failures could have resulted to youth violence and gangsterism in the Nigerian society. Hence, this study seeks as its main objective to x-ray the implications of media exposure, youth violence and gangsterism in Nigeria.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

This study adopted the (Bandura, 1977:22) Social Learning Theory to explain the implications of media exposure, youth violence and gangsterism in Nigeria. The social learning theory believes that people learn whatever they know from parents, teachers, mentors, friends, the environment around them and media outlets (environment). This schools of thought argued that whatever one is exposed to becomes his/her priority to learn and once he/she learns that, it stick and impulse him/her to act on it. It conceived this learning process is acquired through attention (capable of attracting ones interest), retention (ability to keep what is learnt), reproduction (the ability and capacity to repeat or perform what has been learnt) and motivation (reinforcement via reward).

While the media is seen as an agent of socialization, it contents add up bit by bit to make one develop a particular idea. In this case watching or being exposed to violent movies/news contents has a way of impacting on the viewer to make them become violent. Exposure to or mismanagement of media content may not be a direct, necessary or sufficient cause of aggression or violence but both necessary and sufficient conditions to indulge in violence. Violent media content or exposure affects our behaviour, thoughts and emotion. When all this adds up to process, it results to violence or the tendency to harm another person. This happens especially if considerable length of time is allotted by children and youths to viewing this violent content in the media space.

In Nigeria, there is presence of verbal aggression such as saying hurtful words to people, or physical aggression such as fighting, shoving and attacking someone amongst the youths. There is also evidence of the case of relational or indirect attack where lies are told about someone to cause them pain or harm. On the whole, Nigerian media mismanagement of content as well as youths regular viewing or exposure to media violence content has a likelihood or tendency to influence violence among viewers (youths) on a short or long term basis. It is a straight-jacketed belief or thinking with evidence supporting this in Nigeria and elsewhere that aggressive characters acquired from media influence or any source are regulated or enhanced by parental influence, mentors, teachers, friends, religious leaders and media content. However, constant assess to violent media content is both a necessary and sufficient condition to engage in violence without much control as no one is totally immune to the influence of media violent content. Mismanagement of media content and exposure of same to the public is capable of encouraging and escalating violence. This theory was used because it is able to explain the reason and extent of youth violence in Nigeria.

### **5. Methodology**

The study adopted qualitative method of data collection. The study was carried out in thirty-two (32) media outfit covering Television, Radio, Print and Online frames. The media outfits are involved in news, coverage, surveillance/investigation, entertainment and report via print and electronics. Accordingly, staff from the Television, Radio, Print and online media participated in the study having being selected randomly and purposively for the study. Qualitative data was generated via Key Informant Interviews (KII) conducted purposively with sixteen (16) selected interviewees. Two sets of ten (10) participants of male and female were purposively and randomly selected to part take in Focus group Discussion (FGD) used. The

manual content analysis and ethnographic summaries were employed to analyze qualitative data.

## **6. Discussion of Result and Findings**

### **What are the causes of mismanagement of media content on youth violence in Nigeria?**

A participant argued that the causes of mismanagement of media content are corruption, uncensored content, sponsored content, selective media content and overzealousness of media practitioners' media content. To him, these acts has the tendency to breach the broadcasting code, attract sanction and even throw irate youth into violence if adequate care is not taken. These acts of media exposure have led to a lot of uproar and death among Nigerian youth in so many instances.

One participant observed that the causes of mismanagement of media content can be as a result of overzealousness of media practitioners', uncensored media, corruption, sponsored news content and selective media content. He asserts that media practitioners can be group based on their belief and personality. Most of them report news based on who pays them, most do what their instinct tells them, some report what they want to report while others report what they see and the way they see it. If news content is not carefully reported or balanced, the tendency for violence to erupt is high. The Endsars brutality and revolution now are typical and recent examples. Therefore the media must be very cautious and ensure that they do their work devoid of sentiments and biases. Again the media and its practitioners must avoid airing content that will threaten the frail unity that Nigeria is battling with in order not to throw the country into any violence or war.

It was conceived by one of the participants that uncensored media, ignorance, "over sabi" selective news content, uncensored news content and sponsored news content are common causes of media mismanagement in Nigeria. The participant added that these causes have most often thrown the area or state where such news aired in violence and crises. He cited instances with ethnic and religious crises in the North part of Nigeria where mismanagement of media news content due to these causes has resulted to demonstration, riot where tons of lives and properties worth billions of naira have been burnt or vandalized in so many occasions.

Another participant hold that uncensored media content, sponsored news content, overzealousness of some media practitioners' in airing unconfirmed news and selective news airing are the causes of mismanagement of media content that would have provoked violence and gangsterism in Nigeria. He noticed that balanced news reportage promote unity and socio-economic development while faulty media creates and aggravates youth violence and gangsterism in Nigeria. He advocated for peaceful journalism where offensive and violence content that will threaten the unity of a state or country should be censored out of public view. One of the participant accused uncensored news, corruption on the part of the media workers, selective media content, sponsored news, bribery and corruption as well as media practitioners' sentiments as the causes of mismanagement of media content and youth violence in Nigeria. She believed that if the media addressed the causes she has mentioned above and operate on the ethics of their profession; taking into account the broadcasting code, there would not be any violence occasioned from media exposure and airing of news content.

A participant said corruption, sentiments, uncensored new, sponsored news and selective media or peaceful journalism as reasons for mismanagement of media content and youth violence in Nigeria. She noticed that most media houses be it print on electronic on or offline do the biddings of their pay masters, air what they think or whatever information they are presented with. When such news content comes on air, the public may be provoked and youths are always the first to take action. This youth action is most times are irrational, spiral and devastating to say the least.

### **What is the influence of uncensored movie content on youth violence in Nigeria?**

One participant believed that uncensored movies enhanced violence. She lamented that even though the Nigeria film and movie censor board is there to screen and approved Movies to be aired on the public space to certain age categories and classes of person; most movie maker and media practitioners have shun or jump the process to air movies with violent or offensive content. This act is unacceptable and capable of spurring youth violence. Most youth caught in the of cybercrime and ritual killings recently said they learnt the act from movies. She concluded by say “a society that airs violent and offensive movies/ media content will definitely have a harvest of violent youths”.

It was revealed by another participant that uncensored movie content corrupts the mind. All movies are expected to be censored by a regulatory body before being aired in the public space. After approval from the regulatory body, age categories of viewers are fixed to such movies and parental guidance are advised. Most times, these regulations only exist in theory. Children and the youths explore the internets and cables watching any movies of their choice. This has encouraged violence and criminalities among Nigeria youth. He observed passionately that, there is a direct link between uncensored movie content and violence because it has strong influence on youth violence and gangsterism among youth in Nigeria.

Another participant said uncensored movies throw the society into a state of crises and violence. Most violence and crimes is a product of uncensored movies. He noticed that watching violent movies increase the inclination to engage in or practice what has been watched or learnt. This is one reason for the increase in youth violence and gangsterism in Nigeria.

Another participant observed that uncensored movies/media influenced youth violence and gangsterism in Nigeria. She argued the mind and brain master and store what is watched or learnt. The tendency to process and practice is not uncommon. Hence, uncensored movies do have significant influence on youth violence and crime among youths in Nigeria. He further argued that it is a serious problem in Nigeria that demands an urgent intervention.

One participant said the nexus between uncensored movies and violence is not far-fetched. She observed that parent leave electronics at home to go to work and only return home after work. The children come back home from school earlier than their parents and watch whatever they want. This is coupled with the mobile phone and internet facility at their finger-tips that avail them the opportunity to surf the net for information and desired videos. Having watched this, the tendency to engage in the act they watch is very high. This is evident in the contemporary Nigeria where youth violence is taking the front seat to erode peace, safety and socio-economic development.

It was believed by a participant that uncensored movies and news content have the chances of making one become violent. She asserts that violent movies or offensive news content can aggravate anger in a person to do the unthinkable. She cited instances of reprisal attack occasioned by a movie or news content that was aired. To her doing away with uncensored movies is doing away with violence, gangsterism, crime and all antisocial behaviour.

### **What is the effect of sponsored news content on youth violence in Nigeria?**

It was gathered from one of the participant from the KII session that sponsored news has effect on youth violence. He believed if the opinion of the minority or the pay masters is aired against the general public, it can spur violence and crime. He said that when politicians pay media houses to air lies and falsehood, most often, the youth react against such news content violent. He also said the news aired by most media practitioners are sponsored to exhume character assassination or destroy one`s personality or even to cover up a fact. This has resulted in violence in so many quarters.

Another participant believed that sponsored new content has effect on youth violence and gangsterism because the news that is aired is aimed to achieve a particular purpose and if this news is very directional at a person or group of persons, there is always reprisal attack that never ends well.

It is conceived by a participant that sponsored news content encourage youth violence in that, it provoked and instigate someone or a group of people to revolt and defend what is said or aired in the media in a violent way. So many journalists have lost their lives in the hand of violent youth in the course of playing this dirty game. This is one of the many reasons why most media houses are always sanctioned by the regulatory agencies.

Another participant adumbrated that sponsored news content has a relationship with youth violence in that it often creates tension, disorder and violent attacks on the media houses or people who sponsored such news contents. Media houses have been burnt down or destroyed as a result of this kind of acts by violent youth. Thus, there seems to be a link between sponsored news content and youth violence in Nigeria.

A participant noted that sponsored news content have negative effect on youth violence. She observed that, media houses owners or practitioners` are looking for patronage and quick money. Anyone who can pay for their services is the right person to do business with and what he/she wants is what is aired. Most times out of the desperation to make money or please their pay masters, the news content is decided by their pay masters without recourse to the professional code or ethics. This is does not always go well for journalist, media houses and even the persons or organization whose names or businesses are painted in a bad light. When this occurs, violence is usually employed in form of revenge or revolt.

A participant said media houses with decisive pay masters end up with a bad name, lot of sanctions and court cases because sponsored news content is always directed at castigating or manipulating someone, businesses, a group of people or something competitive.

#### **What is the impact of selective media contents on youth violence in Nigeria?**

A participant believed that selective media content or news reportage gives half information or only what the media and their pay masters want to be aired to the public. Most times the general public may feel cheated or taken for granted if the media decide to filter or concealed vital required public information. This may end up with violence from the youth or aggrieved party

It was the opinion of one participant that selective news content has a hidden agenda. When media practitioners` begins to select certain news to air, it simply shows bias and most times unprofessionalism. This situation may lead to violence if a group feels that their interest is not carried along or are deprived of certain agitations. Selective media content covers up a lot of information or fact. This is unhealthy and capable of generating worries; trauma and frustration that if not well managed could result to violence.

Another participant argued that selective media may not be as negative as people see it. It is a professional practice in journalism to avoid divulging sensitive information that may cause problems in aired to the public. Selective media aim at reducing tension and create a peaceful atmosphere in the society. Unfortunately, it has it disadvantage which often times boomerang and end in violence because the public will always see it as if media practitioners collected bribe so as not to air certain news contents.

A participant conceived that selective media content impact negatively on youth violence in Nigeria. For instance, hundred people died the media reported six or decides not to report the news or even do so without the dead persons. This has a way of arousing suspicion and tension. The outcome of this kind of reportage is violence.

It was the opinion of another participant that selective media content is out of corruption or biases. Most times the media is being paid to report news in a certain way as to hide the truth from the public. When media house under report or refuse to air complete news content violence is bound to occur. It is convenient to say selective media content provoke violence, she added.

A participant observed that selective media content and youth violence are like room and parlour apartment. You can use one without the other. He said anytime the media decides to select news content, it is calling for violence or criminal aggression upon itself. To him, selective media content and youth violence goes hand-in-hand.

### **What is the consequence of overzealousness of media practitioners` content on youth violence in Nigeria?**

A participant argued that some Nigeria journalists are too desperate to be noticed or famous. This desperation and quest often make them to report news that is offensive or capable of creating tension just to make them name go viral as objective or fearless journalist. This mindless attitude has provoked anger, cost this country tons of lives and properties worth billions of Naira in most parts of the country.

Another participant observed with obsession that overzealousness of media practitioners to report certain news content has brought about violence in most situations. He cited instances where the journalist aired the new of the massacre in Odi in Bayelsa and Zakibiam in Benue State as well as the Nigerian Army Air Bus crash that was reported by particular media houses kook line and sinker few minutes after these occurrences that sparked violence. To her, media practitioners` who are overzealous should be bound from news gathering and reportage to forestall reprisal action or even violence.

It was the view of a participant that overzealous media practitioners tend to report unrefined and unbalanced contents that raised aggression in the minds of the public. The attitude is sine qua non to violence at all times and it is not good for this country that is managing to stay together as one.

One of the participants holds that overzealous Journalist air media contents that are either offensive, unbalanced or contradictory to gain cheap popularity or achieve certain gains. In which ever eye it is seen from, this acts is provocative and enhanced violence among youths in Nigeria. This has happened several times. In facts, most of those kinds of media houses or journalists/media practitioners are always victim of violent youths themselves. They either ends up sanctioned, bound/sacked or even burnt or destroyed.

A participant conceived that overzealousness of media practitioners` contents has consequences like youth violence. He believed that youth in Nigeria are already angry and are waiting at any slightest provocation to react. Most times this media practitioners allow themselves to be used and it has sparked violence severally in this country.

Another participant revealed that, overzealousness in anything in life is bad. It shows desperation and desire to achieve something nocturnal. Having said that, it has the ability and capacity to offend others or exhume anger and violence in others, he added. He went further to say that most young journalists in Nigeria are in the habit of doing that and they always get served in their own coin. Media practitioners overzealous has killed most journalists and encouraged youth violence in most situations and this is not a good thing to do.

### **7. Conclusion and recommendations**

The media has the role of socializing, educating, entertaining and advertising; these roles keep the public abreast on the latest developments in the society. When these functions are misused or neglected, it tends to encourage youth violence and gangsterism in our society. Based on the conclusions drawn from this study, the following recommendations are made to ameliorate the phenomenon:

- Government and media regulatory agencies must through effective law making and implementation addressed the root causes of mismanagement of media content to forestall youth violence in Nigeria.

- Conscious effort must be made by the government through its agencies to make laws as well as punish violators of uncensored movie content to avoid or reduce its influence on youth violence in Nigeria.

- Sanction and severe punishment should be meted on agent of sponsored news content capable of inciting youth violence in Nigeria.

- Selective media contents should be discouraged so as to ease the tension and aggression that leads to youth violence in Nigeria.

- Training and retraining of media practitioners will reduced the overzealousness of media practitioners` aggressive news content and eventually clamp down on youth violence in Nigeria.

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