

NEWSPAPERS COVERAGE OF DRUG ABUSE AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTHS: A STUDY OF VANGUARD AND DAILY TRUST



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Abstract

It is a common saying that the youth of every nation remains not only the hub, but hope for continued existence of such nation. This aphorism, no doubt, is profoundly truthful, yet, when the same hub of the nation's survival gets so addicted to drugs, sniffs and smokes away their lives, growth and survival becomes certainly difficult. Nigeria, today is indisputably at crossroads with the rate at which her youths get utterly involved in drugs – this therefore raises so much concern, and consequently calls for attention. Anchored on the agenda setting and framing theory, this study employs content analysis research design to investigate the extent that two Nigerian newspapers, (Vanguard and Daily Trust) covered issues of drug abuse among the Nigerian youth. The study arrived at five findings. The first finding showed that news on drug abuse among youths were not regular subjects in Vanguard and Daily Trust, at least within the period of the study. The second finding revealed that the newspaper did not give prominence to the activities and communication of drug abuse among Nigerian youths in terms of pattern of placement. The third finding showed that the nature of the newspapers' coverage on drug abuse among Nigerian youths is significantly favourable. The fourth finding discovered that Vanguard and Daily Trust newspapers had their reports center particularly on legal/moral and health frames. The fifth finding showed that Vanguard and Daily Trust focused more on issues regarding law and enforcement, drug related damage and court trial. Against the above findings therefore, the researchers concluded that despite the fact that Nigerian newspapers have given fair coverage to the issue of drug abuse, there still appears to be a gap that needs to be closed. The researchers consequently recommended that Nigerian newspapers intensify their commitment towards fighting drug abuse, through intensive and strategic reportage, as this will help elevate the issue to a public agenda.

Keywords: Drug abuse, Newspaper coverage, addiction, vanguard newspaper, Daily Trust.

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Introduction

Extant literature has demonstrated that drug abuse is a huge problem in different societies of the world (Adamson, Ogunlesi & Onifade, 2015, p.130). This social malady, research reveals, has to a large extent destroyed a number of youths around the world – Nigeria is not an exception (UNO, 2021). Incidentally, these young men and women are people who the society looks up to; citizens who are no doubt, leaders of societies.

On the other hand, the media – print media in particular is considered carrier of important social items (Ndolo, 2009. p.150), they through their reportage of certain issues set vital agenda for the society. In other words, as Nwosu and Duru (2018) argues, “the extent that certain topics are deemed important in societies may depend a lot on how much the media put such topics up as public agenda” Consequently, this study investigates the extent that *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers succeeded in covering issues of drug abuse among Nigerian youths, this is mainly with the view of identifying the extent that the issue of drug abuse has been publicly projected as an agenda.

Statement of Problem

The media stand in the very critical position of the society’s quest to understand herself and as well act meaningfully on the social realities surrounding such society. What the media therefore reports is what exists and as well, deemed as critical. On the other hand, what they fail to report may never be taken serious (Agba, 2002, p12). In other words, certain issues become gradually popular and of great importance, when they are reported by the media. In today’s Nigeria, one of such problems that has bedeviled the youth is that caused by drug abuse, this social quagmire no doubt raises huge concern that calls for empirical investigation. Against this backdrop therefore, this investigation was embarked on to discover the extent that Nigerian newspapers report this issue in their daily news coverage. More so, to find out the extent that they, as crusaders and watchdogs of the society, report the issue of drug abuse. The reason for this academic enquiry being that the degree that drug abuse is reported and/or framed in these newspapers will largely determine the extent that it becomes an agenda for discussion, and consequently attracting possible solutions from relevant quarters.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study was to investigate how *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers covered drug abuse among youths in Nigeria. In more specific terms though, the study sought the following:

1. To measure the frequency of *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* coverage of drug abuse among Nigeria youths.
2. To ascertain the level of prominence that *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* gave to the coverage of drug abuse among Nigerian youths.
3. To discover the nature of stories that *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* covered on drug abuse among Nigerian youths.
4. To find out how the newspapers framed the issue of drug abuse among the youths in Nigeria.
5. To ascertain the issues that *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* focused on in their coverage of drug abuse among Nigerian youths.

Theoretical Framework

The media framing and the agenda setting theories provide the theoretical prism through which this study is viewed. The framing theory can be interpreted as closely related to the agenda setting theory of mass communication (Uwakwe, 2010, p.188). However, while the agenda theory looks at the way the media helps in shaping social reality, the framing theory deals more with the fact that media coverage largely shapes the way people see issues. The concept of framing, Uwakwe (2010) explains "has led to a situation where media managers are seen as hidden persuaders, mind managers, electronic colonialists and media imperialists" What the above statement presupposes is that the press can frame how the public perceive reality. It might be instructive to note that news coverage does not call for people to take positions, but on the basis of what people learn from coverage, people do take positions (Uwakwe, 2010). The theories therefore enable people to "locate, perceive, identify; label events and occurrences" In other words, it is predicated on the assumption that the media give spotlight view of specific aspects of reality that directs audience attention to those aspects by promoting specific definitions, descriptions and/or analysis that capture the imagination and consequently forms the mental films by which media consumers cognitively respond to issues and events distilled from the world by the media (Obi, Okon, Mbazie, 2021, p. 667). The implication of the foregoing is that the media creates frames by which raw information is filtered and presented to the public. This is usually done with the purpose of focusing their attention on considered angles of the issue or event (Obi, Okon, Mbazie, 2021, p. 667).

Framing therefore, is a system of information processing and presentation whose structure enables the magnification of particular facets of an event or story by elucidating on the import and cause of event, issue or story while identifying the relevant actors, including whom or what should be held accountable. Framing theory seeks to identify and explain frames, how they are developed, their sources and their effect. Generally, however, frames function as highlighters or

moderators of key points about specific information subset. As moderators, they play down certain features of an issue which may be relevant, but for one reason or the other, considered dispensable. As highlighters, they magnify dimensions that are for one reason or the other considered indispensable. Lee, Liu & Cheng, (2018) provide a clear insight into the concept of framing thus: “frame explains how a specific piece of information is shown by the media to audience and how it is organised or structured to influences the mindset (perception) of people and similarly impacts their decision making on the topic which is reported by media. Framing sometimes is divided into the positive and negative frames, as well as equivalence and emphasis frames (Lee, Liu & Cheng, 2018 p.30).When an image is framed in a positive manner, such image or text is considered positive and vice-versa. On the other hand, equivalence frames provide equal alternatives and emphasis frames makes information simple and relevant. In summary, framing research considers how frames are constructed, disseminated and consumed by the audience. It also considers the dynamics that influence audience interpretation of received frames. This therefore explains the reason Igboeli, Ikegbunam, Ikinimoreh, and Nwanolue, (2017) argue that the basis of the framing theory is that “the media focus attention on certain events and then place them within a context that can impact on the beliefs attitudes and the behaviour of the recipients.” Based on the foregoing, and viewed from the perspective of the framing theory, it is in the view of the researchers, that until the press sees issues of drug abuse as unfavorable to the growth of the youth and society in general, and correspondingly frames them as such, they might not be able to properly lend their voice, and as it were, play the watchdog role they are expected to play in bringing these issues to the front burner for discourse and possible solutions.

On the other hand, the Agenda-setting theory again describes the ability of the news media to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda (McCombs and Reynolds, 2002). This happens when news item are covered frequently, and prominently until the audience begins to regard such issues as important. The theory was formally developed by McCombs and Shaw (1968) in the Chapel Hill study of 1968 American presidential election. The mass media can set agenda for the society, by deciding what topics people talk about” The media in other words can decide on what they think should be priority consideration, be it political, economic social, moral or other important issues. They set the tone and fix the rules, making certain issues to predominate discussions at all cost, as well as determine when in their view, the society had had enough, while they introduce another issue (Okunna & Omenugha, 2012). The underpinning factor according to Kosicki (2003, p.54) “is that the media easily elevate an issue to prominence just as they play down other issues”

Based on the conjectures of this theory, it becomes reasonably essential to discuss the present study within the core assumptions of the theory. It therefore becomes instructive to note that the media can do well to set the present level of drug abuse among the youths as a very important agenda. Put differently, till this issue is set as a very essential agenda, the government, both at the Federal, State, and maybe, Local Government might keep underestimating horrendous effect of drug abuse on our youths. So, in order to interpreting this work from the prism of the agenda setting theory, it becomes realistic to conjecture that "when the media dutifully projects, through Nigerian newspapers, the issue of drug abuse among the youths in Nigeria, they would succeed in making the issue public issues that will be overtly discussed not only by the media, but the citizens and the government as it were, and by this way, creating ways and policies to address the persistent challenge.

Understanding the Concept of Drug Abuse: Quick Overview

Drug abuse remains one of the most challenging social maladies of the 21st century, especially to the young and growing population (UNODC, 2005). The reason for the above submission is that today the growing population who supposedly are looked up to take over from the ageing generation get themselves enmeshed in the destructive claws of drug. Substance abuse is no doubt one of the greatest undoing of the present youth population.

A drug refers to a substance that could bring about a change in biological function through its chemical actions (Okoye, 2016, p.123). It is considered a substance that modifies perception, cognition, behavior, mood and general body function (Balogun, 2016, p.44). Therefore, the reason other than that of medical prescription constitutes drug abuse. Youths usually engage in this act due to peer influence, unemployment, divorce or separation of their parents, poverty, stress, and frustration among others (Amosun, Ige & Ajala, 2010). Chronic use of these substances can cause serious, and sometimes, irreversible damage to youths' physical and psychological development. Drug abuse is nothing but the misuse of psychoactive materials that exert their major effects on the brain resulting in sedation, stimulation or change in mood of person (Mageed, Nnamdi, Mustapha & Ladi, 2018, p. 98). According to the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime UNODC (2022):

Substance abuse remains a major public health problem all over the world. Recent data put the global estimate of people who injected drugs in 2021 at 13.2 million, 18 percent higher than previously estimated data. Globally, over 296 million people used drugs in 2022, an increase of 23 percent over the previous decade. Lately however, the number of people who suffer from drug use disorders, has skyrocketed to 39.5

million, a 45 percent increase over 10 years. Youth population are the most vulnerable to using drugs and are also more severely affected by substance use disorders in several regions. In Africa, 70 percent of people in treatment are under the age of 35.

There is no doubt that the above statistics is staggering and does not provide room for a better life among the youths. It might be instructive to note that today, substance abuse does not only expose the individual to major health problems, but serves as a predisposing factor for crimes. The involvement of Nigerians, especially the adolescents in drug abuse and trafficking or narcotic crimes, research has shown, impairs the country's image (both at home and abroad), as it has led to the execution of the lives of many Nigerians abroad (Botvin, 1995, Nyameh, Yakubu, Teru, & Titus, 2013). It is therefore the need to control the supply and at the same time, reduce the demand for narcotic drugs in Nigeria that led to the establishment of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in January, 1990 by the then Ibrahim Babangida administration (Nyameh, Yakubu, Teru and Titus, 2013). According to Oliha (2014, p.44) "majority of the Nigerian youths ignorantly depend on one form of drug or the other for their various daily activities including social, educational, political, moral and many other activities". Substances or drugs usually abused include: narcotics, analgesics, morphine, opium, heroin, brown sugar, pethedine: stimulants, cocaine, amphetamine, methamphetamine, depressants: alcohol, barbiturates, diazepam, hallucinogens d-lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), mescaline, phencyclidine, psilocybin and cannabis: ganja, charas, hash oil, etc. (National Institute of Health 2020).

In addition, Shanoji (2018, p.1) explains that "drugs could be classified into three broad categories that include: the "licit, illicit and undocumented drugs." The licit drugs he avers, include many prescriptive drugs such as antibiotics, stimulants, analgesics sedatives and some other over-the-counter drugs. The illicit drugs he continues, include some hard drugs like cocaine, Indian hemp, steroids, etc. While the undocumented drugs are those drugs that are hardly considered as drugs, but in reality they are. These drugs include the following: tobacco/nicotine, alcohol, colanut, bath salt, lizard excreta, adhesive solutions etc.

Drug abuse usually occurs when its use is not pharmacologically necessary, especially when used in the face of legal prohibition or when a socially acceptable beverage is used excessively (Odejide, 2000). Research has shown that although all age groups are affected by using, adolescents and teenagers are particularly affected (Fayombo & Aremu, 2000, p.233). In the present era, research has shown that misuse of marijuana has reached an epidemic level (Fayombo & Aremu, 2000, p.233).

Drug Abuse and the Youth: A destructive Menace

Research has shown that only in 2021, 15% of the adult population in Nigeria (around 14.3 million) reported a considerable level of use of psychoactive substances (Wada, Khalid, Shittu & Ibrahim, 2021, p.12). This statistics, research also reveal is much higher than the 2016 global average of 5.6% among adults (Kazeem, 2021, p.40). A survey led by Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the Center for Research and information on Substance Abuse with technical support from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and funding from European Union showed that "the highest level of drug use were recorded among people aged 25 to 39 years, with cannabis being the most widely used" Furthermore, the survey revealed that "sedatives like: heroin, metamorphine, methamphetamine, cocaine and non-medical use of prescriptions were also noted" It might be imperative to note that the above survey excluded the use of tobacco and alcohol. Further, Citing *Quarts Africa Report* on drug abuse, Kazeem (2019) argues that: "drug use habits in Nigeria has also devolved with young people gradually resorting to potent mixtures of several drugs at the high risk of fatal overdoses" For instance, gutter water" a widely consumed cocktail of drugs is a mixture of codeine, tramadol, rohypnol, cannabis and water or juice has become a common place among the youths. More worrisome is the facts that today, large number of Nigeria youths are turning to crude concoctions as alternatives, including smoking lizard's parts and dung, as well as sniffing glue, petrol, sewage, urine, in the name of becoming high. More recently, these reports show that these young men has turned to methamphetamine, a highly destructive drug also known as "mkpurummiri" in local parlance.

Sadly, drug abuse continues to pose a major risk among the youth and adolescents with physical and mental health complication. Irrespective of the risk associated with drugs, adolescents continue to use these drugs (Mamman, Tajuddin & Lian, 2016). The implication of the above submission is that the young men who supposedly are the fulcrum on which development is anchored and moved in Nigeria, waste their lives on drugs – this no doubt is a huge quandary.

Studies have shown that today in Nigeria, majority of youths depend on one form of drug or the other for various daily activities that include: social, educational, political and moral etc. Commenting on the dependence on drug among Nigerian students, who are predominantly youths between the ages of 18 to 30 years, Mamman, Tajuddin and Lian, (2014) citing Oshodi, Ajina and Onajole (2010) notes that "dependence and addiction characterised by compulsive drug craving remains one of the major consequences of drug abuse," Likewise, anecdotal evidence have shown that experiment with drugs during the adolescent age (11-25 years) is usually common (Mamman, Tajuddin & Lian, 2014). This

therefore explains the reason young people should be monitored by parents and caregivers as these years are particularly periods of experimentation. At this stage they use drugs for various reasons, including: curiosity and the desire to find out the effectiveness of a particular drug, to feel good, to reduce stress or to feel grown up (Nwaka, 2020, p.130). The use of tobacco and alcohol at young age has been identified to correlate significantly with the use of drugs (WHO, 2017).

Revealingly, research has also shown that drug abuse is not only a Nigeria problem, elsewhere around the globe, the menace of drug abuse has continued to affect different youth populations (Onaivi, 2009; UNODC, 2019). The British Office for National Statistics (2018) reports that: “12% of pupils, aged 11-15 had used drugs such as amphetamines” In Nigeria, Abudu (2008) reveals that “barbiturates are used particularly with adolescents with suicidal tendencies, rather than for addictive purposes” This might explain the reason this study is important at a period in Nigeria, when there is increased incidence of university undergraduates committing suicide (Onwuama, Ezeh-Aruah, Eze, & Okonkwo, 2020, p.120). Cannabis and Marijuana appears to be the most commonly abused drug by adolescents in Nigeria (UNODC, 2011). Drugs are everywhere in Nigerian cities; motor parks, streets, joints, universities campuses, uncompleted buildings etc. From a survey of such areas like Ring road Outlets in Benin City, Ajegunle in Lagos state, Mabushi in Abuja, Under Flyover in Onitsha, Anambra state, it was discovered that a number of youths are involved in intake of cannabis and other drugs (Abudu, 2008; Oshodi, Aina & Onajole, 2020).

Today a number of studies in psychology have demonstrated that there are a number of factors that contribute to drug addiction. Some of these reasons are anchored on the predication of a number of theories. Some of the emphases of these theories revolve around the fact that people have their reasons for depending on a particular type of drug. For example, the socio cultural theory posits that “drug abuse is determined by socio cultural values of people” For example, certain cultures permit consumption of alcohol and marijuana, while other cultures do not. Among the tribe of Nigeria, for example, Edo, Ijaw, Igbo, Ibibio, Urhobo, Itshkiri and Yoruba, alcohol is used in cultural activities. On the other hand, in the Northern part of Nigeria, no form of alcohol is allowed (Oluremi, 2012). Furthermore, the personality theory of drug abuse argues that there are certain qualities or characteristics in individual that abuse drugs. Such personality characteristics like: low tolerance of frustration, poor coping ability and low self-esteem, poor impulse control and high emotional dependence on other people are established to correlate with the use of drug. The theory therefore, argues that “people with these personality characteristics find it difficult to abstain from drugs (Oluremi, 2012). The biological theory of drug abuse states that the individual’s biological or genetic factors determine the level of vulnerability of

such individual to drug abuse, while the learning theory argues that people become addicted to drug use and abuse it as a result of conditional or social learning (Oluremi, 2012).

Sadly in the recent time, the different consequences of drug abuse among Nigeria youths has proven not only grossly devastating, but shameful. These consequences range from mental disorder to users dropping out from school; cultism, social violence, gang formation, internet fraud, armed robbery, 419, social miscreants (area boys and girls), lawlessness among youths, lack of respect for elders, rape, premature death and wasting of precious and innocent lives etc. (Mamman, Tajuddin & Lian, 2016, p.123). These social menace has no doubt destroyed, than help the Nigerian youth. Hence, the urgent need to bring this social abnormality to limelight with the view of getting it increasingly curbed, if not totally wiped out.

Factors that Lead to Drug Abuse among Nigerian Youths

A number of studies have been conducted on drug addiction and the reasons why young people are vulnerable to problem (Oshodi, Aina, & Onajole, 2010; Igwe, Ike & Akam, 2009, p.123). There is also ample evidence that most drug addicts started smoking from their youths (Igwe, Ike & Akam, 2009). As they grow older, they seek new thrills and gradually go into drug abuse (Oshodi, Aina, & Onajole, 2010). A nationwide survey of high school students reported that 65% of the respondents used drugs to have good time with their friends, 54% wanted to experiment to see what it was like, 20% to 40% used it to alter their moods, to feel good and relax, 16% of them made use of drugs to relieve tension and as well overcome their problems (Abudu, 2008, p.99). Although a number of factors have been identified to be responsible or drug abuse, no single factor is identified as solely responsible for it. However, research has particularly isolated the following factors as responsible for the abuse of drugs:

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or drug abuse, no single factor is identified as solely responsible for it. However, research has particularly isolated the following factors as responsible for the abuse of drugs. These factors include: curiosity and desire to find out the effectiveness of a particular drug, peer group influence, environment, promotion and availability, enjoyment, lack of parental supervision, socio-economic status of the parents, pathological family background (Igwe, Ike & Akam, 2009).

Efforts to Address Drug Abuse Menace among Nigerian Youths

Government efforts over the years to address the drug menace in Nigeria have achieved very negligible success. Illicit drug trafficking and consumption in the country increased significantly over the years. A survey conducted in 2019 shows that 44 percent of post primary school students (students over 12 years old) in the country had taken drugs in some form usually as tea or cigarette. One out of every ten students was also found to have taken *ganja* or *marijuana* (Kehinde & Oguntayo, 2019, p. 36). Cocaine consumption was also found to have formed part of the habit of secondary school children during that period. The UNODC (2018) report claimed that “criminal groups in West Africa, often led by Nigerians, have become deeply involved in the cocaine market in many Western European countries since 2005” Sadly, these groups were also said to be active in exporting such hard drugs like cocaine from Brazil, notably Sao Paulo, to destinations in Africa and Europe. Most of those groups are not organised hierarchically, but operate as independent units in loose networks (UNODC, 2018). Several factors were responsible for the rise in drug abuse and drug related crimes among the youths in Nigeria. One of such factors is the failure of governments’ effort to control the problem. To start with, the repeal of decree 20 and its replacement with decree 22 in July 1986, relaxed governments effort at prosecuting the drug war in a drastic manner (Onifade, 2020, p.12). Nevertheless, the government instituted other means of arresting the menace. One of such measures was the establishment of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, in 1989. The agency was empowered by the National Drug law Enforcement Decree 48 of December. They immediately embarked on the aggressive arrest of drug users, peddlers, barons and other drug offenders across the country (Ugwuoke, Mfong, & Omotola, 2019, p.10). Within the first year of its operations, the agency arrested about 250 drug traffickers. In addition to this, about 212 persons out of the 469 drug offenders arrested by the agency were prosecuted. Similarly, over 100 kilograms of illicit drugs were seized and destroyed by the agency (Ugwuoke, Mfong, & Omotola, 2019, p.10). The NDLEA however, has continued over the years to encounter problems in the prosecution of the drug war in the country due to corruption. More so, officers of the Agency have been implicated on several occasions to be involved in corruption over the years ((Ugwuoke, Mfong, &

Omotola, 2019, p.10). The above and so many other factors seem to hamper the success of NDLEA in curbing the menace of drug addiction among young men in Nigeria today.

Is there a way out?

There is no doubt that the government has tried in trying to see that this menace is eradicated or at least, minimally reduced, although their effort might not have proven very effective as expected. Various decrees against drug use have been promulgated in the past. This somewhat explains the reason why the drug law enforcement agency; NDLEA was established in 1989, although the agency has continued to give their best, there still appears to be a lot of work that they need to do (Maman, Othman & Lian, 2014, p.1) However, the Federal Government of Nigeria today seems to appreciate the fact that supply reduction efforts alone cannot solve the drug problem, hence the emphasis on drug reduction (Maman, Othman & Lian, 2014, p.1). The drug reduction directorate is charged with the responsibility of reducing the demand for illicit drugs. They are referred to as the counseling unit because they are in charge of reducing the demand for illicit drugs. The objectives of this directorate include the following:

Drug Abuse Prevention Education

This is geared towards providing factual information and learning experiences on drug problems. To this end, NDLEA and NERDC have come together, concluded the development of preventive drug education curriculum and infused its contents into relevant subjects at various levels of learning (primary, secondary and tertiary levels). While the implementation of this idea is in progress, the essence of this type of preventive education is to make sure that young people recognise the benefits of adopting drug free and healthy lifestyle. It will also provide them with skills that will enable them resist pressures to take drugs. Besides, the directorate will also encourage the launching of drug-free clubs in primary, secondary and tertiary schools so as to promote alternative activities to drug use among the youth (Maman, Othman & Lian, 2014, p.)

Public Awareness Campaigns

This approach aims particularly at involving community groups in drug abuse and trafficking prevention. It involves the use of traditional rulers, community opinion leaders, youth leaders, religious leaders, professional bodies, voluntary organisations, NGO's, etc to campaign against drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking. Community resources are mobilised towards prevention and social integrations programmes.

Treatment and Rehabilitation

In line with statutory responsibility of the Agency, this directorate is also charged with the responsibility of treating and rehabilitating people that have been devastated by drug abuse. Drug rehabilitation is predicated on the need to provide help to people identified as drug dependent persons

Research and Non-Governmental Organisation Liaison

Research is carried out on the trend, patterns and prevalence of drug abuse problems among different target groups. These researches include: school survey, hospital survey, trafficking survey and others. Data collected from these research efforts are analysed and produced as annual research report on drug abuse and trafficking. The reports are distributed to relevant Governmental, Non-Governmental, International Organisations, Corporate Bodies and Individuals involved in drug abuse and trafficking prevention in Nigeria (NDLEA, 2009).

It is presumed that when the above ideas are practically put into place, there would, in the shortest possible time, be noticeable result seen in the eradication and reduction of drug abuse among the Nigerian youth.

Methodology

Content analysis was chosen for this study as a result of the nature of data sought to be generated. These data are embodied in the by the newspaper issues sampled by the study and accessed via the analysis of the manifest newspaper content. The study population was. The population of the study are two national dailies (Vanguard and Daily Trust newspapers), published within a period of one year that ran from 3rd February 2020 to 3rd February 2021. The decision to select this period is based on the fact that the period was particularly the time that large number of youths were at home as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown, expectedly, these young men who were practically less engaged as a result of the lockdown would probably engage in other activities as a way of escape – one of such activities would likely be drug abuse, especially those youths who are already into drug use and maybe, few new ones who would want to try out the habit. Studies also shown that there was increase in such anti-social behaviours during the lockdown. It is therefore expected that the media would expectedly focus on this issue during that period (UNODC 2021; Amanda, Jim, Mason, Aloysius, Todd, Gregory & Graham, 2021)

The sample size of the study was 208 newspaper editions. This size was chosen based on the Basden and Wright's (1997) recommendation that selecting one edition per week would be appropriate for a newspaper study extending up to a period of six months – and this study extended to a year period. Hence for each of the two newspapers, 104 editions (one from each of the 52 weeks that ran

between February, 2020 to February 2021). These whole amounted to 104 editions.

The sample selection was conducted in two stages: the first stage involved selecting newspaper titles. Here the researchers looked out for major characteristics, first the market strength of the title, second the ethnic background of the owner, hence, the researcher purposively selected the *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust*. The second stage involved choosing particular editions of the newspaper titles. Here the researchers aim was to ensure that every day of the week, excluding Saturday and Sunday was duly represented. Thus the researchers began picking the first day that occurred within the first week of the study – Monday, February 3rd, 2021. Then moving to the second week, they chose Tuesday edition (February 11th), the third week, the Wednesday edition (February 19), the fourth week, (Thursday 27) and so on. This process continued up to the first week of February, 2021, where the Tuesday edition (February 1) was selected on the whole 52 for each of the two newspapers and 104 editions for the two newspapers became the sample.

The units of analysis for the study were the news stories, features, pictorials, editorials and cartoons. A coding sheet was used as the data collection instrument. The researchers were assisted by coders were first trained and an inter coder reliability conducted using the Kappa formula as put forward by Cohen (as cited in Lombard 2010). The test result stood at 0.96 which amounted to 96% reliability. Data was quantitatively analysed, using simple percentages.

Data Presentation

RQ: 1: To what extent did *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* frequently cover issues on drug abuse among Nigerian Youths?

Frequency was measured by examining the number of times reports on drug abuse among youths were published in the newspapers. Data generated in that regard are as presented in table one.

Table 1

News contents	<i>Vanguard</i>	<i>Daily Trust</i>
Editions with reports on drug abuse among the Nigerian Youth	44 (42.3%)	34 (32.7%)
Editions without reports on drug abuse among the Nigerian Youth	60 (57.7%)	70 (67.3%)
Total	104 (100%)	104 (100%)

Table one shows that for *Vanguard* newspaper, 42.3% of the editions had reports on the drug abuse among Nigerian youths, while a higher percentage, 57.7% of the reports had no reports on drug abuse. Similarly, *Daily Trust* newspaper had about 32.7% of reports on drug abuse while, about 70% of the reports had nothing. The foregoing therefore indicates that news on drug abuse among youths were not regular subjects in the newspapers, at least within the period of the study. This somewhat suggests that reports on drug abuse were not really viewed as imperative and critical to the nation by newspaper gatekeepers. Evidently, this finding to a large extent, reinforces such view expressed by Kenyagha (2010) that the media, especially, newspaper has not really given attention to issues that relate to drug abuse. In the same vein, Okoye, Agbim, Ohaji and Etumu (2021) hold similar view when they clearly note that the media has not actually given enough attention to the menace of drug abuse. This is irrespective of the fact that abuse of substances have over the years remained a huge set back to the growth of the Nigeria.

RQ: 2: What level of prominence did *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* accord to issues of drug abuse among Nigerian youth?

The researchers referred to table 2 and 3 below to answer research question 2.

Table 2

Prominence	<i>Vanguard</i>	<i>Daily trust</i>
Front Page	20 (21.6%)	22 (21.2%)
Back Page	20 (21.6%)	20 (21.6%)
Center Page	18 (17.3%)	19 (18.3%)
Editorial Page	10 (9.6%)	8 (7.7%)
Others	36 (34.6%)	35 (36.5%)
Total	104 (100%)	104 (100%)

Table 2 above shows that for *Vanguard* newspaper, 26.6% of the reports on drug abuse among Nigerian youths were front page of the newspaper, about 21.6% of the stories were found on the back page of the newspaper, the center page had about 17.3% of the stories in it, the editorial page reported only 9.6% of the stories, while about 34.5% of the stories were found on other pages. Similarly, the *Daily Trust* newspaper had about 21.2% of the stories on drug abuse on its front page, another 21.6% were on the back page, 18.3% of the stories were found on the center page, editorial page of the newspaper had about 7.7% of the stories on drug abuse, while the page other pages stood at 36.5% of the stories. The implication of the foregoing is that most of the stories appeared more on other pages more than the front, center, back and editorial pages.

Headline Size Table 3

Headline Size	<i>Vanguard</i>	<i>Daily Trust</i>
Large	10 (9.6%)	29 (27.9%)
Medium	15 (14.4%)	10 (9.6%)
Small	79 (76.0%)	65 (62.5%)
Total	104 (100%)	104 (100%)

Data in table 3 indicates that for *Vanguard*, about 9.6 % of the headlines were in large fonts, about 14.4% of them were in medium sized headlines and 76.0% of the headlines were in small font size. On the other hand, *Daily Trust* newspaper had 27.9% of the headlines in large fonts, 9.6% were in medium size and 62.5% were in small headlines. On the whole, the foregoing data indicate that the newspaper did not give prominence to the activities and communication of drug abuse among Nigerian youths in terms of pattern of placement.

RQ 3: What nature of stories did the *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* cover on drug abuse among the youth?

Nature of stories

Table 4

Nature of Stories	<i>Vanguard</i>	<i>Daily Trust</i>
Favourable	60 (57.7%)	68 (65.4%)
Unfavourable	33 (31.7%)	35 (33.7%)
Nuetral	11(10.6%)	1 (0.9%)
Total	104 (100%)	104 (100%)

The data above provides answer to research question 3. From the data, 57.7% of reports on drug abuse in *Vanguard* newspapers were favourable, 31.7% of the stories were unfavourable and only 10.6 of the stories were neutral. Similarly, for *Daily Trust* newspapers, about 65.4% of the reports were favourable, 33.7% were unfavourable ad only insignificant 0.9% were neutral. From the foregoing, it was clear that the newspapers reported stories on drug abuse among the youths favourably. In other words, what the above presuppose is that the stories were reported in a favourabe manner.

R.Q 4. How did *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* frame issues of drug abuse among Nigerian youths?

Table 5

Framing**Table 5**

Media frames	<i>Vanguard</i>	<i>Daily Trust</i>
Legal/moral frame	33 (39.7%)	30 (29.8%)
Health frame	28 (26.9%)	40 (38.4%)
Policy and governance frame	18 (17.5%)	18 (17.3%)
Blame frame	10 (9.6%)	12 (11.5%)
Others	15 (14.4%)	16 (15.3%)
Total	104 (100%)	104 (100%)

From the table above, it can be seen that in *Vanguard* newspaper, legal/ moral frame was 37.7%, health frame 26.9%, policy and government frame 17.5%, blame frame 9.6%, others 14.4%. For *Daily Trust* newspaper, the legal/moral frame was 29.8%, health frame 38.4%, policy and governance frame 17.3%, blame frame 11.5%, others 15.5%.

The implication of the data above is that *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers had their reports center particularly on legal/moral and health frames. In other words, the newspapers highlighted more of the legal and health implications of drug addiction more.

RQ 5. What issues did *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* focus on in their coverage of drug abuse among Nigerian youths?

Table 6

Issues	<i>Vanguard</i>	<i>Daily Trust</i>
Law and enforcement	29 (27.9%)	30 (28.8%)
Court trial	10 (17.3%)	19 (18.2%)
Drug related damage	26 (25.0%)	18 (17.3%)
Rehabilitation of victims	18 (17.3%)	20 (19.2%)
Others	13 (12.5%)	17 (16.3%)
Total	104 (100%)	104 (100%)

The data in table 6 shows that 27.9% of the report on drug abuse among Nigerian youths in *Vanguard* newspaper were on law and enforcement, 17.3% centered on court trial, 25.0% were on drug related damage, 17.3% was on rehabilitation of victims, while 12.5% were on other issues. For *Daily Trust* newspaper, 28.8% were on law and enforcement, 18.2% were on court trial, 17.3% were on drug related damage, 19.2% focused on rehabilitation of victims, while 16.3% were on other issues.

Going by the data gathered above, it is clear that *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* focused more on issues regarding law and enforcement (27.9% and 28.8%), drug related damage (25.0% and 17.3%) and court trial (17.3% and 18.2%) Less reports were gotten on other issues.

Discussion of Findings

The findings that came up in the study are instructive as they to a large extent provide deep insights into the pattern of newspaper reportage on drug abuse in Nigeria.

The first finding showed that newspaper reports on drug abuse among Nigerian youths were not regular, at least within the period of the study. In other words, the study lucidly indicated that the newspapers did not in any way give frequent coverage to the issues of drug abuse among the youths. This first finding is in agreement with Kenyaga (2014), who also discovered that the newspapers she studied in Nairobi, Kenya did not give frequent coverage to the issue of drug abuse among the Kenyan youths. Apparently, the discoveries above lucidly throw light to the argument raised by Okeye, Agbim, Ohaji and Etumu (2021) "that the Nigerian media (including newspaper organisations) have not essentially given frequent coverage to the menace of drug abuse. In other words, one might argue at this point that Nigerian newspapers have not really explored the postulations of the agenda setting theory, which supports frequent and prominent coverage of salient news items like: drug abuse as a way of bringing to fore such issues (McCombs 1968, cited in Okunna & Omenugha, 2012).

The second finding as well indicated that the newspapers did not give prominence to the issues of drug abuse. Interestingly, this finding, just like the first one, is also in agreement with Kenyaga (2014) who discovered that the newspaper she studied did not give prominence to the issue of drug abuse. Likewise, the finding above throws light to the fact that the Nigerian newspapers have on certain occasions, paid little attention to the issue of prominence, which remains a core variable in agenda setting theory (Okunna & Omenugha, 2012; Nwosu & Duru, 2012). The implication of this type of coverage therefore, is that issues that should have been projected as public agenda is downplayed – this somewhat does not portray a vibrant media.

Surprisingly, the third finding somewhat differs with the first two findings, as the authors discovered that the stories were reported favourably. However, the finding is in congruence with that of Duru and Nwosu (2018), who found out that the media gave favourable coverage to the issue of drug abuse. It is against the foregoing that the researchers infer that "irrespective of the fact that *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* did not give the stories on drug addiction frequent and prominent coverage, they on the other hand, reported them in a favourable (positive)

manner” The implication of this finding is that the media paid attention to the way the framed issues on drug abuse. In other words, it might be right to conjecture that Nigerian newspapers worked within the assumptions of the framing theory on their coverage of drug abuse.

Furthermore, the fourth finding shows that the newspapers had their reports center particularly on legal/moral and health frames. In other words, the newspapers focused more on the health and legal implications of the drug abuse – this finding to an extent is commendable, as such frames would bring to forefront the consequences of drug abuse to the youths, thereby raising the importance of dealing with such anomaly among the youths (Leeper & Slothus, 2018).

In the same manner, the fifth finding shows that *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* focused particularly on issues of law and enforcement, drug related damage and court trial. The present study is also in agreement with that of Nwosu and Duru (2018), as the authors found out that “the newspapers they studied focused more on issues of enforcement, drug related damage and court trial” It is therefore the view of the researchers that this angle of coverage is also praiseworthy, as the newspapers focused on the extent that law enforcement agencies put in effort in fighting the menace of drug abuse. Similarly, they paid attention to drug related damage (that is the extent that the habit of drug taking have caused societal harm), and court trial; (the extent that relevant authorities failed or put in effort in punishing offenders), From the foregoing, it appears that *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers covered issues on drug abuse more qualitatively than they did quantitatively. In other words, they paid more attention to the way they framed these stories than the way the projected it as public agenda. Usually, the implication of this type of newspaper coverage is that a number of important issues that would have ordinarily made it to the forefront are not given enough consideration – this, to a large extent, remains huge challenge. It largely demonstrates that Nigerian newspapers still has a lot to do with regards to their coverage of issues on drug abuse.

Conclusion and Recommendation.

From the foregoing, it is clear that Nigerian newspapers have not really done badly in their coverage of drug abuse among Nigerian youths, however, based on the findings of this study, it appears that there are still very vital areas that they are yet to address. It is therefore imperative that the newspapers intensify their commitment towards fighting drug abuse among Nigerian youths, through their strategic and well-planned reportage, In order to raise this issue as a public agenda

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