

JOURNALISTIC NARRATIVES THROUGH THE LENS OF A CAMERA: PARTICIPATORY PHOTOGRAPHY AND DRUG ABUSE INTERVENTION



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Abstract

The study investigated Journalists' experiences in the fight against drug abuse in Nigeria through participatory photography. The aim was to present the media as a panacea for ameliorating drug related crimes in Nigeria. The objectives were to find out journalists' experiences and constrains in fighting drug and substance abuse related crimes in Anambra State and their opinions of what new strategies could be employed by the media for more positive results. Anchored on Theory of Reasoned Action by Mark Fishben, the study adopted focus group discussion research design with structured questions as data collection instrument. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 27 Journalists for three sessions of focus group discussion from population of 570 journalists from Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Anambra chapter. Explanatory building Report was used to analyze data collected from the field. Results revealed participants' displayed pictures of people, items and places with narratives showing that media have delved into investigative reporting, increased visibility of group's sensitization programmes and produced effective pictorial communications in the fight against drug and substance abuse related issues. Participants enumerated unethical activities of unprofessional people in new media, inadequate funds and lack of timely support from stakeholders as major constrains, participants suggested photo /video filtering and restriction devices in all new media platforms to achieve ethical and positive pictorial communications, increased collaborations between media and stakeholders and internet data reward for exposure to drug communications. The researcher recommended implementation of participants' suggestions for improved pictorials in the fight against drug abuse.

Keywords: *Drug abuse, Media, Journalists, advocacy and Photography.*

Introduction

The looting and insecurity of lives and properties owing to the negative activities of drug and substance abuse addicts are on the increase. The United Nations

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Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2021)'s world drug report revealed that over 36 million people suffered from drug use disorders. At home, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) (2021) statistics revealed that 40% of Nigerian youths, age 18 and 35 years abuse drugs. This data reinforced that of Kazeem (2019) who observed that youths between the ages of 25 and 39 ranked highest among drug users.

Drug abuse refers to any wrong use of drugs to produce an effect that is contrary and beyond human control. Nwafor, Ezema and Igwebuike (2021) clarified drugs as curative measures for diagnosed illnesses which intake must be duly prescribed by certified medical practitioners. Substances are chemical and natural herbs that can be taken alone or in combination whose resultant affects produces cultivated behaviours that are anti human in nature. There are many drugs and substances that can be abused but this study will focus on indigenous ones found in the study area such as Metamorphine (Mkpurumiri) melted in water, paints, combination of tom-tom and La Casera drink, tobacco, Kola-nut, alcohol and others.

These escalating crimes of drug addicts have negative implication on a nation's image. It is worrisome; scholars who investigated the reasons for the high rate explained that perpetrators have moved from male to female, adults, youths and even teens. For example, previously, drug abuse was popularly known among the male gender but City of hope (2018) confirmed that both men and women are involved in the consumption of tobacco and alcohol with different trends. While Crosier and Marsch (2016) revealed that substance abuse exist not only among community members but include national and global nations. Damilola (2022) agreed to the rising rate of drug abuse which he attributed to peer pressure among others. Nwannennaya (2017) posits that the reason why cannabis is the most abused and trafficked drug in Nigeria is because it is locally cultivated and cheap in terms of price. National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIH), (2023) report listed other reasons why people abuse drugs and substances to include: poor parenting, relaxation purposes, feeling of excitement, to have confidence and to be connected. But the reverse is the case, some addicts end up with mental sickness, some live with damaged body organs, some are wasting in different prisons while some are rooming the streets and constituting nuisances to the community (NIH, 2023).

Nigerian government has come up with laws stipulating punishments for unlawful and illegal use of drugs and substances. Nigerian government also established bodies such as National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC), National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and National Orientation Agency (NOA) with mandates to join the fight against illicit drug use and substance abuse. These bodies together with the media, NGOs,

Individuals and other stakeholders have come up with various advocacy projects, sensitizing youths and community members on the nature, uses and consequences of drug and substance abuse. Reorientation and rehabilitation centers were also established for medical evaluation processes and counseling progresses to improve health and wellness of addicts and their victims.

In spite of all these efforts, reports of negative activities of drug and substance addicts, disturbing the peaceful coexistence of community members filled the air. The media that are one of the stakeholders in the fight against drug and substance abuse have been recently accused of propagating wrong use of drugs and substance through their published and broadcasted programmes, especially in the new media. In line with this, there is need to hear from the horses' mouth, the experiences, constrains and suggestions of way forward. It is against this background the researcher investigates journalistic narratives through the lens of a camera: participatory photography and drug abuse intervention.

Research Questions

The following questions were formulated to help the researcher achieve the set objectives of the study.

1. What are the journalists' experiences in drug abuse intervention projects?
2. What are the participants constrains?
3. What are the journalists' opinions of new strategies that the media can employ to ameliorate drug abuse related crimes?

Literature Review

The Nigerian Union of Journalist (NUJ) was founded on 15 March, 1955 in Lagos during the Nigeria's struggle for independence from British rule. It is affiliated to the Nigeria Labour Congress. Members are practicing journalist in various fields of media studies. The national body gave birth to state chapters which Anambra State chapter belongs. The NUJ Anambra chapter is made up of 570 journalist, men and women who are working in various media and media related organizations, with male gender dominating the population. The association has various chapels which include: Correspondents, Fides, UNIZIK FM, Local Government Information, Minaji, ABS Radio, Federated Onitsha, National Light, National Link Nnewi, National Orientation Agency, Federal Information, Awka Center, State Information, Living Christ Mission Onitsha, Purity FM, Orient Daily, Community News Reporters, NTA Awka, NTA Onitsha, Moment FM Federal Polytechnic Oko and ABS Television respectively (NUJ Anambra Chapter, 2023).

Photographic storytelling is the art of conveying stories, ideas and viewpoints through the medium of photography. American (2022) acknowledged

photographic storytelling as a great example of how photography is not just the practice of creating visually interesting or stunning pictures, but is about telling stories, real or fantasized. Various images appear in print newspapers and magazines as well as online media sites and micro blogging platforms. Ribound, (1967) the flower child that appeared in CBS news and Nick, (1972) Kim Phuc Napalm Attack that surfaced on AP Press are good examples of such images. Photographs tell a story when they incite an emotional response. They tell the stories of the people, the objects and the landscapes they portray. And they do it in a way that goes miles beyond taking accomplished pictures in the traditional sense (Jul, 2021). We need to see photographs of harm reduction, advocacy groups, variety of evidence-based recovery, families and communities fighting, responses to devastation in homes, mistakes made by editors, language-perpetuated stigma, represent people with addiction as human beings. Timely new stories with unusual, distinct, unexpected revealing hit close to home. This study seeks to tell the story of people, objects, and landscapes that journalist encountered in their cause of campaigns against drug and substance addictions in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Media campaign could be defined as a series of well-planned, persuasive media messages intended to create awareness and sensitize the audience on a given issue of social importance. Dunu and Ezepue (2014, p. 73) observed that “mass media campaigns have been identified by scholars as one of the foremost channels capable of communicating information, increasing awareness, and affecting a large number of people”. The media have been used throughout the ages to mount awareness campaigns either for or against a phenomenon considered to be harmful, beneficial or necessary for the audience of mass communication. In doing this, the mass media channels of radio, television, newspaper, magazine and the new media are employed.

Through these media, drug and substance abuse campaign messages are beamed on the audience of mass media, particularly the youths who are the most vulnerable population. The utilization of mass media to mount campaigns against drug abuse is premised on the enormous reach, power and influence which the media possess. Pointing to the power of the mass media as a central tool in transmitting health information to the public, Kogah and Nwadiaro (2011) observed that the level of public engagement needed to control health challenges underscore the role of communication in disseminating information on the dangers to the world so that as informed citizens, people would be in a position to take decisions necessary to safeguard their health.

Message content is important for effective media support in drug abuse control. Vague message and message showing where, how to use and cost of drugs can turn out to be counter-productive. Such media stories may not serve the

purpose of drug abuse control. Some prevention teaching aids may as well contain subtle messages that oppose the intent of the teaching. People inclined to drug and substance abuse look for justifications for their unacceptable behaviours. Some media reports, carry information, photographs and illustrations of drugs that may convey the message never intended by the author or contributor. Hilliard (2019) posits that new media sites such as Snapchat, Facebook and Instagram create platforms for viewers' exposure to unacceptable behaviours, showing posted pictures of celebrities such as Cardi B., Justin Bieber and Drake drinking and getting high. Youths are being confused looking at these social media influencers and are deceived into thinking that drug and substance abuse is appropriate.

Theoretical Review

The researcher anchored the study on the theory of reasoned Action propounded in 1967 by Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen. It was developed in 1975 and was used to test human behaviour in 1980. This theory explains that human behaviour is under the voluntary control of an individual. It is hinged on the premise that the most immediate determinant of a person's behaviour is his/her behavioural intention. It also posits that intention in turn, is a joint function of one's positive or negative feeling, leading to either perform or not to perform the action in question. This theory highlights intentions by focusing on attitudes towards risk reduction, response to social norms and behavioural intentions vis-à-vis risky behaviour (UNAIDS, 1999, cited in Asemah, Nwammuo and Nkam-Uwaoma, 2017).

When the theory was criticized, that behaviour is not under volitional control, it was modified to accommodate perceived behaviour control. This modification as well brought about a change in name: from theory of reasoned action to theory of planned behaviour (Wermer, 2004). Many scholars have leaned on the theory of planned behaviour successfully to achieve their set objectives: scholars like Terry, Hogg and White (1999) used it for predicting of behaviours, Rogers, Lambon, Pant, Hodges and Patterson, (2002) used it for investigating health related behaviours, Bledsoe (2005) leaned on it to investigate exercise motivations. Ababneh, Ahmed and Dedousis, (2022) used same theory for predictors of cheating in online exams among business students during the covid pandemic.

The researcher considered this theory suitable for this study because the researcher seeks the actions of journalists taking and displaying one photograph that reflects their experiences in the fight against drug abuse, telling stories behind the photograph and the importance of the photograph to them. The

narratives aimed at showcasing media as panacea for ameliorating the scorch of drug and substance abuse related crimes in the study area.

Empirical Review

American addiction centers report (2023) in their study titled “Are *television* shows raising *awareness* about important drug issues? Or are they making light of *drug use* and addiction”, used interview and content analysis research method to investigate how the media and Television influence drug use. The objectives includes: to know if particular shows are more likely to feature substances in their storylines, to determine which shows mentioned particular substances most frequently. Findings revealed that many depictions of drug and alcohol use on TV underscore the serious consequences of substance abuse; more lighthearted depictions can desensitize viewers to the toll that drug use takes. **Television programs relay mixed messages about drugs**, leaving viewers – especially young ones – uncertain about the real risks and consequences. The present study filled the geographic knowledge gap by bring investigation down to Anambra State, Nigeria.

Thomson, (2019) in their study titled “In Front of the Lens: The Expectations, Experiences, and Reactions of Visual Journalism’s Subjects”, used triangulation research method, specifically: nonparticipant observations, word association exercises, in-depth interviews and photo-elicitations to investigate the expectations of news media audience of visual journalists and how the audience perceived being photographed and video-recorded in a news media context. Findings revealed among others that perception is quite fluid and can be affected by identity, habituation, and emotionally valence experiences. The research and the present one relate in terms of using photojournalism concept in evaluating actions and the reason behind those actions.

Mbuthia, Wanzala, Hgugi and Nyamogoba (2017) evaluated the effectiveness of alcohol and drug abuse awareness campaigns among University students in Kenya using quasi-experimental research method. The study was done to determine the effectiveness of alcohol and drug abuse awareness campaigns on behaviour change among first year undergraduate students using quasi-experimental research method. The study used baseline survey involving 473 first year undergraduate from two public universities in the coastal region of Kenya. The universities were then allocated to either experimental or control group. Intervention of awareness campaigns were carried out in one of the universities for a period of one year after which an end-line surveys involving 387 students was done. The authors collected data using self-administered questionnaire. The scholars found that there is high prevalence of substance use with alcohol being the most used substance at both baseline and end-line surveys and concluded that

information awareness campaigns against substance abuse alone are not effective in reducing uptake of substance use among university students. The scholars recommended the need to devise more effective strategies to control substance abuse. The above study is different from the present study comparing the two different objectives and methodologies.

Allara, Ferri, Bo, Gasparini and Faggiano (2015) carried out a study titled "Are mass-media campaigns effective in preventing drug use?" using systematic review of randomized and non-randomized studies. The objective of the study was to determine whether there is evidence that mass-media campaigns can be effective in reducing illicit drug consumption and the intent to consume. The authors searched four electronic databases (MEDLINE, EMBASE, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses A & I and CENTRAL) and further explored seven additional resources to obtain both published and unpublished materials. The study identified 19 studies comprising 184,811 participants; pooled analyses and narrative synthesis provided mixed evidence of effectiveness. The study recommended caution in disseminating mass-media campaigns tackling drug use. The above study and the present one are similar in the sense that they both aimed at finding how media has been effective in the fight against drug and substance abuse but differ in adopted methodology and approaches. The above study adopted document analysis approach while this study adopted questionnaire and focus group discussion approach.

Knowledge Gap: Reviewed studies were done in different geographical areas, using different population, sample size, sampling techniques and methodologies while the present study will fill the gap of in-depth investigation using journalist from specific NUJ chapter: Anambra State, who are the key players, they wear the shoe and the story will come out better from them through the lens of their cameras and participatory photography.

Research Methodology

Area of Study

The research was carried out in Anambra state, Nigeria. Anambra is a state in Southeastern Nigeria. Most people in Anambra state are known for their business leverage. There are media organizations owned by federal government, state Government, mission and individuals where the study population works.

The population of the study is 570 journalists in Anambra state, Nigeria. This figure was obtained from Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Anambra chapter (2023) population register. The figure is a summation of all the journalists in the

twenty chapels that made up NUJ, Anambra Chapter, as shown in the population distribution table below.

Table 1: Population Distribution

Chapel	Total
Correspondents	31
Fides	18
UNIZIK FM	38
Local Government Information	71
Minaji	11
ABS Radio	41
Federated Onitsha	16
National Light	20
National Link Nnewi	25
National Orientation Agency	31
Federal Information, Awka Center	14
State Information	120
Living Christ Mission Onitsha	10
Purity FM	12
Orient Daily	15
Community News Reporters	13
NTA Awka	41
NTA Onitsha	9
Moment FM Federal Polytechnic Oko	20
ABS Television	14
Total	570

Source: NUJ Anambra Chapter (2023)

The sample size for the study is 27. Multi-stage sampling technique was adopted in selection of participants for the three sessions of the focus Group Discussion. Firstly, the researcher used clustering sample technique to group the chapels of NUJ, Anambra chapter into three senatorial districts of Anambra State: Anambra North, Anambra central and Anambra South. This conformed to Owuamalam (2012) who posits that cluster sampling helps to divide an entire population into identical units. The researcher used simple random sampling without replacement to give every chapel of NUJ, Anambra chapter in the three senatorial districts equal opportunity to be selected. The following chapels were selected: ABS Radio representing Anambra Central, NTA Onitsha representing Anambra North and National Link Nnewi representing Anambra South. The researcher applied purposive sampling technique to select nine journalists who are willing to

participate in the focus Group Discussion from each selected chapels of NUJ, Anambra State Chapter.

The instrument used in collecting data is structured questions. The structured questions were validated using content/face value method. The reliability of the measuring instrument was measure using test-retest method. Raw data collected during Focus Group Discussion (FDG) session were presented and analyzed using simple dummy table and explanation building report.

Table 6: Dummy Table for different sessions of focus group discussion (FDG)

Date	13th, 14th and 15th June, 2023
Time	9.30am to 11.15am
Venue	NTA Onitsha, ABS Radio Awka, National Link Nnewi
Issue	Media as panacea for drug/substance abuse related crime
Number of participants	Nine (9) in a session, total 27 for three sessions.
Problem identification	Media; panacea for drug and substance abuse related crimes
Consensus on action	Stakeholders should collaborate with media.
Persons/organization to follow action	NDLEA, media, community leaders, opinion leaders, government, NGOs
Time frame evaluation decided	One year
Mode established for evaluation	Monitoring crime rate in the study area.
Follow up on defaulter	legal and persuasion
Challenges/constrain	Bad terrain, participants' attitude, time and fund constrains.

Discussion of Findings Using Explanation Building Report and the Dummy Table

After receiving the participant photos, a Focus Group Discussion was conducted with all the participants where they displayed their photos and shared reasons why they took the photos and the story behind each photo. The discussion was in English language and as such, there was no need for interpretation. The participants refused to be photographed or being recorded for security reasons since they are working with different media here in Anambra, where their voices can easily be identified. In view of this, the researcher resorted to note taking with

the help of a trained assistance. The photos were displayed on a large table while the participants sat round the table.

Answer to Research Question one: What are the journalists' experiences in drug abuse intervention projects? To answer this question, the researcher used question numbers 1, 2 and 3 in the question guide: display and explain your picture to us, what are the stories behind this your picture? And why is this image important to you?

The participants through their displayed photographs revealed that media have increased the visibility and strength of government, organizations and individual's efforts in the fight against drug/substance abuse. They have been following the professional ethics in the reportage of drug and substance abuse. They are involved in investigative reportage, creation, editing and presentation of meaningful graphics used for jingles, documentaries and announcements that arouse the interests of community members during drug and substance abuse sensitization campaign. For example:

Image 1: Assessment of Participant's Displayed Photo



Source: Fieldwork (2023)

The image above revealed participant's displayed photo and response: *These items in this picture are drug and substances being abused. It is a shocking discovery of investigative news reporting, showing that some people who sit round the table enjoying their drinks and table water in beer parlours in our communities are Mkpurumiri addicts moving around unnoticed. It awakens the huge task ahead for crime reporters.*

Image 2: Assessment of Participant's Displayed Photo



Source: Fieldwork (2023)

The image above revealed participant's displayed photo and response: *This is a reflection of drug abuse sensitization campaign in Anambra state.*

Answer to Research Question Two

To answer this question, the researcher used question number 4 in the question guide: in the course of fight against drug and substance abuse, have you encountered any challenge?

All the participants enumerated many constraints such as: unprofessional individuals who have access to social media such as YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter and WhatsApp, through their unethical postings are exposing the masses to activities of addicts that are capable of misleading people. Limited sponsorship for drug and sensitization programmes leading to commercialization, inadequate support from community leaders and opinion leaders. For example, a participant responded thus:

Participants: *Yes, of course, and it is the challenge of upholding the ethics of journalism. In social media, uploaded photos and videos are almost promoting wrong use of drugs; such communications did not pass through Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) for approvals.*

Participant: *In some communities, when prominent and influential persons and their relatives are involved in drug/substance abuse related crimes, the reportage is swept under the carpet and any media practitioner who tries to investigate the issue do not get needed supports.*

Answer to Research Question Three

What are the journalists' opinions of new strategies that the media can employ to ameliorate drug abuse related crimes? To answer this question, the researcher used question number 5 in the question guide: what else do you think the media could do to reduce drug and substance abuse?

Participants put up many suggestions such as inclusion of technological devices for filtering and restricting unethical pictures and videos in all social media platforms and use of effective pictorials and short video/movies in communicating drug and substance abuse related matters among others. Hear from the participants

Participant: *Majority of this generation cannot sit down to read nor watch programmes broadcasted through the traditional media. They are interested in short and precise pictures and videos which they resort to in tweets, games, films and others. The media can use this avenue to reach the youths.*

Participants: *You hear youths speak of “surfing” (transfer of airtime and mobile data). My opinion is that internet data sponsorship should be inculcated in pictorial viewership of drug and substance abuse media communications so that exposure will be rewarded with free data sponsorship.*

Participant: *This generation loves music of various genres, trendy photos and movies/films and can easily access them using their mobile phones and laptops. Stakeholders in film industries and award-giving organizations can sponsor creative pictures from the media for trendy pictures and movies accompanied with various genres of music*

Discussion of Findings

The study aimed at investigating journalistic narratives of drug abuse intervention experiences through the lens of a camera and participatory photography in Anambra State Nigeria.

Research question one investigated the participants’ experiences in drug and substance abuse intervention projects. Findings revealed through displayed pictures of people, items and places and accompanied narratives, that all the participants were involved in various drug abuse intervention projects. This conformed to the previous work of American Addiction Centers (2023) report that the media (Television) depicts drug and alcohol uses: some of the message elements are well structure to produce good effects while the lighthearted depictions underscores the serious consequences of drug and alcohol use and can desensitize viewers. Again, the findings conformed to one of the propositions of planned behaviour that the intention to perform behaviour is best predictor that a desired behaviour will actually occur. In order to measure it accurately and effectively, intent should be defined using the same components used to define behaviour which are action, target, context, and time. Attitude and norms, described below, influence one’s intention to perform a behavior. The journalists all worked hard for one intention: ameliorating drug and substance abuse related crime using media channels and tools effectively.

Research question two investigated the participants constrain in the fight against drug and substance abuse. Finding reveals that unethical activities of unprofessional people uploading videos and photos on social media, lack of funds and sponsorship and commercialization of media programmes were major constrains. This finding conformed to Hilliard (2019) who posits that new media sites such as Snapchat, Facebook and Instagram create platforms for viewers' exposure to unacceptable behaviours, showing posted pictures of celebrities such as Cardi B., Justin Bieber and Drake drinking and getting high. Youths are being confused looking at these social media influencers and are deceived into thinking that drug and substance abuse is appropriate. This is also in line with one of the propositions of reasoned action, that intent should be defined using the same components used to define behaviour which are action, target, context, and time. Attitude and norms influence one's intention to perform a behavior.

Research question three sought to investigate journalists' opinions of new strategies that the media can employ to ameliorate drug abuse related crimes. Findings revealed participants' perception of internet data sponsorship to be inculcated in pictorial viewership of drug and substance abuse media contents: rewarding exposure with free data sponsorship. Stakeholders to collaborate with media in producing effective pictorial depictions, emojis, cartoons, games and movies for sensitizing and other communications relating to fight against drug and substance abuse. Again there is need for inclusion of technological devices for filtering and restricting unethical postings in all social media platforms. This conformed to Thomson, (2019) that perception is quite fluid and can be affected by identity, habituation, and emotionally valence experiences. Pictures can be effective for communications relating to drug and substance abuse issues when they are updated and adopted to match the changing patterns of abuse and addictions observed in our communities. This also conformed to Shrivastava, (2000) who advocates for use of multi-media campaign strategy and collaboration between media, policy makers, medical community and entertainment industry for effective fight against drug (tobacco) abuse. This is in line with one of the propositions of the theory of reasoned action, that intention is a joint function of one's positive or negative feeling, leading to either to perform or not to perform the action in question. Here, intention to reduce drug and substance abuse depends on all stakeholders' responses to achieving positive social norms and behavioural intentions.

Conclusion

When the participants' photographs and narratives were presented, the researcher concluded that the media have used pictures to delve into investigative reporting,

increased visibility of group's sensitization programmes and production of effective pictorial communications in the fight against drug and substance abuse related issues but these positive achievements were thwarted by the activities of unprofessional persons' uploaded pictures and videos in the new media. The media also experienced inadequate funding and timely support from stakeholders. These are the contributing factors for increased looting and insecurity of lives and properties owing to the negative activities of drug and substance abuse addicts in Anambra state.

Recommendations

Encouraged by the above findings, the researcher recommended that:

1. There should be photo/video filtering and restriction devices in all new media platforms to achieve ethical and positive pictorial communications of drug and substance abuse related issues.
2. The media should intensify their efforts in production of effective media contents (pictures display in cartoon series both in print and broadcast, instructive bill boards and fliers to be placed within the reach of all ages especially the youths, emojis that are related to drug abuse sensitization, and others
3. Provision of adequate funds and support by stakeholders to improve collaborations with media especially in the production of effective pictorials to fight against drug and substance abuse

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributed to existing knowledge on how to improve the fight against drug and substance abuse in Nigeria using camera lens and pictorials.

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