

Date of Receiving: 02.03.2026**Date of Publication: 07.07.2026****NEWSPAPER REPORTAGE ON ERADICATION OF FEMALE GENITAL CUTTING (FGC)
IN SELECT NIGERIAN MAINSTREAM NEWSPAPERS****Author(s)**

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Abstract

Female genital cutting is illegal and a violation of human rights. Despite promulgation of laws to promote its cessation, the detrimental practice is still pervasive among Nigerians. However, this paper examined the role of newspaper in eradicating female genital cutting (FGC) in Nigeria. 112 newspapers comprising *The Punch* and *The Guardian* were analysed for the study. This study was anchored on framing, agenda setting and social responsibility theories. Coding sheets were subjected to statistical test and analyzed using descriptive statistics of simple percentage. The result of the finding indicated that the selected newspapers did not give adequate prominence to FGC. The stories were positioned within the inside pages of the newspapers. Also, it was revealed that straight news and feature stories were the major format used in reporting FGC in the newspapers. Similarly, negative direction stories were adopted in reporting FGC in the newspapers. The papers reported less about solution towards eradicating FGC. There were no significant stories about enforcing law against FGC in Nigeria. In conclusion, the study established shortcoming in the functions of mass media in agenda setting and information dissemination in the campaign against FGC. Hence, issues relating to Female genital cutting should be frequently reported and made available in pages of newspaper for review and discussion. Prominence should be given to Editorial and Features that can help raise awareness about FGC and prompt government to take action. Educative articles on the health hazards and legal implication of FGC act to be published regularly by the media.

Keywords: *Female genital cutting, Newspaper, Framing theory, Agenda Theory, Social responsibility theory*

Introduction

The media is an essential tool for increasing public awareness and spreading information that influences attitudes and opinions. The phrase "mass media" encompasses a broad spectrum of media technologies that disseminate information to a diverse, geographically dispersed audience. Media that are used for communication include radio, television, newspapers, and so forth (Pushparaj, 2014).. The media is a powerful tool for persuasion that influences decision-makers' opinions as well as the discourse of the general population. The media is fundamentally an instrument for social awareness and mobilisation, as well as for obtaining and sharing information (Nworgu, Awaeze, & Amadi, 2011). However, newspapers are an essential medium that can be used to promote and mobilise opposition to harmful and cruel cultural and societal norms. As a mass medium, newspapers are responsible for educating the public about the negative effects of various harmful traditional practices and societal ills..

One of these social evils that Nigerian culture should remove is female genital cutting, often known as female genital circumcision or female genital mutilation. Female genital cutting is defined by the World Health Organization as any method, whether performed for artistic or other non-clinical purposes that lead to the incomplete or total scrapping of the outer female sex organ or a wound to the female private parts (WHO, 2022). Research indicates that female genital cutting predates both Islam and Christianity. It was believed to have served as a distinguishing characteristic among ancient Egyptian nobility. A recent estimate shows that women and girls that had experienced female genital cutting (FGC) globally run to about 200 million (UNICEF 2016). Although there is evidence that the practice is also common in western nations, particularly among immigrants from practicing nations, the bulk of people who are impacted by or at risk of it reside in Africa and Asia (Latham, 2016). Despite the fact that female genital cutting is found in over twenty eight African countries and some remote communities across the globe, the practice is most common in Nigeria, Eritrea, Egypt, the Central African Republic, Mali, Sudan, and the northern region of Ghana, where it has long been a customary and cultural practice among many ethnic groups (UNICEF, 2016).

Nigeria has roughly the highest rate of female genital cutting worldwide due to its vast population, which accounts for approximately 25 percent of the 115–130 million circumcised women globally (Okeke, Anyaehie & Ezenyeaku, 2012). In Nigeria, female

genital cutting is an initiation ceremony that can take place during childhood, youth, or adolescence. Additionally, it can be performed before wedlock, at first pregnancy, or following her demise. It is important to remember that female genital cutting is allegedly common among people of various socioeconomic backgrounds in the country, and among different African religious sects (Dike, Ojiyi & Chukwulebe, 2012).

In addition to its detrimental effects on health, FGC has been acknowledged by a few local and international legal instruments as one of the most heinous methods to violate the fundamental rights of women and female children (Safie, Constant & Kando, 2023). Ofor and Ofole (2015) stated that female genital cutting is associated with several health hazards and consequences. The risk of HIV may increase for female genital cutting. Furthermore, almost everyone who has had female genital cutting has experienced the procedure's side effects, which include discomfort and bleeding. Other effects include shock, haemorrhage, acute pain, and psychological impacts (WHO, 2016). Moreso, the long-term health risks include clitoral neuroma, keloid development, infections, delivery problems, foetal harm, fear of men, sexual difficulties, and mental health problems.

The human rights, health, and integrity of females are fundamentally violated by FGC, both domestically and internationally (Abdulcadir, Margairaz, Boulvain, & Irion, 2011; Karmaker, Kandala, Chung, & Clarke, 2011). Eight of Nigeria's 36 states as well as the Federal Capital Territory have reportedly enacted laws that forbid female genital cutting. They include Rivers State, Bayelsa, Abia, Delta, Cross-River, Edo, Ogun, and Osun (UN, 2013). Female genital cutting is not growing less as the population is expanding, despite efforts to end the practice and the health problems associated with it. If Nigeria is to redeem its pledge to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), which sought to end all injurious procedures, involving female genital cutting, as part of the plan to achieving equal rights and strengthening all female gender, then myths and misconceptions about female genital cutting must be addressed. In view of the aforementioned, this study examined how newspapers can raise public awareness of the practice of female genital cutting and work toward its abolition in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

According to UNICEF (2022a), Nigeria is rated third highest in the practice of FGC globally with an approximate figure of 19.9million affected women, despite UNICEF's warning concerning FGC 2022's International Day of Zero Tolerance, which focused on "Accelerating Investment to abolish Female Genital Cutting." According to UNICEF, the prevalence of female genital cutting among Nigerian girls aged 0–14 has risen from 16.9% in 2013 to 19.2% in 2018, a "worrying trend." This data indicates that despite the efforts of numerous governmental and non-governmental organisations and the enactment of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act 2015, FGC continues to occur in Nigeria.

Given the conditions in which most procedures are carried out, female circumcision poses a risk to women's health, with potential short- and long-term health issues as well as psychological effects (Ilesanmi & Ilesanmi, 2018). The mildest type of 'clitoridectomy' is anatomically equivalent to amputating the penis. It thus remains a highly contentious matter and so concerning that the harmful practice persists despite efforts to encourage its cessation. In light of the aforementioned, this study examined how newspapers can raise public awareness of the incidence of FGC and work toward its abolition in Nigeria. It is based on the above that this study examined the roles of newspaper in eradicating Female genital cutting in Nigeria.

Research Questions

- I. What is the frequency of coverage of Female genital cutting in the *Punch and a Guardian* newspapers?
- II. In what format are stories on FGC presented in the selected Nigerian newspapers?
- III. What is the direction of coverage of FGC in the selected Nigerian newspapers?
- IV. What is the level of prominence given to stories on FGC in the selected Nigerian newspaper?
- V. In what ways do the selected Nigerian Newspapers provide adequate guidelines/procedure towards controlling/eradicating Female genital cutting in Nigeria?

Literature Review

Practice of Female Genital Cutting in African Countries

Female genital cutting, commonly referred to as female circumcision, is defined by the World Health Organization (2016) as any non-medical treatment that involves the partial or whole scrapping of a woman's exterior sexual organ or any damage to her reproductive organs. While Osayande (2015) defined it as any tampering with the perfect outlook of a woman's outer sexual organ using a razor blade, knife, or any piercing tools for the purpose of reducing the size of the clitoris or bring about a total extraction of the vulva. Berg and Underland (2014) defined it as any operation involving the cutting of the clitoral foreskin and fore top of the clitoris, cutting of the entire clitoris, and occasionally the labial minora.

Globally, females who have had their genitals removed runs to roughly 200 million. According to UN (2013) estimate, eighty percent of these occurrences occur in Africa, where 28 African countries are home to an estimated 55 million girls under the age of fifteen who are impacted by this detrimental practice. The majority of FGC cases occur in central, northern, western, and eastern African nations. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) reported that in 2013, the frequency of FGC was over 80% in eight of 54 African nations. With an incidence rate of 98%, Somalia led the pack, followed by Guinea, Djibouti, and Egypt, all of which had rates above 90%. According to Purity, Maryjoy, Kalondu, Karani, Rawnaq, Al-Rousan, Kroll, Brún, & McAuliffe (2022), the incidence rates in Mali, Sierra Leone, Eritrea and Sudan were 80% or greater. A 2018 National Population Commission poll found that 20.8% of Nigerians undergo FGC. Nonetheless, there are significant regional differences in the incidence of FGC, with the northwest having the lowest prevalence and the southeast having the greatest.

Incidence and Prevalence of Female genital cutting in Nigeria

The number of females who have had genitals removed at some point in their life is known as prevalence, whereas the percentage of females who have had the procedure within a given time period is known as incidence. Although it is difficult to assess the prevalence rates of FGC in Nigeria, the results of a research carried out by the Directorate of Health Services showed that the practice is common there (NCBI, 2023). According to other research, Nigeria is rated high for FGC instances worldwide due to its massive population (WHO, 2019). It is projected that the increase in the prevalence rate of FGC accounts for approximately 25% of the 115–130 million circumcised women

worldwide (NCBI, 2023). The literature claims that just one of Nigeria's six major ethnic groups—the Fulani—does not practise female genital cutting. The Yoruba, Hausa, Ibo, Ijaw, and Kanuri are the others who do.

Nigeria has the third-highest rate of FGC among women and girls, behind Ethiopia and Egypt, according to UNFPA-UNICEF data. Research indicates that women comprise around 52% of Nigeria's population, which consists of more than 150 million individuals. Women and girls who have undergone FGC or are in danger of experiencing it in Nigeria, fall between the ages of 15 and 49, where the prevalence rate is 24.8%. 41% of adult girls in Nigeria have undergone female genital cutting; the Southern zone has a higher incidence rate than the Northern zone, which ironically engages in FGC less frequently but in a more brutal way (UNICEF, 2016).

UNICEF (2022b) reports that the North East had the lowest prevalence (2.9%), whereas Katsina State in the North West reported the lowest frequency (0.1%). A breakdown of the prevalence rate of female genital cutting among adult women in the Southern zone shows that the South-South has the highest frequency (77%) followed by the South East (68%) and South West (65%). The National Demographic Health Survey (Demographic, 2017) indicates that the south-east (49%) and south-west (47.5%) regions of Nigeria have the highest prevalence rates of FGC. Over 6 million women are affected by female genital cutting in the six states that make up South West Nigeria. About three out of 10 urban-dwelling Nigerian women between the ages of 15 and 49 have had their genitalia mutilated.

In South West Nigeria, the frequency of FGC among girls under the age of 14 who live in urban areas (16.8%) is about comparable to that of girls who reside in remote villages (17%). Ekiti, Imo, Osun, Ebonyi, Oyo and Lagos States are the six South West Nigerian states where female genital cutting is endemic. The prevalence rates of FGC in major endemic areas were as follows, according to data from UNFPA and UNICEF baseline studies: Osun (76.3%), Ekiti (71.2%), Oyo (69.7%), Ebonyi (55.6%), Imo (48.8%), and Lagos (44.8%) (UNICEF, 2022b)..

FGC and Women's Health and Reproduction Rights

Female genital cutting in any form is recognised as a harmful practice that violates the fundamental freedoms of women and girls (Nour, 2008). Human rights, encompassing

civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights, are incorporated in a number of national and international conventions. The United Nations has hosted numerous summits and conferences on FGC. It is widely acknowledged that governments need to recognise that FGC is a human rights issue and endeavour to guarantee its complete upliftment, security, and achievement. Most of the United Nations basic liberties agreement supervisory agencies have examined FGC in their final evaluations to know how countries are fulfilling their duties under the treaties (UNICEF, 2013).

The Human Rights Committee (HRC), the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRA), and the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) have all strongly denounced the practice and supported remedies, including criminalising it. The Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women urged nations to take adequate and effective action to eradicate female circumcision in its general recommendation on the subject. Additionally, it requests that they report to the Committee on their efforts (CEDAW, 2012). Ending female genital cutting is the ultimate objective of international policy. As part of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 5: "Eradicate all injurious procedures that include child, premature, and unintended marriage and Female genital cutting". The SDG 5 seeks to strengthen all female gender and promote equal rights for all genders..

Female genital cutting, a particularly severe type of brutality and unfairness against women and girls, breaches human rights, amounts to torture, and has its roots in harmful gender norms. The practice of FGC continues to play a key role in gender inequality in nations where it is still practiced because it reduces the opportunities for female genders to realise their full potential and rights (Omolase, Akinsanya & Faturoti, 2012). For affected women, the first point of contact in areas where FGC is prevalent is often an International Planned Parenthood Federation clinic. To date, the International Planned Parenthood Federation has implemented a number of initiatives to further this work, such as offering suggestions on how to best address the threat of FGC and supplying the required financial and technical assistance as well as fostering partnerships with FGC-related projects in important nations (Okeke, Anyaehie, & Ezenyeaku, 2017).

Girls and women are severely harmed by female genital cutting, regardless of its type. First of all, it puts their fundamental rights—such as the right to sanctity of life, the right

to personal integrity, the right to the best provision of standard of health (including, as they age, sexual and reproductive health), and the right to enjoy a life free from violence, abuse, and injury—at risk. Additionally, the method infringes upon a child's rights to development, protection, and involvement. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has frequently expressed concern about female genital cutting and, in light of the CRC, has urged States Parties to "take all effective and appropriate measures" with a view to outlawing such practices (Okeke et al, 2017).

Nigerian and Other International law on Female Genital Cutting

There are no legal prohibitions against unequal treatment for females in Nigeria. In fact, the reverse is true. There are actually a plethora of laws aimed at protecting women's and girls' independence and personal rights. Nigeria's 1999 constitution protects her from all forms of maltreatment and grants her basic human rights. Subjecting women and girls to ordeals is illegal under the Criminal Code of 2004, and violations are punishable. Without holding back, women and girls are protected against dehumanising and humiliating actions since they are fully provided for on paper (i.e., in the legislation). Although the Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution states that every citizen has the right to be free from torture and human humiliation, this is not the case for women and girls. As a result of the humiliation they endure, they not only endure physical torture but also severe mental and psychological trauma (Leasure, Roth, Yegon, Anderson, Datta, & Izugbara, 2022).

The good news is that numerous statute-based rules prohibit discriminatory behaviours against women and girls on a global scale. For instance, female genital cutting is expressly prohibited by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the International Labour Convention (ILC), and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). There was no clear federal law in Nigeria against female genital cutting until the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act was passed in 2015 (Wogu, Amonyeze, Folorunsho & Aloh, 2019). Besides, a few other laws, such as the Constitution and the Child's Right Act, were relied upon to address the issue of FGC. In particular, Section 6 of the Child Rights Act is one of the recognised Nigerian law that categorically prohibits FGC. It reads: 6(1) The cutting or genital removal of female is outrightly forbidden (Udowoima & Ukpo, 2021). In addition

to these, additional conventions discuss discrimination and include national and international measures in their statutes to safeguard women's rights.

When matters pertaining to custom and, consequently, female genital cutting (FGC) come before the court, the Evidence Act of 2004 makes it quite explicit what stance the court should adopt. The Evidence Act's Section 14 is quite clear. It states that a habit that prevents a people from growing economically, socially, or politically is against equity, natural justice, and good conscience and must be abolished for that reason. For the sake of emphasis, we can just list a few more statutes to include:

- The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
- The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- The United Nation Charter
- Violence against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPP)

The existence of legislation prohibiting FGC is undeniable. It is unclear whether Nigerians are aware that they exist. Has anyone been detained and charged in a court of justice for breaking the ban on female genital cutting? Is it common for female genital cutting victims to seek legal aid from the appropriate authorities? These enquiries are more likely to have unfavourable responses. Alekhe (2014) asserts that the mass media has not been proactive in raising awareness of social issues, despite the fact that it is the organ responsible for doing so.

However, it is evident that despite the abundance of laws and legal tools, women continue to face significant obstacles and injustices in their daily lives, mainly due to the fact that deeply rooted attitudes and discrimination cannot be eliminated by legislation alone. Equal rights for women are emphasised in Nigeria's Constitution, which is upheld by international law. However, in communities where inequality and long-standing customs persist, it can be challenging to implement these rights (Safie, Constant & Kando, 2023).

Newspapers and the Agenda of News

The daily transmission of information concerning public issues and the extent to which the news media permeates our daily lives are two of journalism's primary functions for the audience. The general public can learn more about these topics because the news agenda is always focused on them. Additionally, issues can swiftly go from the media perspective to the general perspective. King, Schneer, and White (2017) discovered that within six days, the public agenda mirrored the news media agenda in a real-world situation. It goes without saying that persons and issues differ from one another. When there is a high level of individual involvement, noticeable outcomes may occur rapidly. There may occasionally be no observable agenda-setting effects. According to previous research, agenda-setting effects range from two weeks to two months for more recent problems and continue longer for more established topics (Valenzuela & McCombs, 2019). Differences in how people respond to the media agenda are rooted in individual psychology (McCombs & Stroud, 2014). The most crucial cognitive idea governing the effects of agenda-setting is the need for orientation. The concept of need for orientation, first proposed by McCombs and Weaver (1973), describes our natural curiosity in the world and our drive to learn more about it. This viewpoint is provided by the news media for a variety of public issues, such as evaluating a new presidential aspirant or different public policy results. Therefore, the more orientation we need, the more likely we are to look for information, rely on the media, and be vulnerable to agenda-setting influences.

According to Chernov, Valenzuela, and McCombs (2011), a person's need for guidance in public policy is characterised by two factors: relevance and uncertainty. Relevance is the primary differentiator that determines each person's degree of need for guidance. A person's ideology, morals, and emotions are among the many variables that influence relevance (Valenzuela & Chernov, 2016). Less orientation is needed when a subject is thought to be irrelevant. People pay little to no attention to the news in this situation, and its agenda-setting impacts are at most modest. The level of demand for orientation is determined by the degree of ambiguity surrounding a topic among those for whom it is pertinent. If people think they understand the material in general, there is minimal doubt, therefore the demand for orientation is moderate. These set of people are unlikely to be interested readers of the news on the topic, although they will follow up on the news for any new latest information. When a situation is both relevant and

ambiguous to the individual, they have a strong desire for orientation. These folks usually consume a lot of news, and they have a significant influence on agenda-setting.

Theoretical Framework

This research work adopts a combination of agenda setting theory, the framing theory and social responsibility theory.

Agenda setting theory

The majority of research on agenda-setting is predicated on two fundamental tenets, according to McCombs and Shaw (1972): (1) the press and media do not represent reality; rather, they filter and shape it; and (2) the public's perception of the importance of certain issues is influenced by the media's focus on a small number of topics. The agenda setting theory's central claim is salience transfer. The ability of a newspaper to move significant topics from its news agenda to the public agenda is known as salience transfer. By doing this, they affect people's opinions on what the day's most pressing concerns need to be (Ogbuoshi, 2011). The agenda-setting role of the news media refers to their capacity to affect the importance of subjects on the public agenda. The theory aids in comprehending how print media material affects people, especially the intended audience (Kalu, 2010). Therefore, it is essential to employ the print media (newspapers, magazines, etc.) to set the agenda for ending female genital cutting in Nigeria because they have the power to influence public opinion.

Framing theory

The idea behind framing theory is that print media draws attention to specific occurrences and then contextualises them within a meaning field. People's decisions are influenced by the frame—the way an issue is presented—in this instance (Asemah, 2011). This links people to a specific meaning or perception of a problem, which influences their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. Framing theory examines how people see disasters and how they respond to them both during and after a disaster. According to Entman (2007), the media must have a big impact on people's thoughts if they are truly that good at teaching them what to think about. It is thus expected that the newspaper should present issues of FGC in a manner to sensitise the public to its danger and the legal implication for perpetrators of the heinous practice. According to

Shoemaker (1989), "the public places more importance on an issue the more media emphasise it."

Social Responsibility Theory

According to Social Responsibility Theory, the press works for society and its citizens. In this manner, the facts presented by the media are examined and interpreted to give the public accurate information and news that is easy to comprehend. By exposing social ills like female genital cutting and deterring other inappropriate behaviour, this promotes social harmony (Schraddha Bajracharya, 2018). Thus, the media's stated goals are to create and discover answers for society while also informing, documenting, analysing, interpreting, mediating, and mobilising. In their 1956 book, Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm originally created the idea. It fosters total press liberty and non-restriction, however, it should be guided by social responsibilities and outside oversight. In the context of this study, regular media coverage of female genital cutting raises public awareness of the practice's negative health effects and challenges while also urging society to stop it. This is achieved by moving beyond simple (factual) reporting to interpretative reporting.

Methodology

The research design used for the study was Content analysis. The population of this study comprised the *Punch newspaper and Guardian*, published between 1st March, 2023 to 31st March, 2024, on issues relating to Female genital cutting. The reason for choosing the two newspapers out of others was that these newspaper organizations have a national reach, popular and available both online and offline, therefore available to a wide audience. Similarly, the researchers of this study decided to focus on The Punch and Guardian Newspapers because they are both widely read newspapers. The one year period was purposively chosen so that the research could measure what the two newspapers were doing regarding the coverage of FGC at any point in time.

This study adopted a Multistage Sampling, as it consists of various sample stages. Multistage sampling techniques was used because there were decision to be made regarding; how to select the newspapers to be used; the selection of dates to be studied and the selection of the contents.

- *Sampling stage 1: Selection of Newspapers.*

The *Punch* and The *Guardian* newspapers were selected purposively for this study. The criteria for selection of the newspapers was based on the following:

- I. Language of publication is English.
- II. They have a National reach.
- III. They are published daily.
- IV. They are available both online and offline.
- V. The circulation is wide and it contain Eight thousand (80, 000 copies daily) for *Punch* and one hundred and eleven thousand one hundred and fifty five (111, 155) daily for *Guardian*. **(Source: Google search).**

- *Sampling stage 2: Selection of Dates.*

The date selected for this study is 1st March 2023 - 31st March 2024. It was selected purposively to know how regularly newspapers are reporting issues regarding FGC in contemporary times within a year, given the fact that statistic still show that FGC is still being practice in Nigeria.

- *Sampling stage 3: Selection of Content.*

The content of the study was chosen through Simple Random Sampling using *Constructed week*. A day of the week, Monday, was chosen at random, and any newspaper stories on Female Genital Cutting published on all Mondays of the year were analyzed. Using the calendar, it was found out that there was a total of 56 Mondays between 1st March 2023 - 31st March 2024, which means that 56 editions of *Punch* and 56 editions of *Guardian*; this makes a total sample size of one hundred and twelve (112) newspaper editions in all, for the two newspaper under the period of study. All editions of the two newspapers that fell on the chosen Mondays were analyzed.

Unit of analysis is the major entity that is meant to be analyzed in a study. It is the portion of content that will be the basis for decision made during the development of codes. The unit of analysis is made up of the following:

- I. All Straight news on FGC
- II. All Feature articles on FGC
- III. All Editorials on FGC

IV. Cartoons relating to FGC

A content category is essential in any Content Analysis as it helps to distribute and sort contents. The categories for this study are;

- i **Frequency of coverage** - How often stories on FGC are reported in newspapers.
- ii. **Prominence of coverage** - this refers to whether stories on FGC appeared on the front page, inside page, back page.
- iii. **Format** - how the stories on FGC is presented, whether straight news, features, editorials or Cartoon.
- iv. **Direction** - refers to the tone of the story, if it is in support or against the practice of FGC. e.g Positive, Negative, Neutral.

A coding sheet designed in accordance with the objectives of the study served as the research instrument. The coding sheet spread-out the categories of content of the selected newspaper that was designed covering the prominence of the Female genital cutting reportage, the nature of the story, and the depth of the story and identity of the newspapers among others were elements included in the coding sheet. The stories were analyzed on several dimensions that were quantitative in nature. These dimensions included Frequency, Prominence, Format, Direction etc. Frequency counting and simple percentages were used to analyzed the result of the content analysis accordingly using SPSS version 23.0 for window.

Result and Discussion

Table 1: Distributions of the frequency of coverage of FGC by the two selected newspapers (N = 112)

Newspaper	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
The Guardian Stories	3	2.70	2.70	2.70
The Punch Stories	2	1.80	1.80	4.50
No Story	107	95.50	9.50	100.0
Total	112	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 revealed that only 3 stories (2.70%) in all were reported on FGC in *The Guardian* newspaper within the study period of 12 months. In the case of *The Punch* newspaper, only 2 stories (1.80%) were reported on FGC within the twelve months study period. This finding showed that only five (5) stories in all were published on FGC in the 112 editions of the two newspapers (*The Guardian and The Punch*) analyzed

within the twelve (12) month study period. This finding aptly suggested that very low coverage is given to the issue of FGC in the two selected Nigerian newspapers.

Table 2: the Format in which stories of Female genital cutting are mostly presented (N = 112)

Parameter	The Guardian		The Punch	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Straight News	3	5.4	1	1.8
Features	-	-	1	1.8
Editorial	-	-	-	-
Carton	-	-	-	-
No story	53	94.6	54	96.4
Total	56	100.0	56	100.0

Table 2 revealed that in all, *The Guardian newspaper* in 12 months, 53(94.6%) did not report cases of Female genital cutting, while only 3(5.4%) were found as Straight News. Similarly, in *The Punch newspaper*, 1.8% were found as Straight news, another 1.8% found as Feature stories, while 54(96.4%) did not report stories as regard Female genital cutting at all. The significance of these findings is that stories on FGC were scantily reported as Straight news and Feature formats.

Table 3: the Direction of Coverage of Female genital cutting in the selected Nigerian newspapers (N = 112)

Parameter	The Guardian		The Punch	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Negative	3	5.4	2	3.6
Positive	-	-	-	-
Neutral	-	-	-	-
No Story	53	94.6	54	96.4
Total	56	100.0	56	100.0

Table 3 showed that in *The Guardian newspaper*, only 5.4% were negative whereas, 94.6% did not report cases of Female genital cutting at all. Similarly, for *The Punch newspaper*, only 3.6% was negative whereas 96.4% do not report cases of Female genital cutting at all. The significance of this finding is that stories on FGC in terms of the direction of coverage in the selected Nigerian newspapers were negative. The implication of the above was that the tone of the story suggested it is against the practice of FGC and should be discontinued.

Table 4: the level of Prominence given to stories on FGC in the selected Nigerian newspapers

Parameter	The Guardian Frequency	Percentage (%)	The Punch Frequency	Percentage (%)
Front page	-	-	-	-
Inside page	3	5.4	2	3.6
Back Page	-	-	-	-
No Story	53	94.6	54	96.4
Total	56	100.0	56	100.0

Table 4 presented the descriptive statistics showing the level of prominence given to stories on FGC in the selected Nigerian newspapers. In the study, the result from the selected newspaper (*The Guardian and The Punch newspaper*) indicated that the two newspapers did not report cases of Female genital cutting for the days and period under study. However, only about 5.4% were found Inside pages of *The Guardian newspaper* and only 3.6% were found Inside the page of *The Punch newspaper*. The significance of this findings is that FGC stories enjoy little prominence as it appeared mostly on the Inside pages of the selected newspapers (*The Punch and The Guardian*). The implication of the above is that the selected papers do not find stories of FGC important enough to command the most important page (front page) and the second important page (back page). FGC stories only merit the inside page of the selected newspapers. The order of priority or prominence is Front page first, Back page next and Inside page lowest

Table 5: How the selected Nigerian Newspapers provide adequate guidelines/procedure towards controlling/eradicating Female genital cutting in Nigeria (N = 112)

Parameter	The Guardian Frequency	Percentage (%)	The Punch Frequency	Percentage (%)
No Solution	1	1.8	-	-
Sanction individual found guilty	0	0.0	-	-
Enforcing law against the act	2	3.6	2	3.6
Report cases to higher authority	0	0.0	-	-
Allow God to intervene	0	0.0	-	-
No story	53	94.6	54	96.4
Total	56	100.0	56	100.0

Table 5 indicated that both The Punch and The Guardian newspapers did not say anything about solution towards eradicating or controlling FGC. However, for the Guardian newspaper, only about 3.6% talked about enforcing law against the act, whereas 94.6% did not report cases of FGC talk less of providing solution to that effect. For Punch newspaper, only about 1.8% talked about sanctions of individual found guilty, 1.8% also talked about enforcing law against the act whereas 96.4% of The Punch newspaper reviewed did not report cases of FGC. The significance of this finding is that FGC stories in the selected Nigerian newspapers hardly suggest possible solution for eradicating FGC in Nigeria

Discussion of findings

Finding from this study revealed that only five (5) stories in all were published on FGC in the 112 editions of the two newspapers (*The Guardian and The Punch*) analyzed within the twelve (12) month study period. This finding aptly suggested that very low coverage is given to the issue of FGC in the two selected Nigerian newspapers.

On the Format used, it was gathered that FGC when reported was mostly available as a Straight news as well as feature article in the selected newspapers. Equally most of the editions reviewed did not actually say much about solution to that effect. The implication of presenting FGC as a straight news is that it only gives a cursory report about the issue. It does not go in-depth. The format that can address the short coming of straight news is feature, as it goes beyond just providing important facts. A feature is usually more informative in nature, and the stories are descriptive and full of details. Female genital cutting stories must give detailed information about; what FGC is, the implications, statistics of incidences, interviews with the victims etc. Also, making FGC as a discourse in editorial allows for a more nuanced and opinionated approach to the topic. It allows the writer to express their personal views on the issue and advocate for change. An editorial can also help raise awareness about FGC and encourage readers, especially government to take action, such as supporting organizations that work to end the practice or making policies to pass legislation prohibiting it.

In terms of the Direction, it was seen to be negative. The implication of the above was that the tone of the story suggested it is against the practice of FGC and should be discontinued. For Prominence, one can deduce that proper attention are not being given

to Female genital cutting issues in The Punch and Guardian newspaper for the period under study. This implies that the selected papers do not find stories of FGC important enough to command the most important page (front page) and the second important page (back page). FGC stories only merit the Inside page of the selected newspapers.

In this study, The Punch and The Guardian newspapers reported less about solution towards eradicating or controlling FGC. There were no significant stories about enforcing law against the act, and less stories on how to provide solution to FGC in Nigeria.

Female genital cutting is still being practiced in Nigeria. Statistics have shown that the issue is widely practiced. However, the print media coverage of the issue has been insufficient because not many people are aware of its prevalence in our society. It can generally be deduced that journalists in Nigeria are not really doing what they ought to be doing because, FGC is a serious concern and it is also a sensitive one that needs urgent attention because of the adverse effect on the victims and the society at large. In comparison, political issues have constantly dominated pages of daily newspapers, to the neglect of other important issues that affect the growth and development of the society. This study therefore proves that there is much work to be done so that on regular basis issues like genital cutting can be well addressed and properly discussed so as to put lasting solution to it in Nigeria, Africa and the entire continent.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research work examined how the selected newspaper covered stories on Female genital cutting in Nigeria and through its findings concluded that the practice of FGC is still prevalent in Nigeria as a result of low level of campaign against the act in the print media most especially newspapers. Hence, the Nigerian newspapers need to report cases of Female genital cutting so as to curb the act within our society. The study recommended that:

- 1) issues relating to Female genital cutting should be frequently reported and made available in pages of newspaper for review and discussion
- 2) Prominence should be given to Editorial and Features that can help raise awareness about FGC and prompt government to take action
- 3) Educative articles on the health hazards and legal implication of FGC act to be published regularly by the media

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