

Benin Publics' Perception of Media Framing of Gender Equality for National Development in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the Benin public's perceptions of media framing gender equality in Nigeria and its impact on national development. The study's rationale was to ascertain how media framing practices shape public attitudes and influence policy responses, ultimately affecting the overall advancement of gender equality in Nigeria. Anchored on framing theory, the study employed the survey research design and collected data using a structured questionnaire from 384 respondents in Benin City using the multistage sampling technique. The data were presented in tables and analyzed using frequency counts, straightforward percentages, and mean scores. Findings revealed that the media create awareness of gender equality among the Benin public to a great extent, with social media identified as the most effective platform. Also, the standard frames employed by the media on gender equality issues are social justice and political empowerment frames. However, despite recognizing the media's effectiveness, concerns about bias and fairness persist. The researchers conclude that while media plays a significant role in raising awareness, there is considerable skepticism regarding the accuracy and bias of these portrayals. Recommendations include efforts that should be made to increase the frequency and consistency of gender equality content across all media platforms, including traditional and digital media, among others.

Keywords: *bias and fairness, gender advocacy, media influence, media representation, social media.*

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is a critical global issue shaping societal development (Kiram, 2024). Central to addressing discrimination and inequality, it is a key focus of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 5, which aims to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (United Nations, 2021). This goal highlights eliminating discrimination and violence, ensuring equal decision-making participation, and providing equitable access to education and healthcare. However, despite global efforts, significant gender disparities persist, underscoring the challenges of achieving true equality worldwide (World Economic Forum, 2023).

In the context of Nigeria, gender equality remains a pressing issue, reflecting broader global challenges while also highlighting specific national barriers. Nigerian women face a range of socio-economic and cultural obstacles that hinder their progress and opportunities (Endong & Obonganwan, 2015; Guanah, 2023; Akinlami, 2024). Educational attainment, for instance, varies significantly between genders, with cultural norms and economic constraints often limiting girls' access to education (UNICEF, 2022).

Furthermore, Nigerian women frequently encounter systemic gender biases in the workforce, where traditional roles and expectations can restrict their career advancement and economic independence (World Bank, 2022). Gender-based violence and discrimination (GBV/D) are also prevalent, exacerbating the difficulties women face in achieving equality and personal safety.

However, the role of media in shaping public perceptions of gender equality cannot be overstated. Media outlets, including television, radio, print, and digital platforms, are instrumental in framing public discussions and attitudes towards gender issues (Ahmed, 2025). Media representations can either reinforce stereotypical gender norms or challenge and redefine them by highlighting issues of inequality and advocating for change (Khan & Tidman, 2023; Santoniccolo, Trombetta, Paradiso & Rollè, 2023).

In Nigeria, media coverage of gender issues has evolved, with increasing attention given to topics such as gender-based violence (GBV), women's rights, and gender representation in politics and business (Ojebuyi & Chukwunwike, 2018; Adewunmi & Aleshinloye, 2024). However, the impact of media is complex and multifaceted, as it can sometimes perpetuate existing stereotypes or biases while also serving as a platform for advocacy and reform.

Furthermore, the importance of gender equality extends beyond the realm of social justice and has significant implications for national development. Evidence consistently shows that gender equality contributes positively to economic growth and societal well-being (Calvino, et al., 2024). For instance, empowering women and ensuring their full participation in the economy can lead to increased productivity, innovation, and overall economic prosperity (Sudha & Reshi, 2023).

In Nigeria, addressing gender disparities can unlock the potential of a significant portion of the population, leading to improved economic outcomes and greater social cohesion (Fab-Ukozor, 2019; Ihechu & Nwabuisi, 2021; Ihechu, Afulike & Ndukwe, 2023). Gender equality can also enhance educational achievements and health outcomes, creating a more equitable and sustainable development trajectory for the nation (Kattan, et al., 2023). Therefore, the intersection of gender equality and national development underscores the need for comprehensive strategies that address both the systemic barriers faced by women and the role of media in shaping public discourse.

Meanwhile, media framing significantly influences public perception of gender equality, shaping societal attitudes and policy responses. This is because media plays a crucial role in framing gender issues, often highlighting or downplaying specific aspects to create a particular narrative (Hedegaard, 2020). For instance, studies reveal that

Nigerian media frequently portrays gender equality issues through a lens that emphasises cultural and traditional constraints, which may perpetuate gender stereotypes rather than challenging them (Ojebuyi & Chukwunwike, 2018; Fab-Ukozor, 2019; Ndinojuo, 2020; Ihechu, Afulike, & Ndukwe, 2023; Akinlami, 2024). This framing can reinforce existing biases and limit the public's understanding of gender equality as a dynamic and evolving issue, rather than a fixed cultural norm.

Also, the portrayal of gender issues in Nigerian media often reflects broader societal attitudes and can influence policy making. Ihechu Afulike & Ndukwe (2023) indicate that media representations that frame gender equality primarily as a women's issue, rather than a societal one, can marginalize the role of men in addressing gender disparities. This narrow framing may undermine efforts towards comprehensive gender equality by not engaging all societal actors in the dialogue.

Furthermore, the framing of gender equality in Nigerian media can impact public perception and the ultimate effectiveness of gender policies. Media narratives that emphasize sensational or conflict-oriented aspects of gender issues, rather than constructive solutions, may skew public perception and hinder meaningful progress (Ogwezzy-Ndisika, Faustino, Amakoh, Adesile, Ejiwunmi & Oloruntoba, 2023). Understanding how media framing shapes public attitudes (Çerçi, 2024) and influences policy responses (Remitasari & Fenton, 2021) is crucial for advancing gender equality in Nigeria.

The primary aim of this study is to explore the role of media in shaping awareness and understanding of gender equality among the Benin public. Specifically, it seeks to assess the extent to which the media create awareness of gender equality, investigate the framing strategies employed by the media in presenting gender equality as a tool for national development, and examine public perceptions of media framing of gender equality within the Nigerian context. Through this exploration, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the media's influence on public discourse and attitudes toward gender equality.

LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The portrayal of gender in the media has been a critical area of concern, shaping public perceptions and influencing societal norms. Audiences often perceive media representations as reflections of reality, which can reinforce or challenge existing gender stereotypes. Studies have shown that traditional media often depict men and women in stereotypical roles, with men typically portrayed as strong, dominant, and career-oriented, while women are often shown as nurturing, emotional, and primarily concerned with family life (Faustino & Amakoh, 2018; Atar, 2020; Onwumechili, 2021; Omonua, Akpor & Olley, 2023). This pattern can have profound implications on how audiences internalize gender roles, potentially limiting the scope of what is considered acceptable behaviour for men and women.

In recent years, however, there has been a gradual shift towards more diverse and inclusive representations of gender in the media. This change has been largely

influenced by social movements advocating for gender equality and the empowerment of women. For instance, the #MeToo movement brought global attention to issues of sexual harassment and gender inequality, prompting media outlets to reconsider how they portray gender issues (Mendes, Ringrose & Keller, 2019; Sainz-De-Baranda, Adá-Lameiras, Blanco-Ruiz, 2020; Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2021). As a result, audiences have begun to see more portrayals of women in leadership roles, men in caregiving positions, and non-binary characters in mainstream media.

Despite these positive changes, audience perceptions remain complex and varied. Some segments of the audience may embrace these new portrayals as progressive and reflective of societal change. Others, however, may view them as unrealistic or threatening to traditional gender norms (Mendes, Ringrose & Keller, 2019; Aladi & Okoro, 2021; Santoniccolo, Trombetta, Paradiso & Rollè, 2023). For example, older audiences or those with more conservative views may resist media representations that challenge traditional gender roles, perceiving them as a departure from established societal values.

Moreover, the impact of media portrayals on audience perception varies significantly, influenced by factors such as age, education, cultural background, and personal experiences with gender issues (Liao, 2023). Younger, more educated audiences often view non-traditional gender portrayals as essential for social progress (Connell, 2005), while more conservative or less educated individuals may find these portrayals alienating or misaligned with their expectations, creating a disconnect between media representations and audience perceptions.

Therefore, it is clear that the portrayal of gender in the media is not just a passive reflection of societal norms but an active force in shaping public perceptions. The media has the power to challenge stereotypes and promote gender equality, but its impact is contingent on how audiences interpret and respond to these portrayals. As media continues to evolve, so too will the ways in which gender is represented and perceived by the public.

Review of Empirical Studies

Ihechu & Nwabuisi (2021) investigated how women are represented in television advertising within Abia. Their aim was to understand the portrayal of women, particularly from the perspective of Abia's audience. They utilized two main theories: reception analysis and constructivism, as the theoretical underpinnings of their research. Using a survey method with a sample of 400 individuals drawn from a population of 138,570, they collected data through questionnaires. The results revealed dissatisfaction among women regarding their depiction in television ads.

Women were predominantly featured in ads for household goods, baby products, cosmetics, and food. The study found that advertisements often reinforced stereotypes in areas like entertainment, clothing, and cosmetics, but depicted women in a less stereotypical manner in ads for tobacco, travel, food, and financial services. The researchers suggested that ads treating women merely as objects should be

discontinued, and advocated for women to challenge and resist their negative portrayal. While this study focused on media representation of women, it did not cover broader issues of gender equality, which will be explored in the current study.

Aladi & Okoro (2021) analyzed how four newspapers—Vanguard, The Punch, The Guardian, and This Day—depicted women in their coverage from January 1, 2015, to December 31, 2017. They set out with three objectives and two hypotheses, employing content analysis with a coding sheet for data collection. Research questions were addressed using simple percentages, while hypotheses were tested with a chi-square test at a 0.05 significance level. The findings indicated that coverage of women was predominantly focused on entertainment and domestic topics, with minimal attention to areas like economy, politics, education, health, and environment. The portrayal of women was mainly negative. The researchers suggested that journalists should enhance their representation of women, given that women make up 49% of Nigeria's population. This study's focus on media portrayal of women does not encompass gender equality broadly, a topic to be explored in the current study.

Ihechu, Afulike & Ndukwe (2023) explored how media in Nigeria frame cultural practices that affect women, focusing on South East Nigeria. Their study aimed to assess the frequency of media coverage, identify framing patterns, and understand the challenges faced in covering these practices. They used a survey method to collect data from 276 journalists via questionnaires, capturing their views on the difficulties encountered in reporting these cultural practices. Additionally, they employed content analysis to evaluate how often these practices were covered in selected radio, television, and newspaper outlets and to discern the framing approaches used. The study found that radio and television provided substantial coverage of these practices, whereas newspapers had a lower level of coverage. The framing patterns varied from critical to highlighting the practices' impact on societal progress and advocating for their review, amendment, or elimination. Challenges identified included a lack of supportive legislation, familial and religious ties to the practices, and the practices' sacred and secretive nature. The researchers recommended that media professionals, policymakers, NGOs, and community leaders collaborate to address these challenges to improve the coverage and analysis of cultural practices. While this study focused on media portrayal of women, it did not cover broader gender equality issues, which will be examined in the current study.

Framing Theory

Framing Theory, originally developed by Erving Goffman in his seminal work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), explores how individuals and media organizations shape perceptions of reality by emphasizing certain aspects of information while downplaying others. Goffman (1959) introduced the idea that frames are mental structures that shape the way we perceive and interpret information. This concept was later expanded by scholars like Robert Entman, who defined framing as selecting and

highlighting certain aspects of a perceived reality to promote a particular interpretation (Entman, 1993).

In media studies, the theory has been pivotal in understanding how news outlets influence public opinion. For example, studies have shown that the framing of news stories about social issues can significantly impact public attitudes and behaviour. For instance, Iyengar's (1991) research demonstrated that news frames can alter how viewers perceive the causes of social problems and the appropriate responses. This suggests that media frames not only reflect but also construct reality. The theory has also been applied to political communication, where framing can affect electoral outcomes and policy support. Political campaigns frequently use framing to highlight favourable aspects of their platforms while minimizing negative ones, thereby influencing voter perceptions (Ojebuyi & Chukwunwike, 2018). This strategic use of framing can play a crucial role in shaping political narratives and public opinion.

In recent years, the advent of digital media has transformed how framing operates. Social media platforms enable rapid dissemination of information and frames, amplifying their impact. Studies on social media framing indicate that algorithms and user interactions can further entrench certain frames, influencing public discourse on a large scale (Song, 2024). Overall, Framing Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how information is presented and perceived, with significant implications for media, politics, and society.

In the context of this study, framing theory helps explain how media narratives shape public views. Media that frame gender equality as vital for national progress can boost support and align with development goals. Conversely, frames depicting it as a threat to traditional values may lead to resistance. Social media also amplifies these frames, influencing public opinion and policy. By analyzing these frames, we can understand their impact on public attitudes and development efforts in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This research used a survey methodology and a structured questionnaire as the data collection tool. According to Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekhareafo, and Okpanachi (2022), a survey is a type of quantitative research design that involves gathering data from a sample population through the use of structured questionnaires or surveys. This method was chosen because it efficiently collects primary quantitative data from a large population.

The study measured media awareness using a 6-item scale derived from the author's conceptualization. The media frame was assessed through specific questions in the questionnaire designed to capture participants' perceptions of media content. The study focused on the residents of Benin metropolis, which, as reported by Zhujiworld (2024), has a population of 1,968,719.

Benin City was chosen because it is a major cosmopolitan city in Nigeria and has people from diverse backgrounds and worldviews. A sample size of 384 was determined using the Survey-Monkey Sample Size calculator. The research employed a multi-stage

sampling technique. In the first stage, Benin was purposively divided into East and West sectors. In the second stage, the city was further divided into clusters based on Local Government Areas (LGAs): Egor, Oredo, Ikpoba-Okha and Ovia North-East.

In the third stage, random sampling was used to select specific areas from the previously established clusters, resulting in the selection of Siluko, Ekenwan, Ikpoba-Hill, and Ugbowo, respectively. This approach ensured a fair representation across the metropolis. In the final stage, 384 questionnaires were randomly distributed to respondents within these selected areas. The data was analyzed using simple percentages and presented in tabular form, with a response rate of 98.4% (n=374).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Frequency of encounter to media content related to gender equality

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
Daily	65	17.4
Often	108	28.9
Occasionally	176	47.1
Rarely	25	6.7
Never	-	-
Total	374	100

Source: Data Collected by Author (2024)

The data in the above table show that most respondents are occasionally exposed to media contents on gender equality. This is based on the fact that 47.1% of the respondents answered to that effect.

Table 2: Extent media coverage of gender equality issues has increased awareness and understanding of gender equality among Benin publics

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
Significantly increased	46	12.3
Moderately increased	167	44.7
Slightly increased	128	34.2
Cannot say	31	8.3
No impact	2	0.5
Total	374	100

Source: Data Collected by Author (2024)

The above data indicate that the extent to which media coverage of gender equality issues has increased awareness and understanding of gender equality among the Benin public is moderate (44.7%).

Table 3: Types of media content that has been most effective in raising awareness about gender equality among Benin publics

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
Newspaper articles	27	7.2

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
Television programmes	61	16.3
Radio broadcasts	87	23.3
Social media posts	182	48.7
Documentaries	11	2.9
Public service announcements	6	1.6
None of the Above	-	-
Total	374	100

Source: Data Collected by Author (2024)

The data in the above table show that social media posts (48.7%) are the type of media content that has been most effective in raising awareness about gender equality among the Benin public, followed by radio broadcasts (23.3%) and television programs (16.3%).

Table 4: The most common frames used by the media when discussing gender equality in relation to national development

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
Economic disparity frame	46	12.3
Social justice frame	128	34.2
Political empowerment frame	93	24.9
Health and well-being frame	24	6.4
Education and skills frame	51	13.6
Culture and tradition frame	32	8.6
None of the above	-	-
Total	374	100

Source: Data Collected by Author (2024)

The table indicates that the media predominantly employs the Social Justice Frame when discussing gender equality, making up 34.2% of the coverage. Thus, the heavy emphasis on the Social Justice Frame suggests that the media prioritises issues related to fairness and equality, potentially shaping public perception and dialogue around gender equality issues.

Table 5: Perception of Media Framing of Gender Equality for National Development among Benin Publics

Variables	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
Media's portrayal of gender equality in Nigeria as presented in news reports and articles is accurate	53 (14.2)	85 (22.7)	79 (21.1)	96 (25.7)	61 (16.3)
Nigerian media are biased in its framing of gender equality issues	88 (23.5)	108 (28.9)	61 (16.3)	64 (17.1)	53 (14.2)
Nigerian media are effective in raising awareness about gender equality issues	141 (37.7)	174 (46.5)	46 (12.3)	11 (2.9)	07 (1.9)

Variables	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
Media framing of gender equality in Nigeria affect public attitudes towards gender equality	125 (33.4)	168 (44.9)	59 (15.8)	13 (3.5)	09 (2.4)
Nigerian media adequately represents the challenges and successes related to gender equality	63 (16.8)	94 (25.1)	43 (11.5)	102 (27.3)	72 (19.3)
Nigerian media are fair in its representation of different genders in discussions about gender equality	81 (21.7)	101 (27)	39 (10.4)	91 (24.3)	64 (17.1)

Source: Data Collected by Author (2024)

The data in the above table reveals that while the Nigerian media is widely recognized for effectively raising awareness about gender equality and influencing public attitudes, there are notable concerns about media bias and fairness. Many respondents feel that the portrayal of gender equality issues is not entirely accurate or adequate, and there is significant scepticism about the fairness of gender representation in media discussions.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined the perception of Benin publics of gender equality for national development in Nigeria. In the course of this study, there are findings that are very significant in providing answers to the research questions in order to achieve the objectives of this study.

One research objective aimed to assess the extent to which media create awareness of gender equality among the Benin public. The data, derived from Tables 1, 2, and 3, provides insight into how frequently individuals encounter media content related to gender equality, the impact of this media coverage on their understanding, and the types of media content that are most effective. According to Table 1, a substantial portion of the Benin public encounters media content related to gender equality at varying frequencies. The majority of respondents (47.1%) encounter such content occasionally, while 28.9% do so often and 17.4% daily. This suggests that while media content related to gender equality is relatively accessible, it is not uniformly encountered every day. This distribution indicates a relatively high level of exposure to gender equality issues through media, though the frequency varies. The occasional to frequent exposure highlights the potential for media to reach a broad audience, but also underscores that for continuous impact, more consistent media engagement might be necessary. This confirms the study of Ihechu, Afulike & Ndukwe (2023) which found that the extent of media framing of gender-related issues is high.

Table 2 shows that media coverage has had a notable effect on awareness and understanding of gender equality among the Benin public. The majority of respondents (44.7%) felt that media coverage has moderately increased their awareness and

understanding, while 34.2% felt it has slightly increased. This indicates that a significant portion of the population perceives media coverage as a meaningful contributor to their understanding of gender equality. This also implies that while media coverage is beneficial, there is room for improvement in enhancing its effectiveness and reach.

Furthermore, Table 3 highlights the types of media content that have been most effective in raising awareness about gender equality. Social media posts emerged as the most influential form of media, with 48.7% of respondents identifying them as the most effective. Radio broadcasts (23.3%) and television programmes (16.3%) follow, indicating that these traditional media forms also play a significant role. The predominance of social media as the most effective medium reflects its widespread use and ability to rapidly disseminate information. This aligns with global trends where social media platforms are increasingly used for advocacy and awareness campaigns. Traditional media, while still relevant, appears to have a lesser impact compared to digital platforms in this context.

Overall, the findings suggest that media play a substantial role in raising awareness of gender equality among the Benin public. While most individuals are exposed to gender equality content with moderate to high frequency, the perceived impact on awareness is significant but varied. Social media stands out as the most effective medium for creating awareness, surpassing traditional media forms in influence. These insights underline the importance of leveraging digital platforms for gender equality advocacy while continuing to use traditional media to complement these efforts.

The research objective two aimed to identify the frames used by the media to present gender equality in relation to national development among Benin publics. The data from Table 4 reveals how various frames are employed to discuss gender equality, highlighting the media's approach to addressing this issue and its implications for national development. Social justice frame (34.2%) was found to be the most prevalent frame used by the media. It emphasizes the equitable treatment of all individuals and addresses gender equality as a fundamental human right and a matter of fairness.

This frame suggests that the media often presents gender equality as an issue of social justice, highlighting the need for equitable opportunities and rights for all genders to ensure a just society. The prominence of this frame indicates that discussions around gender equality are often anchored in the broader context of human rights and fairness, which aligns with national development goals centred on creating inclusive and equitable societies.

Also, political empowerment frame (24.9%) was another common frame that focuses on the importance of women's participation and representation in political processes. It underscores how gender equality can contribute to more balanced and effective governance. The significant presence of this frame suggests that the media acknowledges the role of political empowerment in national development, advocating for increased female political representation as a means to drive progress and ensure diverse perspectives in decision-making processes.

Furthermore, education and skills frame (13.6%) was also found to be common. This frame emphasised the role of education and skill development in achieving gender equality. This frame highlights how investing in education and skill-building for all genders contributes to national development by fostering a more capable and skilled workforce. The moderate frequency of this frame indicates recognition of the link between education, gender equality, and economic growth. More so, economic disparity frame (12.3%), culture and tradition frame (8.6%) and health and well-being frame (6.4%) were found in the course of this study. However, the relatively lower frequency of these frames suggest that while these frames are recognized, they are less emphasized compared to other aspects.

The findings reveal that the media predominantly use the social justice frame when discussing gender equality and its relation to national development. This framing aligns gender equality with broader human rights issues, emphasizing fairness and equity. The political empowerment frame also plays a significant role, reflecting an understanding of the importance of female participation in governance for national progress. Other frames, such as economic disparity, education and skills, culture and tradition, and health and well-being, are used less frequently but still contribute to a multifaceted view of gender equality. The diversity of frames used by the media indicates a comprehensive approach to discussing gender equality, though the emphasis varies across different dimensions. Therefore, the predominance of the social justice and political empowerment frames suggests that media narratives are strongly aligned with advocating for equitable treatment and increased political representation as crucial elements of national development.

The research objective three sought to understand the perceptions of Benin publics regarding the media framing of gender equality in Nigeria. The data from Tables 5 and 6 offer insights into how the media's portrayal of gender equality affects public opinions and awareness, and how influential these portrayals are perceived to be. In Table 5, a combined total of 36.9% of respondents believe that the media's portrayal of gender equality is accurate. This indicates a notable scepticism about the reliability of media representations of gender equality in Nigeria, suggesting that many people perceive discrepancies between media portrayals and the actual situation. Also, a substantial majority of respondents perceive Nigerian media as biased in their framing of gender equality issues, with 52.4% acknowledging this bias. This perception of bias is critical, as it reflects concerns that media representations may be skewed or not fully objective, which could influence public understanding and attitudes.

Furthermore, the perception of effectiveness is more positive, with 84.2% of respondents believing that Nigerian media are effective in raising awareness about gender equality issues. This high level of perceived effectiveness suggests that while there are concerns about bias and accuracy, the media are still recognised for their role in promoting awareness. In the same vein, a majority of 78.3% believe that media framing affects public attitudes towards gender equality. This indicates that respondents see a direct link between media portrayals and societal attitudes,

underscoring the significant role media play in shaping perceptions and influencing public opinion.

However, respondents are divided on whether the Nigerian media adequately represent the challenges and successes related to gender equality. With 41.9% agreeing and a similar proportion (46.6%) disagreeing, there is a split opinion on how well media coverage reflects the complexities of gender equality. Similarly, the perception of fairness in the representation of different genders is also mixed. While 48.7% feel that the media are fair, 41.4% believe that the media's representation is unfair. This suggests that while some respondents view media portrayals as balanced, others feel that gender representation might be skewed or incomplete.

The findings indicate that while there is significant recognition of the Nigerian media's role in raising awareness about gender equality, there is also a considerable level of scepticism regarding the accuracy and bias of media portrayals. The perceived effectiveness of media in increasing awareness is high, yet concerns about fairness and representation remain prominent. The strong perception of media influence on public attitudes towards gender equality underscores the importance of media framing in shaping societal views.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated public perceptions in Benin regarding media framing of gender equality and its implications for national development in Nigeria. The findings reveal that while media content on gender equality is widely encountered, its effectiveness is often undermined by skepticism about its accuracy, fairness, and credibility. Media frames in Nigeria predominantly emphasize themes of social justice and political empowerment, reflecting the media's focus on advocacy and representation. However, the public's concerns about bias and partiality underscore a critical gap between the media's intended message and its reception. This gap highlights the complex dynamics between media framing, public trust, and social impact.

The research contributes to the broader theoretical discourse on media framing by illustrating how the media not only serves as a vehicle for promoting gender equality but also shapes public attitudes toward its significance. Specifically, the study underscores the dual role of the media as both an advocate for social progress and an influencer of public opinion. Despite the frequency of media content advocating gender equality, public skepticism suggests that the media's framing strategies often fail to fully engage or persuade audiences, revealing a disconnect that must be addressed.

This skepticism points to the need for a critical reassessment of how gender equality is framed in Nigerian media. Perceptions of bias and inaccuracy diminish the media's ability to act as an effective advocate for societal change. To bridge this gap, the media must prioritize accuracy, balance, and fairness in its portrayals. These elements are not just ethical imperatives but strategic necessities for building public trust and ensuring that media content resonates with audiences. The findings emphasize that the

impact of media framing on public perceptions depends as much on the perceived credibility of the content as on its frequency.

Moreover, the study reinforces the pivotal role of media framing in advancing national development goals. Gender equality, as portrayed by the media, emerges as a foundational element of sustainable development. However, this research highlights that the quality of media framing—its fairness, accuracy, and contextual sensitivity—is as crucial as its prevalence. Effective media advocacy requires not only consistent messaging but also nuanced, transparent, and credible portrayals to foster widespread public support and meaningful societal engagement.

In conclusion, this study deepens our understanding of the interplay between media framing and public perceptions, particularly in the Nigerian context. It highlights the importance of aligning media strategies with audience expectations and perceptions to maximize their impact. By addressing the public's concerns about bias and credibility, the media can strengthen its role as a catalyst for gender equality and national development. Ultimately, the findings call for a more deliberate and reflective approach to media framing, ensuring that it serves as an effective tool for societal progress and transformative change.

BIODATA

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