

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMES ON NIGERIAN TELEVISION STATIONS: A CASE OF MEDIA NEGLECT

Yewande Omotosho, Olusola Oyero & Abiodun Salawu

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the performance of Nigerian television stations as regards their programmes for children against the backdrop of responsibilities assigned to the media as partners in protecting the interest and rights of the child contained in various international conventions and treaties. The African Charter on Children's Broadcasting (ACCB) particularly stipulates regular, quality and diverse programming for children towards their physical, social and mental development. This study therefore analysed the content of three Nigerian television organisations to see how they have fared in this responsibility. The findings show a neglect of children on Nigerian television as only 3.3% of their total 818 programmes and 2.6% of the total airtime were devoted to children. However, most of the children's programmes (70.4%) were produced locally and there was a balance in the focus of the programmes between entertainment and learning. Ironically, none of the television stations has a policy concerning children's programming. We, therefore, recommend a holistic transformation in the Nigerian television stations' programming for children. This will include regulatory framework for performance, giving more emphases to African Charter on Children's Broadcasting and other resolutions among broadcasters, and establishment of Kiddies' televisions supported by the government.

Key Words: Children's broadcasting, Responsibility, Under-reportage, Neglect, Nigerian television stations

INTRODUCTION

The first attempt to bring issues affecting children to the fore dated back to the 1924 Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child (United Nations for Children's Fund (UNICEF) 2009, p.4). Several other meetings held with pronouncements and agreements among nations to improve the lot of children. But the most notable event about children was the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which was adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by UN General Assembly resolution 44/25 of November 20, 1989. It became effective on September 2, 1990. About 191 countries have since ratified it (UNICEF 2002). The Convention has produced a profound change with substantive effects on the world's attitude towards children, giving mandate to various sectors of the society, including the media, to take the issues affecting children more seriously.

Born out of the challenge of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the International Children's Television Charter which affirms the rights of children that are identified in the Convention concerning television programming for and about children. The Charter was presented by advocates for children's television to the First World Summit on Children and Television, held in Melbourne, Australia, in March 1995. It was revised and approved at the Prix Jeunesse Round Table in Munich, May 29, 1995, and has been adopted in many countries around

the world (African Charter, 2000). Conscious of the fact that the Charter needs to be complemented by a specific Charter that takes Africa's interests and peculiarities into account, the Commonwealth Broadcasters, under the auspices of the Commonwealth Broadcasters Association (CBA) converged in Cape Town, South Africa on October 13, 2000 to ratify the African Charter on Children's Broadcasting (ACCB), earlier affirmed and accepted at the African Summit on children's Broadcasting which was held in Accra, Ghana in 1997.

The Africa Charter on Children's Broadcasting demands that children's programmes should be of high quality, made specifically for them, for development of their physical, mental and social potentials to the fullest and that they should be involved in the production process. They should also be protected from commercial exploitation, guaranteed right to freedom of expression, thought, conscience and religion and must be ensured equitable access to programmes. In addition to the afore-mentioned demands is the affirmation of the sense of self by children through their culture and language and creation of opportunities for learning and empowerment to promote and support the child's right to education and development.

The Charter further stipulates that children's programmes should be wide ranging in genre and content, but should not include gratuitous scenes and contents that encourage violence, sex and drug abuse. The Charter also requires regular and appropriate timing for broadcasting children's programmes, provision of sufficient resources for qualitative children's programmes and compliance with internationally agreed policies with particular reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA) undertakes to promote the ideals embodied in the spirit of the Charter by encouraging CBA broadcasters to implement every aspect of it.

In spite of Nigerian subscription to these international conventions and charters on children, the unpleasant situation of children has not really improved as their rights are still daily trampled upon. The former Executive Director of Unicef, Ann M. Veneman, did note that the largest number of children whose rights are daily deprived are found in sub-Saharan Africa (UNICEF, 2009, p. ii). Though the media have been charged with the responsibility of active involvement in protecting the interest of the child, it is important to examine how well they have fared in the performance of this duty. Already, Oyero's (2010a) study has proved the 'invisibility and voicelessness' of children in the Nigerian newspapers; it will be of interest to know the extent to which Nigerian television stations have catered for children's needs, especially concerning the expectations of the African Charter on Children's Broadcasting. This paper, therefore, examined the content of Nigerian television stations' broadcasts by determining the proportion of children's programmes aired, airtime allotted, prominence given to such programmes in terms of time of broadcast and the programme formats employed. It also examined the place of programme production, the language adopted, the television stations' philosophy and policies on children's programmes and the challenges confronting the stations in the production of quality children's programmes.

LITERATURE

The task of partnership assigned to the media in catering for the interest of the child is rooted in the social responsibility and development media theories. One of the foremost Communication scholars, Denis McQuail (2005) gives a summary of the basic tenets of Social Responsibility Media Theory. Media should accept and fulfil certain obligations to society. These obligations are to be met by setting high or professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy,

objectivity and balance; and they (media) should be self-regulating within the framework of law and established institutions. The media are also expected to avoid offensive content triggering crime, violence, or civil disorder or harm to minority groups but give opportunity to plural views and reflect the diversity of their society, giving access to various points of view and rights of reply. McQualil (2005) adds that society and the public have a right to expect high standards of performance from the media, and there may be the need for intervention to ensure order and secure public good. There is also the need for journalists and media professionals to be accountable to society as well as to employers and the market.

From the above, the social responsibility media theory expresses the obligation of the media to the society to include 'informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity, and balance', but one paramount obligation of the media is the need to use their position to ensure appropriate delivery of information to audiences (*Siebert et al., 1956*). As noted by Middleton (2009), concept of public interest lies inexplicitly at the heart of the definition of social responsibility which highlights the crucial role of the communications sector in shaping societal processes. Thus, the media are expected to play a pivotal role in delivering public good to the society. Also, among the tenets of social responsibility media theory outlined by McQual is the media obligation to protect the rights of the individual by acting as watchdog over the government. It thus follows that one can justifiably establish that the media have responsibility to serve the interest of the child as part of larger societal interest by giving necessary attention required towards the realisation of the children's many unfulfilled dreams.

Similarly, the development media theory emphasizes the role of the media to support the development efforts in the society. It stresses that media must accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy. In other words, the idea is that media should support ideas, programmes, activities and events, which are related to an improvement of the living standard of people. The media ought to be committed to contributing to the overall goal of development, to promote cultural and informational autonomy, to support democracy and solidarity with other developing nations (McQuail 2005). Thus, seeing the issues affecting children as a development one, one cannot but see the relevance of media in achieving development ends for children.

Again, realization that issues affecting children have greater implications than the present development issues calls for more media involvement since issues affecting them are intergenerational which make their rights crucial (Oyero, 2010b). Any development that is not sustainable is not development, and since children form the future of any society, their issues must be seen from that perspective. This fact has been well noted in chapter 25 of Agenda 21 of the 1992 Earth Summit which is devoted to children to ensure that the development needs and rights of today's children will be met without compromising those of future generations (UNICEF, 2006), as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which requires fulfilling the rights of children noting that six of the eight MDGs can best be met as the rights of children to health, education, protection and equality are protected. Thus, a greater focus on children's rights will cater for their social development leading to the realisation of their full potential.

THE STATE OF CHILDREN'S TELEVISION IN NIGERIA

One could be proud of television programmes on Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) in the 1980s and early 1990s. Then, all television stations were owned by the government, and it was

normal for every child that had access to television to stay glued to NTA on week days from 4pm till the next three hours. On weekends, there were exciting programmes, especially the Sunday evening when *Tales by Moonlight* is aired. The NTA of those days succeeded in featuring good quality television programmes both local and foreign. The programmes then focused on good values, containing educational contents and those that teach morals. There was a happy balance between the foreign and local television programmes (Nwabia, 2012). The programmes did not leave entertainment behind as children were treated to good fun.

Unfortunately, from the middle of 1990, children's TV programmes began to nosedive both in quantity and quality. Though private television stations have begun to emerge at this point, they did not contribute to the expected values of children's programmes enjoyed in the 1980s. The private stations especially relied on imported children's TV content that has less value, thus stiffening the space for the production of good local programmes. The popularity of satellite television does not help the situation, as many cable TV offered endless kiddies programmes. Nigerian children today are more familiar with Ben10, Dora the explorer, Barney than they are with *Tales by Moonlight*.

While, in recent times, some efforts are being initiated to inject fresh air into children's television programming, the efforts have not yielded positive results. Many of the programmes are predominantly entertainment in nature and do not reflect the situation of an average Nigerian child because the programmes are too elitist featuring children from highbrow urban schools. A number of reasons could be deduced as responsible for this situation just as you have in many African countries. The funds to package quality children's programmes are not available. Commercial organisations are only interested in sponsoring programmes that will further that business enterprise and are such children are not considered to have such commercial value. Even when children's programmes are sponsored, they are usually those that are entertainment-oriented.

Besides, politics has taken over the airwaves, and the best of time meant for children's programmes used for political issues. While government allocated money for production of politically-oriented programmes, children's programmes do not enjoy such luxury. The implication of this is that there is dearth of quality children's television programmes; therefore, children and households have to seek for alternatives with foreign cable television. To make matter worse, there seems to be no agency advocating for children's lot on the Nigerian airwaves. Even the regulatory body, Nigeria Broadcasting Commission could not help this situation. While UNICEF has done some workshops on children's programmes for TV stations in the country, their efforts do not appear to have much impact on the content of children's TV programmes.

WHAT TELEVISION OFFERS CHILDREN

Media generally serve today as one of the most central socializing agents in forming behaviours, attitudes and world views. They are the central story tellers of our time, serving as an array of sources of information and entertainment for all ages in all cultures around the globe (Kolucki & Lemish, 2011, p.9). Comstock and Scharrer (2012) noted that children and adolescents' viewing of television and other screen media account for a substantial portion of their time expenditures, and children between the ages 8 to 18 spend 5 hours daily watching television (Rideout, Foehr & Roberts, 2010). Media can be used positively to enrich children's lives, change unhealthy

behaviours, stimulate imagination and creativity, widen education and knowledge, encourage inclusion and tolerance, narrow social gaps and stimulate development and civil society (Kolucki & Lemish, 2011).

Television in particular plays a great role both in the social life and educational life of children. As noted by Davies and Thornham (2007, p. 6), television is more important than other media primarily because of its universal accessibility to all classes, ages and types of children. Television is found in over 98% of households across the world (Clifford, Gunter & McAleer, 1995, p.6), delivering content in various genres. Beyond delivery of information, television is a social medium that affects every aspect of daily life such as dressing, shopping, eating, talking, etc. and has become a pacesetter initiating discussion through what people see on it.

Television is a means of instruction through the various educational programmes that are aired. Children sit before television to learn subjects like Maths, English language, chemistry, etc. For example, watching Sesame Street has been found to contribute to children's scholarly achievement (Cook et al, 1975). Besides, television is a stimulant of children to participate in educational context like quiz competitions, debate and academic games. Kirkorian, Wartella and Anderson (2008, p. 46) pointed out that educational TV programmes, those designed in line with curriculum with a specific goal to communicate academic or social skills, teach their intended lessons. They noted however that while purely entertainment content, particularly violent content, is negatively associated with academic achievements of children, 'educational programmes are positively associated with overall measures of achievement and with potentially long lasting effects' (p.49).

It is not just educational programmes that are beneficial to children, news programmes too are essential since children also live in situations affected by the news, including poverty and conflict, they are thus become aware of their environment and grow up as active and conscious citizens as opposed to being apathetic (Livingstone, 2008). Similarly, Mares and Woodard (2012), reviewing several studies provided substantial evidences to show that television viewing and other forms of media use have positive effects on children's social encounters.

METHOD

This study combined quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Content analysis of children's television programmes was carried out, combined with in-depth interview with programmes with managers of the television stations. The study populations comprised all programmes aired on the three selected television stations, namely Nigerian Television Authority (NTA 2), Lagos Television (LTV) and African Independent Television (AIT). The stations were purposely selected to represent the three categories of television stations found in Nigeria, which are Federal government-owned stations, state-owned stations and privately-owned stations in the order mentioned.

Nigerian television stations' programmes are usually scheduled for a week and run for every quarter of the year before any change. The third quarter of the year 2012 was randomly chosen and the programmes within that quarter were analysed. The programme schedules obtained from the stations assisted a lot in the analysis of the programmes. Children's programmes were differentiated from non-children's programmes, and only children's programmes were analysed.

Thus, every children’s programme, in each segment, constituted the unit of analysis. They were analysed for proportion, time allotted, prominence given (programmes within children’s time-belt, 4-6pm daily and 8am to 12noon on Saturday and Sundays, are prominent), programme format, place of production- either local or foreign programme and language used, either English or other official language. The programmes’ managers (MP- Manager Programmes) of the three stations were also interviewed. The results of content analysis were presented in tables, bar and pie charts and data from interviews were presented in diagrams with discussion following. Reliability was calculated using the formula: Number of agreements multiplied by100, divided by Number of agreements plus Number of disagreements. The inter-coder reliability ranged from 79% to 100% and the overall reliability was 94%. Narrative analysis method was used for the data obtained from the interview conducted; this helps to discover repeated similarities in the data obtained from the interviewees (Bernard, 2000; Kawulich, 2004).

RESULTS

This section shows the result of the data collected.

Table 1: Proportion of Children and Non-Children’s Programmes

Stations	Children’s Programmes	Non-Children’s Programmes	Total
NTA	17 (2.1%)	201 (24.5%)	218 (26.6%)
LTV	5 (0.6%)	359 (44%)	364 (44.6%)
AIT	5 (0.6%)	231 (28.2%)	236 (28.8%)
Total	27 (3.3%)	791 (96.7%)	818 (100%)

Table 1 shows that a total of 818 programmes were aired by the three television stations- NTA, LTV and AIT with each having 218 (26.6%), 364 (44.6%) and 236 (28.8%) respectively. However, only 27 (3.3%) of the programmes were children’s programmes while the remaining 791(97%) were not. Out of the 27 children’s programmes, NTA had 17 (1.8%), and both LTV and AIT had 5 (0.6%) each.

Table 2: Airtime Allotted to the Programmes On Station Basis

Stations	Airtime for Programmes in Minutes Per Week	Non-Children’s Programmes Weekly (Minutes)	Total Weekly Airtime Weekly (Minutes)
NTA2	510 (8hrs, 30mins) (5.1%)	9570 (94.9%)	100% n=10080
LTV	125 (2hrs, 5mins) (1.2%)	9955 (98.8%)	100%

			n=10080
AIT	150 (2hrs, 30mins) (1.5%)	9930 (98.5%)	100% n=10080

Table 2 shows the airtime allotted to Children’s programmes. NTA 2 had the highest with 510 minutes representing 5.1% of its weekly airtime, LTV had the lowest with 125 minutes (1.2%) and AIT was slightly above LTV with 150 minutes representing 1.5%.

Table 3: General Performance on Airtime Allotted to the Programmes

Stations	Airtime for Programmes in Minutes Per Week	Airtime Non-Children’s Programmes Weekly (Minutes)	Total Daily Airtime Weekly (Minutes)
NTA2	510 (8hrs, 30mins) (1.7%)	9570 (31.7%)	10080
LTV	125 (2hrs, 5mins) (0.4%)	9955 (32.9%)	10080
AIT	150 (2hrs, 30mins) (0.5%)	9930 (32.8%)	10080
Total	785 (13hrs, 5mins) (2.6%)	29455 (97.4%)	30240 (100%)

Table 3 shows the general performance of the three stations on the airtime allotted to children’s programmes compared with other programmes. Based on the total airtime of the three stations, NTA 2 had 1.7%, LTV had 0.4% and AIT had 0.5%, making a total of 2.6% of airtime for children programmes. Figure 1 gives the vivid position of these programmes.

Figure 1: Total Airtime Allotted to Children’s programmes by the Stations

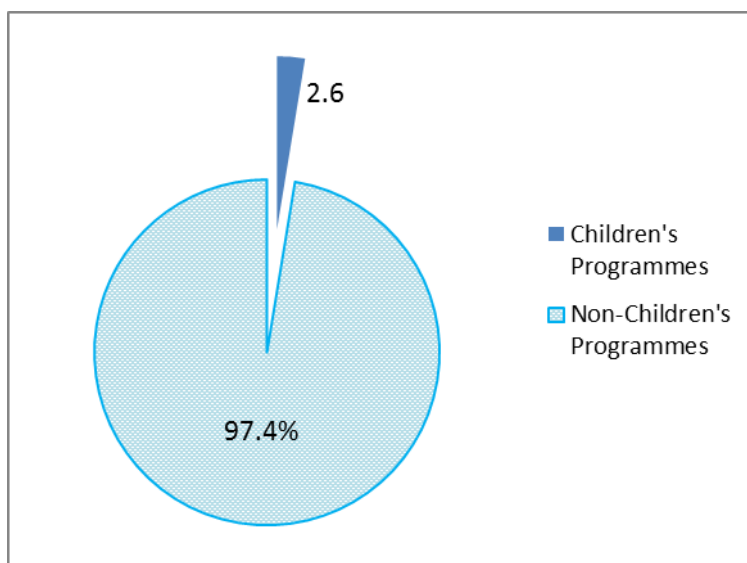


Table 4: Prominence given to Children’s Programmes

Stations	Prominent	Non-Prominent	Total
NTA 2	9 (52.9%)	8 (47.1%)	100%, n=17
LTV	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	100%, n=5
AIT	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	100%, n=5
Total	17 (63%)	10 (37%)	100%, n=27

Table 4 shows how the stations give prominence to children’s programming in terms of the time of the day that such programmes are aired. Children’s programmes are expected to be aired during the children’s programmes belt, which is 4pm to 7pm daily. The morning hours on Saturday and Sunday, that is 8am to 12noon are also regarded as children’s programme belt. 52% of NTA2 programmes were prominent and 80% of LTV and AIT were also prominent. Combining all the programmes, 63% of the television programmes were prominently aired as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Prominence given to Children’s Programmes

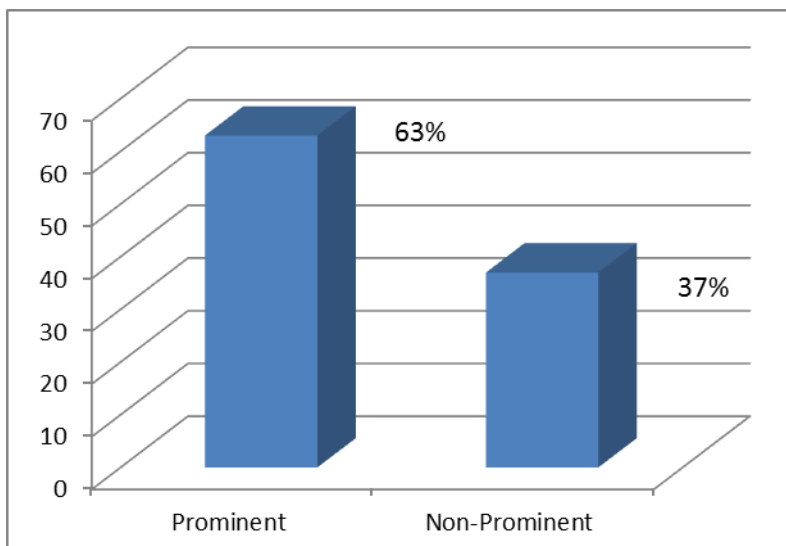


Figure 2 shows the comparison of Prominent and Non-prominent children’s programmes. We see that 63% of all the children’s programmes were prominent while 37% were not prominent.

Table 5: Programme Formats for Children’s Programmes

Format	NTA2	LTV	AIT	Total
Cartoon	7 (41.7%)	0	0	7 (25.95%)
Talk Show	2 (11.8%)	1 (20%)	3 (60%)	6 (22.2%)
Magazine	4 (23.5%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	7 (25.95%)
Puppet Show	3 (17.6%)	0	1 (20%)	4 (14.5%)
Debate/Contest	1 (6%)	1 (20%)	0	2 (7.4%)
Party	0	1 (20%)	0	1 (3.7%)

Total	17 (100%)	5 (100%)	5 (1000%)	27 (100%)
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Table 5 reveals the types of format used for the children’s programmes. Animated cartoons had the largest portion among NTA 2 children’s programmes, 7 cartoons representing 41.7%, Talk-show was 11.8%, Magazine programmes had 23.5% , Puppet show and Dabate/Contest had 17.6% and 6% respectively. For LTV, 20% programmes were Talk Show, 40% Magazine programmes, Debate and Party were 20% each. AIT had 60% of its children’s programmes as Talk Show, Magazine programmes and Puppet Show were 20% each. In all Cartoons and Magazine programmes dominate the programme content of the stations, followed by Talk Show and Puppet Show took the third place

Table 5: Programmes’ Source of Production

Stations	Local	Foreign
NTA 2	10 (58.8%)	7 (41.2%) n=17
LTV	5 (100%)	0 n=5
AIT	4 (80%)	1 (20%) n=5
Total	19 (70.4%)	8 (29.6%) N=27

Table 5 presents the sources where the children’s programmes were obtained from. 58.8% of children’s programmes aired by NTA 2 were produced locally, while the foreign ones took 41.2%. All LTV programmes were local production and AIT children’s programmes had 70.4 local productions while the foreign content was 29.6%.

Table 6: Focus of Children’s Programmes

Stations	Learning	Entertainment	Mixed	Total
NTA 2	4 (23.5%)	8 (47.1%)	5 (29.4%)	(100%) n=17

LTV	2 (40%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	(100%) n=5
AIT	3 (60%)	0	2 (40%)	(100%) n=5
Total	9 (33.3%)	10 (37.1%)	8 (29.6%)	(100%) N=27

Table 6 shows the focus of the content of the children’s programmes by the three stations. NTA 2 had 47.1% of its programmes focused on entertainment and 23.5% for learning, while programmes mixed with both content were 29.4%. LTV had a balance of learning focused and entertainment- oriented programmes with 40% each, while mixed programmes had 20%. None of the children’s programmes on AIT was purely entertainment; it had 60% learning focused and 40% mixed programmes. In all, the television stations had more of entertainment focused programmes (37.1%), closely followed by learning (33.3%) and mixed programmes were 29.6%.

Figure 3: Language of Children’s Programmes

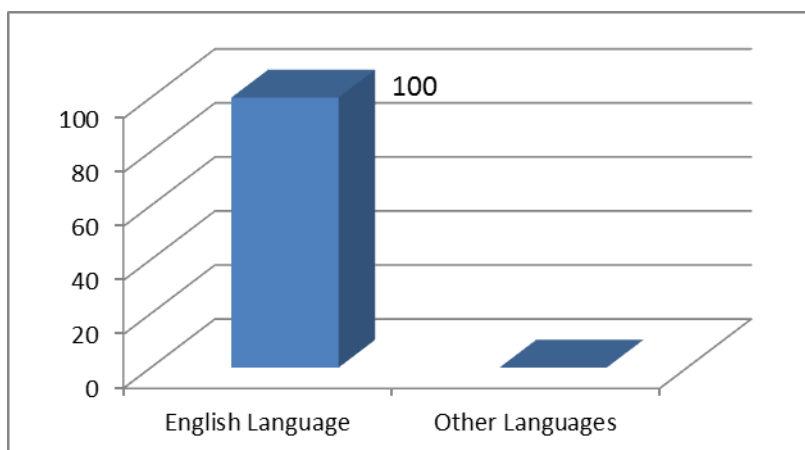


Figure 3 shows that all the children’s programmes by the three stations were produced in English language, which is

the official language for the nation.

CONTENT DESCRIPTION OF CHILDREN’S PROGRAMMES

As already mentioned, a total of 27 children’s programmes were identified on the three stations. NTA2 had 17 of the programmes with cartoons being dominant, 7 out of the 17 programmes representing 41.7% of its children’s programmes. The names of these cartoons are *Ben 10*, *Tom and Jerry*, *Scooby Doo*, and *Legon Cartoon*. Other children’s programmes on the schedule of NTA2 include *Young Inventors*, *Children’s Costume Festival (CCF)*, *Sesame Square*, *Tales by Moonlight* and *Clip-Clap*. *Young Inventors* is a learning oriented programme that involves design of things and innovations, it has two segment weekly. *Children’s Costume Festival (CCF)* is a traditional attire contest where children compete. *Sesame Square*, aired thrice a week, is a puppet show used to teach letters and numbers; the show aims to educate children about malaria prevention, promote Nigerian unity through the representation of the diverse groups that make-up the country and to help remove the stigma of being HIV-positive. *Tales by Moonlight*, is a

traditional story-telling programme that teaches children moral lessons, it has two segments every week. *Clip-Clap*, also aired twice a week, is a variety programme with segments on classroom work, music and dance and discussion about issues that affect them.

LTV has five programmes, namely: *KKB Show*, *Nnena and Friends*, *School Debate* (twice weekly), and *Children Monthly Party*. *KKB show* is a variety programme that showcases children's talents, teaching of crafts, cooking, and drama. *Nnena and Friends* is another variety programme which involves children's travels to see places, dancing and partying and discussions. *School debates* showcase different schools debating on selected topics; and *Children Monthly Party* is purely entertainment.

AIT equally has five programmes namely, *KKB Show*, *Kid Trust*, *Healthy Moments*, *Between the Lions* and *Leaders of Tomorrow*. *KKB show* has been described already; *Kid Trust* is a talk show that teaches children about values that make for future leaders; and *Healthy Moments* teaches children how to live a healthy life through the kind of food they eat and maintenance of hygiene. *Between the Lions* is a puppet television series designed to promote reading, while *Leaders of Tomorrow* teaches children about different professions and what it takes to achieve them.

Sources of children's programmes

The interviews conducted with programme managers of the stations provided insight into the situation and management of children's programmes in the selected television stations. We sought to find out the source of children's programmes. NTA 2 gets its children's programmes from network studios, since the station is a network station for some national programmes of NTA. It also purchases children's programmes from marketers. For AIT its programmes are created in-house and some are syndicated programmes by independent producers. It currently has 2 in-house and three syndicated programmes. LTV has five programmes which are sponsored in-house created programmes.

Child Rights Content of Children's Programmes

On whether the stations have children's programmes that specifically talk about child rights, all the stations answered in the negative:

No, we have no children's programme that basically addresses the issue of child rights. Though we know that child rights are important issues that should be in the content of our children's programmes, people aren't ready to fund programmes relating to child rights because they really don't see the usefulness of it. --- NTA 2, MP

Well, sincerely speaking, there's really no kiddies programme that addresses the issues of child rights in its contents. Basically, the programmes we have are all about craft-making, fun seeking and teaching of academic subjects such as Mathematics, English, etc., none talks about child rights. --- LTV, MP

No, the programmes for children are entertainment and fun-seeking programmes. --- AIT, MP

The foregoing actually reveals that children's programmes are included in the stations programming without any specific purpose in mind.

Stations' Policy on Children's Programming

We inquired if the stations have any particular policy with which they operate on children's programming. All the stations have no such policy:

We do not have written-down policy on children's programming, but we are aware of their importance and that is why we have those programmes for children. --- NTA2, MP

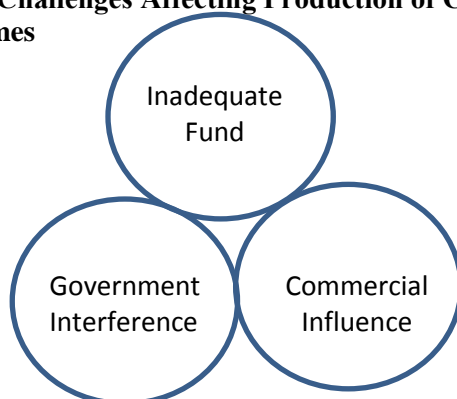
There is no policy on children's programming"--- LTV, MP

"Our policy is not targeted specifically to children's programming but all our programmes. ---AIT, MP.

Challenges Facing Production of Children's Programmes

Part of the interview tried to find out the problems the stations were having in production of children's programmes. The interviewees identified the problems confronting them as regards production of children's programmes to include inadequate funding, government interference, commercial factor and preference of audience for foreign children's programmes.

Figure 4: Challenges Affecting Production of Children's Programmes



One of the issues is the influx of foreign children's programmes; in NTA, we try to have more number of local children's programmes than the foreign ones. The problem is that no matter how good our local programmes are, children now still prefer the foreign cartoons, which makes it kind of difficult for us in producing quality programmes. Another challenge is government interference, because the time belt for children's programmes is 4 -7 pm and we may have to broadcast political programmes at this time. And then the issue of funding which is why it's difficult to have quality children's programmes, they pump money into political issues in NTA rather than children's programmes- NTA 2, MP

The major problem faced in providing children's programmes is the cost and funding. It's difficult finding people that are willing to sponsor children's programmes, they rather invest it in other programmes than in kiddies programmes and the cost of producing local programmes in general are very expensive and time consuming, especially children's programmes because the techniques must be put right to achieve an excellent work and we have less personnel that are willing to work on kiddies programmes... LTV, MP

Sponsorship is a major problem because we are profit driven, likewise all stations too; we live and grow based on adverts like other stations too. Fund to produce children's programmes is a problem and normally, kids are rowdy so it's difficult putting them together for the shows. - AIT, MP

DISCUSSION

As revealed in the findings of the study, only 3.3% of the programmes aired on the three selected television stations were children's programmes. This tells much of the kind of priority that Nigerian television gives to children. It shows that Nigerian television stations are completely not in compliance with international declarations as regards children's programming. The African Charter on Children's Broadcasting prescribes that the interest of the children should be at the fore through airing of high quality and regular programmes for children, but that is not the situation as seen with Nigerian television stations.

This finding confirms the fact that children are generally under-reported in the media. Oyero's (2011, p.51) has established gross under-reportage of children's issues in the Nigerian newspapers where less than 1% was recorded on children's issues in two national newspapers. Similar to this is McManus and Dorfman's (2002) study carried out on the portrayal of child care in U.S. newspapers which recorded inadequate reportage, as well as Moss' (2011) study on the economic impact of the child care. Stories about child care represented a fraction of 1% of the stories in the newspapers, an evidence of gross under reportage of child care. It has actually been mentioned that children and young people are not considered as important in societal decision-making process because they are immature, ill-informed or indeed, not interested in current affairs (McNamara's, n.d.). This to some extent may be true with news content, but when it comes to other media genres, especially those that are meant for children's mental, social and physical development, the opposite is the case.

Children are generally attracted to television (Raising Children Network ,n. d, p.1-2); they are interested in it and learn a lot from its contents. It is against this background that the media have been recognised as partners in protecting the interest of the child. The UN workshop's resolution known as the Oslo Challenge clearly spells out that child and media relationship is an entry point into the wide and multifaceted world of children, and that in every aspect of child rights, in any element of the life of a child, the relationship between the children and media plays a role (The Media Wise, 2003). The implication of this is that the Nigerian televisions have not been playing the expected role in the world of children considering the limited number of children's programmes on their schedule.

Data on the airtime allotted to children's programmes show that NTA 2 had 5.1%, LTV had 1.2% and AIT had 1.5%, none of the stations has allotted a significant space to children's

programming. That three stations gave only 2.6% of the total airtime available to children's programming is a confirmation that children really have no serious place in the estimation of the television stations. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) specifies that broadcasters shall 'devote at least 10 per cent of total airtime to children's programming...' (NBC 2012, p.58), but this is not the case. Even the government-owned national station had only 1.7% of the total airtime by the three stations. Children surely deserve something better than the present performance of the television stations considering their place in the future of any society. For any society to be sustainable, priority must be given to children because the future belongs to them. It is thus important that children must be provided with facilities, including media content that will enhance their personality development (Parajuli, 2004). Children today grow-up immersed in the media world, and parents see television as important educational tool that can assist children's intellectual development (Rideout, Vandewater, & Wartella 2003). So, television provides opportunity for children to learn skills and to develop educationally.

It is also seen that the few programmes for children were not balanced in genres as scheduled by the individual stations as presented in Table 5 above. NTA 2 had Cartoons/Animations dominating its programmes with 41.7%. It was Magazine programmes that dominated LTV programmes with 40%, while Talk-show dominated AIT programmes with 60%. It appears that the television stations just featured the programmes as they wanted without any scientific reason for doing so or consideration for appropriateness and balance. The African Charter on Children's Broadcasting (ACCB) requires that children's programmes should be of wide range in genres and content (Art 6); this is meant to give children that wide privilege of learning from diverse format angles.

It is worthy of note that 70.4% of the 27 programmes were produced locally. This is commendable and should be improved upon. It is in line with Article 17 of the UNCRC which stipulates production of media content that are of social and cultural benefits to children. Looking at the overall performance, the stations have also done well in ensuring that most of their children's programmes (63%) were aired at the appropriate time-belt, this is in accordance with the stipulation of ACCB that Children's programmes should be aired in regular time slots at times when children are available to listen and view (Art.7.). However, one observes that just about half (52%) of NTA programmes are prominent. This is not good enough. A closer look of NTA 2 children's programmes reveals that the non-prominent programmes were featured as early as 5: 30am when children are still sleeping or preparing for school; whereas, non-children's programmes were scheduled for children's time-belt. Similarly, one can observe that almost half (41.2%) of NTA 2's 17 programmes were foreign. This is not healthy for a national government-owned station that is expected to provide example for other private broadcasters.

While in overall performance of the three stations there is a balance in programmes focus among learning, entertainment and mixed programmes- 33.3%, 37.1% and 29.6 respectively, it was entertainment that dominated NTA 2 programmes with 47.1% being cartoons. As noted earlier, NTA is a national station, owned by the government and run with tax-payers money, is expected to set the pace in providing balance in programming and serving the interest of the society, children especially. Though it has the highest number of children's programmes (60%) among the three stations, quantity without consideration for quality and balance is not desirable.

It is worthy of note that all the children's programmes were packaged in English language. This is a clear departure from the prescription of the UNCRC and the ACCB which address the role of

the media in having consideration for the linguistic needs of children (UNCRC, Art 17b) and that children should hear, see and express themselves, their culture and their language (ACCB, Art4). Recognising that Nigeria has three indigenous languages (Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo) as official languages apart from English calls to question the commitment of the stations to the performance of their duty.

The interview conducted actually revealed a major factor responsible for the unpleasant situation of children's broadcasting on the Nigerian Televisions. None of the broadcast TV stations has a policy for children's programming. This is not only unimpressive; it equally questions the popularity of African Charter on Children's Broadcasting among Nigerian broadcasters. Is it that the broadcast organisations are not aware of their responsibilities as prescribed by UNCRC, the Oslo Challenge and the ACCB in particular? Or is it that the political and economic environment does not allow them to decide on policy for children's programming?

The programme managers of the three broadcasters did identify similar factors constraining the production of children's programmes, namely: sponsorship and funding, government and commercial interference where space meant for children's programmes are occupied by sponsored political and commercial programmes, etc. These challenges would definitely occur since the organisations do not have a policy on children's programming and so children's programmes will be at the will and caprices of other perceived more important programmes. One can also argue that since the broadcast organisations' priority for children's programming is not grounded or non-existent, it would be difficult to persuade sponsors to support such programmes. There are a number of children-oriented companies who produce children's goods in Nigeria and will gladly support children's programmes. Though children may not have the power of purchase, they do actually influence their parents purchase decisions (Brown,1979; Thomson et al, 2007; Ramzy, et al, 2012 and Kumar,2013).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this paper have shown that children are neglected in the Nigerian Television programming. The neglect reflects in the number of programmes, time allotted to the programmes and the quality and balance of programming given to children. We have noted that the television stations are not in compliance with the resolutions of a number of treaties and convention on children such as UNCRC, the Oslo Challenge and the African Charter on Children's Broadcasting (ACCB). It has also been pointed out that lack of house policy on children's broadcasting by the television stations is a major factor responsible for setbacks in the programming content of the stations for children. This trend is a departure from the expectation from the media in contributing to children's social development. Recognition of the fact that children form the future of any society should elicit greater commitment from the media to pay more and greater attention to them.

The media have obligations to the society as specified in social responsibility media theory. The theory prescribes that the media should carry out certain social duties, recognising that they have the responsibility in the maintenance of the society. As observed in this study, the media performed poorly in their responsibility to children as their voices are not heard and their media needs are not well catered for to reflect the much needed diversity of the society. Children are vulnerable members of the society, and as part of the watchdog role of the media in protecting the rights of individuals, children should be catered for. Similarly, recognising that children's issues are development-entered, the media need to promote such issues and give them their due place in line with the tenets of development media theory.

We therefore recommend the need for the major stakeholders in the Nigerian broadcast environment to take more seriously the issue of children's programming on television. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) needs to formulate and enforce some guidelines that will ensure that broadcasters give priority to children's programming by producing and airing regular and quality children's programming at appropriate times. The practice of switching children's programmes for sponsored political and commercial programmes should be declared unethical. Another way that the NBC can help push forward the airing of good children's programmes is to initiate a move of collaboration among the various television organisations for production of such programmes which they can share for broadcast. This kind of initiative should be actively supported by the government through adequate finance. The government, through the Ministry of Information which supervises the government broadcast stations, may also consider setting up television stations that are solely for children programming. This will definitely be a novel thing to do since children are already familiar with similar kiddies' channels on cable TV providers.

It is also important that relevant organisations like UNICEF and Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA) should popularise the declarations and resolutions of conventions that relate to children's broadcasting. It was noted that it appears that the broadcasters were ignorant of resolutions of these summits such as ACCB which, of course, may be a major reasons why the stations do not have a policy on children's programming. Getting the broadcasters informed will go a long way in placing the interest of children on the heart of these broadcasters.

The broadcasters too need to strive to be informed of their expectations by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on Children's Broadcasting. Whoever will occupy the position of programme manager should be versed enough to know the diversity inherent in programming and the special attention that vulnerable members of the society like children deserve. Similarly, Nigerian broadcast organisations should have a well-grounded policy for children's programming. And finally, the excuse of lack of sponsorship should not be allowed to hinder the broadcast of good children's programmes. The media need to accept the presentation of children's programmes as part of their responsibility and do the needful with or without advert support or sponsorship. Nonetheless, they should embark on strong marketing drive for sponsorship. With good policy in place, the advertisers and sponsors will be ready to support good programmes for children.

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Yewande Omotosho is at the Department of Mass Communication, Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria.

Email: yewande.omotosho@covenantuniversity.edu.ng

Olusola Oyero is a Post-doctoral fellow with North-West University, Mafikeng Campus, South Africa and a Senior Lecturer, Department of Mass Communication, Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria.

Emails: 25799916@nwu.ac.za & olusola.oyero@covenantuniversity.edu.ng

Abiodun Salawu is a Professor of Communication and Media Studies at North-West University, Mafikeng Campus, South Africa.

Email: Abiodun.salawu@nwu.ac.za