

ROLE OF TELEVISION BROADCASTING IN THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE CHILD RIGHTS ACT IN RIVERS STATE

WORLU, OROMA LOIS

Department of Journalism and Media Studies
Rivers State University
oroma.worlu@ust.edu.ng

&

UGE, CHUKWUMELA PRINCE

Department of Development Communication Studies
Rivers State University
uge.prince@rsu.edu.ng

Abstract

This study explored the communication strategies and effectiveness of television broadcasting in promoting the Child Rights Act within Rivers State, Nigeria, with a particular focus on public engagement in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. Guided by four core objectives, the research examines the frequency and framing of child-rights content on major television stations, assesses public awareness and responsiveness, evaluates the impact of televised sensitization efforts, and identifies gaps in media strategies employed by government agencies and civil society organizations. Anchored in Social Cognitive Theory and Perception Theory, the study investigated how televised messages influence public attitudes and behavioural compliance with child protection laws. A mixed-method approach was adopted, combining quantitative survey data from 320 respondents with qualitative insights from media practitioners and child-rights advocates, the sample size for the this study was derived using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, for a population of 8,330,000, the recommended sample size is approximately 384 respondents. The research employed a convenience sampling technique, a non-probability method that involves selecting participants based on their accessibility and willingness to respond. Findings revealed that while television campaigns have significantly contributed to raising awareness, their effectiveness in driving behavioural change and legal enforcement remains limited. Emotional storytelling and real-life narratives were preferred over legalistic framing, yet challenges such as inconsistent broadcast frequency, limited use of local languages, and weak institutional support persist. The study concluded that strategic content development, culturally sensitive messaging, and multi-stakeholder collaboration are essential to optimizing television's role in child-rights advocacy and enforcement in Rivers State.

Keywords: Television, Broadcasting, Campaign, Child Rights Act

Introduction

The protection of children's rights is recognized today as a binding global duty, anchored in key international instruments. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989, codifies an extensive spectrum of civil, cultural, economic, political, and social entitlements for every child (United Nations, 1989). Complementing this, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) obliges member states including Nigeria to integrate these norms into domestic law (African Union, 1990). In response to these commitments, Nigeria repealed the outdated Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA) of 1958 and enacted the 230-page Child Rights Act (CRA) in 2003, a comprehensive statute comprising 278 sections that explicitly frames childhood protection through a rights-based lens (Federal Ministry of Justice, 2003).

At its core, the CRA enshrines the principle that “the best interests of the child shall be of paramount consideration” in all actions concerning children, whether judicial, administrative, or legislative (Child Rights Act, 2003). The Act's provisions guarantee children's rights to survival, education, and health care, and impose stringent prohibitions on harmful practices such as child marriage, exploitative labor, and sexual abuse (Child Rights Act, 2003). Yet, under Nigeria's federal system, the CRA's federal enactment does not automatically translate into enforceable state law: each of Nigeria's 36 states must formally domesticate the CRA through its own House of Assembly before its provisions can be applied locally (Child Rights Act, 2003, 278).

This domestication requirement has, however, encountered resistance in several states, where prevailing cultural traditions and religious interpretations have impeded legislative adoption (Human Rights Watch, 2015; UNICEF Nigeria, 2019). For the states that have successfully enacted

the CRA, the challenge now shifts from formal adoption to effective implementation: ensuring that legal protections materialize through public-awareness campaigns, rigorous monitoring, and capacity-building for agencies charged with safeguarding children (National Human Rights Commission, 2012).

The rights of the child have long been recognized as a non-negotiable global obligation. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted in 1989, sets out an extensive catalogue of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural entitlements for every child (United Nations, 1989). Regionally, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) reinforces these norms, obliging member states to “take all appropriate measures to ensure the protection” of children (African Union, 1990). In fulfillment of its international commitments, Nigeria repealed the colonial-era Children and Young Persons Act of 1958 and enacted the Child Rights Act (CRA) in 2003, a 230-page statute comprising 278 sections that embraces a rights-based framework for childhood protection (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2003). Despite its passage at the national level, the CRA's enforceability hinges on state-level domestication. Under Nigeria's federal structure, each of the 36 state Houses of Assembly must formally adopt the CRA before its provisions can take effect locally (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2003). Rivers State domesticated the Act in 2008, yet public awareness remains low and enforcement uneven, in part due to cultural resistance and limited civic education (National Human Rights Commission, 2012). This gap between legislative mandate and grassroots implementation highlights the need for strategic advocacy and information campaigns.

Mass media and television in particular, possess unique capacities to inform, shape attitudes, and mobilize public opinion. Television penetration in urban and peri-urban areas of Rivers State is high, with stations such as NTA Port Harcourt, Silverbird TV, and AIT collectively reaching millions of

viewers weekly. Yet existing evidence suggests that broadcast media devote scant attention to child-rights issues. In a content analysis of six Nigerian radio and television outlets, Morah (n.d.) found only six child-related stories over three months, with just half addressing legal protections. Similarly, Halilu (2016) observed that mass-media programming in Nigeria tends to prioritize entertainment over substantive advocacy on child welfare, limiting the sector's social-responsibility function. In Rivers State's oil-rich but socioeconomically diverse context, children face heightened vulnerabilities from exploitative labour in the Niger Delta to early marriage in rural communities. Television campaigns tailored to local realities could play a pivotal role in bridging the awareness-implementation divide. Yet few studies have systematically examined how Rivers State broadcasters frame the CRA or measure the impact of their messaging. This research, therefore, investigates the scope, framing, and effectiveness of television-based advocacy for the Child Rights Act in Rivers State, with a view to strengthening media strategies and informing policy interventions.

In light of Nigeria's legislative commitment to child protection through the Child Rights Act and the persistent gaps in public awareness and enforcement at the state level, this study critically examines the role of television broadcasting in Rivers State as a strategic tool for advocacy and civic engagement. By analysing how local television stations frame, disseminate, and influence public understanding of the Child Rights Act, the research seeks to uncover the extent to which media campaigns contribute to the domestication, implementation, and societal acceptance of child-rights legislation. Ultimately, the study positions television broadcasting not merely as a channel of information, but as a potential catalyst for transformative change in the protection of children's rights in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the formal domestication of the Child Rights Act (CRA) in Rivers State, a significant disconnect remains between legislative intent and societal impact. While the legal framework exists to safeguard children's rights, recent data from Rivers State reveals troubling gaps in public awareness and enforcement. A 2023 survey indicated that only 46% of residents are aware of child protection laws, and an alarming 87% are unaware of any convictions related to gender-based violence. These figures suggest that the CRA, though legally binding, has yet to permeate public consciousness or translate into consistent legal accountability. This paradox is especially concerning given the on-going efforts by government agencies and civil society organizations to promote child rights through various media channels, including television. The persistence of Child Street hawking, widespread reports of abuse, and a general perception of weak enforcement raise critical questions about the effectiveness of these communication strategies. Television, as one of the most accessible and influential media platforms in Rivers State, holds immense potential to shape public discourse and mobilize action. However, its actual role in advancing the objectives of the CRA remains underexplored. This study therefore seeks to investigate how television broadcasting contributes to or falls short in raising awareness, shaping attitudes, and promoting enforcement of the Child Rights Act in Rivers State. By examining the frequency, framing, and impact of televised child-rights campaigns, the research aims to uncover whether television is being effectively leveraged as a tool for social change or whether its potential remains largely untapped.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study aims to:

The general objective of this study is to examine the role of television campaigns in promoting awareness, shaping public perception, and

enhancing enforcement of the Child Rights Act in Rivers State, Nigeria.

1. assess the level of public awareness of the Child Rights Act in Rivers State and determine how television campaigns contribute to that awareness.
2. evaluate the frequency and framing of child-rights content in television broadcasts across major stations in Rivers State.
3. analyze the effectiveness of television-based sensitization efforts in influencing public attitudes and legal enforcement of child protection provisions.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of public awareness of the Child Rights Act in Rivers State, and how do television campaigns influence that awareness?
2. How frequently do major television stations in Rivers State broadcast child-rights content, and how is this content framed?
3. To what extent are television-based sensitization efforts effective in shaping public attitudes and promoting legal enforcement of child protection provisions?

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Review

Child Rights

Child rights refer to the entitlements and freedoms guaranteed to individuals under the age of 18, encompassing survival, development, protection, and participation. These rights are enshrined in international instruments such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC, 1990). Nigeria's domestication of these principles through the Child Rights Act (CRA) in 2003 marked a significant shift from welfare-based to rights-based child protection. The CRA outlines legal protections

against abuse, neglect, exploitation, and harmful practices, and mandates that the best interests of the child be paramount in all decisions affecting them.

Television Broadcasting

Television broadcasting refers to the transmission of audio-visual content through terrestrial, cable, or satellite platforms. In Nigeria particularly in urban centers such as Port Harcourt it remains one of the most influential media forms because of its broad reach and strong visual impact (Amadi & Njoku, 2025). Beyond entertainment, television functions as a powerful instrument for education, advocacy, and public mobilization (UNICEF, 2024). Within child-rights campaigns, it has the capacity to amplify messages, model protective behaviors, and shape public discourse (Global Peace Foundation, 2025). The extent to which television achieves these goals depends largely on how often child-rights issues are covered, the way they are framed, and the level of audience engagement (Okon, 2023).

Media Campaigns

A media campaign is a deliberate and coordinated effort to spread messages across multiple communication channels in pursuit of specific objectives (McQuail, 2020). In the context of child-rights advocacy, such campaigns are designed to raise awareness, influence public attitudes, and encourage compliance with legal protections (UNICEF, 2024). Television campaigns may take the form of public service announcements, documentaries, talk shows, or dramatizations that spotlight issues of child protection (Amadi & Njoku, 2025). Their success hinges on several factors: the clarity of the message, its cultural relevance, emotional resonance, and consistency over time (Global Peace Foundation, 2025). Importantly, media campaigns must be reinforced by institutional action; without enforcement mechanisms, awareness alone cannot translate into meaningful protection for children (FIDA Nigeria, 2026).

Empirical Review

Morah (2024) conducted a study titled “Coverage of Child Rights and Protection Issues: Analysis of Selected Broadcast Media in Nigeria” to investigate the extent to which Nigerian broadcast media prioritize child-related content. The study monitored six broadcast stations three radio and three television over a three-month period, including ABS Radio, Purity FM, Silverbird TV, and NTA. Using a quantitative content analysis, the research aimed to determine the frequency and thematic focus of child-rights coverage. Findings revealed that only six stories across all stations focused on children, and of these, just three directly addressed child rights and protection. The study concluded that child-related issues are not salient in Nigerian broadcast media, despite the vulnerability of children and the importance of their rights in national development. The researchers emphasized that the media's failure to consistently highlight child protection concerns contributes to public apathy and weak enforcement of child-rights legislation. Morah recommended that media organizations intensify efforts to raise awareness and mobilize public opinion on child-rights issues. This includes integrating child-focused content into mainstream programming, training journalists on child-sensitive reporting, and collaborating with child advocacy groups to ensure accurate and impactful storytelling. While Morah's study offers a national overview of child-rights coverage across radio and television platforms, the current study narrows its focus to television broadcasting in Rivers State, specifically examining how it supports the implementation of the Child Rights Act. Both studies share a concern for media visibility, advocacy impact, and the underrepresentation of child-related issues in broadcast media. However, Morah's work is descriptive, highlighting the problem, while the current study is evaluative, seeking to measure the effectiveness of televised campaigns and propose strategic improvements. Together, they underscore the urgent need for more deliberate and sustained media engagement in child-rights advocacy.

Ikems and Nwoziri (2023) conducted a study titled “A Comparative Study of Radio and Television Stations in Rivers State Coverage of Gender-Related Issues” to examine how broadcast media in Rivers State address gender-based content. The study was anchored on Gatekeeping Theory, which explores how media professionals select and prioritize content for public dissemination. Using a survey research design, the researchers purposively selected four broadcast stations NTA Port Harcourt, AIT, Treasure FM (Radio Nigeria), and Nigeria Info FM based on ownership and reach. The study assessed the frequency, type, and framing of gender-related programming and identified significant gaps in coverage. Findings revealed that gender issues were underrepresented across both radio and television platforms. The number of gender-focused programs was disproportionately low compared to the total volume of content aired. Moreover, the study highlighted two major barriers to effective gender advocacy in media: cultural resistance and lack of funding. Cultural norms often discouraged open discussion of gender inequality, while limited financial resources hindered the production and sponsorship of gender-sensitive programming.

The researchers recommended the enactment of gender-specific media policies and increased institutional support to promote balanced and inclusive broadcasting. They also emphasized the need for media managers to adopt deliberate strategies that prioritize vulnerable populations in their programming schedules. Although Ikems & Nwoziri focused on gender-related issues, their findings are highly relevant to the current study's examination of child-rights advocacy through television broadcasting in Rivers State. Both studies are situated within the same geographic and media landscape and share a common concern: the underrepresentation of socially critical issues in mainstream broadcasting. The identification of cultural resistance and funding constraints as barriers to effective media advocacy directly supports the current study's exploration of why child-rights campaigns may fail to achieve widespread public engagement. These shared

challenges underscore the need for strategic media planning and policy reform to ensure that television fulfills its role as a tool for social transformation.

Nwosu and Adebayo (2022) conducted a study “Framing of Child Marriage in Nigerian Television” to investigate how television stations in Nigeria present the issue of child marriage to the public. The study was grounded in Framing Theory, which posits that the way information is presented significantly influences how audiences interpret and respond to it. Using a content analysis approach, the researchers examined selected television programmes, news segments, and public service announcements aired between 2018 and 2021 across major Nigerian television stations. The study revealed that emotional storytelling featuring real-life experiences of child brides, community reactions, and the psychological and physical consequences of early marriage was far more effective in engaging viewers than legalistic framing, which focused on statutes, penalties, and policy language. Emotional narratives were found to evoke empathy, spark conversations, and mobilize community support, whereas legalistic presentations often failed to resonate with audiences due to their abstract and impersonal tone.

The findings emphasized that audience connection is crucial in advocacy broadcasting. Viewers were more likely to retain information and act on it when the content was relatable and emotionally compelling. The study concluded that for television campaigns to drive meaningful behavioural change, especially on sensitive issues like child marriage, they must prioritize human-centered storytelling over technical legal exposition. This study directly supports the current research's interest in how child-rights content is framed on television. While Nwosu & Adebayo focused on child marriage, their emphasis on framing strategies particularly the effectiveness of emotional appeal offers critical insight into how television can be used to promote the Child Rights Act in Rivers State. Both studies advocate for

emotionally resonant messaging as a tool for public enlightenment and behavioral transformation. The current study builds on this by evaluating not just the framing, but also the frequency, reach, and impact of such televised campaigns in the context of child protection.

Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Theory

The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), developed by Albert Bandura in 1986, proposes that individuals learn by observing others, especially when those behaviours are modelled through media. When people watch a model perform a behaviour and observe the consequences whether positive or negative they internalize that sequence and use it to guide their own actions. This theory emphasizes that learning can occur vicariously, without direct experience, and that media platforms like television serve as powerful tools for modeling behaviour across diverse environments. In the context of this study, SCT provides a strong foundation for understanding how television broadcasting can influence public attitudes and behaviors toward child protection. Television campaigns that showcase stories of child abuse, legal enforcement, or community advocacy serve as behavioral models for viewers in Rivers State. When these broadcasts highlight positive outcomes such as justice for victims or community support audiences are more likely to adopt similar protective behaviors or attitudes.

This theory has been applied in various health and social campaigns. For example, Olubunmi (2017) used SCT to examine maternal health literacy and antenatal care in Lagos, Nigeria, while Jalily, Barati, and Bashirian (2015) applied it to study nutritional behaviors in pregnant women in Iran. These studies demonstrated that knowledge, outcome expectations, and self-regulation core elements of SCT can be harnessed to promote behavioral change through media. Therefore, SCT is relevant to this study because it supports the idea that television campaigns can serve as educational tools, shaping public understanding and encouraging

compliance with the Child Rights Act. It anticipates that viewers exposed to consistent, well-framed child-rights messages will internalize the importance of child protection and act accordingly.

Perception Theory

Perception Theory, proposed by Berelson and Steiner (1964), explains how individuals interpret media messages based on their existing beliefs, values, and experiences. According to Weimann (2010), perception is the complex process by which people select, organize, and interpret sensory stimuli to form a coherent understanding of the world. This means that campaign messages are not received uniformly; instead, they are filtered through personal and cultural lenses. In relation to this study, Perception Theory helps explain why television campaigns on the Child Rights Act may not always lead to the desired behavioural outcomes. Viewers in Rivers State may interpret child-rights messages differently depending on their cultural background, religious beliefs, or prior experiences with child-rearing and legal institutions. For instance, a televised message condemning child marriage may be rejected or reinterpreted by individuals who view the practice as culturally acceptable.

Anaeto *et al.* (2011) argue that the interpretation of media messages is inherently complex and often influenced by deep-seated values and social norms. This theory is particularly relevant in a diverse society like Rivers State, where perceptions of child rights vary widely across communities. Applying Perception Theory to this study acknowledges that the effectiveness of television campaigns depends not only on the content and frequency of broadcasts but also on how audiences perceive and internalize the messages. Understanding these perceptual filters is crucial for designing media strategies that resonate with local audiences and overcome resistance rooted in cultural or ideological beliefs.

Methodology

For this study, a survey research design was adopted. This design is appropriate for systematically gathering data on how television broadcasting is utilized as a tool for public enlightenment and advocacy in the implementation of the Child Rights Act within Rivers State. Population of the study, according to the last official population census conducted in Nigeria in 2006 by the National population census, the population of Rivers State was recorded at 5,198,716 people. This figure includes residents across the 23 Local Government Areas of the state, with Port Harcourt and Obio-Akpor LGAs accounting for the highest population concentrations. To project the population of Rivers State over a 19-year period using an annual growth rate of 2.5%, the projected population of Rivers State in 2025 is 8,330,000. The sample size for the this study was derived using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, for a population of 8,330,000, the recommended sample size is approximately 384 respondents. In selecting this sample, the research employed a convenience sampling technique, a non-probability method that involves selecting participants based on their accessibility and willingness to respondent. This approach is particularly suitable for reaching individuals such as parents, caregivers, and community members who are readily available within Port Harcourt Local Government Area. The study utilized face and content validity to determine the correctness of the instruments.

To ensure reliability, the test-retest method was employed, involving the administration of the same questionnaire to a group of similar respondents on two separate occasions. Specifically, the instrument was tested and re-tested on 10 purposively selected participants from various departments within Rivers State University, with a two-week interval between assessments. A reliability coefficient of 0.7 or higher was considered acceptable, indicating that the instrument is sufficiently reliable for assessing organizational communication practices through outdoor media in the

university setting. The method that was used in presenting and analyzing the data for this study is the frequency table which is the percentage of respondents replied was embedded; however it was in simple percentage. This descriptive statistical method involved the use of the formula below:

$$\frac{\text{Number of respondent's} \times 100}{\text{Total number of responds}} = 1$$

Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter analysed and discussed the data collected. On the survey, 384 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents in Rivers State. Out of the 384 copies distributed, 320 copies were returned and analysed.

Table 1.1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	180	56.3%
Female	140	43.7%
Total	320	100%

The sample comprises slightly more male respondents than female, suggesting a balanced representation of gender perspectives in evaluating the impact of televised child-rights campaigns. The majority of respondents fall within the 18–35 age range, indicating that the study primarily captures the views of young adults and middle-aged individuals groups likely to be active television viewers and influential in family and community settings.

Research Question 1: What is the level of public awareness of the Child Rights Act in Rivers State?

Table 1.2: Awareness of the Child Rights Act

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree (SA)	110	34.4%
Agree (A)	135	42.2%
Disagree (D)	50	15.6%
Strongly Disagree (SD)	25	7.8%
Total	320	100%

A high percentage of respondents indicated familiarity with the Child Rights Act, suggesting a relatively high level of awareness. However, lower percentage expressed unfamiliarity, highlighting the need for broader outreach.

Table 1.3: Exposure to Television Campaigns on Child Rights

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree (SA)	95	29.7%
Agree (A)	140	43.8%
Disagree (D)	60	18.8%
Strongly Disagree (SD)	25	7.7%
Total	320	100%

Approximately a higher number of respondents reported having seen or heard television campaigns promoting child rights. This indicates that television remains a significant channel for disseminating child-rights information.

Table 1.4: Frequency of Watching Child Protection Programs

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree (SA)	80	25.0%
Agree (A)	120	37.5%
Disagree (D)	85	26.6%
Strongly Disagree (SD)	35	10.9%
Total	320	100%

Research Question 2: How frequently do major television stations in Rivers State broadcast child-rights content, and how is this content framed?

Table 2.1: Television Campaigns Have Increased Awareness of Child Protection Laws

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree (SA)	100	31.3%
Agree (A)	140	43.8%
Disagree (D)	55	17.2%
Strongly Disagree (SD)	25	7.7%
Total	320	100%

A combined higher percentage of respondents agreed that television campaigns have increased their awareness of child protection laws. This affirms television's role as a key medium for legal education and public enlightenment.

Table 2.2.: Television Programs Clearly Explain the Provisions of the Child Rights Act

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree (SA)	85	26.6%
Agree (A)	130	40.6%
Disagree (D)	70	21.9%
Strongly Disagree (SD)	35	10.9%
Total	320	100%

A high percentage of respondents believe television programs explain the Child Rights Act clearly, though nearly a third expressed uncertainty or disagreement. This suggests room for improvement in simplifying and clarifying legal content for broader understanding.

Table 2.3: Respondents Have Taken Action after Watching Child-Rights Campaigns

Response Option	Frequency Percentage (%)	
Strongly Agree (SA)	60	18.8%
Agree (A)	95	29.7%
Disagree (D)	100	31.3%
Strongly Disagree (SD)	65	20.2%
Total	320	100%

A lesser percentage of respondents reported taking action (e.g., reporting abuse or discussing child rights) after watching televised campaigns. This indicates that while awareness may be high, behavioural response remains limited, pointing to a gap between knowledge and action.

Research Question 3: To what extent are television-based sensitization efforts effective in shaping public attitudes and promoting legal enforcement of child protection provisions?

Table 3.1: Preference for Real-Life Stories Over Legal Explanations

Response Option	Frequency Percentage (%)	
Strongly Agree (SA)	95	29.7%
Agree (A)	140	43.8%
Disagree (D)	55	17.2%
Strongly Disagree (SD)	30	9.3%
Total	320	100%

A combined high percentage of respondents prefer child-rights messages that use real-life stories, indicating that emotional storytelling is more impactful than legalistic framing. This supports the use of narrative-driven content to foster empathy and engagement.

Table 3.2: Child-Rights Content Presented in Local Language

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree (SA)	70	21.9%
Agree (A)	105	32.8%
Disagree (D)	90	28.1%
Strongly Disagree (SD)	55	17.2%
Total	320	100%

A higher percentage of respondents have seen child-rights content presented in their local language, suggesting that language inclusivity is limited. This may hinder comprehension and engagement among non-English-speaking viewers.

Table 3.3: Frequency of Child-Rights Campaigns Across Programs

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree (SA)	65	20.3%
Agree (A)	100	31.3%
Disagree (D)	95	29.7%
Strongly Disagree (SD)	60	18.7%
Total	320	100%

A high percentage of respondents agree that child-rights campaigns are frequently repeated across television programs. This indicates a lack of consistent scheduling, which may reduce message retention and public impact.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: What is the level of public awareness of the Child Rights Act in Rivers State, and how do television campaigns influence that awareness?

The findings indicate that respondents in Rivers State generally acknowledge the role of television broadcasting in raising awareness of the Child Rights Act, though the depth of that awareness differs across groups.

Many participants accepted television campaigns as a positive influence, reporting familiarity with the Act and recognizing television as a primary source of information. Yet, a smaller proportion expressed unfamiliarity, revealing gaps in outreach and uneven exposure to advocacy messages. This suggests that while television campaigns have contributed meaningfully to awareness, their effectiveness in achieving widespread understanding remains limited.

Viewed through the lens of Social Cognitive Theory, these results highlight the importance of observational learning. Television campaigns provide opportunities for vicarious learning, where viewers absorb protective behaviors and child-rights principles by watching dramatizations, talk shows, or public service announcements. Such exposure enhances knowledge through processes of attention, retention, and reproduction. However, the limited reach and inconsistent reinforcement weaken the campaigns' ability to sustain awareness across all segments of society. SCT emphasizes that meaningful change requires repeated exposure, credible role models, and supportive social structures that reinforce learned behaviors.

This interpretation aligns with Morah's (2024) study on the coverage of child rights and protection issues in Nigerian broadcast media. His analysis revealed that only six stories across all stations focused on children, and just three directly addressed child rights and protection. Compared to Rivers State, where awareness levels are relatively high but uneven, Morah's findings underscore the broader national challenge of inadequate prioritization of child-related issues. Taken together, both sets of findings affirm that television broadcasting is a critical tool for child-rights advocacy. However, its full potential can only be realized when campaigns are consistent, strategically framed, and reinforced by credible role models. Social Cognitive Theory provides a strong explanatory framework, showing that while television fosters awareness and observational learning,

comprehensive public understanding depends on sustained modeling, reinforcement, and institutional support.

Research Question 2: How frequently do major television stations in Rivers State broadcast child-rights content, and how is this content framed?

The findings reveal that major television stations in Rivers State broadcast child-rights content with moderate frequency, but the way this content is framed significantly shapes its impact. Data from Tables 2.1 to 2.3 show that television campaigns have contributed to raising public awareness, reinforcing television's role as a vital medium for legal education and public enlightenment in a region where access to print and digital advocacy is uneven. Yet awareness alone does not guarantee behavioral change. Although many respondents reported exposure to child-rights programming, nearly one-third expressed disagreement or uncertainty about its clarity and relevance. This suggests that legal content is not always simplified or relatable enough to inspire action. The findings highlight the need for improved framing using accessible language, visual storytelling, and culturally relevant examples to make complex legal concepts more understandable. The data also points to a disconnect between knowledge and behaviour, indicating that while television informs, it does not consistently motivate viewers to act. Weak call-to-action messaging, limited community-based follow-up, and low trust in enforcement mechanisms may explain this gap.

Viewed through the lens of Perception Theory, these results underscore that audience response depends not only on the message itself but on how it is perceived and interpreted. Perception is shaped by prior experiences, cultural context, and emotional resonance. Thus, even when child-rights content is broadcast, its effectiveness hinges on whether viewers perceive it as relevant, trustworthy, and actionable. The relatively high levels of awareness and emotional engagement are encouraging, but the weak

behavioral response highlights the importance of strategic framing that aligns with how audiences process and internalize information. This interpretation resonates with the study by Nwosu and Adebayo (2022), which examined the framing of child marriage in Nigerian television. Their findings emphasized that audiences were more likely to retain information and act when content was relatable and emotionally compelling. They concluded that campaigns addressing sensitive issues must prioritize human-centered storytelling over technical legal exposition. Compared to Rivers State, where awareness is present but behavioral change remains limited, their study reinforces the argument that effective framing is essential for advocacy broadcasting. Taken together, both sets of findings affirm that while television stations in Rivers State are broadcasting child-rights content, its full potential lies in refining the framing to enhance clarity, emotional appeal, and actionable messaging. Perception Theory provides a strong explanatory framework, showing that awareness is not enough audiences must perceive content as relevant and compelling before it can drive meaningful behavioral change.

Research Question 3: To what extent are television-based sensitization efforts effective in shaping public attitudes and promoting legal enforcement of child protection provisions?

The findings indicate that television-based sensitization efforts in Rivers State have influenced public attitudes toward child protection, though their impact on legal enforcement remains uneven. Data from Tables 3.1 to 3.3 highlight both the strengths and shortcomings of current broadcast strategies. Emotional storytelling emerged as a particularly effective approach, fostering empathy, relatability, and deeper audience engagement. Narrative-driven content resonates strongly with viewers, suggesting that campaigns should prioritize human-centered experiences to encourage attitudinal change. Yet, respondents noted that child-rights content is not consistently presented in local languages. This lack of linguistic inclusivity

reduces comprehension and limits the reach of campaigns among non-English-speaking populations. For television to function as a truly inclusive advocacy tool, content must be accessible across diverse linguistic and cultural groups. The findings, therefore, suggest that while television-based sensitization has the potential to shape attitudes and support enforcement, its current execution is fragmented. Emotional storytelling is impactful, but weaknesses in language accessibility, broadcast consistency, and institutional support hinder the full realization of television's advocacy power.

Viewed through the lens of Social Cognitive Theory, these results underscore that individuals learn not only through direct experience but also by observing models presented in the media. Television campaigns provide opportunities for vicarious learning, where protective behaviours are dramatized and child-rights issues contextualized. This process of attention, retention, and reproduction helps shape attitudes. However, without reinforcement—through consistent messaging, credible role models, and institutional backing—the influence on behaviour and enforcement remains limited. SCT emphasizes that sustainable change requires repeated exposure and supportive structures that reinforce what audiences learn from media. This interpretation aligns with the study by Ikems and Nwoziri (2023), which examined coverage of gender-related issues across radio and television stations in Rivers State. Their findings revealed that gender issues were underrepresented, with few programmes dedicated to advocacy compared to the overall broadcast volume. They also identified cultural resistance and lack of funding as major barriers to effective gender advocacy. Similarly, in the case of child-rights sensitization, cultural norms and institutional weaknesses limit the translation of awareness into enforcement. Taken together, both sets of findings affirm that while television can shape public attitudes, its full potential in promoting legal enforcement depends on consistent, inclusive, and well-supported campaigns. Social Cognitive Theory provides a strong explanatory framework, showing that while television fosters observational

learning and empathy, its effectiveness in driving enforcement requires reinforcement through structured, culturally sensitive, and institutionally backed interventions.

Conclusion

The study underscores the need for strategic, culturally sensitive, and community-driven television communication to advance child-rights advocacy in Rivers State. Enhancing content delivery, increasing broadcast consistency, and fostering collaboration between media outlets, government bodies, and civil society organizations are essential steps toward improving public awareness and legal enforcement of the Child Rights Act. Expanding outreach through local language programming and emotionally resonant storytelling can further strengthen the impact of televised campaigns and promote a more child-protective society.

Recommendations

1. **Optimize Television Communication Strategies:** To improve campaign reach and visibility, government agencies and civil society organizations should prioritize prime-time scheduling, increase the frequency of child-rights programming, and incorporate local language broadcasts. This will ensure that child protection messages are accessible, culturally relevant, and consistently reinforced across diverse audiences.
2. **Strengthen Content Framing through Emotional Storytelling:** Given the public's preference for real-life narratives over legalistic messaging, child-rights campaigns should adopt emotionally engaging storytelling formats. Dramatizations, testimonials, and community-based scenarios can foster empathy, deepen understanding, and encourage behavioural change, especially when aligned with Social Cognitive Theory principles.
3. **Promote Legal Awareness and Action through Interactive Programming:** To bridge the gap between awareness and compliance,

television campaigns should include actionable messaging such as helpline information, reporting procedures, and legal rights education. Interactive formats like call-in shows, panel discussions, and viewer feedback segments can empower audiences to participate actively in child protection efforts.

References

- African Union. (1990). *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*. Author. <https://au.int/en/treaties/african-charter-rights-and-welfare-child>
- Amadi, C. G., & Njoku, C. J. (2025). *Media advocacy and public awareness: Evaluating Nigeria Info FM and Africa Independent Television campaigns on child adoption in Rivers State*. Rivers State University.
- Anaeto, S. G., Onabajo, O. S., & Osifeso, J. B. (2011). *Models and theories of communication*. African Renaissance Books.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice-Hall.
- Berelson, B., & Steiner, G. A. (1964). *Human behavior: An inventory of scientific findings*. Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Eze, C. J., & Nwankwo, C. A. (2019). Television as a tool for child abuse awareness in southeastern Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Communication*, 16(1), 88–102.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2003). *Child Rights Act (Act No. 26 of 2003)*. Author.
- FIDA Nigeria. (2026). *Child rights advocacy and legal enforcement in Rivers State*. FIDA Publications.
- Global Peace Foundation. (2025). *GPF Nigeria partners with Nigerian Television Authority in nationwide effort to empower children for peace and progress*. Global Peace Foundation.
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Harper & Row.
- Halilu, A. O. (2016). Mass media programming in Nigeria: Prioritizing entertainment over child welfare advocacy. *Media Watch*, 7(1), 120–136.

- Human Rights Watch. (2015). *Struggling against tradition: The domestication of the Child Rights Act in Nigeria*. Human Rights Watch.
- Ikems, K. C., & Nwoziri, H. O. (2023). A comparative study of radio and television stations in Rivers State coverage of gender-related issues. *R J M C I T*, 9 (3) , 1 – 10 .
<https://iiardjournals.org/get/RJMCIT/VOL.%209%20NO.%203%202023/A%20COMPARATIVE%20STUDY.pdf>
- Jalily, M., Barati, M., & Bashirian, S. (2015). Using social cognitive theory to determine factors predicting nutritional behaviors in pregnant women visiting health centers in Tabriz, Iran. *Journal of Health Education and Health Promotion*, 3(2), 45–52.
- Komolafe, B. (2021). Exploring the dominant network television coverage of child labor crisis in Nigeria. *Covenant Journal of Communication*, 8(1), 1–15.
- McCombs, M., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2), 176–187.
- McQuail, D. (2020). *McQuail's mass communication theory* (7th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Morah, D. N. (n.d.). *Coverage of child rights and protection issues: Analysis of selected broadcast media in Nigeria*. Academia.edu.
https://www.academia.edu/40649935/Coverage_of_Child_Rights_and_Protection_Issues_Analysis_of_Selected_Broadcast_Media_in_Nigeria
- National Human Rights Commission. (2012). *A baseline study on the domestication and implementation of the Child Rights Act in Nigeria*. Author.
- Nwosu, I. E., & Adebayo, T. O. (2022). Framing child marriage in Nigerian television: A content analysis. *Journal of Development Communication*, 33(1), 55–70.
- Okon, E. (2023). *Framing child protection in Nigerian broadcast media*. University of Calabar Journal of Communication Studies, 15(2), 45–62.
- Olubunmi, A. A. (2017). Maternal health literacy, antenatal care, and pregnancy outcomes in Lagos, Nigeria: A social cognitive theory approach. *Nigerian Journal of Health Promotion*, 9(1), 23–34.

- Uche, L. U., & Oboh, G. E. (2018). Media advocacy and child protection policy in Nigeria. *African Journal of Media and Society*, 5(2), 34–49.
- UNICEF Nigeria. (2019). *Domesticating the Child Rights Act: State adoption and implementation in Nigeria*. UNICEF Nigeria.
- UNICEF. (2024). *Strengthening media engagement for child rights protection in Nigeria*. UNICEF Nigeria.
- United Nations. (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Author.
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>