

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MEDIA LITERACY INTERVENTIONS
IN REDUCING CHILDREN'S EXPOSURE TO HARMFUL MEDIA CONTENT**

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BENIN CITY**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS
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DECLARATION

This project work is based on a study undertaken by me in the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, under the supervision of Dr. Nonso Nnabuike. All ideas, views, findings, and analyses expressed in this study are products of my personal research. Where the views and works of others have been used, they have been duly acknowledged.

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research was carried out by Okafor Vivian Ogochukwu in the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin. It is approved by the undersigned on behalf of the department, having met the requirements in partial fulfillment for the award of the Bachelor of Arts Degree (B.A.) in Mass Communication.

15-8-25

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01/8/25

Dr. Daniel Ekhareafo
Head of Department

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to God Almighty, my everything, for His grace, guidance, and unwavering support throughout this academic journey.

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First and foremost, I return all glory to God Almighty for His help, mercies, provision, and unwavering support throughout the period of my academic journey. Without Him, none of this would have been possible.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of media literacy interventions in reducing children's exposure to harmful media content. It explores the nature of harmful media content, the extent of children's exposure, and the role of various stakeholders including parents, educators, media professionals, and regulatory bodies in mitigating these risks through media literacy efforts. The study adopts a quantitative research design and uses a structured questionnaire to gather data. Findings reveal that children are increasingly exposed to violent, sexual, and misleading content through various media platforms. However, media literacy interventions when properly implemented, are seen as effective tools for equipping children with critical thinking skills to navigate media content safely. The study concludes that a collaborative approach involving schools, families, media institutions, and government agencies is vital for enhancing the impact of media literacy. It recommends the integration of media literacy into school curricula, improved parental supervision, and stronger regulatory frameworks to protect children from harmful media influences.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

In our digital world today, children are increasingly exposed to a wide range of media content, including television, social media, online videos, and digital games some of which are quite helpful while others pose a high risk of exposure to violence. The globalised nature of the 21st century with all its ingredients of sophistication in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has turned the world into what the philosopher and media theorist, Marshall McLuhan calls "The Global Village" (Hendricks, 2020). While media can be a valuable source of education and entertainment, it also presents significant risks, including exposure to violent, misleading, and inappropriate content especially among children.

The ease with which people do business, access and share information through surfing the Internet has drawn the attention of educationists and media experts on the need for students to be abreast with world happenings and critically evaluate information in the era of social media (Uwandu, 2017). The rise of easy internet access in Nigeria has further amplified these concerns, as children can easily encounter harmful material through mobile devices and social platforms. What further intensifies this issue is that children as young as five now have easy access to phones and other media devices, increasing their vulnerability to this exposure. The most urgent need also points to the fact that children issues have not been given enough coverage by the media in Nigeria (Awele, 2020).

To address these challenges, media literacy interventions have been introduced as a proactive measure to equip children with the necessary skills to critically analyze and engage with media content. Media literacy refers to the ability to access, evaluate, and create media in an informed manner. It empowers children to differentiate between reliable and misleading information, recognize harmful content, and make responsible media choices.

The National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy conceives media literacy as "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate messages" (Baran & Davis, 2012, p.416). According to Ezekiel S. Asemah "Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in various forms. It empowers individuals to be critical thinkers and effective communicators." AN Adum, et al "The media often do not offer reality, but mere representations of reality. It therefore takes media literacy to understand the distinction between the media and the real world." "The only way to help children explore their media world positively is to impart media literacy skills to them."

In Nigeria, various stakeholders, including government agencies, governmental organizations (NGOs), and schools, have developed programs aimed at enhancing children's media literacy. For instance, the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) conducts school-based media literacy campaigns to educate children on the importance of understanding media content classification. Similarly, initiatives like Safer Internet Nigeria and Google's Be Internet Awesome (Nigeria Edition) provide educational resources to help children navigate online spaces safely except for those in rural areas who might not necessarily have easy access to these resources.

Despite these efforts by these stakeholders, concerns still remain regarding the effectiveness of these interventions in reducing children's exposure to harmful media. Factors such as limited reach, lack of parental involvement, and gaps in media regulation may hinder their impact. This study seeks to analyze the effectiveness of these media literacy interventions in Nigeria, examining their strengths, limitations, and potential areas for improvement.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The rapid growth and expansion of digital and traditional media has greatly increased children's exposure to various forms of media content in Nigeria as although media can be a powerful tool for education and social development, it also presents risks, including exposure to violent, sexual, and misleading content most times even without warning. Many Nigerian children consume these media contents without proper guidance, leading to them being influenced negatively thereby affecting their cognitive, emotional, and social development.

The major issue on ground remains the fact that despite the importance of media literacy in mitigating these risks, there is still limited awareness and implementation of various structured media literacy interventions for children in Nigeria. Schools, parents, and regulatory bodies such as the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) have made efforts to regulate harmful content, but these measures often fall short due to weak enforcement, limited parental supervision, and the unregulated nature of online platforms.

Existing studies have examined media influence on youths and adults, but there is a gap in research focused on children and the effectiveness of media literacy programs in helping them critically engage with media. The kind of media education in terms of content that children are exposed to matters a lot. This is because, if children are exposed to content which are laced with violence, sex or pornography, strong language, drugs and alcohol (Onumah, 2008) as often is it the case, it is likely to affect their lives as they grow into adulthood. According to Uwngiaren, 2007, he insist that the media we consume daily plays a role in constructing and interpreting the nature of that world according to certain values, ideological framework and cultural principles.

This study seeks to analyze the effectiveness of media literacy interventions in reducing children's exposure to harmful media content in Nigeria. It aims to assess the role of educational institutions, parental guidance, and regulatory bodies in promoting media literacy among children.

1.3 Research Objective

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the effectiveness of media literacy interventions in reducing Nigerian children's exposure to harmful media content. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the nature, sources, and extent of children's exposure to harmful media content in Nigeria.
2. Assess the effectiveness of media literacy interventions in helping children critically analyze and filter media content.
3. Evaluate the contributions of parents, educators and media regulatory bodies, such as the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB), the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission

(NBC), and the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), in controlling children's exposure to harmful media.

4. Identify the challenges hindering the successful implementation of media literacy programs for children in Nigeria.

1.4 Research Questions

1. To what extent are Nigerian children exposed to harmful media content, and what are the common sources?

2. What are the existing media literacy programs in Nigerian schools, and how effective are they in helping children to critically analyze and filter media content?

3. How effective are the contributions of parents, educators and media regulatory bodies like the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB), the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC), and the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) in controlling harmful media exposure for children?

4. What are the major challenges in implementing media literacy programs for children in Nigeria?

1.5 Significance of Study

The findings of this study will firstly be helpful to parents and guardians as well as educators. It would help them to understand the importance of media literacy and equip them with strategies to guide their children's media consumption. It would also be helpful to Government and policy makers as well as media regulatory bodies such as NFVCB, NBC, NCC etc.

The study would also go on to serve as a guideline for media content creators to encourage them to consider child-friendly programming and responsible content creation. Lastly, this study would be of great benefit to students and scholars who wish to conduct further study in related fields.

1.6 Scope of Study

This study mainly focused on analyzing the effectiveness of media literacy interventions in reducing children's exposure to harmful media content. The study also broadens on how the media helps to reduce child violence in Nigeria. The study is however delimited to some residents specifically adults in Edo state Benin City.

1.7 Limitation of Study

Despite the importance of this study, certain limitations may impact its findings: The Projected limitations are

1. Access to Data – Some parents, educators, and regulatory bodies may be unwilling to provide full details about children's media consumption or the effectiveness of media literacy interventions.

2. Geographical Constraints – The study may be limited to specific regions in Nigeria, making it difficult to generalize findings for the entire country.

3. Reliability of Responses – Some children and parents may not accurately report their media consumption habits, which could affect the accuracy of the findings.
4. Changing Media Landscape – The rapid evolution of digital and social media platforms may introduce new challenges that are not fully captured in this study.
5. Time and Resource Constraints – Due to time and financial limitations, the study may not cover every aspect of media literacy interventions in Nigeria.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

1. Analysis - the process of examining something in detail to understand it better or draw conclusions.
2. Effective - producing the desired result or having a successful impact.
3. Media – Channels of communication, such as television, radio, newspapers, and the internet, used to share information with the public.
4. Literacy – The ability to read, write, understand, and use information effectively.
5. Media Literacy – The ability to critically analyze media content, understand its messages, and make informed decisions about media consumption.
6. Harmful Media Content – Any media material that contains violent, sexual, misleading, or inappropriate messages that may negatively affect children's development.
7. Media Literacy Interventions – Programs, policies, and educational strategies designed to teach children how to interact with and interpret media responsibly.
8. Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) – The regulatory body overseeing broadcasting in Nigeria, ensuring compliance with content regulations.
9. Parental Mediation – The involvement of parents in monitoring and guiding their children's media consumption.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Historical Review

2.1.1 History of Media Literacy

Media literacy has evolved over the years as a response to the increasing influence of mass media on society. It emerged as an educational approach to help individuals critically analyze, evaluate, and engage with media content and can be traced back to the early 20th century. The recognition of the need for a deeper understanding of media messages by educators and scholars brought about this concept. According to Buckingham, 2003 et al.) In the 1920s and 1930s, concerns about the impact of movies on children led to early research in media studies, particularly in the United States and Europe. By the 1950s, the rapid rise of television further emphasized the need for media education. This marked the emergence of structured media literacy movements particularly in countries like the UK where media education was introduced into schools as a formal response to the pervasive influence of television (Masterman 1985)

During the 1960s and 1980s, media literacy gained theoretical depth with scholars introducing concepts such as McLuhan's famous assertion that "the medium is the message," which highlighted how the form of media influences the way information is perceived (Mc luhan 1964). Media literacy education during this period focused on television, advertising, and propaganda, with an emphasis on the political, economic, and social dimensions of media influence (Masterman 1985). By the 1990s, with the rapid expansion of digital technology and the internet, media literacy became a global movement, gaining recognition from organizations such as the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) in the United States and UNESCO, which advocated for the integration of media literacy education into school curriculums worldwide (Tyner 1998; UNESCO, 2011). Countries like Canada, the UK, Australia, and parts of Africa developed formal media literacy programs to equip students with critical thinking skills necessary to navigate media messages (Buckingham, 2003).

With the emergence of social media, fake news, deepfakes, and AI-generated content in the 2010s, the importance of media literacy increased significantly. Scholars such as Wardle and Derakshan (2017) noted that the rise of information disorder demanded a more nuanced understanding of how digital content is created and distributed. Governments and educational institutions worldwide began to focus on digital media literacy, which includes understanding how algorithms shape information, recognizing misinformation, and ensuring online privacy and security (UNESCO 2018; Hobbs, 2017). The history of media literacy demonstrates its evolving relevance in addressing contemporary media challenges.

2.1.2 History of Media Literacy Interventions

The history of media literacy interventions is closely tied to the evolution of media itself and the growing recognition of its impact on society, particularly on vulnerable groups such as children. According to Bant, Early media literacy interventions began in the 1920s and 1930s, when educators and policymakers raised concerns about the influence of films and radio on young audiences (Buckingham, 2003; Tyner, 1998). These early efforts primarily focused on censorship and content regulation, as governments sought to control media exposure to prevent negative

influences. However, by the 1950s and 1960s, media literacy interventions shifted towards education, with schools incorporating media analysis courses to help students critically engage with television and advertising content.

By the 1980s and 1990s, the rise of globalization and digital media led to the expansion of media literacy programs beyond traditional education. Countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia developed national media literacy curricula, incorporating lessons on propaganda, stereotypes, and media ownership (Buckingham 2003). In the United States, the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) was established to promote critical engagement with media (Hobbs 2017).

In Nigeria, agencies like the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) and the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) launched initiatives to promote safe internet usage, cybersecurity awareness, and digital media education (NITDA 2021; NCC, 2020). Additionally, organizations such as the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) and the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) played key roles in regulating harmful media content and ensuring that children were exposed to age-appropriate materials (NFVBC, 2019; NBC, 2020).

According to Hobbs, 2020 and UNESCO, 2021, In recent years, media literacy interventions have become more technology-driven, incorporating artificial intelligence, fact-checking tools, and interactive learning platforms. Schools and regulatory agencies now emphasize critical thinking, digital ethics, and media responsibility to equip young audiences with the skills needed to evaluate media messages effectively. In Nigeria, there has been growing advocacy for the integration of media literacy education into school curriculums, ensuring that children develop the ability to question, analyze, and interpret media content in a rapidly changing digital landscape (NITDA et al, 2021).

As stated by Buckingham, 2003, The evolution of media literacy interventions demonstrates a shift from passive content regulation to active education and empowerment.

2.2 Conceptual Review

2.2.1 Concept of Media Literacy

Media literacy is defined as "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and produce communication in a variety of forms". Ojebuyi and Salawu (2018) define media literacy as the competence that allows individuals particularly children and youths to critically engage with media content, recognize harmful or misleading messages and develop resistance to media manipulation.

The Aspen Institute characterizes media literacy as "the ability to sensitize, analyze, and produce information for specific results." According to The Center for Media Literacy (CML), media literacy includes "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media," underscoring the active role individuals play in interacting with media content.

Media literacy encompasses a set of skills essential for navigating today's complex media landscape. These skills include the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using various forms of communication. According to The National Association for Media Literacy

Education (NAMLE) media literacy builds upon traditional literacy, offering new forms of reading and writing, and empowers individuals to be critical thinkers, effective communicators, and active citizens.

In the Nigerian context, media literacy is crucial due to the pervasive influence of media on perceptions and behaviors. Adum et al, (2015) emphasize that "the media often do not offer reality, but mere representations of reality. It therefore takes media literacy to understand the distinction between the media and the real world."

According to Asemah et al. (2017), media literacy is "an essential skill that empowers individuals to navigate the complex media environment by equipping them with the ability to question, analyze, and interpret media content." This skill is particularly crucial for children, as they are increasingly exposed to a variety of media sources that can shape their perceptions and behaviors.

According to Chido Onumah, He emphasized that media literacy entails the process of empowering individuals especially children to be active, critical participants in their media environment, this emphasis stated, if critically looked into, would not only help children to be active participants in their media environment, but would also go a long way in helping to reduce the rate of violence among kids as they are now aware of what they should engage and what they shouldn't. This further goes on to support the quote by Adum et al. (2015) The only way to help children explore their media world positively is to impart media literacy skills to them.

In conclusion, The importance of media literacy especially in Nigeria has grown with the rise of digital and social media platforms, where misinformation and harmful content are easily accessible coupled with the absence of strict gatekeepers and anyone having the right to upload both sensitive and insensitive contents online. Research suggests that media literacy education can significantly reduce children's susceptibility to harmful media effects by helping them develop critical thinking skills and ethical media habits.

2.3 Opinion Review

2.3.1 Children's Exposure to Harmful Media Content

Children today are growing up in a highly digitalized world where they have unprecedented access to various forms of media. From television and video games to social media platforms and online streaming services, media consumption has become an integral part of their daily lives. While media can be a powerful tool for education, creativity, and social interaction, it also presents significant risks, particularly in terms of exposure to harmful content.

According to Livingstone et al. (2017), children's exposure to media content has increased due to advancements in technology and the availability of smart devices. They argue that while media can contribute positively to cognitive and social development, unregulated exposure can lead to negative behavioral and psychological consequences. Similarly, Asemah et al. (2013) emphasize that without proper guidance, children may consume inappropriate media content, which can shape their perceptions of violence, gender roles, and reality in general.

A study by Uwaoma & Udeze (2015) highlights that Nigerian children, in particular, are highly exposed to unfiltered digital content due to inadequate regulatory frameworks and parental oversight. The scholars stress that with the increasing penetration of mobile devices and internet access in Nigeria, children are more likely to encounter violent, sexual, and misleading content, which can have detrimental effects on their psychological well-being.

Children's exposure to harmful media content is a growing concern that requires urgent attention. Parents, educators, and policymakers must implement strategies to regulate media consumption and promote media literacy among children.

2.3.2 Types of Harmful Media Content

Exposure to harmful media content significantly impacts children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. Violence and aggression have become a major concern, as children often imitate what they see in the media. A five-year-old child attempting to punch an adult is a clear example of how exposure to violent movies, cartoons, and video games can desensitize children to violence and encourage aggressive behavior.

Another form of harmful media content is seen through unregulated access to online content which exposes children to sexual content and pornography and goes on to distort their perception of relationships and sexuality. Adeyanju (2019) highlights how this unrestricted access can have long-term psychological effects. Asemah (2011) supports this by stating that "children are highly impressionable and easily influenced by the media; thus, exposure to harmful content can have lasting effects on their cognitive and social development."

Misinformation and fake news are also prevalent issues, as the rise of social media allows children to encounter false information that shapes their beliefs and opinions negatively (Okunna, 2018). Furthermore, cyberbullying and online harassment contribute to psychological distress and low self-esteem among children. Asemah (2011) notes that many children suffer from online harassment, which can have lasting emotional consequences. According to research by the Mental Health Foundation in the UK, over 40 percent of children struggle with low self-esteem, often due to online harassment and exposure to damaging content that shapes their perception of self-worth.

Another concerning issue is unhealthy consumerism, where children are constantly influenced by advertisements and social media influencers. Excessive exposure to advertising leads them to develop materialistic values and unhealthy habits (Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2019). In conclusion, the various forms of harmful media content require urgent intervention through proper regulations, parental guidance, and media literacy programs to protect children from their damaging effects.

2.3.3 Factors Contributing to Children's Exposure to Harmful Content

Presence of the media would help to stand in for them and also serve as a source of distraction for the children (Umeogu and Ojiakor 2014) without taking cognisance of the unfiltered nature of the media space in our today's world (Asemah et al. 2013).

Digital Accessibility – The widespread availability of smartphones and the internet increases exposure. Children as low as three years now have access to phones and other gadgets without

proper guidance on how to use these gadgets (Ofodu and Adebayo, 2018) making them vulnerable to harmful content online.

Peer Influence – Friends and social groups often introduce children to inappropriate content. A popular quote says, "if you can't beat them, you join them". The vulnerability of some children make them easy prey to these harmful contents as they can get lured by their friends into visiting sites which are very harmful and insensitive for them (Ojebuyi et al.)

Algorithmic Recommendations – Online platforms use algorithms that may inadvertently suggest harmful content especially pornographic sites and online betting platforms which in time goes on to become an addiction for the children (Okonofua et al.)

2.3.4 Effects of Exposure to Harmful Media Content

According to Adum et al. (2015) The media often do not offer reality, but mere representations of reality. It therefore takes media literacy to understand the distinction between the media and the real world. This goes a long way to show how great effect the media has on the real world. Harmful media content could also have Psychological Impact on children in form of Anxiety, depression, and self-esteem issues (Asemah, 2011).

Exposure to harmful media content can affect children's behavior and thinking. Behavioral changes, like increased aggression, fear, and reduced sensitivity to violence, happen when children copy what they see in the media. The consistent exposure of children to violent contents can easily corrupt their minds thereby making them decide to practice what they have watched over time without feeling empathy for others. Scary or disturbing contents can also cause fear or anxiety.

Cognitive distortion could also arise which involves children developing wrong ideas about reality, relationships, and social values. Okunna (2018) notes that media can create false beliefs about love, success, and body image, leading to low self-esteem and poor decisions. To reduce these effects, children need media education and proper parental guidance to help them understand and filter what they watch.

Given these concerns, media scholars argue that media literacy and regulatory interventions are crucial in mitigating children's exposure to harmful media content. Okunna (2018) notes that Nigerian children are at a higher risk due to the lack of media education in schools, making them vulnerable to misinformation, harmful stereotypes, and cyber threats. This underscores the need for a comprehensive approach involving parents, educators, policymakers, and regulatory agencies in curbing the negative impact of media exposure on children.

2.3.5 Media Literacy Interventions

Media literacy interventions are structured efforts designed to equip individuals, especially children, with the necessary skills to critically analyze, evaluate, and interact with media content responsibly. These interventions aim to reduce the negative impacts of harmful media exposure by fostering critical thinking, ethical media use, and digital safety awareness. According to Asemah (2011), media literacy is an essential life skill in today's media-saturated world, as it enables children to differentiate between beneficial and harmful content while promoting informed decision-making.

In Nigeria, where children have increasing access to digital media with limited regulatory oversight, interventions focusing on education, parental mediation, and policy reforms are crucial in mitigating the adverse effects of harmful media content (Okunna, 2018).

According to Asemah et al. (2013), media literacy is not just about understanding how media works but also about recognizing media's influence on attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors. They argue that in Nigeria, where media regulation is still developing, children are at an increased risk of exposure to misleading or harmful content. Similarly, Okunna (2018) emphasizes that the absence of formal media literacy education in Nigerian schools leaves children vulnerable to misinformation, stereotypes, and exploitative digital content.

Furthermore, Uwaoma & Udeze (2015) highlight that while media literacy is a global concern, interventions must be context-specific, reflecting the media habits and cultural settings of children in different regions. In Nigeria, where internet penetration and social media usage have grown significantly, interventions must focus on both traditional and digital media to effectively protect children from inappropriate content.

In addition, a study by Hobbs & Jensen (2009) also underscores the importance of media literacy education as a preventive tool against media-related harms, noting that "children who receive structured media literacy education demonstrate stronger critical thinking skills and are less likely to be influenced by harmful media messages." Similarly, Ojebuyi & Salawu (2019) argue that a multi-stakeholder approach—including parents, schools, media organizations, and government agencies—is necessary for ensuring the success of media literacy interventions.

Given these insights, scholars agree that media literacy interventions should be implemented through a combination of educational programs, parental mediation, regulatory policies, and digital tools. These interventions not only reduce children's exposure to harmful media but also empower them to interact responsibly with the media landscape. As Adeyanju (2019) points out, "in a media-driven world, the ability to critically engage with media content is as important as basic literacy skills."

2.3.6 Types of Media Literacy Interventions

a. Educational Interventions

These involve integrating media literacy into school curricula to teach children how to critically engage with media. According to Okunna (2018), the inclusion of media literacy in school curricula is one of the most effective ways to equip children with critical media analysis skills.

Example: The inclusion of media literacy courses in Nigerian secondary schools, as proposed by the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), aims to help students assess the credibility of media messages.

Several private and public schools in Nigeria have incorporated media literacy education into their curricula, either as standalone subjects or as part of civic and computer studies.

Key Initiatives:

Lagos State Ministry of Education partnered with tech companies in 2023 to launch a "Safe Digital Schools Program", training students and teachers on digital ethics.

Some private schools now offer fact-checking and misinformation awareness lessons, especially in social studies and English classes. This strategy as cited by Akinro & Fakunle (2020), "enhances children's ability to identify misinformation and avoid manipulative media content."

b. Parental and Educational Programs Mediation Strategies

Parents play a crucial role in shaping children's media consumption habits through active involvement and guidance. Uwaoma & Udeze (2015) assert that parental mediation significantly reduces children's exposure to violent and inappropriate content. Encouraging co-viewing, setting screen-time limits, and discussing media messages with children goes a long way in helping to guide the children on how to relate with media contents.

Example: Media Awareness and Safety Advocacy (MASA) Initiative. The Media Awareness and Safety Advocacy (MASA) initiative is a non-governmental organization that promotes digital and media literacy among Nigerian children and teenagers.

Key Initiatives:

The "Be Media Smart" Campaign educates secondary school students on the dangers of misinformation, cyberbullying, and digital addiction making it an educational intervention. They also organize training workshops for parents on how to monitor and guide their children's media usage.

MASA also partners with social media influencers to create child-friendly online safety content.

The only challenge to this initiative is in terms of limited funding and reach, especially in rural communities where digital literacy is lower.

c. Governmental and Regulatory Policy Interventions

Regulatory bodies and government agencies implement policies to control children's exposure to harmful media.

Example: The National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) is Nigeria's regulatory body responsible for classifying and censoring films and videos to protect children from harmful content. They enforce content classification systems to ensure children are not exposed to unsuitable media.

According to Ojebuyi & Salawu (2019), while the NFVCB plays a crucial role in censoring harmful media, weak enforcement of classification rules and illegal access to age-restricted content remain significant challenges in Nigeria. They argue that media literacy education should complement censorship efforts to ensure children understand why certain content is inappropriate for them.

Key Initiatives:

The National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) Media Literacy Campaign

In 2021, the NFVCB launched a Media Literacy and Awareness Program for Schools, aimed at educating children and teachers on responsible media consumption.

The campaign included school outreach programs where NFVCB officials engage students on media safety, digital ethics, and the effects of violent and explicit content.

The board also partners with Nollywood filmmakers to encourage the production of child-friendly movies.

d. Digital and Technological Interventions

Advancements in technology have led to the development of digital tools and parental control features to monitor children's media usage including Mobile applications and browser extensions that filter explicit content, such as Google's Safe Search and YouTube Kids.

According to Adeyanju (2019) digital interventions complement parental efforts in protecting children from harmful media exposure.

Example: National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) Digital Literacy Program. NITDA is a government agency under Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation & Digital Economy responsible for developing and regulating information technology (IT) in Nigeria.

NITDA, under the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, has introduced digital literacy programs to promote safe internet use among Nigerian children. It also helps to promote digital parental control tools, classifying it under digital interventions as well.

Key Initiatives:

Child Online Protection (COP) Framework: Launched in 2022, this initiative educates students on online risks and responsible internet usage. The Child Online Protection (COP) Framework teaches children how to use the internet responsibly, making it an educational intervention.

Partnerships with Schools: NITDA collaborates with schools to introduce digital literacy courses in computer studies.

Parental Control Awareness: The agency also promotes the use of parental control settings on mobile devices and internet browsers.

According to Uwaoma & Udeze (2015), digital literacy efforts like NITDA's programs are vital in reducing children's exposure to online dangers such as cyberbullying and explicit content. However, they argue that Nigeria still lacks a comprehensive digital safety law to ensure stronger regulatory enforcement.

2.3.7 Regulatory Bodies and Their Role in Media Literacy

Regulatory bodies play a crucial role in ensuring responsible media consumption, enforcing policies, and promoting media literacy programs to help children and society navigate the media landscape safely. According to Asemah, Edegoh, & Ojih (2013), "a well-regulated media space contributes to media literacy by ensuring children are exposed to educational and morally acceptable content."

In Nigeria, several regulatory bodies oversee different aspects of media, ensuring that harmful content is controlled and media literacy is promoted.

1. National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB)

The National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) is the regulatory agency responsible for censoring and classifying films and videos in Nigeria. It operates under the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture and ensures that media content aligns with national security, moral standards, and cultural values before public distribution to viewers.

Role in Media Literacy:

- **Film Classification and Content Regulation:** NFVCB reviews, classifies, and censors movies to protect children from inappropriate content.
- **School Outreach Programs:** Conducts media literacy campaigns in schools to educate children on safe media consumption.
- **Encouraging Family-Friendly Content:** Works with Nollywood filmmakers to promote child-friendly films.

2. National Broadcasting Commission (NBC)

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) is the regulatory body responsible for overseeing and controlling broadcast media in Nigeria, established by the NBC Act of 1992. The NBC regulates television and radio stations, ensuring that broadcast content meets ethical, moral, and legal standards.

The NBC enforces the Nigerian Broadcasting Code, which prohibits the airing of harmful content during children's viewing hours. It also mandates broadcast stations to include educational programming for children.

3. National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA)

- **Supporting ICT education** by providing digital literacy programs and infrastructure in schools. They also engage in School Outreach Programs where they conduct media literacy campaigns in schools to educate children on safe media consumption.
- **Encouraging innovation and tech startups** through grants and incubation programs.
- **Film Classification and Content Regulation:** NFVCB reviews, classifies, and censors movies to protect children from inappropriate content.
- **Encouraging Family-Friendly Content:** Works with Nollywood filmmakers to promote child-friendly films.

4. Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC)

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) is the independent regulatory authority for the telecommunications industry in Nigeria. It was established by the Nigerian Communications Act (NCA) of 2003 to oversee the growth, regulation, and operation of the country's telecom sector.

Role in Media Literacy:

- **Regulating Internet Service Providers (ISPs):** Ensures ISPs comply with laws that restrict access to adult content for minors.

- **Cybersecurity Awareness Programs:** Conducts campaigns on cybercrime prevention, fake news detection, and responsible digital citizenship.
- **Supporting ICT Education:** Provides funding for tech hubs and digital skills training in secondary schools.

5. The Federal Ministry of Education

The Federal Ministry of Education (FME) is the government body responsible for formulating and implementing educational policies in Nigeria.

The body plays a crucial role in promoting media literacy among children by integrating digital literacy and responsible media consumption into the education system.

Role in Media Literacy:

- **Curriculum Development** – Incorporating media literacy education into school curricula through subjects like Civic Education and Computer Studies to teach children how to critically analyze media content.
- **Teacher Training** – Providing workshops and training for educators on media literacy and digital safety on how to educate students about media literacy.
- **Collaboration with Regulatory Bodies** – Working with NBC, NFVCB, and NITDA to ensure children are protected from harmful media content.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns** – Running initiatives to educate students and parents on the risks of fake news, cyberbullying, and online misinformation.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Collaborates with NGOs to promote responsible media use among students.

2.3.8 Challenges Faced in the Implementation of Media Literacy Interventions

Implementing media literacy programs faces several challenges that can hinder their effectiveness. One major issue is the rapid advancement of digital technology. New media platforms and technologies emerge quickly, making it difficult for educational programs to stay current and address the latest developments.

Also, the complexity of online platforms. Many digital services operate in ways that aren't transparent, making it hard for educators and users to understand how information is presented or filtered. This lack of clarity can impede efforts to teach critical evaluation of online content.

Furthermore, The widespread presence of misinformation and disinformation adds another layer of complexity. Even with media literacy education, individuals may find it challenging to identify false information, especially when it's presented in a convincing manner.

Finally, limited resources and funding can restrict the implementation of comprehensive media literacy programs. Without adequate support, it's hard to reach a broad audience and provide the necessary training and materials.

2.3.9 Strategies to Improve the Implementation and Effectiveness of Media Literacy Interventions

Improving media literacy among children in Nigeria requires strategic interventions. Professor Euphemia Chika Asogwa emphasizes that "media literacy is essential in the digital era to help young people critically engage with media content." One key strategy is integrating media literacy into school curricula, ensuring children develop critical thinking skills early.

Another strategy that can be employed is the training of parents and teachers as Chido Onumah and Olunifesi Suraj note that "media literacy skills enable children to become critical consumers of media and agents of positive change." Lastly, strengthening regulations is another approach, with the NFVCB stressing that "teaching children media literacy helps them analyze content and avoid harmful influences." Additionally, public awareness campaigns and digital tools can further equip children to navigate media responsibly.

2.4 Empirical Review

Several studies have examined the effectiveness of media literacy interventions in reducing children's exposure to harmful media content in Nigeria. Asemah and Edegoh (2013) investigated the impact of media literacy education among Nigerian secondary school students and found that those exposed to structured media literacy lessons demonstrated a better ability to evaluate media messages critically. The study highlighted that integrating media literacy into school curricula helped students differentiate between reality and media representation, ultimately reducing their acceptance of violent and misleading content.

Also, Uzochukwu and Okoro (2020) explored the role of parental mediation in children's media consumption and discovered that active parental mediation, where parents discuss media content with their children, was more effective in mitigating harmful media effects than restrictive mediation. However, they noted that many Nigerian parents lacked digital literacy skills, making it challenging to guide their children effectively.

On the regulatory front, Ibrahim and Yusuf (2019) assessed the effectiveness of the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) in controlling children's exposure to harmful media content. The study emphasized the need for stronger collaboration between NFVCB, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), and the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) to enhance content regulation in digital spaces. Their findings indicated that while the NFVCB enforces classification guidelines, unregulated online content and pirated films remain significant challenges.

Furthermore, Nwachukwu et al. (2021) examined the use of digital tools, such as parental control applications, in monitoring children's online activities. Their study revealed that only 30% of Nigerian parents utilized these tools due to a lack of awareness and technical knowledge. However, schools that incorporated digital literacy workshops reported a 25% decrease in students' exposure to harmful media content within six months, demonstrating the potential effectiveness of such interventions.

Additionally, Chukwu and Udeze (2016) conducted a study on the role of school-based media literacy programs in Enugu State and found that students who participated in media literacy workshops were significantly better at identifying violent and inappropriate content in films and online videos. The study emphasized the importance of integrating such programs into formal education to build critical thinking skills.

Similarly, Adebayo and Balogun (2021) examined media literacy awareness among teachers in Lagos public secondary schools. Their findings revealed that although most teachers recognized the need for media literacy education, only a few had received any form of training, thereby limiting their ability to guide students effectively in evaluating media content.

These studies collectively highlight the importance of media literacy education, parental guidance, and regulatory measures in mitigating children's exposure to harmful media content in Nigeria. Despite these efforts, gaps remain in online content regulation and parental digital literacy, necessitating further research on the long-term impact of media literacy education and the development of more effective digital monitoring strategies.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

There are several theories as propounded by different scholars that will provide a background framework for this study.

1. Cultivation Theory (George Gerbner, 1976)
2. Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973)

Cultivation Theory

The Cultivation Theory, developed by George Gerbner (1976), explains how prolonged exposure to media content influences individuals' perceptions of reality. The theory argues that continuous exposure to media, particularly television, shapes people's worldviews, often leading them to accept mediated representations as reality. In the context of this study, the theory helps to explain how Nigerian children who are frequently exposed to harmful media content—such as violence, misinformation, and explicit material—may begin to see these depictions as normal or acceptable.

Gerbner's theory is particularly relevant in a digital era where Nigerian children have unregulated access to television, social media, video games, and online content. Without media literacy interventions, children are at risk of developing distorted worldviews shaped by negative media influences. This justifies the need for media literacy education, parental mediation, and regulatory measures to mitigate harmful media effects.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973) shifts the focus from media effects to the active role of audiences in selecting and using media. It posits that media consumers are not passive recipients but rather actively seek content that fulfills specific needs, such as entertainment, information, social interaction, and personal identity.

In relation to Nigerian children, this theory explains that they actively consume media content based on their desires and gratifications. Some children may watch violent films for entertainment, engage with social media for social connections, or play video games for relaxation. The problem arises when children lack the critical skills to evaluate and filter harmful content, leading to potential negative effects such as aggression, desensitization to violence, or low self-esteem.

By applying this theory, the study highlights the importance of educating children on media literacy skills—not to eliminate media use but to empower them to make informed choices, interpret media messages critically, and avoid harmful content. This reinforces the role of media literacy education, parental guidance, and regulatory bodies like the NBC, NFVCB, and NITDA in ensuring safer media consumption for Nigerian children.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study used the survey research design, which is used to collect quantitative research data that is further used to evaluate public perception on the role of mass media in the campaign against child labor. Berger (2000, p. 147) says that "surveys are used to determine what people know, what people think, what people own, what people do, what people plan to do, what people's attitudes are, people's tastes, people's beliefs and what people value". This summarizes what people's perception entails.

According to Osuala (2005) as cited in Asemah (2012), the study of samples from which inferences about population can be drawn is needed because of the difficulties in attempting the study entire population. To this end, the survey research design is deemed suitable and ideal for assessing the effectiveness of media literacy interventions in reducing children's exposure to harmful media content by collecting the opinions and responses of Benin residents through a determined and specific sample size.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population for the purpose of this research study is 1, 500, 000. This is the total number of people that currently resides in Benin City, Edo State, which was National bureau of statistics.

3.3 Sample Size

A sample size is a representative of a research population.

According to Adeagbo (2009), sample size refers to a group of people that are selected for research purposes from which information is obtained.

The selected sample size for this study is 300. The number was determined by using the Cochran Sample size determination formula, which is suitable for calculating and determining the sample size of larger population.

Formula: $N = n / [1 + (n/p)]$

N = sample size, n = estimated sample, and p = Population of study

The estimated sample for this study is 300.

Therefore;

$$N = 252 / \{1 + (252/1,500,000)\}$$

$$N = 252 / \{1 + 0.00017\}$$

$$N = 252 / 1.00017$$

$$N = 251.96$$

N = 252

3.4 Sampling Procedure

The researcher adopted the purposive sampling technique for the sampling procedure. The purposive sampling technique is a sampling method in which the researcher uses his or her judgement to choose respondents and selects those that best meet the purpose of the study. This method is selected because it will allow the researcher to select the most suitable and relevant sources of data that are suitable for this study.

The researcher in this study picked certain selected residents from the University of Benin and its environs for the purpose of this study.

3.5 Instrument of Data Collection

The researcher made use of questionnaire for the purpose of this study. According to Asemah (2009) the questionnaire is a list of questions designed to elicit information from respondents by filling in the answers in the space provided for the purpose. Asemah et al (2012) mentioned that a questionnaire is a set of questions designed to investigate a given subject matter. Questionnaires are extensively used by researchers to obtain facts about past, present and anticipated events, conditions and practices to make inquiries concerning attitudes and opinions.

The questionnaires were shared to the selected respondents in order to collect appropriate responses that will be used in answering them.

3.6 Validity of Instrument

Validity is an important quality of measuring instrument in research. It is used to establish trust in the process that a given research instrument can produce reliable and significant results.

Okwechime (2011) expressed that it is a quality of measure being dependable, stable and consistent overtime. The research instrument adopted in this study is a questionnaire.

Content and face methods of validity will be used to test the strength of the questionnaire by the project supervisor, who is an experienced researcher and trainer in the field of media. Corrections will be pointed out to the researcher and a final draft that will meet up with the required validity strength will be done and administered to the respondent.

3.7 Reliability of Instrument

The reliability was determined by a pilot study. Payne (2017) says that a pilot study is a research study conducted before the intended study. They are usually executed as planned for the intended study but on a smaller study. Using a pilot study, a researcher can identify or refine a research question, figure out what methods are best for pursuing it and estimate how much time and resources will be necessary to complete the larger version among other things (Crossman, 2017). It is also known as a pre-research.

Using the pilot study, the researcher selected 25 respondents out of the 500 to whom the questionnaire were distributed before the main study was carried out.

3.8 Method of Data Collection

The researcher intends to use both primary and secondary sources for the purpose of this research. The primary sources includes selected respondent who will be given the questionnaires to fill based on their own opinion and perceptions. Questionnaires will also be administered online.

These methods are what the researcher intends to use in data collection for the reason of ease in retrieval, cost reduction and in order to ensure proper and effective distribution of questionnaires to the right persons.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

The data will be collated, presented and analyzed based on the information which will be gathered using the questionnaire survey research design. The researcher intends to use tables for easy placement and identification of data; as well as use simple percentages and provide a short explanation of data presented using the table in order to aid reader's understanding.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDING

4.1 Data Presentation

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Male.	171	57%
Female.	129	43%
Total.	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 1 indicates that the research encompasses both the male and female genders. However, more females 171 (57%) participated than males 129 (43%).

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
18-25.	234	79.1%
26-35.	19	6.4%
36-45.	18	6.1%
46 and above.	25	8.4%
Total.	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 2 shows that young people between the ages of 18 till 25 participated more in the survey, followed by those within the age bracket of 26 till 35, age bracket 36 till 45 follows with the 46 and above being the least. All persons who participated in the survey are youths.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Profession

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Parent.	19	6.3%
Teacher.	23	7.7%
Media Professional.	7	2.3%
Student.	222	74%
Others.	29	9.7%
Total.	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 3 shows that most of the respondents who participated in the survey are students 223 (74%) while persons from other professions not spelt out come next 29 (9.7%), followed by Teachers 23 (7.7%) while Parents and Media Professionals have the lesser number of respondents.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Qualification

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary school.	123	41%
Diploma/NCE.	13	4.3%
Bachelor's Degree/HND.	144	48%
Master's Degree or above.	20	6.7%
Total.	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 4 shows that most of the respondents are Bachelor's Degree/HND holders. The gap between the Bachelor's degree/HND holders and other Educational Qualifications is obviously alarming. Overall, the study encompassed different respondents from different Education Qualifications.

Table 5: Exposure of Children to harmful contents through media platforms

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes.	298	99.3%
No.	2	0.3%
Total.	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 5 was used in measuring if the respondents are aware of the exposure of children to harmful contents through media platforms. The study reveals that a number of them are. Therefore, it is safe to say that generally, the respondents are aware of the exposure of children to harmful media contents.

Table 6: Channel/medium of social interaction

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Television.	37	12.3%
Smartphone.	91	30.3%
Social Media.	50	16.7%
YouTube.	3	1%
Video Games.	4	1.3%
All of the above.	115	38.3%
Total.	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 6 provides a detailed breakdown of the channel of social interaction children most frequently engage with around the respondents. The study proves that 115 (38.3%) of children are found engaging with all the above listed channels, 91 (30.3%) are found engaging with smartphones, 50 (16.7%) engage with social media, 37 (12.3%) engage with television, 4 (1.3%) engage with video games while 3 (1%) engage with YouTube. It is therefore safe to say that most children engage with all channels of social interaction.

Table 7: Type of Harmful Content Children are exposed to

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Violence.	42	14%
Pornography.	55	18.3%
Cyber bullying.	9	3%
Gambling and betting Ads.	21	7%
False Information.	20	6.7%
All of the above.	153	51%
Total.	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 7 shows that a large number of children 153 (51%) are exposed to all of the above listed harmful contents. A lesser percentage of children 9 (3%) are exposed to Cyber Bullying while others are frequently exposed to Pornography, violence and others.

Table 8: Media Literacy Should be Taught in Schools to Help Children Understand and Filter Media Messages

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree.	230	76.7%
Agree.	66	22%
Disagree.	3	1%
Strongly Disagree.	1	0.3%
Total.	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 8 reveals that 230 (76.7%) strongly agree, 66 (22%) agree that Media Literacy should be taught in schools to help children understand and filter media messages while a lesser amount of persons disagree. This shows that media literacy should be taught in schools to help children understand and filter media messages.

Table 9: Parents and Guardians Need Training on How to Supervise Their Children's Media Use

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree.	215	71.7%
Agree.	83	27.7%
Disagree.	1	0.3%
Strongly Disagree.	1	0.3%
Total.	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 9 was used in measuring the opinions of the respondents as regards parents and guardians needing training to supervise their children's media use. A large percentage of the respondents strongly agree 215 (71.7%) and 83 (27.7%) of the respondents agree that parents should be trained to supervise their children's media use while 1 (0.3%) disagrees. Therefore, it is safe to say that parents and guardians should be trained to supervise their children's media use.

Table 10: Regulatory Bodies in Nigeria are doing enough to Protect Children from Harmful Content

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree.	37	12.3%
Agree.	52	17.3%
Disagree.	75	25%
Strongly Disagree.	136	45.3%
Total.	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 10 records the respondents opinions on the effectiveness of regulatory bodies in the protection of children from harmful contents. It can be deduced from the study that a significant number of the respondents, 136 (45.3%) strongly disagree and 75 (25%) disagree with the effectiveness of regulatory bodies in protecting children from harmful media content. Although, 37 (12.3%) strongly agree and 52 (17.3%) agree that regulatory bodies are doing enough to protect children from harmful media. This shows that the regulatory bodies are not doing enough to protect children from harmful contents.

Table 11: Children need Guidance to help them distinguish between Real and Fake information Online

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree.	168	66.7%
Agree.	99	33%
Disagree.	1	0.3%
Strongly Disagree.	1	0.3%

Total.	300	100%
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Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 11 shows that a higher number of respondents 168 (66.7%) and 99 (33%) in this study agree with the notion that children need guidance to help them distinguish between real and fake information online, while a lesser number disagree. This therefore shows that a larger population agree that children need guidance to distinguish fake and real information online.

Table 12: Many harmful contents children are exposed to can be reduced through proper digital tools

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree.	178	59.3%
Agree.	117	39%
Disagree.	5	1.7%
Strongly Disagree.	0	0
Total.	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 12 was used to measure the respondents' perception on the possibility of the reduction of harmful media contents children are exposed to through proper digital tools. The study reveals that 178 (59.3%) persons and 117 (39%) respondents agree to this possibility while 5 (1.7%) of persons disagree. Therefore, it is safe to say that many harmful contents children are exposed to can be reduced through proper digital tools.

Table 13: More public campaigns and awareness programs on Media Literacy should be developed in Nigeria

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree.	195	65%
Agree.	102	34%
Disagree.	2	0.7%
Strongly Disagree.	1	0.3%
Total.	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 13 clearly reveals that a greater percentage of the sample size 195 (65%) and 102 (34%) believe that more public campaigns and awareness programs on Media Literacy should be developed in Nigeria while a lesser percentage 2 (0.7%) disagree. This therefore shows that a larger population agree that more public campaigns and awareness programs on Media Literacy should be developed in Nigeria.

Table 14: Religious, educational and community institutions should also support media literacy education for children

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree.	215	71.7%
Agree.	82	27.3%
Disagree.	3	1%
Strongly Disagree.	0	0
Total.	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 14 indicates that a larger number of respondents 215 (71.7%) and 82 (27.3%) agree that Religious, educational and community institutions should also support media literacy education for children while a lesser number of the respondents 3 (1%) disagree. It is therefore safe to say that Religious, educational and community institutions should also support media literacy education for children.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

4.2.1 To What Extent are Children Exposed to Harmful Media Content?

The data from this study confirms that children are significantly exposed to harmful content through various media platforms. Table 5 reveals that almost all the respondents 99.3% acknowledged the presence of harmful media content that children are exposed to. This strong agreement suggests that the issue is widely recognized and considered a serious concern by the general public.

Further evidence from Table 7 shows that children are not only exposed to a single type of harmful content, but to multiple forms at once—including violence, pornography, gambling advertisements, cyberbullying, and misinformation. The fact that 51% of respondents selected "All of the above" points to the broad and overlapping nature of this exposure. These findings highlight the urgent need for intentional measures to limit the accessibility of such content to young audiences, especially as it appears to cut across various media forms.

4.2.2 What Media Platforms are Most Used by Children?

Table 6 indicates that children are active users of multiple media channels. A significant number of respondents 37.3% noted that children around them engage with all the listed platforms—television, smartphones, social media, YouTube, and video games. Smartphones alone accounted for 29.4% of responses, pointing to their central role in children's media habits.

This reflects the growing trend of multi-platform media usage among young audiences, which is largely driven by the accessibility of mobile devices and the internet. Children's frequent exposure to different platforms increases their chances of coming across inappropriate content. As such, these findings underscore the need for closer monitoring and regulation across all major media outlets that children interact with.

4.2.3 Should Media Literacy be Taught in Schools?

The results presented in Table 8 strongly support the inclusion of media literacy in the school curriculum. An overwhelming 76.7% of respondents strongly agreed, and 22% agreed, that media literacy education is essential to help children understand and critically assess media messages. This widespread support reflects the growing recognition that children need structured guidance to navigate the complex media environment.

As media plays a large role in shaping attitudes, values, and behaviours, early exposure to media literacy can equip children with the skills to question, interpret, and filter the messages they receive. These findings suggest that integrating media literacy into formal education is a necessary step toward safeguarding children from negative media influences.

4.2.4 Are Parents and Regulatory Bodies Doing Enough to Protect Children?

According to Table 9, a majority of respondents 71.7% strongly agreed that parents and guardians need training on how to supervise their children's media use. This implies that many adults may lack the skills or knowledge required to effectively guide their children through today's digital landscape. Without proper supervision, children remain vulnerable to harmful media influences.

Additionally, Table 10 reveals a general dissatisfaction with the efforts of regulatory bodies in Nigeria. A combined 70.3% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that regulatory bodies are doing enough to protect children. This suggests a gap in policy implementation, enforcement, or public awareness.

Together, these findings indicate that both parents and media regulators have critical roles to play in protecting children, and both need greater support, training, and accountability to fulfill those roles effectively.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study examined the effectiveness of media literacy interventions in reducing children's exposure to harmful media content. The major objectives were to assess the level of media exposure among children, evaluate public opinions on existing media literacy strategies, and identify the roles of stakeholders such as parents, schools, and regulatory agencies.

From the findings:

1. Children are heavily exposed to various media platforms, particularly through smartphones, television, and social media. Many start using digital devices from a very early age without proper guidance.
2. Media literacy interventions are recognized by the public as essential in promoting critical thinking and responsible media consumption. However, the reach and implementation of such interventions remain limited, especially in rural or underserved communities.
3. Parental supervision and school-based training were identified as the most effective tools in limiting children's access to harmful media.
4. Challenges such as parental digital illiteracy, lack of awareness, and inconsistent regulation affect the success of media literacy programs in Nigeria.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that while media literacy interventions in Nigeria have shown potential, their effectiveness is currently hampered by inadequate implementation, limited stakeholder collaboration, and insufficient outreach. There is a pressing need for more coordinated efforts involving parents, educators, media bodies, and policy-makers to enhance children's media literacy, especially in a rapidly evolving digital age.

Children cannot be shielded completely from media content, but they can be equipped with skills to navigate it wisely. Thus, media literacy is not just a helpful tool — it is an essential life skill in today's world.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Integrate Media Literacy into School Curricula

Government and education authorities should incorporate media literacy as a core subject in primary and secondary schools to equip students with analytical and evaluative skills.

2. Strengthen Parental Involvement and Education

Parents should be trained through workshops or community programs to understand the media landscape and guide their children effectively.

3. Enhance Digital Regulation and Oversight

Regulatory bodies such as the NFVCB and NBC should tighten controls on harmful content and increase awareness about content classification systems.

4. Expand Access to Media Literacy Resources

NGOs, tech companies, and government agencies should ensure that rural and underserved areas have access to digital safety tools and training materials.

5. Encourage Collaboration Among Stakeholders

A multi-sectoral approach involving schools, religious institutions, media outlets, and civil society organizations should be employed to create a supportive media environment for children.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

Future researchers may consider:

1. Examining the impact of social media algorithms on children's media exposure in Nigeria.
2. Conducting longitudinal studies to measure the long-term effectiveness of media literacy interventions.
3. Exploring media literacy practices among parents and teachers in rural versus urban settings.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A: Background Information

1. What is your gender? (a) Male (b) Female
2. What is your age bracket? (a) 18–25 (b) 26–35 (c) 36–45 (d) 46 and above
3. What is your current role/profession? (a) Parent (b) Teacher (c) Media Professional (d) Student (e) Others
4. What is your highest educational qualification? (a) Secondary School (b) Diploma/NCE (c) Bachelor's Degree/HND (d) Master's Degree or above

Section B: Media Usage and Exposure

5. Do you think children are exposed to harmful content through media platforms? (a) Yes (b) No
6. Which media platforms do children around you interact with the most? (a) Television (b) Smartphone (c) Social Media (d) YouTube (e) Video Games (f) All of the above
7. What type(s) of harmful content do you think children are exposed to? (a) Violence (b) Pornography (c) Cyberbullying (d) Gambling and Betting Ads (e) False Information (f) All of the above

Section C: Opinion on Media Literacy Interventions

8. Media literacy should be taught in schools to help children understand and filter media messages. SA A D SD
9. Parents and guardians need training on how to supervise their children's media use. SA A D SD
10. Regulatory bodies in Nigeria are doing enough to protect children from harmful content. SA A D SD
11. Children need guidance to help them distinguish between real and fake information online. SA A D SD
12. Many harmful contents children are exposed to can be reduced through proper digital tools. SA A D SD
13. More public campaigns and awareness programs on Media Literacy should be developed in Nigeria. SA A D SD
14. Religious, educational and community institutions should also support media literacy education for children. SA A D SD