

**MEDIA AND THE PLIGHT OF THE AFRICAN CHILD
A CASE STUDY OF BAH-EL-GAZEL, SUDAN**

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DECLARATION

I CHEPKOECH SHILLAH, declare that this dissertation are my personal work and do hereby assert and affirm that this work has not been done by any person in any institution or presented for any award.

Sign 
CHEPKOECH SHILLAH

Date: 8th JUNE 2007.

APPROVAL

This is to certify that this work has been submitted for examination with my approval as supervisor.

Sign _____
MRS. DOROTHY KAMASOMERO

Date: _____

DEDICATION

To my loving parents and siblings.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe great appreciation to my supervisor Mrs. Dorothy Kamasomero.

I thank my parents for the Love, financial support and material support.

Finally I thank my friends for encouragement throughout the study and all my class mates.

I am grate for the participation of the respondents who were instrumental to the success of this project.

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needed for the continent's children. We urge President Bush to put forth a plan at the G-8 Summit in July that demonstrates U.S. commitment to improving the lives of Africa's children. The plan should address not only short-term humanitarian needs but also commit the leadership and financial resources needed to bring about long-term improvements in child health, education and nutrition. Children's lives are truly in the balance (Save the Children International, 2007).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Africa is afflicted by a precarious situation. The young are being made to lead ever more challenging lives – thus depriving them of a necessary aspect of growth. The stage of being a child which is synonymous with exploration and adventure. Instead, we have a growing number of children who have to take care of their brothers and sisters, yet they may be no more than 8 years old. Conflict, famine and other rights abuses also add to this mix of troubles that affect the African child. The media, in the west, has been instrumental through its role as watch dog and advocator, to provide their governments and society with a pedal to remedy society vices that would otherwise have gone unabated. There is need, therefore, to investigate the role the media has played in highlighting the plight of the African child in the African context.

1.2 General Objectives

The general objective of the study was to investigate the role of the media in portraying the plight of the African child.

1.3 Specific Objectives

The research aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- To find out the problems affecting the African child.
- To establish the role of the media in highlighting the plight of the African child.
- To investigate the challenges facing the media in highlighting the plight of the African child.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the problems affecting the African child?
2. What role do the media play in highlighting the plight of the African child?
3. What challenges are being faced by the media in highlighting the plight of the African child?

1.5 Scope of the Study

1.5.1 Subject Scope

The study was limited to the media's role in highlighting the plight of the African child.

1.5.2 Geographical Scope

The study was carried out in the Bah-el-Gazel, located in southern Sudan.

1.5.3 Time Scope

The study was carried out between April 2007 and June 2007. Due to the time limitation of study, primary data information will be obtained from published information and articles from the print media.

1.6 Justification of the Study

The conclusions of the study will offer an insight into how the media may be supported to in highlighting the problems and challenges that afflict the African child. In highlighting these challenges that are faced, the media will encourage the society to act proactively in the elimination of these challenges to the youngsters who are tomorrow's leaders.

The government may use the findings to setup policies that may improve the conditions of the children.

The study findings may be used by the general public to shed light on the role the media plays in showcasing problems affecting the society, in particular the plight of the African child.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This section was concerned with presenting existing information on the study or work of other scholars, who have done research on similar studies. It will provide direction as we embark on our own research.

2.1 Problems affecting the African Child

As many as 120,000 children under 18 years old, some as young as eight, may be compelled to spend the day as child soldiers across the continent, Amnesty International said today (Amnesty, 2007). Amnesty (2007) further adds that despite the growing dynamic of peace in many conflict areas in Africa, the inadequate and insufficient response of African governments and the international community to solve the problem of child soldiering is encouraging the continued ruthless exploitation of Africa's children by leaders of armed forces and armed political groups to further their own material and political ends.

In Africa, preventable or treatable diseases, like pneumonia, malaria, diarrhea and measles, are still a greater threat to the health of children than HIV/AIDS. But far too little is done to increase the access of Africa's children to low-cost, lifesaving services. Proven, low-cost immunizations, antibiotics and anti-malarials, oral rehydration therapy and improved breastfeeding practices could save most of the lost lives (Kaplan and Sadock's, 1999).

With basic education, enormous gains can be made. As the number of girls educated increases, mortality rates for mothers and children fall. Educated mothers are more likely to have their children vaccinated, promote healthful preventive practices and send all their children to school. In many ways, education is a "social vaccine," protecting children against disease and improving their chances of escaping poverty.

Despite the challenges, we know investments in basic health and education can make a difference -- and effectively address these threats to the future well-being of Africa's children. In southern Africa, for example, an enormously successful immunization campaign has virtually eliminated measles as a cause of death among children under 5. Vitamin A coverage across sub-Saharan Africa has increased dramatically over the last few years, with more than 90 percent of children reached in countries such as Ghana, Gambia and Togo.

According to Amnesty (2007), whether in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Uganda, Somalia, children have been abducted in the streets or taken from classrooms, refugee camps or camps for the internally displaced. Many have also been taken from their homes at gunpoint, as their distraught parents looked on helplessly. Others have reported being picked up while playing in their neighbourhood or walking along the road. Some children are known to have voluntarily joined the army or armed political groups after being separated from their families and facing poverty and the collapse of basic social services such as educational and health centres.

Once recruited, forcibly or otherwise, some children are sent to camps for military training and indoctrination. Here, they are mostly subjected to violent treatment. In some camps

children have died from deplorable conditions. After a few weeks of training, the children are deployed to the front lines for combat. In DRC, some front line duties have included serving as decoys, detectors of enemy positions, and bodyguards for commandants, or sex slaves. Most girl soldiers are sexually exploited or raped by their commanders or other soldiers. Boys and girls are also often used as porters for ammunition, water and food, or as cooks.

UNICEF (1985) observes that yesterday, street children were no more than a footnote. Today, street children are a major issue. Tomorrow, if present trends continue, they could be blight on urban civilization. For Africa, tomorrow is already here. Street children are not only blight on urban civilization; they pose a serious obstacle to overall socio-economic development in Africa.

The world and Africa in particular are witnessing rapid and wide ranging socioeconomic and political changes. There is rapid urbanization, runaway population growth and increasing disparities in wealth. One of the negative consequences of these changes is the emergence of large numbers of children on the streets. In Tanzania they are known as 'watoto wa mitaani', in Kenya they are known as 'chokorra' and in The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) they are called moineaux or 'sparrows'. By whatever name they are called, what stands out is the sad fact that everywhere, children living and working on the street are ignored, scorned, mistreated and misunderstood by society and by governments.

Breakdown of the Family and the Emergence of Street Children. The family institution in Africa is going through a lot of upheavals. Fewer and fewer children have stable and loving family environments. Many families have broken up with children left to fend for themselves. Many families are also increasingly characterized by absent parents, lack of communication

between parents and children, alcoholism and domestic violence. Many children run away to the streets to avoid violence and abuse in the family. It is now common occurrence to hear of terrifying stories of abuse of children by parents or family members.

2.2 Problems Faced by the Media

According to Goddard (1993), the media has always been faced with the question of objectivity. This question is built on the assumption that consumers want non-partisan, unbiased information. Consumers may want to read (watch) news that is consistent with their tastes or prior beliefs. Media bias is a result of consumer heterogeneity and media competition. More importantly, we find that media bias increases when there are more conscientious consumers.

The media, by selective omission and differing emphasis conveys very different messages and stimulates radically different impressions about any event. The different impressions created from an objective event by slanting information is what we call media bias. The quality of news products then depends on their timeliness and accuracy. Therefore, media (newspapers, magazines, journals, TV and radio stations) will compete on these relevant dimensions. Since any biased news will decrease information accuracy and consumers' capacity to estimate the underlying truth, classic economic theory suggests that media competition will certainly wipe out biases in the news if media is free and not influenced by outside forces such as governments and politics (Gentzkow, Glaeser & Goldin 2004). This will ultimately also lead to society having a better understanding and appreciation of the media's role instead of the usual societal impression of the media as being politically driven, in the case of developing countries.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction.

This part of the study was concerned with the way the study was conducted. It explained in detail the methods of data collection and analysis. It will show the instrument used to collect data, research area and design. It also showed the sample and how the sample was selected.

3.1 Research Design.

A case study design was used since this study looks at a particular case such that the findings are generalized for other areas. A qualitative analysis was used for the study. The findings of this study were then be used to generalize for other areas.

3.2 Study Area.

The study was conducted in the Bar-el-Gazel, Southern Sudan.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique.

3.3.1 Sample Size.

The sample had a total of 100 participants who participate in the study. These were comprised of 20 town officials, 50 town's people, 10 children and 20 journalists.

3.3.2 Sampling Technique.

Random sampling were used for selecting majority of members from the general public as well as convenience sampling technique. The town of Bar-el-Gazel targeted for responses

from the general public as these were provided on the ground information whilst responses from town officials and journalists would provide a means to validate and appraise the responses from the town's people.

3.4 Research Instruments.

3.4.1 Questionnaires.

The study employed interview guides for the town's people and personal guided interviews for journalists and town officials. The interview guides were used for the town people because they may not have time or chance to fill in and return the questionnaires.

3.4.2 Secondary Data.

The study employed the use of secondary sources of information such as past issues of newspapers, magazines, and the internet.

3.4.3 Observation.

The study also employed the use of observation to add value to the responses and provide a first hand experience of the subject in the natural environment.

3.5 Procedure.

The researcher obtained a letter of introduction from the university and used this letter as proof that she was a student of Kampala International University. The researcher showed it to the authorities of Bah-el-Gazel and get permission from the council. On the days of conducting the study the researcher sampled officials and staff members, distribute questionnaires and collect them afterwards. After collecting questionnaires from respondents,

the researcher discussed with administrators and at the end of the day thanked whoever had participated in the study.

3.6 Data analysis.

The questionnaires was checked immediately to ensure that all questions have been responded to. Data was then coded and tabulated in tables. Frequencies and Percentages were be calculated using SPSS and MS Excel and thereafter deductions and conclusions made.

3.7 Interpretation of Data.

After tabulation of data, percentages were calculated then deductions and conclusions made.

3.8 Limitations of the study.

The researcher was confronted by the following limitations.

Lack of Cooperation

The members from the general public believed that the research was of financial benefit to the researcher and may refuse to cooperate. This was reduced by explaining to the respondents that nature and purpose of the study.

The participants and natives of the region were not very welcoming to foreigners. This proved to be a challenge to the study. The researcher overcame this by traveling with a guide (native) to encourage positive reception.

Living Conditions

The living conditions in the study area are harsh. Amenities such as tapped water was difficult to come by in Bar-el-Gazel. This may increase the cost of doing the study.

Financial Constraints

The research was carried out in Southern Sudan and this involved the researcher meeting a financial cost of travel to and from the study location. The researcher overcame this by soliciting for funds from family and well-wishers before embarking on the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

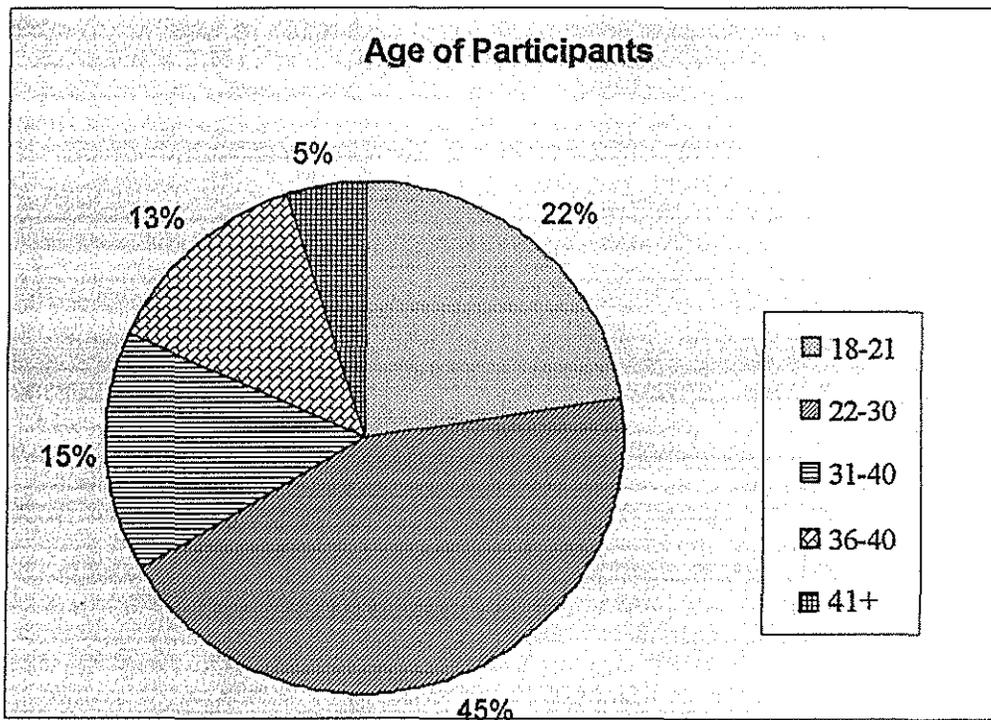
This chapter concentrated on the presentation of findings of the study. One hundred respondents were sought for the study with 100% response. The findings were discussed and shown in figures and tables as presented below.

4.1.0 Background of respondents

4.1.1 Age

The age of respondents who participated was investigated and the results are in figure 1.

Figure 1: Age of Respondents who participated



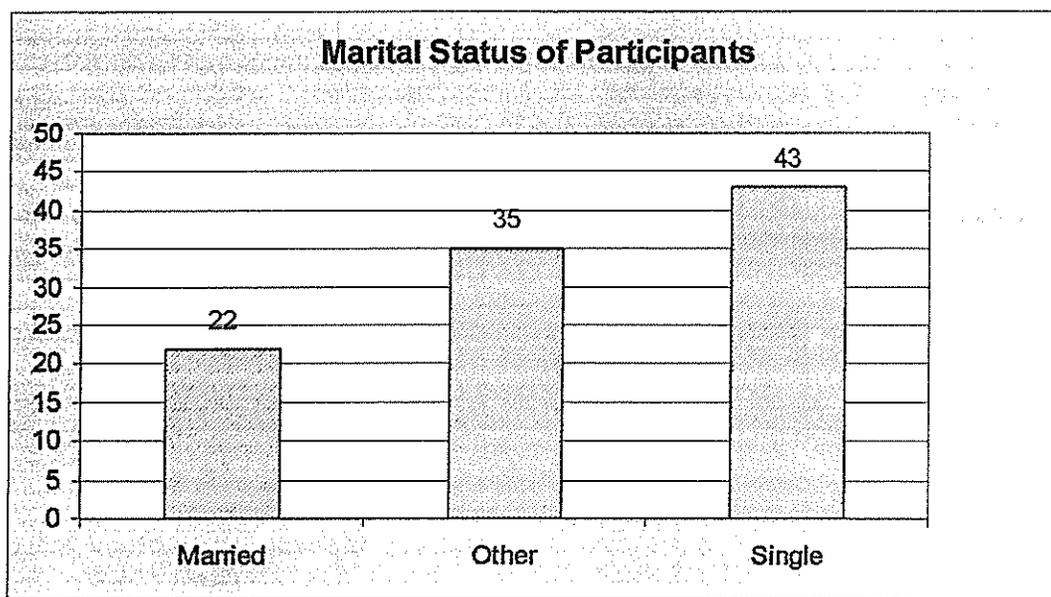
Source: Primary Data

The majority of respondents were between the ages of 22-30 (45%) of the participants. The next populous were the age group of 18-21 making up 24% of the participants. Those in the age group 25-28 represented 21% of the population while those in 29-35 and above 36 represented 18% and 3% respectively.

4.1.2 Marital Status

Marital status of those who participated in the study was investigated and the results are in figure 2.

Figure 2: Marital Status of Participants



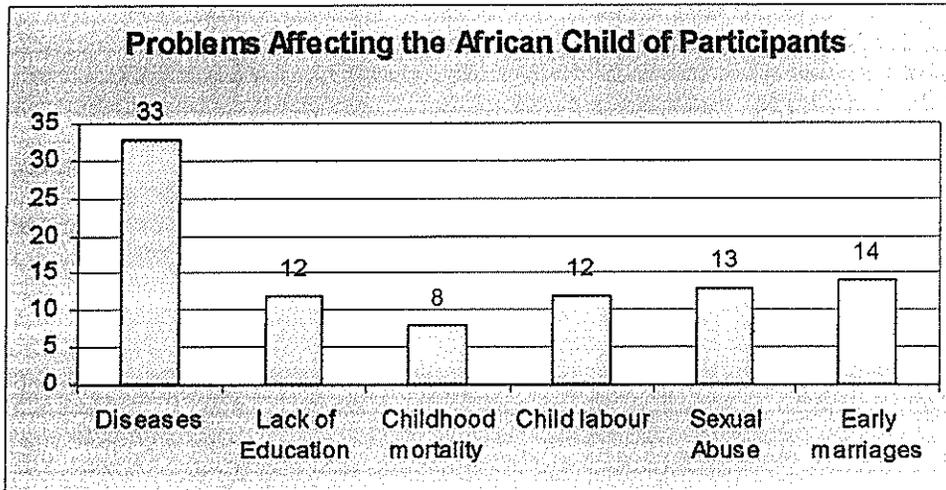
Source: Primary Data

Figure 2 shows that participants that were single were 43% and those that were married were 22% respectively while those that were widowed, those who were of other marital status comprised of 35% of the respondents.

4.2.0 Data Presentation

4.2.1 The Problems Affecting the African Child

Figure 3: Problems affecting the African Child



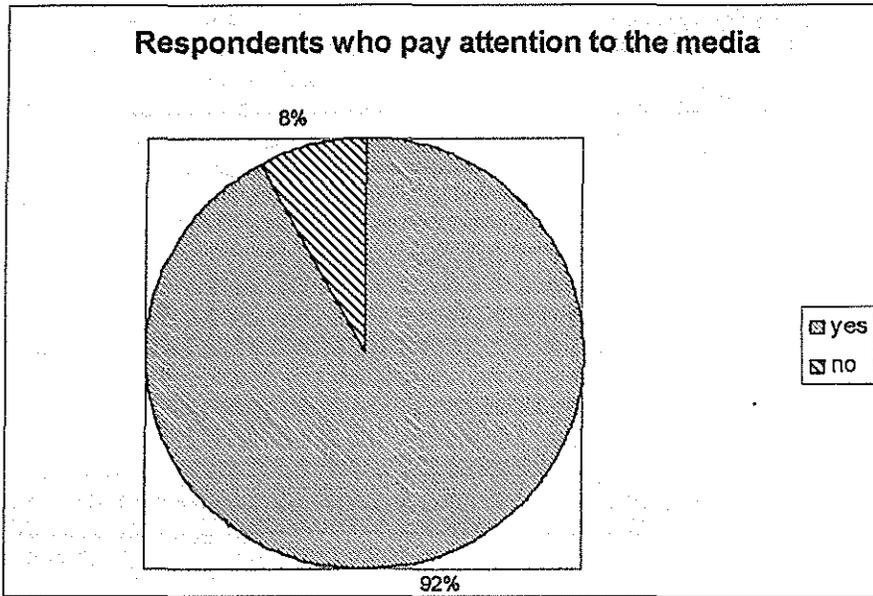
Source: Primary Data

Most of the respondents (33%) said that children succumbed to preventable or treatable diseases, such as malaria and pneumonia. African children experience routine violation of their basic human rights through child labour (12%), sexual abuse (13%) and early marriages (14%).

While millions of children don't get adequate education (12%). A fraction of the respondents also said that child mortality was a major problem in Africa. This was 8% of the respondents.

The media that the respondents paid attention to was investigated and the findings are shown in the figure below;

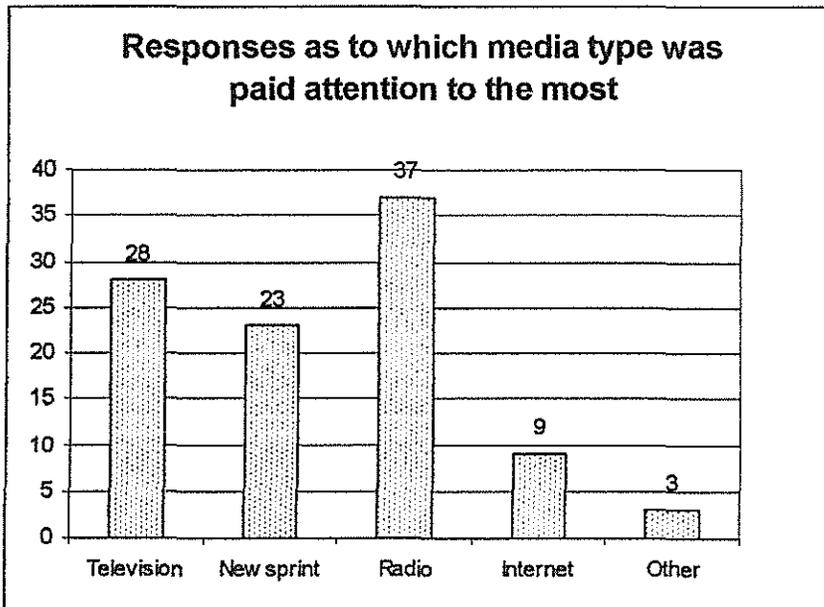
Figure 4: Showing the respondents who pay attention to the media



Source: Primary Data

It was found that the majority of respondents did pay attention to what was put forward in the press. This was 92% of the participants. Only 8% of the participants did not pay attention to the media.

Figure 5: Showing the various media paid that respondents pay attention to



Source: Primary Data

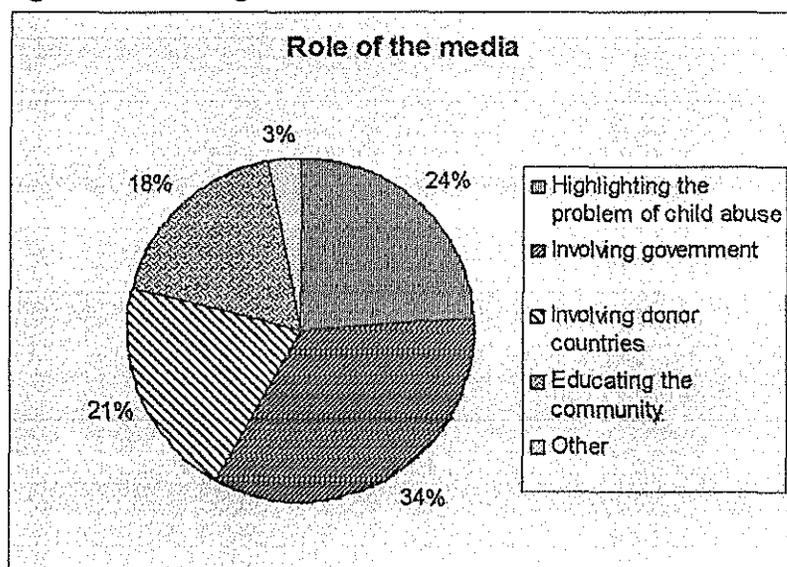
It was found that the majority of respondents paid attention to television and radio with 28% and 37% respectively. The next popular media outlet was newsprint in form of magazines and newspapers at 23% while those who used the internet were 9%. Only 3% indulged in other media types.

4.2.2 The Role of the Media in highlighting the plight of the African Child

It was found that the majority of respondents did pay attention to what was put forward in the press. This was 78% of the participants. Only 22% of the participants did not pay attention to the press of which 90% of these said they did pay attention to other media such as Television and Radio.

It was found that amongst the roles of the media, the majority of respondents said that showing the extent of the problem of child abuse in Sudan (36.48%) was what the media does. Another 21% said that the media involved the donor community which also helped reduce the problem of child abuse. Others were highlighting the problem (17%), involving the government (11%), educating the public about the problem (15%) and creating empathy for the children (26%).

Figure 6: Showing role of the media



Source: Primary Data

Information presented by the media is not commercially biased	Strongly disagree	22	22
	Disagree	36	36
	Strongly Agree	53	53
	Agree	42	42
	Strongly disagree	3	3
	Disagree	2	2

Table 1: Showing the Perception of Individuals toward Media
Source: Primary Data

The results showed that the respondents were more inclined to the notion that the media was objective. Twenty eight percent however believed the media presented complete information and was able to provide accurate information. This was shown as follows: 42% said they strongly disagreed with the notion that the media was objective. 36% simply disagreed while 18% agreed that the media was free from influence and only 4% said that they strongly believed the media was free from influence. When asked whether the media presented complete information, the majority of the respondents (36%) simply disagreed while 22% strongly disagreed with the statement. 14% of the participants felt the media presented complete information whilst 28% felt strongly that the media did present complete information. Despite the negative perception about the media's abilities, the respondents showed a marked difference when asked whether they believed the media presented factual and accurate information. Fifty-three percent of the participants said they strongly agreed with the statement whilst 42% simply agreed. Only 3% and 2% said they strongly disagreed and simply disagreed respectively.

It was found that the media did have an effect on the problem of child abuse. This was stated by 62.5% of the respondents. The effects mentioned were that the media educated the public about child abuse (29.17%), the media highlighted the problem of child abuse (31.25%) and that the media involved the government at only 6.25% of the respondents. The vast majority

of the respondents however said that the media had little effect on the subject of child abuse with 50% of the respondents believing so. Eleven percent of the respondents believed that the media did play a role in reducing the problem of child abuse.

When asked whether the media could do more to stop the problem of child abuse, all of the respondents said yes. Amongst what they thought the media could do, the majority of the respondents 31.25% said that the media should advocate for more public support. A further 29% said the media should seek donor support while 11% and 6% said the media should seek assistance for the children and advocate for government action respectively.

The third objective of the study was to investigate the challenges that the media faces in while highlighting the plight of the African child. The journalists were queried to establish the challenges that are faced by them in their duties.

Table 2: Showing the challenges to the media in fighting child abuse in Sudan

Options		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
The media's effort in combating child abuse is good.	Strongly Agree	4	4
	Agree	18	18
	Strongly disagree	42	42
	Disagree	36	36
The media presents complete information	Strongly Agree	28	28
	Agree	14	14
	Strongly disagree	22	22
	Disagree	36	36
Can the media be instrumental to stopping child abuse	Strongly Agree	53	53
	Agree	42	42
	Strongly disagree	3	3
	Disagree	2	2

Source: Primary Data

The results showed a general negativity toward the work of the media. The respondents were asked whether the media was good and the majority strongly disagreed in principle. Only 4% strongly agreed with the notion that the media effort in combating child abuse was good.

The respondents were asked whether the media presented complete information, and 36% said that the media did not present complete information. When asked to explain their position, they said that the media only showed commercially viable stories. Twenty eight percent said they agreed strongly with the notion that the media presented complete information.

Fifty three percent of the respondents strongly believed that the media can be instrumental to fighting child abuse in Sudan, while 42% simply agreed that the media could be instrumental to fighting child abuse.

4.3 Discussion

The study findings showed that the plight of the African child was no petty issue as a number of problems that affect the African child were very debilitating on their future. This has also affected Africa's ability to uplift its people from poverty resulting in a vicious cycle.

Healthcare and education were chronically under-funded in many countries and children's issues were often not prioritized by African governments. As observed by the study, the poorest families are forced to pay for or go without even the most basic services, and this agreed with literature reviewed on similar studies.

Sub-Saharan Africa was the region furthest from achieving universal primary education, with the lowest numbers of children starting school. "On top of this, [the region] is being

ravaged by HIV/AIDS - around 2.2 million children are infected with the virus and nearly 12.5 million have been orphaned by AIDS," the NGO observed.

African governments also need to focus on better governance and providing basic rights for all, but unless these policies focus on children, we will fail to break the cycle of poverty for future generations in Africa. Governments, donors and multilateral agencies should place children at the centre of their policies and above all, to break Africa's cycle of poverty. However to do this, there must be a drastic investment in Africa's children today.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter is going to discuss the findings that the researcher got from the study and the conclusions she made from the study according to what he found out from the study.

5.1 Summary

The general objective of the study was to investigate the role of the media in portraying the plight of the African child. And this was achieved by finding out the problems affecting the African child, establishing the role of the media in highlighting the plight of the African child and investigating the challenges facing the media in highlighting the plight of the African child.

A case study design was used since this study looked at a particular case such that the findings are generalized for other areas. A qualitative analysis was used for the study. The findings of the study were then used to generalize for other areas. The study was conducted in the Bar-el-Gazel, southern Sudan. The sample was composed of a total of 100 participants. There were comprised of 20 town officials, 50 town's people, 10 children and 20 journalists.

Random sampling was used for selecting the majority of members from the general public as well as convenience sampling technique. The town of Bar-el-Gazel was targeted for responses from the general public as these provided on the ground information whilst

responses from town officials and journalists will provide a means to validate and appraise the responses from the town's people.

5.2 Conclusions

The increase of coverage of children's issues in both the media is an indicator that the media is covering issues concerning the welfare of the child. However, children are important members of our society and way in which the media have chosen to highlight their plight should not have been the way we offer the problem more coverage. Children, being the future adults are an important part of our society. How they are treated presently determines how they will treat their children too.

The findings of the study may also be highly attribute to the characteristics of the respondents who were mostly majority of respondents were between the ages of 21-24 (34%). These mostly are comprised of the educated individuals and account for the high rate of use of television and print media along with the internet use.

The responses on the solutions to what the media could also do are also based on these highly opinionated individuals who stated that highlighting the problem of child abuse (17%), involving the government (11%), educating the public about the problem (15%) and creating empathy for the children (26%) were avenues that the media could explore. These findings agreed with other authors quoted in the literature review.

It was found that whilst the findings agreed with those of other authors in the literature review, such as Gough 1996 and Wynne-Jones and Sayid 2001, the media in Sudan plays a more passive role and only ventures into child abuse topics when it is commercially applicable.

5.3 Recommendations.

There is need for more coverage of children's issues. Media houses should be the voice of children especially now that the children's cabinet was disbanded.

International donors must take a much broader approach to protect livelihoods and provide long-term food security, with social safety nets and protection for those who are most vulnerable.

Most children in Africa succumb to preventable or treatable diseases, such as malaria and pneumonia, which means that government and relevant stakeholders should endeavor to provide adequate and affordable medicines to the vulnerable groups like children.

NGOs that advocate for children's rights protection should be funded by governments so as to ensure that rights violations of children are a thing of the past. That is, African governments also need to focus on better governance and providing basic rights for all.

The African governments, donors and multilateral agencies should place children - their survival, development and protection - at the centre of policy and practice and above all. This would uplift their general welfare and promise them a better and brighter future.

Multinational media corporations should be encouraged to publish more child welfare related news by offering tax reduction and tax holiday to those that do so. Rather, what children say and do should also make headlines. Special desks to deal with children's issues should be established in the media houses. Editors and journalist should be trained on the coverage of children's issues.

More space should be allocated to hard news on children's issues in prime pages too, although photographs are good, the caption that go along with them are usually too brief to tell the whole story well.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: TIME FRAME AND BUDGET OF THE STUDY

Time frame of the Study.

The researcher hopes that the study will be conducted in the following time schedule.

TIME	EVENT
Proposal Writing	April 2007
Construction of Interview Guide	May 2007
Data Collection	May 2007 – June 2007
Dissertation Writing	June 2007
Handing in	June 2007

Table 3: Showing Time Frame of the Study

Budget.

The Researcher hopes that the study will be guided by the following budget

ITEM	COST/Kshs
Typing and Binding	3,500
Literature collection	7,000
Transport	7,000
Data Collection	4,000
Total	21,500

Table 4: Showing Budget of the Study

APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE

MEDIA AND THE PLIGHT OF THE AFRICAN CHILD A CASE STUDY OF BAH-EL-GAZEL, SUDAN

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR GENERAL PUBLIC

Please take time to fill out this questionnaire.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to get information on the Role, Problems and Effect of the media in highlighting the plight of the African Child. The study is purely academic and high confidentiality is assured. Your participation in this study will contribute to the success of this study.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Please Put a TICK on the option box of your answer and fill out the spaces where necessary.

BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

Age

- 25-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56+

Marital status

- Married
- Cohabiting
- Single

Religion

- Catholic
- Muslim
- Protestant
- 7th Day
- Pentecostal
- Other

Educational level

- Diploma
- Bachelors
- Masters
- PhD

SECTION A:

PROBLEMS AFFECTING THE AFRICAN CHILD

1. Please tick the options that you participate is
 - Listen to Radio
 - Watch Television
 - Read Newspapers/ magazines
 - Surf the Internet