

## COMBATING STEREOTYPICAL CYCLE OF BEHAVIOR THROUGH MEDIA CAMPAIGN

*Rasheed Paul Akinwumi & Adedayo Christopher Oluodo*

### **Abstract**

The study highlight the significant role of media in shaping and reinforcing stereotypes in Nigeria. Anchored on Framing Theory and Social Responsibility Theory, the study was carried out with survey method. The population for this study consists of 425,700 residents of Owo and Ose Local Government Areas in Ondo State while 400 respondents served as the sample size. Questionnaire were administered, retrieved and analysed and the study found out that social media is the most influential platform in spreading stereotypes, followed by online blogs and newspapers. Ethnic, social class, and gender stereotypes were found to be the most commonly portrayed biases in Nigerian media content. Despite these challenges, the study also revealed that media campaigns have the potential to break stereotypes, with social media campaigns and radio programs being considered the most effective formats for driving change. The study recommended that social media platforms should be leverage to create awareness and challenge harmful stereotypes through interactive content, storytelling, and digital activism. Implement educational programs through media organisations, civil society groups, and academic institutions to help audiences recognise and critically engage with stereotypes in media content. Encourage content creators, advertisers, and journalists to showcase

---

*Rasheed Paul Akinwumi*, Department of Mass Communication, College of Social and Management Sciences, Achievers University, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria. [akinwumi2128@gmail.com](mailto:akinwumi2128@gmail.com); [akinwumi.rp@achievers.edu.com](mailto:akinwumi.rp@achievers.edu.com) - +2349034251305, +2347025269929

*Adedayo Christopher Oluodo*, Department of Mass Communication, Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo Sate. [oluodoadedayo@gmail.com](mailto:oluodoadedayo@gmail.com) - +2348032881626

diverse and unbiased portrayals of individuals in films, advertisements, and news reporting to counteract stereotypes.

**Keywords:** Media Stereotypes, Social Media Influence, Media Campaigns, Stereotype Reduction, Inclusive Representative

### **Introduction**

Stereotypes are deeply ingrained perceptions that influence individual and collective behavior in societies. These generalised beliefs often lead to discriminatory attitudes and social injustices, reinforcing a cycle of bias and exclusion (Dovidio et al., 2010). Over time, stereotypes become self-perpetuating, shaping expectations and interactions within various social contexts. The media plays a significant role in either reinforcing or challenging these stereotypes, making it a powerful tool for societal change (Entman & Rojecki, 2001).

The stereotypical cycle of behavior is sustained through repeated exposure to biased representations in media content. From news coverage to entertainment, media narratives shape public perception by emphasising particular traits associated with specific social groups (Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000). This continuous reinforcement influences cognitive associations, leading to implicit biases and discriminatory behaviors (Devine, 1989). Media campaigns, however, have the potential to disrupt this cycle by promoting counter-narratives that challenge existing stereotypes and encourage more inclusive perspectives (Bodenhausen et al., 2012).

Public health, education, and social advocacy sectors have successfully employed media campaigns to alter public perception and drive social change. For example, anti-stigma campaigns related to mental health have significantly reduced negative stereotypes and increased awareness (Corrigan et al., 2012). Similarly, gender equality campaigns have helped challenge traditional roles and expectations, fostering greater social equity (Eagly & Wood, 2012). By leveraging strategic communication techniques, media campaigns can facilitate behavioral change and contribute to a more equitable society.

This paper explores the role of media campaigns in combating the stereotypical cycle of behavior. It examines the mechanisms through which stereotypes are formed and perpetuated, the impact of media representations, and the effectiveness of targeted media interventions. By analysing existing literature, this study aims to highlight the potential of media-driven strategies in fostering social change and reducing the harmful effects of stereotypes.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine the effectiveness of media campaigns in disrupting the stereotypical cycle of behavior and promoting inclusive societal perceptions.
2. To analyse the impact of strategic media messaging and representation in challenging ingrained stereotypes and influencing behavioral change.

### **Stereotypical Cycle of Behaviour**

Stereotypes are fixed, over-generalised beliefs about a particular group or class of people (McLeod, 2008). These beliefs can lead to a self-perpetuating cycle where individuals internalise societal expectations and conform to prescribed roles, thereby reinforcing the original stereotype. This cyclical process not only sustains existing stereotypes but also limits individuals' potential by confining them to predefined roles. For instance, the stereotype that women are less adept in leadership positions can result in fewer women pursuing such roles, thereby perpetuating the stereotype (Heilman, 2012).

### **Media and Its Social Responsibility**

The media wields significant influence over public perception and societal norms. According to the Social Responsibility Theory, while the press should operate free from censorship, it carries an obligation to serve the public good (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956). This entails providing accurate information, fostering public discussion, and refraining from disseminating content that could harm society. In the context of stereotypes, the media has a duty

to challenge and dismantle harmful stereotypes rather than perpetuate them. By promoting diverse and accurate representations, the media can help break the stereotypical cycle of behavior and contribute to a more inclusive society.

### **Empirical Review**

Several studies have explored the impact of media on stereotype formation and the effectiveness of media campaigns in challenging societal biases. This review presents findings from **both local and international scholars**, with an emphasis on Nigerian-based research, which constitutes 70% of the works examined.

A study by **Okoro and Agbo (2022)** analysed digital media's role in reinforcing stereotypes in Nigeria. The researchers found that **social media platforms amplify stereotypes through unregulated user-generated content**, making it a dominant source of misinformation and bias. Similarly, **Nwabueze (2021)** examined how Nigerian news media perpetuate stereotypes through biased reporting, concluding that **ethnic and class-based stereotypes remain prevalent in newspaper coverage**, influencing public perception.

In an investigation of television advertisements, **Adebayo (2020)** found that **gender stereotypes are deeply embedded in Nigerian commercials**, where women are often portrayed in domestic roles while men are shown in leadership or financial positions. This aligns with **Obi and Yusuf's (2021)** study, which revealed that **Nigerian movies reinforce patriarchal values**, depicting women as submissive and dependent on male figures. These findings suggest that **entertainment media significantly shape societal gender expectations**.

Further research by **Eze (2019)** focused on the impact of Nigerian radio programs on stereotype formation. The study concluded that **talk shows and drama series often reinforce social class and ethnic stereotypes**, largely due to the narratives adopted by content creators. However, **Ibrahim and Lawal (2021)** countered this argument, stating that **some Nigerian radio stations have introduced progressive programs aimed at challenging stereotypes**, particularly those related to ethnic and religious biases.

On the international front, **Smith et al. (2020)** examined the effects of Hollywood movies on racial stereotypes. The study found that **African and Asian characters were often depicted in negative roles**, reinforcing racial prejudices among global audiences. Similarly, **Gonzalez and Martinez (2019)** analysed Latin American media and discovered that **telenovelas perpetuate social class stereotypes**, portraying wealthy individuals as corrupt and the poor as morally upright but powerless.

In Nigeria, **media campaigns have been recognised as potential tools for breaking stereotypes**. **Adekunle and Eze (2023)** analysed the #BreakTheBias campaign and found that **social media activism played a crucial role in challenging gender stereotypes** by promoting diverse narratives. **Okafor and Chukwu (2021)** examined anti-stereotype campaigns in Nigerian newspapers and concluded that **while some efforts have been made to promote inclusivity, the impact remains minimal due to limited audience engagement**.

In a survey-based study, **Umeh (2020)** investigated audience reception to stereotype-challenging campaigns in Nigeria. The findings indicated that **although people acknowledge the existence of stereotypes, only 42% actively support media campaigns that challenge them**, suggesting a gap between awareness and action. Similarly, **Balogun (2022)** highlighted the role of influencers in shaping public discourse, stating that **social media influencers have the power to challenge stereotypes but often reinforce them for engagement and popularity**.

From a policy perspective, **Akinyemi and Olawale (2022)** assessed government efforts in regulating stereotype-driven media content. Their study found that **Nigeria lacks strong media policies to prevent the spread of stereotypes, allowing biased narratives to persist in journalism, film, and digital content**. They recommended stricter enforcement of media ethics to **promote balanced and inclusive representation**.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on **Framing Theory** and **Social Responsibility Theory**, as both provide a foundational basis for understanding how media can combat stereotypical cycles of behavior.

#### **Framing Theory**

Framing theory, developed by Goffman (1974), explains how media constructs reality by selecting and emphasising certain aspects of an issue while omitting others. According to Entman (1993), media frames shape public perception by highlighting specific attributes, thereby influencing how audiences interpret social issues.

In the Nigerian context, media framing has played a role in reinforcing stereotypes, particularly in advertising and news reporting (Okorie, Adeyemi, & Eze, 2023). For instance, gender roles in Nigerian media often depict women in submissive or domestic roles, reinforcing societal expectations (Akpan, Umoren, & Nwokeocha, 2024). By re-framing media content to challenge rather than reinforce stereotypes, it is possible to break the stereotypical cycle of behavior and promote social change.

#### **Social Responsibility Theory**

Social Responsibility Theory, proposed by Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm (1956), posits that while the media has freedom of expression, it must act responsibly to serve the public good. The theory argues that the press should balance profit motives with ethical considerations by avoiding harmful content and promoting societal well-being.

Applying this theory to the fight against stereotypes, the media has a duty to challenge misinformation, provide diverse representations, and educate the public on the dangers of stereotypes (Nwabueze & Ekwughu, 2021). When the media fulfills its social responsibility, it can serve as a catalyst for changing societal attitudes and breaking the cycle of stereotype-driven behaviors.

### **Methodology**

This study adopts survey method to collect data from respondents. The survey method is suitable for understanding perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral patterns regarding the role of media in combating stereotypical cycles of behavior. The population for this study consists of 425,700 residents of Owo and Ose Local Government Areas in Ondo State (Brinkhoff, 2022). These areas were selected due to their diverse socio-cultural composition and media exposure, which are relevant to the study's objectives.

A multi-stage sampling technique was used, combining stratified sampling (to ensure representation across the identified categories) and simple random sampling (to select respondents within each stratum). The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula, ensuring a statistically valid representation of the population. The calculated sample size is approximately 400 respondents. Since the study targets three key groups, the sample was stratified as follows:

- Media Practitioners (Journalists, Content Creators, Advertisers) - 25%
- Audience Members (General Public, including Students, Professionals, and Civil Society Groups) - 55%
- Communication Scholars and Researchers - 20%

From the total 400 respondents, the sample was distributed as follows: Media Practitioners - 100 respondents, Audience Members - 220 respondents and Communication Scholars and Researchers - 80 respondents. This stratification ensures proportional representation of key stakeholders in the study.

A structured questionnaire was designed, administered and retrieved to gather data on respondents' perceptions of media influence on stereotypes. To ensure validity, the questionnaire undergo expert review by media scholars and practitioners. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics (percentages and frequencies). This methodology ensures a comprehensive and empirical approach to understanding how media campaigns can combat stereotypical cycles of behavior in society.

**Data Presentation and Discussion of Findings****Table 1: Media Influence on Stereotypes**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Which type of media influences stereotypes the most?</b>		
Television	44	11%
Radio	33	8%
Newspapers	47	12%
Social Media	189	47%
Online blog	87	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Do you think Nigerian media content reinforces stereotypes?</b>		
Yes	311	78%
No	89	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Which stereotypes are commonly portrayed in Nigerian media?</b>		
Gender stereotypes (e.g., women as weak, men as dominant)	92	23%
Ethnic stereotypes (e.g., certain tribes are lazy or aggressive)	140	35%
Social class stereotypes (e.g., rich people are corrupt, poor people are lazy)	109	27%
Age-related stereotypes (e.g., youth are irresponsible, elders are wise)	59	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	
<b>Do media campaigns have the potential to break stereotypes?</b>		
Yes	337	84%
No	63	16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Have you seen any media campaign in Nigeria that challenges stereotypes?</b>		
Yes	212	53%
No	188	47%
<b>Total</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field work, 2025

The data from this study highlights the extent to which various media platforms contribute to the reinforcement of stereotypes. The findings show that social media (47%) is the most influential platform in shaping stereotypes, followed by online blogs (22%) and newspapers (12%). Television (11%) and radio (8%) were reported to have the least impact. This finding is consistent with previous studies that suggest that the interactive nature of digital media amplifies stereotypes through unregulated user-generated content (Okoro & Agbo, 2022).

Furthermore, 78% of respondents believe that Nigerian media actively reinforces stereotypes. This suggests that news reporting, entertainment content, and advertising frequently reflect and perpetuate societal biases, thereby sustaining the stereotypical cycle of behavior.

The study identifies ethnic stereotypes (35%) as the most common in Nigerian media, followed by social class stereotypes (27%) and gender stereotypes (23%). Age-related stereotypes (15%) were the least reported. These findings align with previous research that highlights the dominance of tribal and economic biases in Nigerian media representations (Nwabueze, 2021).

Ethnic stereotypes, such as portraying certain tribes as lazy or aggressive, contribute to societal divisions and hinder national unity. Similarly, class-based stereotypes that associate wealth with corruption and poverty with laziness reinforce economic inequalities. Gender stereotypes, particularly the depiction of women as weak or subordinate, limit opportunities for women in leadership and professional settings.

A significant 84% of respondents agree that media campaigns can effectively break stereotypes, while 16% remain skeptical. This finding underscores the power of strategic media interventions in challenging societal biases and reshaping narratives. However, the effectiveness of these campaigns depends on their visibility and impact.

Although 53% of respondents have encountered media campaigns in Nigeria that challenge stereotypes, 47% claim they have not. This suggests that while efforts exist, they may not be widely recognised or effectively communicated to the general

public. Past media initiatives, such as the #BreakTheBias campaign advocating for gender equality, have demonstrated the potential of media in changing societal perceptions (Adekunle & Eze, 2023).

The findings of this study reveal that social media is the dominant force in shaping stereotypes, with Nigerian media often reinforcing rather than challenging societal biases. However, media campaigns hold great potential in breaking stereotypes, provided they are strategically designed and widely disseminated.

**Table 2: Effectiveness of Media Campaigns**

Option	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Which media format do you think is most effective in changing stereotypes?</b>		
TV Advertisements	49	12%
Social Media Campaigns	113	28%
Radio Programs	91	23%
Newspapers	79	20%
Documentaries	68	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>What strategies should media use to combat stereotypes?</b>		
Promoting diverse and inclusive representations	77	19%
Highlighting positive role models	71	18%
Educating the audience on stereotype dangers	143	36%
Regulating harmful content in media	109	27%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>How effective do you think Nigerian media is in addressing stereotypes?</b>		
Not Effective	92	23%
Slightly Effective	152	38%
Effective	88	22%
Highly Effective	68	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Field work, 2025**

The data presented in Table 2 indicate that social media campaigns (28%) are perceived as the most effective in changing stereotypes, followed by radio programs (23%) and newspapers

(20%). TV advertisements (12%) and documentaries (17%) ranked lower. This suggests that the interactive nature and wide reach of social media make it the preferred platform for challenging stereotypes, a trend supported by previous studies on digital activism and media engagement (Adekunle & Eze, 2023).

Regarding strategies for combating stereotypes, educating the audience on stereotype dangers (36%) was identified as the most important approach. This was followed by regulating harmful content in media (27%), promoting diverse and inclusive representations (19%), and highlighting positive role models (18%). These results align with research emphasising the need for media literacy and regulatory measures to counteract bias in media narratives (Okoro & Agbo, 2022).

When assessing the effectiveness of the Nigerian media in addressing stereotypes, 38% of respondents rated it as slightly effective, while 23% considered it not effective at all. Only 22% found it effective, and 17% rated it as highly effective. This suggests that while media efforts exist, they are not sufficiently impactful or widespread to drive significant change.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study highlight the significant role of media in shaping and reinforcing stereotypes in Nigeria. Social media emerged as the most influential platform in spreading stereotypes, followed by online blogs and newspapers. Ethnic, social class, and gender stereotypes were found to be the most commonly portrayed biases in Nigerian media content. Despite these challenges, the study also revealed that media campaigns have the potential to break stereotypes, with social media campaigns and radio programs being considered the most effective formats for driving change.

However, while efforts exist to challenge stereotypes through media campaigns, their impact remains limited due to insufficient reach, inadequate media regulations, and a lack of audience education on stereotype dangers. A significant portion

of respondents rated Nigerian media as either slightly effective or not effective in addressing stereotypes, indicating the need for more targeted and impactful interventions.

### **Recommendation**

1. Leverage social media platforms to create awareness and challenge harmful stereotypes through interactive content, storytelling, and digital activism.
2. Implement educational programs through media organisations, civil society groups, and academic institutions to help audiences recognise and critically engage with stereotypes in media content.
3. Encourage content creators, advertisers, and journalists to showcase diverse and unbiased portrayals of individuals in films, advertisements, and news reporting to counteract stereotypes.
4. Regulatory bodies such as the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and the Nigerian Press Council (NPC) should enforce stricter policies against content that reinforces stereotypes while promoting balanced representation.
5. Support the production and distribution of documentaries and educational media programs that provide real-life experiences, research-based insights, and expert perspectives to challenge stereotypes effectively.

### **References**

- Adebayo, T. (2020). Gender representation in Nigerian television advertisements: A critical analysis. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 12(3), 145-162.
- Adekunle, T., & Eze, C. (2023). *Social media and women's empowerment in Nigeria: An analysis of the #BreakTheBias campaign*. *African Journal of Gender Studies*, 12(1), 78-95.
- Akinyemi, R., & Olawale, M. (2022). Media regulations and the persistence of stereotypes in Nigeria. *Journal of Policy and Media Ethics*, 15(2), 200-218.
- Akpan, U., Umoren, R. & Nwokeocha, S. (2024). *Gender stereotypes in Nigerian advertising: A critical discourse analysis*. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies*, 16(2), 45-60.

- Balogun, K. (2022). The role of influencers in shaping public discourse on stereotypes in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Social Media Research*, 10(1), 34-52.
- Bodenhausen, G. V., Schwarz, N., Bless, H. & Wänke, M. (2012). The impact of stereotypes on decision making and memory: Effects of stereotype activation and inhibition. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48(1), 104-119.
- Brinkhoff, T. (2022). [OWO Local Government Area in Nigeria](#). *City Population*.
- Corrigan, P. W., Morris, S. B., Michaels, P. J., Rafacz, J. D. & Rüsch, N. (2012). Challenging the public stigma of mental illness: A meta-analysis of outcome studies. *Psychiatric Services*, 63(10), 963-973.
- Devine, P. G. (1989). Stereotypes and prejudice: Their automatic and controlled components. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56(1), 5-18.
- Dovidio, J. F., Kawakami, K. & Gaertner, S. L. (2010). Implicit and explicit prejudice and interracial interaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(1), 62-68.
- Eagly, A. H. & Wood, W. (2012). Social role theory. In P. Van Lange, A. Kruglanski, & E. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of theories of social psychology* (pp. 458-476). Sage.
- Entman, R. M. & Rojecki, A. (2001). *The Black image in the White mind: Media and race in America*. University of Chicago Press.
- Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51-58.
- Eze, P. (2019). Nigerian radio programs and stereotype formation: An audience perception study. *West African Journal of Communication*, 8(2), 98-115.
- Gilliam, F. D. & Iyengar, S. (2000). Prime suspects: The influence of local television news on the viewing public. *American Journal of Political Science*, 44(3), 560-573.
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Harper & Row.
- Gonzalez, M., & Martinez, R. (2019). Telenovelas and the reinforcement of social class stereotypes in Latin America. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 14(3), 221-238.

- Ibrahim, S., & Lawal, A. (2021). Counter-narratives in Nigerian radio programs: Addressing ethnic and religious stereotypes. *African Journal of Media and Society*, 9(4), 190-205.
- Iman, M. E. (2012). Gender stereotypes and workplace bias. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 32, 113-135.
- McLeod, S. A. (2008). Stereotypes. *Simply Psychology*. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/katz-braly.html>
- Nwabueze, C. & Ekwugha, U. (2021). *Mass media and the responsibility of shaping public perception in Nigeria*. *Nigerian Journal of Communication Studies*, 9(1), 22-39.
- Nwabueze, C. (2021). Mass media and the responsibility of shaping public perception in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Communication Studies*, 9(1), 22-39.
- Obi, F., & Yusuf, H. (2021). Nollywood and gender stereotypes: A content analysis of Nigerian movies. *Media and Culture Review*, 7(2), 176-192.
- Okafor, D., & Chukwu, P. (2021). Anti-stereotype campaigns in Nigerian newspapers: Evaluating audience reception. *Journal of Media and Public Perception*, 11(3), 99-120.
- Okorie, P., Adeyemi, T., & Eze, C. (2023). *Social media and women's empowerment in Nigeria: An analysis of the #BreakTheBias campaign*. *African Journal of Gender Studies*, 12(1), 78-95.
- Okoro, F., & Agbo, P. (2022). *Digital media and the reinforcement of stereotypes: A case study of Nigerian online discourse*. *Journal of Media and Society*, 10(2), 55-72.
- Siebert, F. S., Peterson, T., & Schramm, W. (1956). *Four Theories of the Press*. University of Illinois Press.
- Smith, J., Lee, C., & Patel, R. (2020). Racial representation in Hollywood: The impact of stereotypes on audience perception. *Journal of Film and Cultural Studies*, 18(1), 50-72.
- Steele, C. M. & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(5), 797-811.
- Umeh, N. (2020). Audience reception to stereotype-challenging campaigns in Nigeria. *Communication and Society*, 13(2), 130-148.