



NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF FOOD SECURITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES. A CASE STUDY OF NIGERIAN DAILY NEWSPAPERS

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ABSTRACT

The study conducted a content analysis of four selected Nigerian daily newspapers namely; Daily Trust, Leadership, the Nation and Vanguard Newspapers in order to assess the coverage of food security and climate change issues/stories by these newspapers. The study covered a period of three years (2020, 2021 and 2022). The objectives of the study were to determine the volume of coverage of food security and climate change issues by the selected Nigerian newspapers, compare the total coverage of food security and climate change issues amongst them. The four selected newspapers were purposively chosen based on popularity in four regions, a total of 4380 issues of the 4 newspapers were obtained. Descriptive statistics was used to describe the coverage while Paired t-test was used to compare differences between the total coverage of climate change and food security issues by each newspaper. The findings of the research revealed that coverage of food security and climate change information by selected newspapers in the study area is generally low with 1,247 (31%) articles and 611 articles (15%) respectively. Leadership newspaper had the highest number of coverages with 187 issues/stories on climate change while Daily Trust had the highest coverage of food security issues/stories with 365. It was therefore recommended that the newspaper publishers should increase innovative coverage and passing of food security and climate change issues including engaging Journalist in climate summits, workshops and conferences.

Keywords: Food Security, Climate Change, Newspaper, Coverage

INTRODUCTION

Food security exists when all people have reliable access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food for a healthy life. It is built on four pillars: availability, access, utilization, and stability. Food security is influenced by cultural, environmental, and geographical factors, and is a key focus of Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2), which aims to end hunger and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030. In Nigeria, food insecurity is a major issue, with 9 out of 10 citizens unable to afford a healthy meal. To address this, agricultural transformation is a policy priority, aiming to boost food production, create jobs, and promote development. However, climate change poses serious challenges, particularly in Africa, leading to increased temperatures, droughts, and other adverse effects.

The Nigerian mass media play a vital role in educating the public on environmental and agricultural issues, but coverage on climate change remains limited due to a lack of training and resources. Nonetheless, the media can significantly shape public understanding and responses to climate change. Promoting climate-smart agriculture—which includes improved soil, water, and pest management—is crucial, and mass media, particularly print outlets, can enhance the spread of knowledge and adoption of sustainable practices.

Empirical data from Tagbo (2010) shows that the Nigerian mass media have not been doing well in the coverage of environmental issues, with specific reference to climate change, gas flaring and environmental pollution in the oil rich Niger Delta region. The environmental catastrophe in the Niger Delta region reflects the country's environmental agenda, which ignores other environmental concerns.

Nwosu and Uffoh (2005) had also discovered that the media in Nigeria gives poor quality coverage to environmental concerns and problems after researching media pictures of

environmental issues and problems. Experts have underlined the importance of successfully communicating future climate change to policymakers in order to influence suitable agriculture policies and adaption methods. According to Tagbo (2010), the media can play an important role in communicating meaningful climate information and guiding public debate and understanding about weather and climate change. Tagbo (2010) also noted that regular and accurate communication about climate change is the first step towards developing coping mechanisms in Africa.

The majority of people in the developing world still rely on the "traditional mass media" such as newspapers, radio, and television; thus, bringing a probability that these three media sources can be effective channels for disseminating agricultural information (Nazari and Hassan, 2011). Furthermore, mass media have the capacity to uplift the knowledge and change people's behavior by drawing their attention to particular issues (Hassan *et al.*, 2009; Kayode and Adeniran, 2012). Although radio and television are the quickest types of mass media to reach a wide audience, newspapers have additional advantages of being in permanent form, carrying more information, and often being more authoritative (Aiyesimoju and Awoniyi, 2012).

However, agricultural and other developmental challenges are often overshadowed in newspaper coverage in favor of business, political news, and other social topics (Narayana and Kumar, 2009). Globally, there is limited literature on newspaper coverage on climate change and food security in particular. Also, one of the problems is that previous studies had looked at agricultural news generally but none has looked at climate change and food security in particular or specifically. Other African countries' studies mostly investigated the usage of media in agricultural information coverage (Yusuf *et al.*, 2016).

Tagbo, (2010) stated that, despite the threats of climate change, the Nigerian media appears to be falling behind, leaving the awareness campaign to individual initiatives, putting the country at risk of being seriously wounded by the repercussions of climate change in the near future. Furthermore, despite the noteworthiness of the role newspapers play in disseminating information to the public, there are concerns in many countries that newspapers tend to prioritize advertisements, politics, entertainment, and crime events while ignoring developmental topics such as agriculture (Narayana and Kumar, 2009). A study carried out in Nigeria revealed that the degree of prominence accorded to agriculture by newspapers was very low. Only 36 (4.8%) out of 750 news items on agriculture were published on the front pages (Okarie and Oyedepo, 2011). In Botswana, Oladele and Boago (2011) reported that public newspapers provided less coverage to agricultural news than private newspapers. Generally, agricultural information has suffered limited coverage in newspapers. Empirical data from Tagbo (2010) also shows that the Nigerian mass media have not been doing well in the coverage of environmental issues, with specific

reference to climate change, gas flaring and environmental pollution in the oil rich Niger Delta region.

Therefore, this study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge on the coverage of food security and climate change by Nigerian newspapers, by finding answers to such questions as what volume of food security issues are covered by Nigerian newspapers, what volume of climate change issues are covered by Nigerian newspapers, and whether there is a difference between the volume of coverage of food security and climate change issues by Nigerian Newspaper”

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Description of Study Area

The study area for this research is the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Nigeria is a term coined out by a British reporter, Flora Shaw, which she took from the Niger River to apply to the region during the era of colonial rule. The capital city of Nigeria is Abuja. Nigeria comprises 36 States. Nigeria occupies a landmass of about 923,000km², and has latitude of 9.0820°N and Longitude 8.6753°E. These coordinates place Nigeria in both the Northern and the Eastern hemisphere.

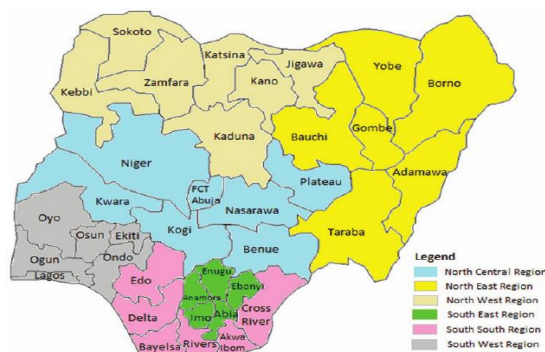


Figure 1: Map of Nigeria showing Geo-Political zones and states

Population for the Study

All printed newspapers published in Nigeria between January 2020/2021 to December, 2022 were used as the population for the study.

Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was employed for the selection of four daily newspapers in Nigeria namely; Daily Trust, Vanguard, Leadership and The Nation. The four newspapers were purposively selected due to their circulation strength, readership, wide coverage of issues and popularity within geographical locations. All 4,380 editions of the four newspapers published in 2020/2021/2022 constituted the sampling size of newspapers. However, only 3,977 editions representing 4,380 (90.7%) were retrieved and analyzed

Data Collection

Content analysis was used for data collection. This is described as the scientific study of content of communication (Obaja, 2003). It is the study of the content with reference to the meanings, contexts and intentions contained in messages. Content analysis is a powerful empirical method for analyzing text, a method that technical communicators can use on the job and in their research. Content analysis can expose hidden connections among concepts, reveal relationships among ideas that initially seem unconnected, and inform the decision-making processes associated with many technical communication practices. (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011). The following analysis will be employed in the study to help guide coding of the selected newspaper samples:

Volume of coverage: This is the total number of food security/climate change issues reported by the selected newspaper.

Analytical technique:

Objectives 1 and 2 were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage and mean. Objective 3 was analyzed using paired t-test. Paired t-test was used to compare differences between the total coverage of climate change and food security issues by each newspaper.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Volume of coverage on climate change issues

The volume of coverage on climate change in the selected four daily newspapers over three years is presented in Table 1 and Figure 2 respectively. The results revealed that the total volume of coverage on climate change issues for the three years was 153, 240 and 218 issues/stories in 2020, 2021 and 2022 respectively. The three-year average coverage is 203 issues/stories. This shows that the volume of coverage of climate change by these newspapers is low. A study by Nwabueze et al., (2015) on content analysis of three national Dailies (Vanguard, Guardian and Daily Sun Newspapers) found that the volume of coverage of climate change issue is poor and that the dominant form of presentation was feature stories. The current study disagrees with the findings of Fawole & Olajide (2012) in their study titled “reporting of climate change news in three selected Nigerian newspapers” to investigate the reportage of climate change news in Nigeria. A content analysis of the Guardian, Punch & Nigerian

Tribune was carried out. Findings from the research show that the newspaper coverage of climate change news was widespread covering all areas of climate change. In addition, the findings of the current study corroborate with the study of Batta et al., (2013) in a study titled “press coverage of climate change issues in Nigeria and implications for public

participation opportunities” content analysed selected daily Nigerian newspapers to find out how climate change issues are covered and framed in Nigerian 26 newspapers. Findings from the research show a low representation of climate change in the newspapers.

Table 1: Volume of Coverage of Climate change issues by some Selected Nigerian Newspapers (2020-2022)

S/N	Selected Newspapers	2020			2021			2022		Mean Coverage
		Reviewed Issues	Frequency	Percentage	Reviewed Issues	Frequency	Percentage	Reviewed Issues	Percentage	
1	Daily Trust	295	26	9	336	70	21	62	17	53
2	Leadership	294	58	20	341	63	18	66	19	62
3	The Nation	303	49	16	349	66	19	55	15	57
4	Vanguard	300	20	7	352	41	12	35	10	32

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Volume of Coverage of Food Security by Selected Newspapers

The results in Figure 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 show the volume of coverage of food security issues by the four selected Nigerian newspapers. The individual coverage by the selected newspapers are presented in Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6 respectively. The results revealed that the year with the highest volume of coverage of food security by Daily Trust newspaper was 2021 with 147 issues. The year with the highest volume of coverage

of food security by Leadership newspaper was 2021 with 121 issues and the year with the highest volume of coverage of food security by The Nation newspaper was 2021 with 125 issues. Similarly, the year with the highest volume of coverage of food security by Vanguard newspaper was 2022 with 93 issues. It can be concluded that Daily Trust newspaper had the highest coverage of food security issues among the selected newspapers while Vanguard newspaper had the least coverage of food security issues.

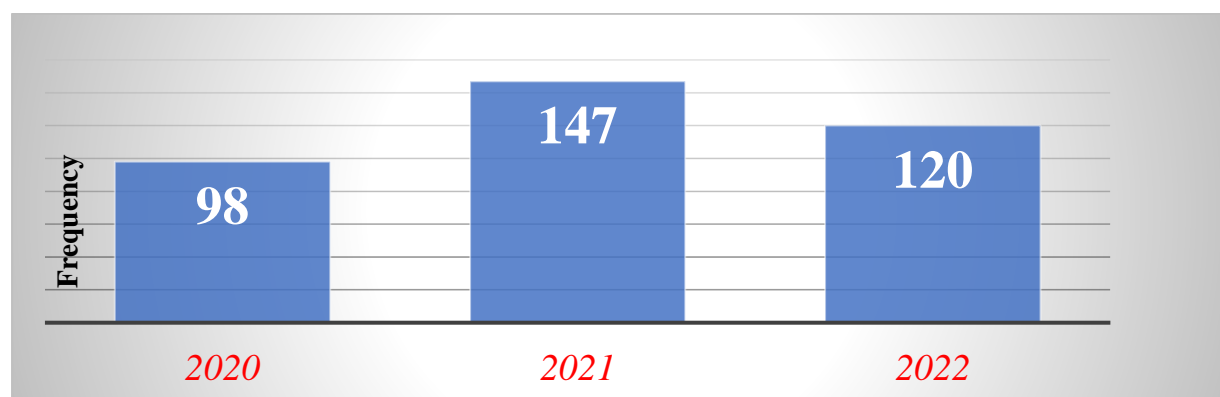


Figure 2: Coverage of food security by Daily Trust (2020-2022)

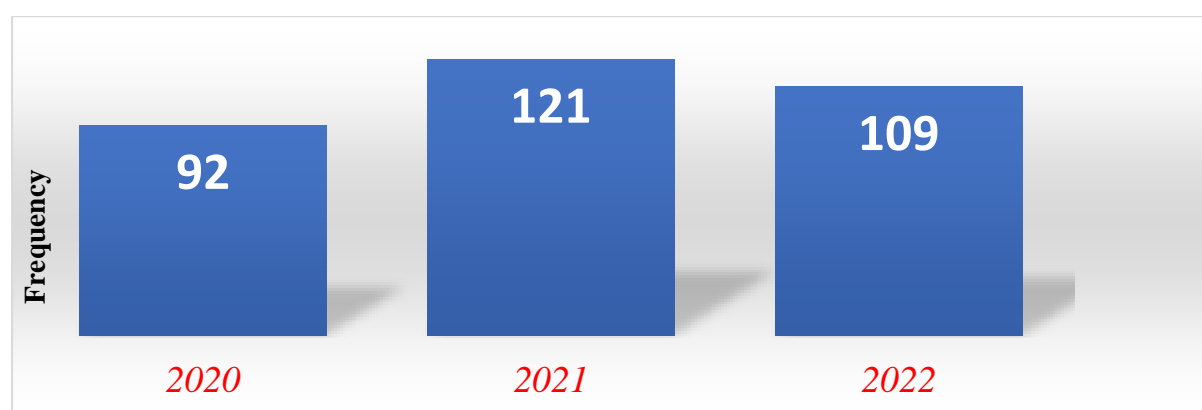


Figure 3: Coverage of food security by Leadership Newspaper (2020-2022)

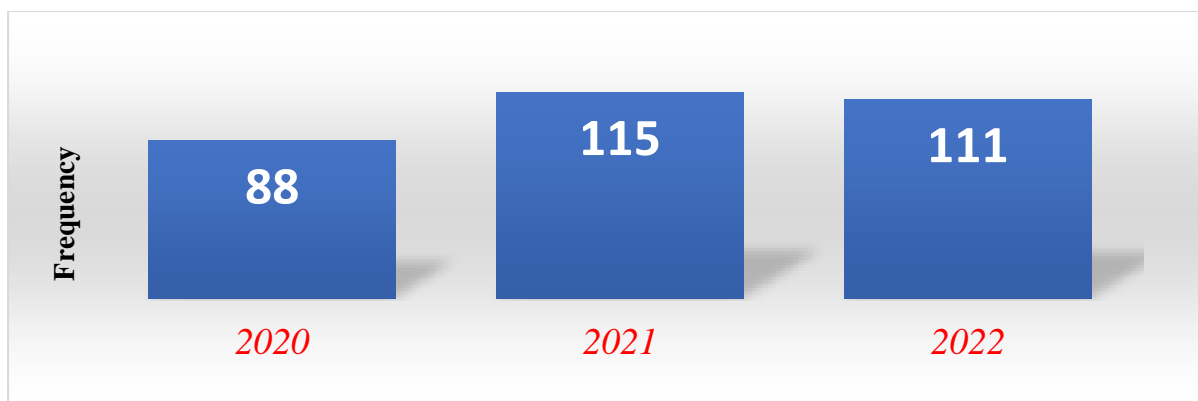


Figure 4: Coverage of food security by The Nation Newspaper (2020-2022)

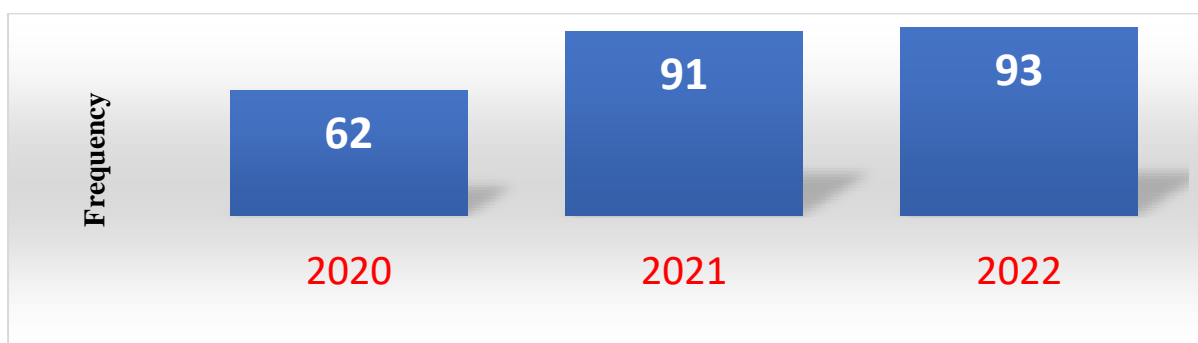


Figure 5: Coverage of food security by Vanguard Newspaper (2020-2022)

Figure 6 show the total coverage of food security issues by each of the newspapers (Daily Trust, Leadership, The Nation and Vanguard) for three years consecutively. In 2020, Daily Trust had the highest coverage of food security issues 33% (98), followed by Leadership 31% (92), then The Nation 29% (88), while the Vanguard had the lowest coverage of food security issues 20% (62). In 2021, the Daily Trust also had the highest coverage of food security issues 43% (147), followed by The Nation 36% (125), then Leadership 35% (121), while Vanguard had the lowest coverage of food security issues 26% (91). Similarly, in 2022, Daily Trust had the highest coverage of food security issues with 34% (120), followed by The Nation with 31% (111) and Leadership with 32% (109), while Vanguard had the lowest coverage of food security issues with 26% (93). Figure 7 gives the total coverage of food security issues by each of the selected newspaper for three years in which Daily Trust recorded the highest frequency of 37% (365) issues, followed by Leadership 33% (322) issues, then The Nation with 31% (314) issues, and Vanguard with the lowest coverage of 24% (246) issues.

Therefore, out of 3,977 newspaper editions, only 1,247 (31%) editions on food security issues were published. This result indicates that for three years consecutively, the volume of coverage of food security by the newspapers was low.

Therefore, the findings of this study conform with the findings of Asogwa and Angela (2023) in a study titled "Evaluation of the extent Nigerian dailies reported food scarcity issues as well as the framing, prominence and challenges journalists faced while covering food security issues". The study adopted two frameworks such as the framing theory and agenda settings. Both the qualitative and quantitative methods were employed in the descriptive content analysis. Vanguard newspaper was used and the period covered was 2022. Results found that Nigerian dailies reported issues on food security. However, the coverage was very low.

Findings from this study disagree with Kutyauro et al., (2021), Akinkugbe and Abiola (2019) in their study found that the media continues to raise awareness effectively, provide information, shape perceptions, and consider food security.

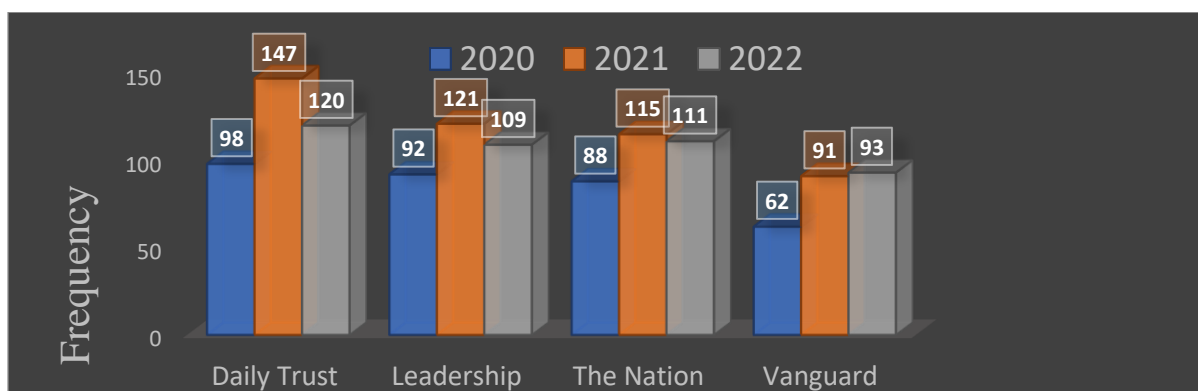


Figure 6: Total coverage of food security issues by all selected Nigerian Newspapers (2020-2022)

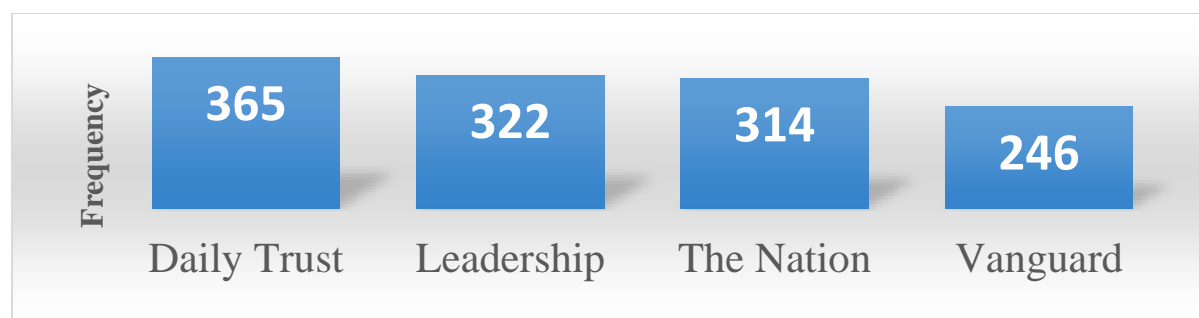


Figure 7: Total coverage of food security by selected newspapers for three years

Differences in the Volume of Coverage of Food Security and Climate Change Issues by Nigerian Newspapers

In order to compare the differences between the total coverage of food security and climate change issues, paired t-test was used and the result is presented below in Table 2. Table 2 revealed computed t-value ($t = 7.30$; $p = 0.000$) which implies a significant difference between the volume of coverage of food security and climate change. The result further shows

that the newspapers under review published more on food security than on climate change. Corroborating this finding is the study of Kutyauro et al., (2021) on Media coverage on food security and climate-smart agriculture: A case study of newspapers in Zimbabwe. Results from 469 food security articles revealed that 22.6% coverage was related to climate change while 77.4% covered food security issues.

Table 2: Paired T- test Analysis of the Volume of Coverage of Food Security and Climate Change Issues in the Selected Nigerian Newspapers

		Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	P-value	Decision
Pair	Volume of food security –	103.92	25.143			
	Volume of climate change			7.30	0.000	Significant
		53.00	16.752			

CONCLUSION

The research findings revealed that coverage of food security and climate change information by selected newspapers in the study area is generally low with 1,247 (31%) articles and 611 articles (15%) respectively. The result of the difference in the volume of coverage of food security issues and volume of coverage of climate change issues further reveals that computed t-value ($t = 7.30$; $p = 0.000$) is less than the level of significance (0.05).

Based on the findings of the study, it could be concluded that: The coverage of food security and climate change information by the selected newspapers in the study area was generally very low. However, there was no difference with regards to the volume of food security and climate change issues in the selected newspapers used for this study.

RECOMMENDATION

Newspaper publishers should deliberately increase the coverage of agricultural news most especially on food security and climate change in a bid to foster sustainable agricultural development.

Reporting of climate change issues needs to be prioritized if the press is to fulfill its role in providing timely information on climate change.

Journalists training and collaboration with national stakeholders would assist in more effective climate change coverage, instead of the great reliance on one-off events to spark recognition of the major environmental problem.

Journalist should report more on the causes and effects of climate change on food security. This will help educate the public more on the reality of climate change which might in-turn guide their actions towards becoming climate friendly.

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