

**NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF DEVELOPMENTAL COMMUNICATION
ISSUES: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TWO NIGERIAN'S DAILY (THE PUNCH
AND THE NATION)**

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this research is to look at how the media handled education, politics, and security issues in the months of April, June, and July 2022. The researcher develops research questions by focusing on the four aspects of the research subject. The study was hinged on social responsibility theory and Agenda-Setting theory, while content analysis was the research design used for the study. From the findings of the study, it was discovered that the newspapers examined gave a considerable level of prominence to the stories reported. Frequency of reportage in relation to the developmental communication issues with political issues taking prominence in the two national daily evaluated. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended that media should always give same coverage to various developmental communication and also give more importance to opinions of the members of the public on issues that concern them by writing such issues as features and editorials so that newspaper can do in-depth analysis on stories and enlighten the citizens.

Keywords: Newspaper, Coverage, Developmental, Communication, Issues.

INTRODUCTION

Even though newspapers have been around since the 1600s, they are still important sources of information today (Weber, 2006 & Tom, 2012). Newspapers are a type of mass communication that can have an impact on political, military, corporate, intellectual, and social organisations, as well as people's health and safety. Newspapers excel in fostering public dialogue and discussion, which are critical for the growth of a society (Copeland, 2003). In order to fulfil their critical social tasks, newspapers and other mass media have traditionally paid close attention to covering a wide range of human activities, including but not limited to politics, education, sports, business and economics, religion, arts and culture, entertainment, and health.

Academics, urban planners, politicians, and journalists in Nigeria and other developing countries have recently begun to investigate the impact of newspapers on progress. Print media has switched its emphasis to the reader since it is now expected to affect what people believe and do (Agbamu, 2006). The extent to which individuals and the general public understand social problems influences how they think about and respond to them. As a result, the media are critical to public education because they provide a forum for knowledge distribution (Fawole, 2000)

The media contributes to societal progress in a variety of ways, including facilitating communication between people from different parts of society to aid in human and material development, promoting local cultural preservation, disseminating information with a development focus, and supporting social projects and other forms of progress (Baki 2015).

According to Mustapha, the mainstream media influences what people know, how they think, and what they do since it makes people aware of what is going on in society (2012). Some people read the news or magazines to learn something new or to stay up to date on world happenings. Some people like to listen to the radio or watch their favourite television shows. The media can play an important role in creating the agenda for development concerns by communicating key information to the public. This allows people to talk and learn about a wide range of topics.

Newspapers, radio, and television continue to be the most widely used forms of "traditional mass media" in developing countries. As a result, they will be useful for disseminating information regarding a number of societal challenges (Nazari& Hassan, 2011). Furthermore, how the media covers specific issues can raise public awareness, leading to increased information and possibly alternative behaviours (Hassan et al., 2009; Kayode&Adeniran, 2012). Newspapers are more reliable than radio and television, the two fastest forms of mass media, because they are printed on permanent paper, include more information, and are more authoritative in general (Aiyesimoju&Awoniyi, 2012).

Despite the importance of newspapers in informing the public, many people are concerned that the media focuses too much on advertising, politics, entertainment, and crime at the expense of development-related topics such as agriculture, education, politics, sports, and so on (Narayana & Kumar, 2009).

Okarie and Oyedepo's (2011) research in Nigeria, for example, indicated that agriculture received minimal coverage in the media. Only 36 (4.8%) of 750 agricultural-related news stories made the front pages. Through their research in Botswana, Oladele and Boago (2011) revealed that official media did not cover agricultural news as fully as commercial periodicals. Agricultural news has never been well covered by the media. People routinely consult newspapers for tips on how to live a healthy lifestyle, avoid health problems, and avoid disease consequences (Ahmed & Bates, 2013; Rachal, Ries, & Caulfield, 2011). Rachal, Ries, and Caulfield (2011) (Gollust& Lantz, 2009). These two studies highlight the importance of newspapers as a source of information that can assist the general public in thinking and acting more healthfully.

Therefore this research looks at how news outlets in Nigeria cover topics like education, politics, and security to see how much attention is paid to them. The two major daily newspapers that were studied were (The nation and punch newspapers).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.

- 1) To determine the Frequency of Newspapers Reportage on developmental communication stories in selected newspapers.
- 2) To find out the nature of stories reported on developmental communication in selected newspapers.
- 3) To know the story placement in the newspapers on developmental communication stories in selected newspapers.
- 4) To know the most covered developmental communication stories in the selected newspaper.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS.

- 1) What is the Frequency of Newspapers Reportage on developmental communication stories in selected newspapers?
- 2) What is the nature of stories reported on developmental communication in selected newspapers?
- 3) What is the story placement in selected newspapers' developmental communication stories?
- 4) What are the most covered developmental communication stories in the selected newspaper?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Numerous studies have been done on how newspapers in the nation and abroad report on important socioeconomic topics. The Nigerian media is renowned for its high level of

persistence in following up on certain themes over time. The Boko Haram insurgency, corruption, elections, women in politics, concerns with rape, child molestation, and human trafficking are just a few of these challenges.

In his research findings on the role of the Nigerian mass media in the escalation of the Boko Haram insurgency, Haruna (2016), while focusing on developmental communication and various issues reported in Nigerian newspapers, came to the conclusion that while the media play a significant role in calming tension, they also do more significant harm to the public by exposing the society to more terror attacks. This is accomplished through their ongoing public reporting of sensitive information and army secrets that ought to be kept a secret. He points out that when the media leaks material intended to be kept private to the public in any manner, militants learn about it and use it to plan attacks. According to him, the media should fulfil their obligation to uphold social responsibility by attempting to communicate information that would ease national tensions.

Ekwueme (2017) claims that the majority of reports on the economic slump during the Buhari Administration were not covered from a human interest perspective. The study suggests that media provide the coverage of the economic slump from a humanist standpoint some positive weight.

In Newspaper Coverage of the Nigeria Restructuring Debate: A Study Of Selected Nigerian Newspapers, Felix (2018) notes that the chosen newspapers paid the restructuring-related issues a lot of attention. They utilized the size of their headline to highlight the restructuring discussion and establish the topics for open forums. They did a good job of covering the reorganization discussion. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher suggests that the media give the public's perspectives on topics that matter to them greater weight and give them a voice before highlighting any problem. His comment on the ways that Nigerian publications have covered HIV/AIDS.

The crucial responsibilities that newspapers play in establishing the contextual agenda to support the multi-sectoral and grassroots approach to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care, and support implemented by the government were validated by Okidu (2013). However, the study comes to the conclusion that there is insufficient media coverage of contextual factors to explain the overwhelming number of new HIV/AIDS cases in Nigeria.

Nnamdi Kanu's re-arrests were covered in newspaper coverage patterns in another study by Felix and Olanihun (2022). According to a review of two national dailies' content, the news stories about Nnamdi Kanu's re-arrest predominate in the publications of the chosen newspapers, with a small amount of prominence in the front-page lead. Another finding demonstrates that the Vanguard gave the coverage of Nnamdi Kanu's re-arrest more space. Therefore, the study advises Nigerian journalists to never rely on straightforward news stories and to always critically interpret and investigate issues in crises. Interpretative characteristics will assist in giving a more thorough report on a subject, such as Nnamdi Kanu's recent re-arrests.

Jimi & Raheemat (2012) found that the Nigerian media did not provide equitable attention to the development topics they studied in their study on the media's coverage of development issues in Nigeria using the MDGs as examples. While other equally urgent developmental challenges in the nation were overlooked, they frequently reported some issues. Additionally, the Nigerian media did nothing to inform, inspire, or educate the populace on the need of addressing the identified developmental difficulties (Ohamobi et al 2024).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Responsibility Theory

The idea of social responsibility came about because of the problems with the libertarian press theory. The Hutchins Commission looked at the libertarian idea and made suggestions that had an effect on how the social responsibility idea grew. When the committee was set up in 1947, Robert Hutchins was named its head. Okim and Ngozi (2017) say that Ravi (2012) thinks that the social responsibility thesis is an extension of libertarianism because the media recognises its role in resolving conflicts by encouraging public opinion, consumer action, private rights, and substantial societal interests. As a public service, it is the media's job to think about what the public needs when they decide how to report the news. You could say that this is utilitarian.

Okim and Ngozi (2017) added to McQuail's main ideas and pillars of his social responsibility theory. He thinks that the media has a social duty to report in a way that is honest, fair, balanced, and true. He then said that journalists and other professionals owe an explanation to their audiences, employers, and the market. It is also the job of the media to show and value the diversity of our society by letting people give different opinions and answers. So, the media has a civic and ethical responsibility to teach the public about the growing problems with communication and how they might affect other areas like politics, education, and national security. The goal of the media is to teach the public about a wide range of topics, bring attention to the problems people face in their personal growth, and offer solutions to these problems. In this debate, key ideas and assumptions of the social responsibility theory will be looked at and criticised.

The investigation is based on the idea that the media set the agenda for the whole country. The idea focuses on how the media can affect how the general public sees important events. "Audience members judge the importance of an issue or topic based on how much media attention it gets," says a quote from Mc Combs and Shaw (1972) that Ovoh used (2008, p. 222). Nwabueze (2006), page 176, says that "The agenda-setting hypothesis says that if a topic is covered and talked about a lot in the media, people will pay more attention to it. So, the media set the topics that people talk about." The media agenda is always the most important thing, according to the agenda-setting principle. Griffin (2000) says, "The media act as a bridge between the outside world and the image we have of it in our heads." Nwabueze makes a similar point (2008, p. 84). The agenda-setting hypothesis says that it is the job of the media to tell the public how important different issues are. This shows how important it is to figure out how important developmental communication challenges are in a variety of settings, such as academics, government, and national defence, among others. The scope of this study is a key area of research. So, the media, especially print

media, should make sure that development issues are talked about regularly and in enough depth.

METHODOLOGY

A research technique or design is a foreknowledge of what data the researcher needs to acquire, according to Felix (2018), quoting Akindele et al. (2008: 56). They say that research methodology governs data gathering and analysis in every study. "Research design" is a plan or set of criteria for collecting data to validate hypotheses and answer questions. This inquiry used content analysis.

The research focuses on the stories of developmental communication covered by Nigeria's daily newspapers, The Nation and The Punch, including but not limited to articles about education, politics, and security. A study method known as content analysis allows for the objective, methodical description of the communication's evident content. Felix (2018) quotes Gbolagunte & Popoola (2005: 21) who define content analysis as a method for a rigorous, quantitative, and objective description of media texts that is beneficial for classifying output, looking for effects, and comparing media through time or between content and reality.

Content analysis is a method for methodically, objectively, and quantitatively analysing communication to assess factors. This study approach analyses media coverage of developmental issues like education, politics, and security in April, May, and June 2022. These months were part of the second quarter of 2022, when developmental communication issues are severe.

The population for this research consists of all 91 daily issues—91 editions total—of the two chosen newspapers, The Punch and The Nation, which were published from April to June 2022. The sample comprises of every issue of the chosen newspapers that ran a story on developmental communication problems between April 1 and June 30 of 2022. The researcher used the Taro Yamane formula to determine the sample size thus:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{where: } n &= \text{the sample size} \\ N &= \text{the population size} \\ e &= \text{the accepted sampling error} \\ \text{the needed sample size at a 95\% confidence level with } (0.10)^2 & \\ N &= \text{Population size } 181 \\ n &= 47.6 \text{ approximately } 48. \\ \text{Therefore, the sample size is } 48. \end{aligned}$$

Purposeful sampling was used. Tejumaiye (2003), referenced in Felix (2018), says the purposive sample is chosen based on particular attributes or features. Data collection tools are the coding sheet and instructions. The selected newspapers were chosen for their coverage of national and international issues, availability, and editorial quality. Cross-tabulating percentages and frequency tables was utilised to analyse the topic. To identify and analyse newspaper articles on developmental communication, the following content categories were created:

- Newspaper Identity: (i) The Punch (ii) The Nation.

- Frequency of Newspaper coverages : (i) The Punch (ii) The Nation
- Type/Nature of Story: (i) Editorials (ii) Feature (iii) News (iv) Opinions (v) Pictures
- Placement of Stories: (i) Front page (ii) Inside page (iii) Back page
- Category of Stories: (i) Education (ii) Politics (iii) Security
- Period: (i) April (ii) May (iii) June
- Shape allocated to each stories (i) Editorials (ii) Feature (iii) News (iv) Opinions (v) Pictures

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This study examined how two particular newspapers covered topics on developmental communication. Further research was done to determine the pattern of reporting on developmental communication issues in newspapers, explain the nature of and the journalistic genre item used within the stories, as well as the prominence given to the stories reported and the depth of the report. Developmental communication issues covered in the study included but was not limited to education, politics, and security. Only 48 of the 91 newspapers in the sample were examined using the Taro Yamane formula. The 48 stories make up the aspect that is being analysed. The two publications received the same amount of representation. The analysis of the provided data is shown in the tables below.

Table 1: Frequency of the newspaper coverage of developmental communication issues

NEWSPAPER	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
THE PUNCH	186	52%
THE NATION	172	48%
TOTAL	358	100%

SOURCE: CONTENT ANALYSIS, 2022.

The table above shows the frequency of stories on coverage of developmental communication issues in the Punch and the Nation newspaper within April and June 2022. There were a total of 358 stories of developmental communication. The Punch newspaper had the highest frequency of such stories at 52%, while the Nation had 48%. By implication, the selected papers covered developmental communication.

TABLE 2: NATURE OF STORIES REPORTED ON DEVELOPMENTAL COMMUNICATION ISSUES

THE PUNCH			THE NATION		
TYPE OF STORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	TYPE OF STORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
EDITORIAL	4	2.2%	EDITORIAL	2	1.2%

FEATURES	6	3.2%	FEATURES	4	2.3%
NEWS	146	78.5%	NEWS	129	75%
OPINION	8	4.3%	OPINION	3	1.7%
PICTURES	22	11.8%	PICTURES	34	19.8%
TOTAL	186	100%	TOTAL	172	100%

SOURCE: CONTENT ANALYSIS, 2022.

From the table above, The Punch newspaper has the highest reportage of developmental communication stories presented in the news format with the same thing on the Nation newspaper. The Punch newspaper, through its news stories on the topic, had a frequency of 146 (78.5%). The pictures placement came next with a frequency of 22 (11.8%), the opinion had a frequency of 8 (4.3%), the features articles had a frequency of 6 (3.2%), while editorials appeared within the same newspaper appeared 4 (2.2%). The Nation newspaper had its news story format also with the highest frequency of 129 (75%), followed by the pictures that had 34 (19.8%), the features had the frequency of 4 (2.3%), and opinion articles had 3 (1.7%) while the editorials had a frequency of 2 (1.2%).

Table 3: STORY PLACEMENT IN THE NEWSPAPER ON DEVELOPMENTAL COMMUNICATION ISSUES

THE PUNCH			THE NATION		
PLACEMENT	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	PLACEMENT	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
FRONT PAGES	42	22.6%	FRONT PAGES	36	29.2%
INSIDE PAGES	139	73.7%	INSIDE PAGES	128	74.4%
BACK PAGES	5	2.7%	BACK PAGES	8	4.7%
TOTAL	186	100%	TOTAL	172	100%

SOURCE: CONTENT ANALYSIS, 2022.

From the table given above, The Punch newspaper had the bulk of its stories on the inside page with a frequency of 139 (73.7%), the front-page stories accounted for a frequency of 42 (22.6%), while the back pages had a frequency of 5 (2.7%). On the other hand, The Nation had the bulk of its stories on the inside pages with a frequency of 128 (74.4%), the front page stories accounted for a frequency of 36 (29.2%), while the back page had 8 stories (4.7%). It is worthy to note that both newspapers have the inside page's highest number of stories in all the editions analysed.

TABLE 4: FREQUENCY OF CATERORY OF DEVELOPMENTAL COMMUNICATION ISSUES

THE PUNCH	THE NATION

DEVELOPMENTAL COMMUNICATION STORIES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	DEVELOPMENTAL COMMUNICATION STORIES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
EDUCATION	28	15.1 %	EDUCATION	21	12.2 %
POLITICAL	112	60.2 %	POLITICS	108	62.8 %
SECURITY	46	24.7 %	SECURITY	43	25 %
TOTAL	186	100%	TOTAL	172	100%

SOURCE: CONTENT ANALYSIS, 2022.

From the above analysis, the Punch political, developmental communication issues had the highest frequency stories of 112 (60.2%), security is the next with the frequency of 46 (24.7%), followed is education with the frequency of 28 (15.1%). On the other hand, the Nation had the bulk of its stories on the political with a frequency of 108 (62.8%), security is the next with the frequency of 43 (25%), followed is education with the frequency of 21 (12.2%). It is worthy to note that the two national dailies analysed have political developmental communication issues as the highest issues covered the most.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The research question examined whether or not the selected newspapers (the Punch and the Nation) adequately reported the stories of developmental communication issues within the chosen period. From the analysis, the study found that the selected newspapers adequately covered the developmental communication issues. In the three months (April, May, and June) that were examined, 358 stories on the topic were reported across education, politics and security. Therefore, the media outlets under focus considerably perform the agenda-setting role (McCombs and Shaw in 1972) and social responsibility. This observation agrees with (Folarin, 2005 cited by Felix, 2018; Chineny et al., 2015), who avers that mass media determines what we think and worry about and project them daily.

The research question on the nature of stories reported on developmental communication issues indicated that news is the most covered aspect of disseminating information on developmental issues to a heterogeneous nationwide audience. New stories are directed toward informing the audience in a summarised and fact-alone manner (Gbolagunte and Popoola, 2005, cited by Felix, 2018). Features combine the dual purpose of informing and entertaining, while editorials, on the other hand, are specifically directed towards educating the readership through analysis of societal and national importance issues. Interpretative articles, which include opinions, columns and other reports incorporating in-depth analyses, are directed toward interpreting events and issues (Felix, 2018). The goal is to let the reader put events in perspective and take positions on important issues. However, the percentage of editorials deliberated on the restructuring of developmental communication was deficient. As observed earlier, the editorial does critical analyses, directs and enlightens the public along a path of consciousness and conscientiousness; however, such advantage was not explored by the newspapers examined. Newspaper houses should have used the editorials more to educate the public on this issue of importance.

The Story placement or positioning is one of the methods through which the print media perform the agenda-setting function; hence, the location of a story goes a long way in

determining the measures of importance attached to it by the publisher and, inadvertently, by the audience as well. The majority of the stories were inside the pages of the newspapers examined. About 73.7% of the stories were inside page stories of the Punch, and the Nation have 74.4% inside the pages too on developmental communication issues. FrontPage, centre spread and back page of newspapers are meant to attract attention and command prominence; therefore, the newspapers examined adequately used the parameters mentioned to cover the issue and brought it to prominence except for the little shortfall recorded for the back spread. Therefore, prominence was given to the issue of developmental communication. This is contrary to other scholars' findings that Nigerian newspapers do not give the prominence of the front page, centre spread and back page to germane issues (Farayibi, 2017; Ekwueme, 2017; Anyanwu, 2015; Haruna, 2016, all cited in Felix, 2018).

The research question on the frequency of categories of stories reported on developmental communication issues indicated that the Punch newspaper covered mostly political developmental communication issues with 60.2%, security the next with 24.7%, followed is education with 15.1%, while on the other hand, the Nation had the bulk of its stories on the political with 62.8%, security is the next with 25%, follow is education with 12.2%. It is worthy to note that the two national dailies analysed have political and developmental communication issues as the highest issues covered the most. It was not in line with Ravi (2012) cited by Okim&Ngozi (2017), that believe that the media recognizes that it is its responsibility to resolve conflict through discussing and promoting public opinion, consumer action, private rights, and critical social interests as the general coverage here mainly was focused on political, developmental communication issues.

CONCLUSION

This research study titled newspaper coverage of developmental communication issues such as education, politics and security in Nigeria to determine the level of attention given to such stories in two national daily, which are (The nation and the punch newspapers). The present study found that stories covered by the two dailies were majorly news reports on developmental communication issues. The inside pages of the newspapers carried more on the developmental communication issues. Thus, the study deduced that the selected dailies give prominence through the inside page and the front page lead on the developmental communication issues. The two chosen newspapers mostly covered political developmental communication, followed by security more than educational issues. The study concludes that Punch gave more space in the report on developmental communication than in The Nation newspaper.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this study finding, the following suggestions were made:

- ✓ Journalists in Nigeria should do more than just report the news. They should also look into problems with communication and development. Interpretive characteristics give a full picture of topics like politics, education, and safety.

- ✓ Before bringing up a topic, the media should pay more attention to what the public has to say about developmental communication issues.
- ✓ Education, safety, and political problems should be given a lot of attention on the front pages of newspapers.
- ✓ There should be more feature stories in the media about children who have trouble with speech and language. As opposed to basic news reporting, a feature piece is more interesting because it includes the opinions of knowledgeable people.
- ✓ The media should report on all of the things that make it hard to communicate in the same way, without favouring any of them.
- ✓ Journalists should use editorials to explain to the public how communication problems are getting worse and change public opinion, since they know more than the general public. Journalists should also spend more time and money on stories that are important to the success of their country.
- ✓ The population, health, agriculture, and economy will be studied more, and newspapers that were not available during the first research period will be added to the study to give it more credibility and depth. This study can help students in fields like political science and mass media, which are related.

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