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Evaluating the Participation of Nigerian Newspapers in Flood Disaster Risk Reduction

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Abstract

This study assessed the role played by the Nigerian media in flood risk reduction. It evaluates the content of two major newspapers in reportage of 2012 flood disaster. In 2012, worst flood disaster in the history of Nigeria occurred wreaking havoc in 30 out of its 36 states. Aftermath of the hazard, stakeholders traded blames and resolved to work together to reduce flood risk. Media is one of the key stakeholders in the society. It informs, educate and mobilize people for common goal, hence the need to examine role it played in 2012 flood disaster. The research method employed in this study is quantitative content analysis of two widely circulated Nigerian newspapers – *The Punch* and *The Trust*. The manifest contents of the newspapers were critically analysed from Januar1, 2012 – December 31, 2012. The result of the analysis showed that the media did little to create awareness of impending flood and educate people of activities than could make the society disaster –prone. Also, it was observed that the media was highly active during and after the flood occurrences, reporting human misery, economic woes and blaming disaster management organisations and government. The study, therefore, among others, recommends that the media needs to engage more in proactive reporting, development journalism and collaborate with other stakeholders to reduce disaster risks.

Keywords: Disaster Risk Reduction; Flood; Media; Participation; Reportage.

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1. Introduction

In the recent time, occurrences of flood in many countries are one of the events that have become a source of worry to the world. Its scale, frequency and destruction are annually becoming alarming and threatening developmental strides recorded by nations. For example, a 2015 report by the World Resource Institute (WRI) predicts that the people that would be affected by flood globally would be over 54 million by 2030 from 21 million being affected annually in 2015 [28]. This explains the increasing attention being paid to flood disaster reduction at local, national and international levels. On regular basis, media reports the incidents.

In Nigeria, flood is a perennial disaster. For example in 2012, 30 out of 36 states in Nigeria were affected by flood. It claimed 363 lives, displaced over two million people while property worth billions of naira were destroyed [19]. This destruction has become an annual ritual and a source of great concern to all stakeholders. Some factors such as changes in socio – economic activities as well a physical factors such as climatic change, depletion of ozone layers among other are responsible. These factors aggravate this mainly man- made disaster in the country with about 180 million populations [30]. Attendant to the increasing incidents of flood is its human and economic tragedies. Flood has been identified as one of the main disasters that set the developmental strides of nation back rapidly and account for several loss of lives and property [5, 29].

As a social and developmental problem, there is an urgent need for stakeholders to work together and find lasting solution to flooding. One of the key stakeholders in the society is the media [6,1]. By virtue of its professional callings, media educates, informs, persuades, mobilizes, interprets and entertains the public about events. Its participation in disaster management is crucial [11, 24]. Lately, the focus on disaster management has shifted from response to disaster risk reduction. This entails disaster prevention, reduction and preparedness [23, 27]. Media is expected to be actively involved in this new paradigm shift to save lives and property. The need for media and other stakeholders to collaborate in reducing disaster risk is imperative in Nigeria as the country is recognized as one of the highly vulnerable nations to flood disaster [3,18].

In this study, participation means involvement of mass media through reportage by disseminating early warning information and educating people of activities that should be avoided to reduce or prevent flood risks. The study examines the extent of reportage and stage of the reportage of flood disaster by two widely circulated, national newspapers in Nigeria.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Media and Disaster Risk Reduction

Expectedly, the Nigerian media has been focusing attention on flood through its series of reportage. Also, as a watchdog of the society and moulder of public opinion, media has great role to play in creating awareness and educate populace before the occurrences of flood disaster. Media has been identified as an important prevention factor as its contents create disaster risk reduction (DRR) and awareness [15, 22]. According to [14] contributions made by the media in disaster management can save lives and reduce economic losses to a greater extent. With other stakeholders, such as disaster management organisations (government and non-government

organisations), experts, communities, activists, other citizens among others, the media is expected to play more active role in disaster risk reduction campaign.

2.2 Framing Theory

This study has framing theory as its theoretical foundation. To understand the participation of Nigerian newspapers in disaster risk reduction and management, there is a need to understand how newspapers report flood disaster stories and the framing of such reportage. Framing Theory is closely related to one of the earliest theories of mass communication – agenda setting theory. In fact, framing theory is referred to as a second level of agenda setting theory [25, 10]. Framing broadens the scope of agenda setting theory by focusing on the importance of particular issues and how the media present the issue to its audience (readers, listeners and viewers). The two theories emphasize how media draws public's attention to specific issues of importance. Both involve similar psychological processes but different cognitive processes [26]. The distinction between the two theories, however, is that while agenda-setting only tell the audience what to think about, framing tells them how to think about that issue.

Media focuses on some issues of public importance like flood disaster as a way of informing and educating audience about the event and its consequences. Often the media reportage result into action taken in support or against the issues being projected [4,13,9]. Framing is more interested in presenting the media contents especially news in a particular way to influence the thinking of the audience (readers, viewers and listeners). In reporting disaster, by frame the report in disaster risk reduction through awareness of disaster risk creation, educating readers of ways to build resilience and get prepared for flood disaster, the media is actively involved in saving the society of impending destruction of lives and property.

Meanwhile, it is important to note that framing is an essential part of human communication and behavior. Man brings his own frames or intention to bear on communication process. People interpret happenings around them through their primary frameworks. The media through it presentation and other agents of socialization assist in building and setting up this frame [10, 13]. However, for journalists, framing is more of professional, practice oriented and has its own self-regulatory arrangements that accord with its responsibility to the public. In reporting disaster, media may frame its report in pro- active, warning and education frame or reactive frame whereby it covers the disaster occurrence while it is happening and its occurrence.

Through its contents such as news, photographs, features, editorial, interviews, opinions, letter to editors, advertisement and columns, media uses its power to shape public opinion and mobilize people for common good. Through careful frame building and frame setting, journalists influence public agendas and policies through careful reportage of events and issues, with the media stimulating policymakers and other stakeholders to take action [7].

Flood disaster is endemic in Nigeria and this study is examining how Nigerian newspapers have been framing the disaster as part of its collaboration with other stakeholders to save the nation. Fundamentally, the study focuses attention on reportage of flood disaster in Nigeria. By critical examination of its contents, the frequency

of reportage, prominence, space allocation, formats, initiators of disaster story etc. for a period of one year (January 1 – December 31, 2012), and the study revealed this involvement.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

The research design employed in this study was quantitative content analysis. It examined the reportage of flood disaster risk reduction in two selected newspapers in Nigeria. This is in line with [16] and [17] assertions that content analysis is most appropriate when researcher's aim is to examine manifest communication contents in a systematic, objective and statistical way for the purpose of measuring variables. It affords the researcher the opportunity of collecting data about media content such as topic of the issues, frequency of mentioning, and themes of the messages among others. The two newspapers used were The Punch and Trust newspapers. Both are widely circulated national newspapers. However, The Punch caters more for the interest of people in the southern part of Nigeria, while The Trust caters for the interest of the northerners. The main offices of the newspapers are located at Lagos (south) and Abuja (north) respectively. The newspapers (hard copies) editions were analysed from January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2012. The period of study was specifically selected as the worst flood in the recent history of Nigeria occurred in 2012. Many lives were lost, property destroyed and millions of people affected in 30 out of the 36 states in Nigeria. Consequently, 2012 was named "the year of recurring disasters" [12]. Furthermore, in 2012, Nigeria experienced its worst floods, plane crashes, series of bomb explosion, road and water accidents, fire outbreaks, building collapses among others [2,19,20,21]. The researcher and two Research Assistants examined all 730 editions of the newspapers at the libraries of the newspapers located at Lagos (The Punch) and Abuja (Daily Trust) Head offices of the media houses. All materials published on flood disaster in 2012 were analysed critically under the following categories: disaster stage at the time of reportage; frequency of reportage; placement of the story, formats of the story and space allotted to flood disaster stories.

3.2 Method of Analysis

Data gathered were coded into coding sheets. The researchers and two Research Assistants critically cross checked others work to ensure reliability and enhance validity.

The results of the data were statistically presented in tables for easy understanding. According to [8], presentation in table and graph forms assist in proper, concise, visual presentation of data.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Frequency of Reportage of Flood Disaster in Nigerian Newspapers

To ascertain the participation of the newspapers in flood disaster risk reduction, five categories of analysis were used. The categories of analysis employed are; frequency of the stories, placement of the stories, space allotted to the stories, format of the coverage, writer of the stories and disaster stage at the time of reportage.

Frequency of Reportage

Table 4.1: Frequency of flood disaster stories published by the newspapers in 2012

Months (2012)	Newspapers		
	Punch	Trust	Total
January	04	02	06
February	03	01	04
March	06	10	16
April	12	03	15
May	05	07	12
June	16	06	22
July	28	20	48
August	27	53	80
September	51	84	135
October	63	23	86
November	27	08	35
December	13	13	26
Total	255	230	485
%	53%	47%	

As shown in Table 4.1, Punch published flood and flood related materials 255 times. Trust published the materials in 230 times. Accordingly, out of 485 times the flood issues were covered, Punch has 53% while Trust has 47%.

4.2 Placement of the stories

Table 4.2: Placement of the flood stories in 2012

No.	Month	Newspaper	Front page	Page 2-5	Centre spread	Back page	Others	Total
1.	January	Punch	1	1	0	2	0	4
		Trust	0	0	0	0	2	2
2.	February	Punch	0	0	0	3	0	3
		Trust	0	0	0	0	1	1
3.	March	Punch	0	2	0	0	4	6
		Trust	0	0	0	0	10	10
4.	April	Punch	2	1	0	0	9	12
		Trust	0	0	0	0	3	3
5.	May	Punch	1	2	0	0	2	5
		Trust	0	0	0	0	7	7
6.	June	Punch	2	4	0	1	9	16
		Trust	0	1	0	0	5	6
7.	July	Punch	4	3	0	2	19	27
		Trust	5	3	1	2	9	20
8.	August	Punch	2	3	0	0	22	27
		Trust	1	6	0	0	46	53
9.	September	Punch	3	8	0	1	39	51
		Trust	6	7	0	0	71	83
10.	October	Punch	6	7	0	2	48	63
		Trust	2	3	0	1	17	23
11.	November	Punch	0	1	0	1	25	27
		Trust	0	0	0	0	8	8
12.	December	Punch	0	0	0	1	12	13
		Trust	0	1	0	0	12	13
<i>Total</i>			35	53	01	16	380	485
<i>%</i>			7.22	10.93	0.20	3.30	78.35	100

From Table 4.2, it is clear that most (386 = 79.60%) of the reportage of flood disaster in 2012 by the two newspapers were placed on less prominent (others) pages.

The more prominent pages altogether has 99 (20.40%) placement. Further breakdown shows that; Front page has 33 (6.80%), Page 2 – 5 has 50(10.30%), and Back Page with 15 (3.10%) placement. Centre Spread has only one (0.20%) placement.

4.3 Space allotted to flood disaster stories

Table 4.3: Spaces allotted to flood disaster stories in 2012

	Month (2012)	Newspaper	1-9 column	10 + column but less than ½ a page	Half a page	More than ½ but less than a page	One page	More than one page	Total
<i>1.</i>	Jan.	Punch	1	1	1	0	1	0	4
		Trust	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
<i>2.</i>	Feb.	Punch	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
		Trust	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
<i>3.</i>	Mar.	Punch	3	3	0	0	0	0	6
		Trust	8	2	0	0	0	0	10
<i>4.</i>	Apr.	Punch	4	5	2	0	1	0	12
		Trust	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
<i>5.</i>	May	Punch	1	2	0	2	0	0	5
		Trust	4	2	1	0	0	0	7
<i>6.</i>	Jun.	Punch	4	4	4	2	0	2	16
		Trust	3	1	0	0	1	1	6
<i>7.</i>	Jul.	Punch	6	16	3	0	3	0	28
		Trust	7	10	1	0	1	1	20
<i>8.</i>	Aug.	Punch	11	5	6	0	4	1	27
		Trust	20	16	8	0	4	5	53
<i>9.</i>	Sept.	Punch	9	35	5	0	2	0	51
		Trust	18	51	5	0	9	1	84
<i>10.</i>	Oct.	Punch	11	35	8	0	8	1	63
		Trust	18	3	0	0	1	1	23
<i>11.</i>	Nov.	Punch	9	13	2	0	2	1	27
		Trust	8	0	0	0	0	0	8
<i>12.</i>	Dec.	Punch	7	6	0	0	0	0	13
		Trust	4	2	0	0	6	1	13
<i>Total</i>			<i>165</i>	<i>212</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>04</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>485</i>
			<i>34.02</i>	<i>43.71</i>	<i>9.48</i>	<i>0.82</i>	<i>8.87</i>	<i>3.10</i>	

According to the findings as shown by Table 4.3, 165 (34.02%) stories and 212 (43.71%) stories occupy less than half a page out of 485 flood disaster stories reported in 2012 by the two newspapers. However, 46 (9.48%) and 4 (0.82%) stories occupy half a page and more than half but less than a page space respectively. Furthermore, 43 and 15 stories representing 8.87% and 3.10 % respectively are stories that occupy one page and more than one page.

4.4 Formats of the stories on flood disaster

Table 4.4: Formats of the stories on flood disaster by newspapers in 2012

No.	Month	Newspaper	News	Features interviews	/	Editorial	LTE Opinion	/	Advert	Total
1.	January	Punch	2	1		0	1		0	4
		Trust	2	0		0	0		0	2
2.	February	Punch	1	2		0	0		0	3
		Trust	1	0		0	0		0	1
3.	March	Punch	3	0		1	2		0	6
		Trust	9	1		0	0		0	10
4.	April	Punch	10	1		1	0		0	12
		Trust	3	0		0	0		0	3
5.	May	Punch	4	1		0	0		0	5
		Trust	7	0		0	0		0	7
6.	June	Punch	11	1		1	3		0	16
		Trust	4	2		0	0		0	6
7.	July	Punch	21	4		1	2		0	28
		Trust	11	4		1	4		0	20
8.	August	Punch	23	3		0	1		0	27
		Trust	43	9		1	0		0	53
9.	September	Punch	43	5		1	2		0	51
		Trust	75	9		0	0		0	84
10.	October	Punch	53	9		1	0		0	63
		Trust	22	1		0	0		0	23
11.	November	Punch	24	3		0	0		0	27
		Trust	8	0		0	0		0	8
12.	December	Punch	12	1		0	0		0	13
		Trust	6	7		0	0		0	13
<i>Total</i>			398	64		08	15		0	485
<i>%</i>			82.10	13.20		1.70	3.10		0	

The data collected on the formats of report used in flood disaster in 2012 as presented in Table 5. 4 shows, the bulk of the report is presented in news format. News has 398 items representing 82.10% of the total reports of flood disaster in 2012 in the two newspapers. This is followed by features and interview which has 64 (13.20%) items and Letter to editor / opinion that poll 15 (3.10%) items. The two newspapers wrote Editorial on flood disaster in 2012 only in 8 times representing 1.70% of 485 reports. No advert on flood disaster was published in 2012.

4.5 Writers of the flood stories

Table 4.5: Writers of the flood stories

No.	Month	Newspaper	Journalists	Disaster managers/experts	Citizens	Total
1.	January	Punch	3	0	1	4
		Trust	2	0	0	2
2.	February	Punch	3	0	0	3
		Trust	1	0	0	1
3.	March	Punch	4	0	2	6
		Trust	10	0	0	10
4.	April	Punch	11	1	0	12
		Trust	3	0	0	3
5.	May	Punch	4	0	0	5
		Trust	7	0	0	7
6.	June	Punch	10	4	2	16
		Trust	6	0	0	6
7.	July	Punch	26	0	2	28
		Trust	18	0	2	20
8.	August	Punch	23	3	1	27
		Trust	53	0	0	53
9.	September	Punch	47	2	2	51
		Trust	82	0	2	84
10.	October	Punch	55	5	3	63
		Trust	21	0	2	23
11.	November	Punch	26	1	0	27
		Trust	7	1	0	8
12.	December	Punch	11	2	0	13
		Trust	13	0	0	13
<i>Total</i>			447	19	19	485
		%	92.16	3.92	3.92	

In this study, writers of flood disaster stories are categorized into three. The writers are journalists, disaster managers / experts and citizens. These are three broad categories of stakeholders in disaster management. According to the findings as presented in Table 4.5, the bulk of the reports on flood disaster in 2012 were written by journalists. 447 stories representing 92.16% were written by journalists. Only 19 stories representing 3.92% each were contributed by disaster managers/ experts and citizens. This shows that disaster managers, experts in disaster management and citizens are not making good use of newspapers in disaster management.

4.6 Stages of Reportage of flood disaster by Nigerian newspapers

Basically there are three periods of reportage of events by media. The stages are; before event, during event and

after event has occurred. Same obtained in flood disaster – before / pre, during and after/post disaster. However, it is instructive to note that the participation of Nigerian media in disaster risk reduction, which is the focus of this study, happens mainly at pre disasters stage. Table 4.6 present findings on the stage of media reportage of flood.

Table 4.6: Stages of Reportage of Flood Disaster in 2012

No.	Month	Newspaper	Pre flooding	During flooding	After flooding	Total
1.	January	Punch	4	0	0	4
		Trust	2	0	0	2
2.	February	Punch	3	0	0	3
		Trust	1	0	0	1
3.	March	Punch	6	0	0	6
		Trust	4	1	5	10
4.	April	Punch	8	3	1	12
		Trust	1	0	2	3
5.	May	Punch	1	2	2	5
		Trust	3	3	1	7
6.	June	Punch	4	7	5	16
		Trust	2	3	1	6
7.	July	Punch	9	12	7	28
		Trust	5	9	6	20
8.	August	Punch	9	12	6	27
		Trust	6	29	18	53
9.	September	Punch	7	31	13	51
		Trust	3	35	46	84
10.	October	Punch	1	22	40	63
		Trust	0	6	17	23
11.	November	Punch	6	1	20	27
		Trust	1	0	7	8
12.	December	Punch	3	0	10	13
		Trust	1	0	12	13
<i>Total</i>			90	176	219	485
<i>Total</i>			%	18.56	36.29	45.15

From the data, it is clear that Nigerian newspapers least reported flood disaster stories before its occurrences. Out of 485 stories on flood reported in 2012, only 90 representing 18.56% were reported before disaster occurrence. The stories were mostly reported after flood disaster has occurred. Statistically, 219 (45.15%) stories were written after flood disaster had occurred while 176 (36.29%) of the stories reported during stage of the disaster.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings from this study provided empirical evidence of Nigerian newspapers participation in flood disaster risk reduction. It shows that though Nigerian media is involved in disaster management, it performs least at disaster risk reduction which is the pre disaster stage. It is more active during and after flood disaster occurrences. Thus, the study reveals the present state of media involvement in disaster risk reduction. It calls stakeholders attention to the need to collaborate and communicate more before the occurrences of flood disaster [3].

Also, the study shows that disaster managers, experts and citizens are not making best use of media platform to disseminate information on flood disaster. The bulk of materials published on flood disaster in 2012 emanated mainly from journalist. Thus, there is urgent need for other stakeholders to use mass media platform more to educate and create disaster reduction awareness.

6. Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study is that it examines the content of the newspapers to measure the media participation. Further research could use interview method to find out the relationship between disaster managers and the media. Knowing the state of the relationship of these key stakeholders would explain the present state of collaboration and how to improve on it. The basic assumption is that if organization has good relationship with the media and cultivate media at all stages of its activities, the media collaboration will be enhanced. Apart from interview, further studies could also use other methods such as survey and focused group to proffer solution to the challenges of coordination, collaboration and communication (3Cs) among stakeholders. The 3Cs are very important to the success of disaster risk reduction.

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