

The Role of Broadcast Media in Assessing Government Agricultural Development Strategies in Nigeria's Post-Subsidy Era

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Abstract

This study evaluated the effective communication as a key to agribusiness management and sustainable development in Nigeria. The development media theory was adopted as a theoretical framework. This study adopted a qualitative research method to explore how broadcast media assess and communicate government agricultural development strategies in Nigeria's post-subsidy era. The population consists of three key stakeholder groups: 36 farmers, 40 media personnel, and 47 policymakers across selected states with significant agricultural activities. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 30 participants, comprising 15 farmers, 10 media professionals (broadcast journalists, editors, and producers), and 5 policymakers from relevant government agencies and agricultural institutions. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews and data analysis followed a thematic approach, where responses were transcribed, coded, and categorised into emerging themes that reflect patterns in media coverage, policy evaluation and stakeholder engagement. The findings revealed that broadcast media play a crucial role in disseminating agricultural policies in Nigeria, particularly through radio and television; however, their effectiveness is hindered by overreliance on government press releases, limited investigative journalism and inadequate farmer engagement. The study concluded that while Nigerian broadcast media serve as vital channels for disseminating agricultural policies, their overreliance on government narratives and limited investigative reporting weaken their effectiveness in providing comprehensive and balanced information to farmers and stakeholders. The study recommended that broadcast media should enhance

investigative journalism and reduce overreliance on government narratives to ensure balanced and comprehensive coverage of agricultural policies.

Keywords: *Broadcast Media, Government, Agricultural Development, Strategies, Nigeria, Post-Subsidy Era*

Introduction

Agriculture remains a fundamental pillar of Nigeria's economy, contributing significantly to employment, food security and gross domestic product (GDP). Despite its crucial role, the sector has faced persistent challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited access to credit, poor mechanisation and climate change-induced uncertainties (Eze et al., 2022). The Nigerian government has implemented various agricultural development strategies over the years to address these issues, including subsidy programs, mechanisation policies and agro-financing schemes (Ogunleye & Adeyemi, 2023). However, with the removal of fuel subsidies in 2023, concerns have emerged regarding the affordability of agricultural inputs and the cost of food production. In this context, the role of broadcast media in assessing and communicating these development strategies becomes increasingly significant.

Broadcast media, comprising radio and television, serves as a critical platform for informing the public and policymakers about government interventions in agriculture. As a mass communication tool, it provides real-time updates on policies, market trends, and technological innovations that impact agricultural productivity (Olayemi, 2022). The accessibility of radio, especially in rural communities where farming activities are predominant, makes it an essential medium for disseminating information on government agricultural strategies. Similarly, television programs dedicated to agriculture offer visual demonstrations and expert analyses, which enhance farmers' understanding of modern farming techniques and policies (Ogunyemi & Ajayi, 2021).

The removal of subsidies has significantly altered Nigeria's agricultural landscape. Farmers now contend with increased costs of transportation, fertilizers, and other essential inputs, leading to higher food prices and potential declines in production (Oladipo & Okon, 2024). In this scenario, the effectiveness of government policies in mitigating these challenges requires continuous assessment. Broadcast media plays a crucial role in this evaluation by providing a platform for stakeholders, including farmers, policymakers and agricultural experts, to discuss policy outcomes and suggest improvements. Through investigative reporting, documentaries and panel discussions, the media can highlight gaps in implementation and accountability (Ibrahim et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the media serves as an intermediary between the government and farmers, ensuring that agricultural policies are well understood and adapted to local contexts. Many government initiatives such as the National Agricultural Technology and Innovation Policy (NATIP) and the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA), have been widely publicized through radio and television programs (Adebayo & Umeh, 2022). However, the effectiveness of these programs depends on the ability of broadcast media to critically assess their

implementation and impact. Without proper media scrutiny, policies may fail to achieve their intended objectives, leading to wasted resources and ineffective agricultural interventions.

In addition to policy assessment, broadcast media contributes to agricultural knowledge dissemination by featuring expert opinions, success stories and instructional programs. Farmers rely on agricultural programs such as "Farmers' Voice" and "Agro Today" to learn about improved farming techniques, climate-smart agriculture and market dynamics (Ugochukwu & Eze, 2023). The integration of indigenous languages in radio broadcasts further enhances farmers' comprehension, ensuring that vital information reaches diverse communities. This function of broadcast media aligns with the principles of development communication, which emphasise the use of media to drive socio-economic progress (McQuail, 2021).

Despite its importance, the role of broadcast media in assessing agricultural policies is not without challenges. Limited funding, political interference and regulatory constraints often hinder media organizations from providing objective analyses of government strategies (Okechukwu, 2023). In some cases, media houses are pressured to present a favourable image of government policies rather than critically examining their effectiveness. This underscores the need for media independence and investigative journalism in the agricultural sector to ensure transparency and accountability.

Moreover, technological advancements have introduced new dynamics in agricultural communication. Digital and social media platforms complement traditional broadcast media by enabling interactive discussions and real-time feedback from farmers and agricultural stakeholders (Chinedu & Bello, 2024). Platforms such as YouTube, Facebook Live, and WhatsApp groups have become valuable tools for disseminating agricultural information and assessing government policies. However, the digital divide remains a challenge, as rural farmers with limited internet access may not fully benefit from these innovations.

In light of these factors, this study seeks to examine the role of broadcast media in assessing Nigeria's post-subsidy agricultural development strategies. It aims to evaluate how effectively radio and television programs communicate government policies, analyse media content on agricultural development, and identify challenges facing broadcast media in policy assessment. The study will also explore the interplay between traditional and digital media in agricultural communication.

Statement of the problem

Agriculture remains a critical sector for Nigeria's economic growth and food security, yet it continues to face challenges such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, climate variability and limited access to modern farming technologies. In response, the government has implemented various agricultural development strategies, including mechanization programs, credit facilities and policy frameworks aimed at increasing productivity and ensuring food sufficiency. However, the removal of fuel subsidies in 2023 has introduced new challenges, particularly in terms of rising production costs, transportation expenses and access to essential farming inputs. These developments raise concerns about the effectiveness of government agricultural policies in mitigating the adverse effects of subsidy removal on farmers and food security. Given this reality, the role of broadcast media in assessing and communicating these

strategies is more crucial than ever. While radio and television serve as primary sources of information for farmers and agricultural stakeholders, there is a need to evaluate their effectiveness in objectively analysing government policies, raising awareness and facilitating public engagement.

Despite the presence of agricultural programs on Nigerian broadcast media, there is limited empirical research on how effectively these platforms assess and communicate government agricultural strategies in the post-subsidy era. Many media programs tend to focus on policy promotion rather than critical analysis, thereby creating gaps in public understanding of policy implications and implementation challenges. Additionally, political influence, funding constraints, and regulatory pressures often limit the ability of broadcast media to provide independent evaluations of agricultural policies. Without a robust media-driven assessment framework, farmers and the general public may struggle to access accurate and timely information needed to make informed decisions. This study, therefore, seeks to examine the extent to which broadcast media effectively assess government agricultural development strategies, identify existing gaps in media coverage and explore ways to strengthen media engagement in agricultural policy discourse in Nigeria.

This study aims to achieve three key objectives. First, it seeks to examine the effectiveness of broadcast media in assessing and communicating government agricultural development strategies in Nigeria's post-subsidy era. By analysing media coverage, programming content and stakeholder engagement, the study evaluates how well radio and television platforms inform farmers and the general public about agricultural policies and their impact. Second, the study identifies the challenges that hinder broadcast media from providing comprehensive and objective analyses of government agricultural strategies. It explores factors such as political interference, funding limitations, regulatory constraints and media biases that may affect the depth and accuracy of agricultural policy assessments. Lastly, the study proposes strategies for enhancing the role of broadcast media in fostering transparency, accountability and public engagement in agricultural development. By recommending ways to improve media coverage, investigative reporting, and policy dialogues, the study contributes to strengthening the communication link between government initiatives and agricultural stakeholders.

Broadcast Media and Agricultural Communication in Nigeria

Broadcast media, comprising radio and television, plays a crucial role in agricultural communication by disseminating information on government policies, market trends and farming techniques (Olayemi, 2022). Radio, in particular, remains a vital medium for rural farmers due to its affordability, accessibility and ability to broadcast in local languages. Agricultural programs such as Farmers' Voice and Agro Today provide farmers with timely information on weather forecasts, pest control measures and financial support schemes (Ugochukwu & Eze, 2023). Television, on the other hand, offers visual demonstrations and expert discussions, helping farmers to understand modern agricultural practices and technological innovations (Ogunyemi & Ajayi, 2021).

The Nigerian government has leveraged broadcast media to promote various agricultural development initiatives, such as the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) and the

National Agricultural Technology and Innovation Policy (NATIP) (Adebayo & Umeh, 2022). These policies aim to enhance agricultural productivity through mechanisation, improved access to credit, and value chain development. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives largely depends on how well they are communicated to farmers and stakeholders. Researchers suggest that while media coverage of agricultural policies has increased, there is often a lack of critical assessment and feedback mechanisms that allow farmers to express their concerns and needs (Ogunleye & Adeyemi, 2023).

Despite the contributions of broadcast media, several challenges hinder its effectiveness in agricultural communication. These include limited funding, political influence and inadequate training of journalists on agricultural reporting (Okechukwu, 2023). Many agricultural programs focus on government narratives rather than providing in-depth analysis and investigative reporting on policy implementation. This media approach limits farmers' ability to make informed decisions and advocate for policy adjustments when necessary (Ibrahim et al., 2023).

To enhance the role of broadcast media in agricultural communication, there is a need for greater media independence, investment in agricultural journalism and the integration of interactive media platforms (Chinedu & Bello, 2024). Digital and social media platforms, such as YouTube and WhatsApp, have emerged as complementary tools that enable real-time discussions and knowledge sharing among farmers. By strengthening the synergy between traditional broadcast media and digital platforms, agricultural communication can be made more inclusive, transparent and effective in Nigeria's post-subsidy era.

Government Agricultural Development Strategies in Nigeria's Post-Subsidy Era

Nigeria's agricultural sector has historically relied on government interventions, including input subsidies, mechanization programs, and rural infrastructure development. However, the removal of fuel subsidies in 2023 has had significant implications for agricultural production, particularly in terms of increased costs of transportation, fertilizers and other essential inputs (Oladipo & Okon, 2024). In response, the government has introduced alternative strategies to cushion the impact of subsidy removal, including the expansion of credit facilities, investment in agricultural mechanization and policies aimed at boosting local food production (Ogunleye & Adeyemi, 2023).

One of the major government initiatives is the National Agricultural Technology and Innovation Policy (NATIP), which focuses on mechanisation, climate-smart agriculture and agribusiness development (Adebayo & Umeh, 2022). Additionally, government programs such as the Anchor Borrowers' Program (ABP) and the Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones (SAPZs) have been expanded to support smallholder farmers and promote value chain integration (Eze et al., 2022). These policies aim to enhance productivity and reduce the country's dependence on food imports. However, concerns remain regarding their implementation, accessibility, and long-term sustainability.

Despite these strategies, Nigerian farmers continue to face challenges such as high production costs, poor infrastructure, and climate-related risks (Ibrahim et al., 2023). The removal of subsidies has further exacerbated these issues, making it difficult for small-scale farmers to afford essential inputs and transportation. Moreover, inconsistencies in policy

implementation and bureaucratic bottlenecks have hindered the effective distribution of government support to farmers (Okechukwu, 2023).

Given these challenges, there is a need for continuous evaluation of government agricultural policies to ensure their effectiveness in addressing post-subsidy realities. Broadcast media plays a crucial role in this process by facilitating public discourse, monitoring policy impact, and providing a platform for stakeholders to voice their concerns. Strengthening media coverage and analysis of agricultural development strategies can help improve transparency, accountability, and policy responsiveness in Nigeria's agricultural sector.

The Role of Broadcast Media in Policy Evaluation and Public Engagement

Broadcast media serves as a key instrument in policy evaluation by providing information, fostering dialogue, and holding policymakers accountable (McQuail, 2021). Through investigative journalism, documentary reports, and expert interviews, media outlets assess the effectiveness of government policies and highlight areas for improvement. In the agricultural sector, radio and television programs can analyse policy impact, showcase success stories, and expose challenges faced by farmers in policy implementation (Olayemi, 2022). This evaluative role is crucial in ensuring that agricultural strategies remain relevant, efficient, and beneficial to all stakeholders.

One of the major ways broadcast media facilitates policy evaluation is through stakeholder engagement. Programs that feature discussions between government officials, agricultural experts, and farmers help to bridge the communication gap between policymakers and the people affected by their decisions (Ogunyemi & Ajayi, 2021). By providing a platform for farmers to share their experiences and feedback, media outlets contribute to a more participatory approach to policy formulation and implementation (Ugochukwu & Eze, 2023). This is particularly important in Nigeria's post-subsidy era, where the effectiveness of government interventions needs to be continuously assessed.

However, the ability of broadcast media to objectively evaluate government policies is often constrained by factors such as political interference, lack of funding, and regulatory restrictions (Okechukwu, 2023). In some cases, media organisations may be pressured to present a favourable image of government initiatives rather than critically examining their impact. This challenge underscores the need for independent media and professional journalism training to enhance policy evaluation in the agricultural sector (Chinedu & Bello, 2024).

To strengthen the role of broadcast media in policy evaluation, media houses must adopt more investigative approaches, leverage digital tools for audience engagement and collaborate with agricultural research institutions (Ibrahim et al., 2023). By combining traditional and digital media strategies, Nigeria can enhance transparency, accountability and public participation in agricultural policymaking, ensuring that government strategies effectively address the realities of the post-subsidy agricultural landscape.

The Development Media Theory

This theory was propounded by Denis McQuail in 1987, serves as a relevant framework for assessing the role of broadcast media in evaluating government agricultural development

strategies in Nigeria's post-subsidy era. This theory posits that media should actively support national development goals by providing information, fostering public participation, and promoting government policies that enhance socio-economic growth (McQuail, 1987). The tenets of the theory emphasize that the media should be used as a tool for development, operate in close partnership with the government and prioritise issues that contribute to economic and social advancement (Oso, 2012). It assumes that in developing nations, the media must go beyond entertainment and political reporting to focus on developmental issues such as agriculture, education and public health (Okunna, 2020). By guiding media coverage towards nation-building, the theory underscores the role of broadcast platforms in shaping public discourse on government interventions and ensuring that agricultural policies are effectively communicated and evaluated.

Despite its contributions, the Development Media Theory has been criticised for promoting government-controlled media narratives, which may suppress critical journalism and limit press freedom (Akinfeleye, 2018). Some scholars argue that the theory encourages propaganda by prioritising state interests over independent media analysis (Uche, 2019). However, its relevance to this study lies in its recognition of media as a strategic instrument for agricultural development. By applying this theory, the study examines how Nigerian broadcast media contribute to policy dissemination, assess the effectiveness of agricultural initiatives and provide a platform for stakeholders to engage in constructive dialogue. Given the complexities of Nigeria's post-subsidy economic landscape, Development Media Theory helps highlight the balance between media support for government strategies and the need for objective evaluation in agricultural policymaking.

Empirical Review

Adebayo and Umeh (2022) carried out a study on *Agricultural Transformation and Media Engagement in Nigeria: Evaluating Policy Impact*. The study assessed the role of Nigerian broadcast media in disseminating information about agricultural transformation policies and their impact on smallholder farmers. A mixed-method approach was used, including content analysis of agricultural programs on Nigerian radio and television stations, as well as surveys with 300 farmers across six states. The study found that while broadcast media played a crucial role in informing farmers about government policies, coverage was often biased towards government perspectives, with limited critical evaluation. Similarity: Both this study and the current research focus on the role of broadcast media in assessing agricultural development strategies in Nigeria. Dissimilarity: While the reviewed study examined media engagement during a period of agricultural transformation, the current study specifically investigates media assessment of agricultural policies in Nigeria's post-subsidy era.

Ibrahim et al. (2023) conducted a research on *Media Coverage of Agricultural Policies in Nigeria: A Content Analysis Approach*. This study analysed the extent and nature of Nigerian broadcast media coverage of government agricultural policies. The study employed content analysis of 500 agricultural-related news reports from major Nigerian radio and television stations over a 12-month period. The study revealed that media coverage of agricultural policies was predominantly event-driven, with little investigative journalism or in-depth policy

evaluation. Similarity: Both studies explore the role of broadcast media in reporting on government agricultural policies. Dissimilarity: While the reviewed study focused on content analysis of media reports, the current study seeks to assess the broader impact of media engagement, including stakeholder perspectives and policy implications in the post-subsidy period.

Oladipo and Okon (2024) did a research on *The Economic Impact of Fuel Subsidy Removal on Nigerian Agriculture*. This study evaluated the effects of fuel subsidy removal on agricultural productivity, cost of production, and farmers' livelihoods in Nigeria. The study adopted a quantitative approach, using surveys of 500 farmers and secondary data analysis on agricultural input costs before and after subsidy removal. The study found that fuel subsidy removal significantly increased the cost of farm inputs and transportation, negatively affecting smallholder farmers and food prices. Similarity: Both studies investigate the impact of Nigeria's post-subsidy era on agriculture. Dissimilarity: While the reviewed study focused on the economic effects of subsidy removal on farmers, the current study examines how broadcast media assesses and communicates government agricultural development strategies in response to these economic changes.

Gap Identification

Despite extensive research on media engagement in agricultural development (Adebayo & Umeh, 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2023) and the economic implications of subsidy removal on the agricultural sector (Oladipo & Okon, 2024), there remains a critical gap in understanding how broadcast media assesses and communicates government agricultural development strategies in Nigeria's post-subsidy era. Existing studies have primarily focused on media coverage patterns, economic impacts, and farmers' access to information, but they have not sufficiently examined the evaluative role of broadcast media in shaping public discourse on agricultural policies in the face of subsidy removal. Furthermore, while prior research highlights media bias and the event-driven nature of reporting, there is limited empirical analysis of how broadcast media facilitate policy scrutiny, stakeholder engagement, and accountability in the agricultural sector under these new economic conditions. This study seeks to bridge this gap by investigating the effectiveness, objectivity, and influence of broadcast media in assessing and communicating government agricultural strategies in Nigeria's evolving economic landscape.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research method to explore how broadcast media assess and communicate government agricultural development strategies in Nigeria's post-subsidy era. The population consists of three key stakeholder groups: 36 farmers, 40 media personnel, and 47 policymakers across selected states with significant agricultural activities. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 30 participants, comprising 15 farmers, 10 media professionals (broadcast journalists, editors, and producers), and 5 policymakers from relevant government agencies and agricultural institutions. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, allowing for rich, detailed insights into participants' perspectives on media engagement with agricultural policies. The interviews were semi-structured, covering themes such as media effectiveness, policy communication and farmers' reception of government

strategies. Data analysis followed a thematic approach, where responses were transcribed, coded, and categorised into emerging themes that reflect patterns in media coverage, policy evaluation and stakeholder engagement. This qualitative methodology ensured a comprehensive understanding of how broadcast media influence agricultural policy discourse in the post-subsidy economic landscape.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Themes were deduced deductively following the research objectives. The following themes were deduced: Broadcast Media as a Platform for Agricultural Policy Communication; communication barriers existing among stakeholders in the Nigerian agribusiness sector; Media Assessment of Government Agricultural Strategies in the Post-Subsidy Era; and Stakeholder Engagement and Public Perception of Agricultural Policies through Media. These were presented and discussed below:

Broadcast Media as a Platform for Agricultural Policy Communication

This theme explores how Nigerian broadcast media disseminate information on government agricultural development strategies, the nature of coverage, and the accessibility of such information to farmers and stakeholders. Extract from the interview: Media Professional (Broadcast Journalist, Age 42): stated that in experience as a broadcast journalist covering agricultural policies, the media play a crucial role in informing the public about government initiatives. However, the extent of effectiveness varies. Radio remains the most accessible medium for rural farmers, while television appeals to a broader audience, including policymakers. Unfortunately, media houses often rely heavily on government press releases and officials' statements, which limits critical discussions. The media run special agricultural programs, but budget constraints, lack of investigative journalism, and limited sponsorships hinder in-depth reporting.

Farmer (Rice Farmer, Age 50): narrated that for farmers, broadcast media are one of our main sources of information about government policies. Farmers hear about new programs, subsidies, and extension services through radio stations that broadcast in local languages. However, sometimes the information is unclear or comes too late for farmers to take action. Also, there's little follow-up from the media on whether these policies are working or if farmers face challenges accessing benefits. Farmers wish there were more programs where they could call in and share their experiences.

Policymaker (Agricultural Development Officer, Age 45) elicited that policymakers recognise the importance of broadcast media in policy dissemination. The government collaborates with media houses to ensure that agricultural programs reach the right audience. However, a major challenge is misinformation, as some media outlets sensationalise reports without verifying facts. Policymakers are working on strengthening partnerships with journalists and broadcasters to ensure that farmers receive timely, accurate and practical information about government interventions.

Media Assessment of Government Agricultural Strategies in the Post-Subsidy Era

This theme examines the extent to which broadcast media critically evaluate the effectiveness,

challenges, and impact of agricultural policies following subsidy removal. It also considers the role of investigative journalism in policy scrutiny. The interview extract: Media Professional (News Editor, Age 38): posited that the media have covered the effects of subsidy removal, particularly how it has increased production costs for farmers. However, there's still a gap in investigative reporting. Many journalists lack the resources to travel to rural communities to document first-hand accounts of how farmers are coping. Government-sponsored agricultural programs often receive more attention, while the voices of struggling farmers are not adequately represented. Media need more independent reports evaluating whether these policies are truly beneficial.

Farmer (Cassava Farmer, Age 47): averred that the impact of subsidy removal has been tough on us. Farm inputs have become very expensive, and transporting our produce to markets now costs almost double. Farmers got the information on the radio that the government is introducing measures to support farmers, but the reality on the ground is different. The media should do more investigative reporting to show the real struggles of farmers instead of just broadcasting government announcements. Farmers want the media to ask tough questions on farmers' behalf.

Policymaker (Ministry of Agriculture Official, Age 50): illustrated that the government is aware of the challenges farmers are facing post-subsidy removal, and several intervention programs have been introduced. However, the media need to go beyond reporting only the problems. They should also highlight success stories where farmers have benefited from government support. A balanced media approach is one that critiques policies while also showcasing positive developments will create better public understanding and policy engagement.

Stakeholder Engagement and Public Perception of Agricultural Policies through Media

This theme investigates how media coverage influences farmers, policymakers, and the general public's understanding, acceptance, and response to government agricultural initiatives in Nigeria's evolving economic landscape. Interview Extraction: Media Professional (Agricultural Program Host, Age 40) explained that media coverage has a strong influence on how people perceive government policies. When media air stories about farmers struggling due to high costs, it generates public sympathy and pressures policymakers to act. At the same time, positive reports on successful agricultural projects can encourage more people to participate in government initiatives. However, media must ensure that reports are well-researched so that media will not misinform the public or create unnecessary panic.

Farmer (Poultry Farmer, Age 35): answered that most of what farmers know about government agricultural policies comes from radio and television programs. When media discuss these policies, farmers feel more connected and informed. However, sometimes, the media make it seem like the government is doing everything right, while in reality, farmers still struggle. It would be better if the media engaged farmers directly, maybe through live call-in programs, so farmers can share their concerns and get real-time responses from government officials.

Policymaker (Policy Analyst, Age 44): stated that stakeholder engagement is critical for policy success, and the media serve as a bridge between the government and the people.

Policymakers rely on media reports to assess public reactions to their policies. However, one challenge is that some media houses focus on controversy rather than constructive dialogue. A more solution-oriented media approach is one that fosters discussions among farmers, experts, and policymakers would enhance policy effectiveness and encourage more public participation.

Discussion of Findings

The findings indicated that broadcast media play a crucial role in disseminating agricultural policies in Nigeria, particularly through radio and television; however, their effectiveness is hindered by overreliance on government press releases, limited investigative journalism, and inadequate farmer engagement. Adebayo and Umeh (2022) found that Nigerian broadcast media play a key role in informing farmers about government policies but often rely heavily on government perspectives, aligning with this study's finding that limited investigative journalism and overdependence on official sources hinder the effectiveness of agricultural policy communication. The Development Media Theory posits that the media should actively support national development by disseminating information that fosters economic and social progress; however, this study's finding that Nigerian broadcast media rely heavily on government narratives rather than investigative reporting suggests a deviation from the theory's ideal role in effectively communicating agricultural policies. The finding that Nigerian broadcast media rely heavily on government narratives with limited investigative journalism implies that farmers and other stakeholders may not receive a balanced or critical assessment of agricultural policies, potentially leading to misinformation, reduced trust in media reports and ineffective policy implementation.

The study found that while media coverage highlights the impact of subsidy removal on agriculture, there is a gap in critical assessment and investigative reporting, resulting in an imbalance between government narratives and the real challenges faced by farmers. Ibrahim et al. (2023) revealed that media coverage of agricultural policies is predominantly event-driven, with little investigative journalism, which supports this study's finding that while the media highlight the impact of subsidy removal, they fall short in critically assessing the effectiveness and challenges of agricultural policies. According to the Development Media Theory, the media should critically assess government policies to promote informed public discourse, yet this study's finding that agricultural policy coverage lacks depth and investigative scrutiny highlights a gap between the theory's principles and the current state of media reporting in Nigeria's post-subsidy era. The finding that media coverage of agricultural policies lacks depth and investigative scrutiny implies that critical challenges faced by farmers in the post-subsidy era may remain underreported, limiting public awareness, reducing accountability from policymakers and hindering necessary policy adjustments.

The findings revealed that media coverage significantly influences public perception and stakeholder engagement with agricultural policies, yet a lack of interactive platforms and solution-oriented reporting limits direct participation from farmers and comprehensive policy evaluations. Oladipo and Okon (2024) emphasised that fuel subsidy removal significantly increased agricultural production costs, affecting farmers' livelihoods, reinforcing this study's finding that media influence public perception and stakeholder engagement but often lack

interactive platforms to adequately reflect farmers' experiences and policy effectiveness. Development Media Theory emphasises that media should facilitate public engagement in policy discussions but this study's finding that media coverage influences stakeholder perceptions without providing interactive platforms for farmer participation suggests that Nigerian broadcast media are not fully leveraging their potential to foster inclusive policy dialogues. The finding that media coverage influences stakeholder perceptions but lacks interactive platforms for farmer participation implies that agricultural policies may not fully reflect the realities and concerns of farmers, leading to reduced engagement, ineffective policy responses, and potential disconnect between government initiatives and grassroots needs.

Conclusion

The study concluded that while Nigerian broadcast media serve as vital channels for disseminating agricultural policies, their overreliance on government narratives and limited investigative reporting weaken their effectiveness in providing comprehensive and balanced information to farmers and stakeholders.

The established that the lack of in-depth and investigative media coverage on agricultural policies in the post-subsidy era undermines critical policy evaluation, reducing the media's role as a watchdog and limiting the public's ability to assess the true impact of government interventions on the agricultural sector.

Finally, the study justified that although broadcast media significantly influence public perception and stakeholder engagement in agricultural policies, their failure to create interactive platforms for direct farmer participation limits inclusive dialogue, reducing the effectiveness and responsiveness of policy formulation and implementation.

This study contributes to knowledge by expanding the discourse on the role of broadcast media in assessing and communicating government agricultural development strategies in Nigeria's post-subsidy era. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on media coverage patterns and policy dissemination, this research highlights the lack of investigative journalism and the overreliance on government narratives, which weaken the effectiveness of media in providing balanced and critical assessments of agricultural policies. By integrating perspectives from farmers, media professionals and policymakers, the study offers a holistic understanding of the gaps in media reporting, particularly in evaluating the real impact of subsidy removal on agricultural production and livelihoods. This contribution provides empirical evidence that can inform media organizations, policymakers, and researchers on the need for a more critical and development-oriented media approach in shaping agricultural policies.

Furthermore, the study advances the application of Development Media Theory in the Nigerian agricultural context by revealing that while media influence public perception, they fail to fully engage farmers through interactive platforms, limiting grassroots participation in policy discussions. This finding underscores the need for media practitioners to shift from passive policy reportage to active stakeholder engagement, ensuring that farmers' voices are integrated into policy discourse. Additionally, by demonstrating how media narratives shape policy reception and stakeholder responses, the study offers valuable insights for future research on the intersection of media, policy communication and agricultural development in Nigeria. These

contributions serve as a foundation for further studies on media effectiveness in post-subsidy economic environments, emphasising the role of media in bridging policy gaps and fostering agricultural sustainability.

Recommendations

In view of the findings from the work, the following recommendations have been made.

- 1) Broadcast media should enhance investigative journalism and reduce overreliance on government narratives to ensure balanced and comprehensive coverage of agricultural policies
- 2) Media organisations should prioritise in-depth analysis and critical assessment of agricultural policies to improve public awareness and hold policymakers accountable.
- 3) Broadcast media should create more interactive platforms, such as live call-in programs and farmer-centred discussions, to enhance stakeholder engagement and ensure agricultural policies reflect grassroots realities.

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