

Press Coverage of National Emergency Management Agency Flood Intervention Activities in South-South Region, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the press coverage of National Emergency Management Agency flood intervention activities in South-South region, Nigeria from January to December, 2022. The objective of the study was to ascertain the frequency of coverage of NEMA flood intervention activities in The Guardian, The Punch, This Day and The Vanguard newspapers. The theoretical framework of the study was drawn from the agenda setting theory and social responsibility theory. The research design adopted for this study was the content analysis and the population of this study comprised the whole national dailies published in Nigeria within the period under study. The population of these four newspapers was 4,380 issues published between January and December, 2022. Philip Meyer's recommendation of 351 was adopted to represent the population since the total population for content analysis. The study adopted a systematic sampling procedure to select the sample content analysed. Data for this study were analysed using quantitative method. Findings from the study revealed that The Vanguard newspaper carried the most number of stories on NEMA flood intervention activities in South-South region of Nigeria compared to the other three newspapers. The study concludes that the significant role of Vanguard in shaping public awareness and perceptions related to disaster response efforts. The media's influence, particularly through Vanguard, becomes evident in its extensive coverage, potentially impacting the public's understanding and engagement with NEMA's interventions during flood events. Based on the results, the study recommended that it is advisable for NEMA to maintain a balanced engagement with other newspapers to ensure a diverse range of perspectives and wider reach.

Keywords: Coverage, National Emergency Management Agency, Flood, Intervention

Introduction

Environment is one of the most important elements that sustain human life on earth. Humans can only become well if there are no or limited environmental challenges. Today, many environmental problems threaten the world. Flooding is considered to be the most devastating natural disaster worldwide (Komolafe *et al.*, 2015). Flooding is excess water flowing onto land which is usually dry, that is when rainfall exceeds absorption capacity of the soil, which in turn causes significant environmental consequences (Nwachukwu *et al.*, 2018). Rentschler and Salhab (2020) maintain that the rate of flood occurrence in recent times has been unprecedented, with 70 million people globally exposed to flooding every year, and more than 800 million living in flood-prone areas. The authors estimate that 1.47 billion people, or 19% of the world population, are directly exposed to substantial risks during 1-in-100 year flood events.

Flooding has been found to result from climate change, excessive precipitation, building on waterways, sea-level rise, soil moisture regime, dam operations, especially along borders, uncontrolled rapid population growth, inadequate preparedness, and lack of political will (Nigeria Hydrological Services, 2020). Flooding has both natural and human causes. Excessive levels of precipitation as the main natural cause of flooding, caused by climate change. Generally, flood is an overflowing or eruption of a great body of water over land not usually submerged (Daniel & Udo, 2019). It is an extreme weather event naturally caused by rising global temperature which results in heavy down pour, thermal expansion of the ocean and glacier melt, which in turn result in rise in sea level, thereby causing water to inundate coastal lands.

Flooding causes inundation and harm to plants and animals, including man, buildings and infrastructure (Ujene & Oguike, 2020). However, flooding is a global natural hazard that has affected lives, led to the loss of properties and extinction of species in the environment. In fact, flooding is a threat that affects the quality of the environment. Given the issues relating to flooding, it is regarded as a factor that is used in defining environmental quality of residential neighbourhoods. Other environment hazards include drought, desert encroachment, soil erosion and tsunamis. From the foregoing, it is clear why flooding is regarded as a regular global occurrence.

In Nigeria, flooding has remained a prevalent environmental problem and there is frequent occurrence of flooding (Bamidele & Badiora, 2019). Flooding has negative implications on the survival of livelihoods, social and economic activities. Basically, in recent decades, flooding has led to the loss of thousands of lives and property. Flooding in Nigeria is caused by weak implementation of planning policies, streams and channel obstruction due to indiscriminate waste disposal habits and human activities in flood plains. Inadequate drainage system, changes in ecosystem through the replacement of natural and absorptive soil cover with concrete, deforestation of hillsides, and silting up of drainage channels are main causes of flooding (Okon *et al.*, 2015).

Naturally, flooding occurs during raining season and has resulted in loss of lives, livelihood, houses, investments, and displacement of people (Hydrological Services Agency, 2014; Emeribeole, 2015). One of the prominent flood disasters in Nigeria occurred in 2012. This devastating event was marked by extensive flooding in many parts of the country. The floods were triggered by heavy rainfall and the release of water from dams, resulting in the displacement of

millions of people and substantial damage to infrastructure and farmland. Initially, flooding is a thing that could not be estimated or even expected. However, with the Internet and modern technology, meteorologists now predict and estimate the volume of flood that may happen each time. Based on this, inhabitants of the flood-prone areas are always notified and advised to relocate in order to mitigate the effects of the flood. As an emergency, the function of managing the effect of flood falls under the national emergency management agency (NEMA, 2018)

The 2018 flooding in various states, particularly in the Niger River basin, which led to displacement, loss of lives and damage to infrastructure (National Emergency Management Agency, 2018). The 2017 floods in Benue State, where heavy rainfall and the release of water from the Lagdo Dam in Cameroon caused widespread flooding, affecting thousands of residents. The 2010 floods in Kogi State, where the overflowing of the River Niger resulted in the displacement of communities and significant loss of property and farmland. The 2019 flooding in many states, including Adamawa, Kano and Niger, which resulted from heavy rainfall and the release of water from dams, leading to displacement, destruction of homes and agricultural losses (NEMA, 2018). These flood disasters have had a significant impact on Nigeria, its people and its economy, highlighting the need for improved flood risk management and disaster preparedness.

The South-South region of Nigeria is known for its vulnerability to a wide range of disasters, including flooding, oil spills and other environmental and humanitarian crises. In response to these challenges, the national Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has been actively involved in disaster management and relief efforts in the region. While NEMA's role is pivotal in mitigating the impact of disasters and providing aid to affected communities, to effectively respond to emergency situations in Nigeria, NEMA has developed several plans and remediation. Some of these are National Disaster Response Plan, the Search and rescue/Epidemic Evacuation Plan, the National Nuclear and Radiological Plan, the Early Warning System on Epidemic among others. NEMA has operational office in Abuja and Gombe and Zonal Office in each of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Over the year NEMA has encountered some challenges in the implementation of these plans aimed at increasing efficiency and effectiveness in disaster management in Nigeria (NEMA, 2022). Periodic flood on the other hand do occur naturally in rivers but such floods usually result from heavy rain most times combined with the melting snow which cause the river to overflow their banks resulting into a rapidly rising of river with or no advance warning of NEMA intervention.

The media are always the channels most agencies and organisations give information or communicate with the public. Subsequently, the media do not cover any activity that is not news worthy or important. When incidents of great significance to the environment and to the health of people take place in the society, the media expose them and make the public aware. People rely on the press as their major source of news, especially during emergencies such as flooding. People would want to get timely and accurate information or what to do to be safe.

The media play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing government responses to emergencies. Positive and informative press coverage can bolster public confidence in NEMA's efforts, whereas negative or biased reporting can erode trust and support. Moreover, the media serves as a vital channel for disseminating information about flood disaster preparedness, response plans and relief measures. This study therefore sets to ascertain the press

coverage of NEMA flood interventions activities in South-South region of Nigeria, from January to December, 2022.

Statement of the Problem

The effects of flooding have grown from significant to dangerous proportions over the past-three decades causing the loss of lives and property, especially in the South-South, Nigeria. This area of the country is low-lying region and submerged during intense rainstorm. To forestall threats and reduce the impact of perennial flooding in the Nigerian government established NEMA uses geographic information systems and metrological data to improve early warning signal which reduce exposure to flood risk. In this regard, timely, effective and adequate provision of information is necessary for awareness of impending flooding and on how to be safe. NEMA does all these to mitigate effect and risk of flooding on the people.

Messages from NEMA are always being projected by the media who reports newsworthy or important occurrences. The media have been reporting flooding cases in Nigeria; for instances, we have heard reports of flooding on Ogumpa, Yenagoa, Lokoja, Kadunna among others. It appears unclear if the press on its report stress the intervention activities of NEMA. In other words do Nigerian press cover the NEMA intervention activities? This study therefore sets to ascertain the press coverage of NEMA flood intervention activities in South-South region of Nigeria from January to December, 2022.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this research was to ascertain press coverage of NEMA flood intervention activities in South-South region, Nigeria, January – December, 2022. However, the objectives were to:

1. ascertain the frequency of coverage of NEMA flood intervention activities in *The Guardian, The Punch, ThisDay and The Vanguard* newspapers;
2. find out the prominence given to NEMA flood intervention activities coverage in the newspapers under study;
3. examine the slant adopted by the newspapers under study to cover the NEMA flood intervention activities;

Literature Review

Conceptual review

Floods in Nigeria

Flood is an overflowing of a great body of water over land not usually submerged. According to Obebi, (2013), in his work, Analysis of flood events in Nigeria, it was found that the first great flood occurred in the time of Noah. God gave a warning; it was jettisoned and then came the deluge which exterminated mankind except Noah and his household. Adeoye et al., (2007) found in their work; Climate Change and Menace of Floods in Nigerian cities: Socio-economic Implication that flood is an extreme weather event naturally caused by rising global temperature which result in heavy downpour, thermal expansion of ocean and glacier melt, which in turn result in sea level, causing salt water to inundate coastal lands. They maintained that across the globe, floods have posed tremendous danger to people's lives and properties. Flood caused about one third of all deaths, one third of injuries and one third of all damage from natural disasters.

Floods occurs in Nigeria in three main forms; coastal flooding, river flood and urban flooding. Coastal flooding occurs in the low lying belt of mangrove and fresh water swamp along the coast. River flooding occurs in the flooding plains of the large rivers, while urban flooding occurs in towns, on flat or low lying terrain especially where little or no provision has been made for surface drainage, or where existing drainage has been blocked with municipal waste, refuse and eroded soil sediment. Apart from the 1936 flood disaster in Nigeria, Busari et al, (2009, p.8) found that flood disaster had occurred in 1980 in Ogunpa which ravaged the city of Ibadan. Comparing Eludoyin et al., (2007) views, serious flood disaster have occurred in Ibadan in (1985, 1987 and 1990). In Osogbo, it occurred in (1992, 1996 and 2002). In Yobe it occurred in 2000, in Akure, flood disaster occurred in 1996, 2000, 2002, 2004 and 2006. In 2001, Abia, Adamawa and Akwa-Ibom states witnessed heavy downpour and rainstorm which affected about 5,000 people. Farmlands, properties, buildings were submerged and destroyed. About 12,300 persons were displaced by torrential rain in Zamfara . Similarly, in 2005, it was the turn of Taraba state as massive flood displaced over 50,000 people (Obebi, 2013, para.3).

Flooding

Flood from layman's point of view is seen as any spill-over of excess water from river bank or when the earth surface is inundated by water. Obebi (2013) perceive it as an outcome of accumulation of large volumes of water flowing through river channels spilling over the banks and causing extensive damage to human lives and property. Similarly IPCC (2007) describes flooding as the 'overflowing of the normal confines of a stream or other body of water or the accumulation of water over areas that are not normally submerged' causing or threatening damage in the event. Floods naturally occur with prolonged rainfall over several days, extreme rainfall within short space of time (flash flood) or when an ice or debris jam causes a river, water bodies, dam or stream to overflow its surrounding areas. Manmade floods are generated by human behaviour and activities that adversely affect the environment such as deforestation, poor farming method, overgrazing, over-cultivation, increase population, levees or dams failure and development activities. Okonkwo (2013) simply observed flood as too much water in the 'wrong' place! To him, flood is a hazard with no exception to any community- rural or urban, developed and underdeveloped. Okonkwo enumerates further some of the rather destructive floods that occurred worldwide, including the China floods of 1887 and 1931 that claimed 3.7 million and 2million people respectively; the Morvi Dam incident of 1979 in India that claimed over 4,500 lives and the Landslide in Huascarán (Peru) 1962 with the loss of more than 4,000 lives (Okonkwo, 2013).

Famous (2013) similarly documents the 1530 St. Felix flood storm surge Netherlands with death toll of 100,000 and the Indian Ocean Tsunami Indonesia with death toll of 230,000. Famous avers further that in 2004, the Haiti spring flooding destroyed more than 3,000 persons while the Pakistani flood of 2010 suffocated about 2,000 human lives. Famous also points out that the Rio de Janeiro floods of January 2011 put to death 800 people. These constitute quite a few of the fatal floods that impacted the world. Obeta (2014) in addition affirms that Nigeria, akin to other nations world over, do experience unpleasant flood incidents. In 2001, for instance, Abia state, Adamawa state and Akwa-Ibom State experienced intense rain and rainstorm which impacted on 5,000 of the populace. Similarly in that particular year, 12,300 persons relocated from their residence due to

the torrential rain that came with destruction of farm lands, damage to property and inundated living houses in Zamfara State (Obeta, 2014).

Obeta says further that in 1988 and 2007, Kano State played host to windstorm and floods which disorganized 300,000 lives while in 2011 flood wreaked extensive havoc on Lagos state and Ibadan. The story is similar to that in 1999 and 2001 when Bayelsa and Delta State suffered heavy floods, displacing many and rendering them homeless (Obeta, 2014). Famous (2013) observes that in 2005, Taraba State experienced massive flood that put over 50,000 people out of home. Regionally, flood also took heavy toll on certain West Africa countries due to heavy rains resulting from ruthless flooding in West African region of Nigeria, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Mali, Kenya, and Togo with heavy carnage of 353 persons and distressing over 600,000 others (Famous, 2013). This shows that flood hazard is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria, but what is perhaps strange is the indifference and seemingly lack of learning and ineptitude which flood warnings evoke in Nigeria and the casual manner with which mitigation efforts are undertaken. Flood events in coastal areas of Nigeria such as Rivers State cannot be totally avoided due to its environment predisposition. However the governments can minimize its negative effects on lives, property and the environment when proactive measures of mitigating these effects become a strong priority for governments.

According to Okonkwo (2013), some countries in the Sub Saharan Africa including Nigeria are yet to demonstrate full preparedness in tackling the problems associated with flooding. The other problem associated with flooding in Nigeria is the negative environmental stance of majority of the populace. There is gross lack of awareness and non-sustainable attitude as people deliberately block drains and destroy the surroundings which otherwise would have acted as natural receptacle, reservoir, and containment for flood waters during heavy rains and river overflow.

Effects of Flooding

Flood disaster undoubtedly impacts directly or indirectly on lives, infrastructures and the environment. The effects of floods can be classified as primary and secondary effects (Bariweni et al., 2012); the detail of which are outline below: (a) Primary Effects: This type of effect refers to the immediate impacts of flood as manifested in the loss of life, damage to buildings and other structures, including bridges, sewage systems and roadways. Bariweni et al. (2012) also enlists frequent damage of power transmission facilitates and generating equipment by flooding affecting the power generation, distribution and supply in affected an area. Flooding disrupt normal drainage systems the community making sewage spills a common occurrence; this also results in serious health hazard alongside with standing water and wet materials in homes (b) Secondary or long-term effects refers to situations such as economic hardship due to a temporary decline in tourism, rebuilding costs, or food shortages leading to price increases is a common after-effect or secondary effects of serious flooding. The effects on those affected victim can cause psychological problems and post traumatic disorders to them, especially where deaths, serious injuries and loss of property occurred. (c) Benefits of Flooding: Flood waters flow along with sand, silt and debris during the flood and these become deposited on the flood plan and adjoining areas. Post flood, these deposits enriches the land making it richer and more fertile for higher agricultural yields (Bariweni et al,

2012). Flood recharges ground waters, lakes, and increases biomass of these bodies of water which will increase fisheries yields. Floods irrigate the dry and semi- arid regions thus increasing their agricultural yields and preserve ecosystems in river corridor. Flood increases the functioning capacity of hydropower stations.

Press Coverage of Flood

Newspaper publication started in Nigeria by the British missionary in 1859 and today, there are quite a number of government and privately -owned newspapers in the country varying in frequency and time of publication as well as circulation rate, target audience and achievements. (Ifenkwe: 2008). The communication and interpretation of science to the general public is achieved through a variety of media the most important of which are the traditional print media, TV, radio and now the electronic channels such as the Internet. Ladle et al. (2005) are of the view that environmental scientists have a prime responsibility to report findings that are likely to be of concern to society in an accurate, objective and simple a fashion as possible. Since the general public relies on the mass media as main source of its knowledge about science, investigating the mass media's portrayal of global warming is crucial (Boykoff, 2007; Wilson, 2000). However, the media do not simply mirror reality. On the contrary, they make their own selections according to some implicit criteria. This could be tied to political economy, ownership, management structure and news commercialisation.

Environmental and National Emergency management Agency Policies in Nigeria

The NEFCP was developed in March 2005. The policy thrust is directed at ensuring that coordinated and methodical actions are implemented in the management of flood and erosion problems in the country. It was argued that before 2005, efforts at controlling floods and erosion in Nigeria appeared discontinuous, very uncoordinated, and seriously under-funded leading to unsatisfactory results (Wahab, 2017). Among other things, Obasanjo (2005), in his preface to the policy, stated that "the national policy on flood and erosion control is intended to coordinate and promote programs that will eventually lead to the minimization of soil erosion" promote programs that will eventually lead to the minimization flood hazards." Oladoku and Proverbs (2016) state that the National Erosion and Flood Control Policy has as its purpose the preservation of natural resources, conservation of productive land and the prevention of negative consequences from floods and landslides. The policy provided that land use laws and regulations be formulated and reviewed. However, according to Arokoya and Ibam (2014), it is not just the review and formulation of land use regulations and laws, but the strict enforcement and adherence to these laws that will engender achievement of government objectives. The enforcement of land use laws and regulations have been undermined in Nigeria through the instrumentality of the State bureaucracy. Public and private buildings have been constructed without regard to government environmental regulations. Some projects are sometimes built without adherence to existing environmental guidelines because some top government officials get percentages as kickbacks from contracting firms. The continuous indulgence of Nigerians in unfriendly environmental practices like deforestation, bush burning, overgrazing and indiscriminate waste disposal is an attestation to their abysmal ignorance

Theoretical framework

Agenda-Setting Theory

The agenda-setting theory as propounded by McCombs and Shaw in 1972, posits that the mass media do not instruct what people think but what they should think about. Due to the gate keeping function of the media, they determine and direct public attention to issues considered more important, by the emphasis and prominence given to the issues in the media. It is to this end that the theory maintains that the issue or message that constantly features in the media becomes the public agenda of the people (Coffman, 2002). There is wide agreement that awareness leads to knowledge, and knowledge leads to behaviour modification (Rimal, 2000). Various theories and models acknowledge the importance of the mass media in creating awareness in the society. Agenda-setting theory holds that the media have the ability to advise or tell audiences what issues are major and relevant, thus setting the agenda. They can achieve this by choosing what stories to consider newsworthy and how much prominence and space they give those stories.

Relating this theory to the study, the agenda setting posits that media determine the NEMA flood intervention activities and its importance to the public by giving this issues a prominent treatment in their agenda over a period of time. The print media would have succeeded in making the audience believe that the reportage is indeed important. This theory is significant in this study because National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Hydrological Services Agency, State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), Local Emergency Management Agency (LEMA), and the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster management and Social Development know the power of the mass media and therefore uses them to their advantage of committing awareness messages on NEMA intervention for floods issues. In this respect, the print media need the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Hydrological Services Agency, State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), Local Emergency Management Agency (LEMA), and the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster management and Social Development need the print media to reach out to the public. This is a good example of how the mass media should carry out their agenda setting functions for the purpose of green issues and environmental degradation.

Social Responsibility Theory

This study also anchored on the Social Responsibility Theory, this theory was propounded by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm in 1963 also provides a work for this study. It underscores the need for the media to accept and fulfil obligations to the society. The theory came into being in the 20th century following concerns that the Libertarian Theory had serious shortcomings that were already hurting the society. The theory sees the media as very powerful and so important to the continuance of modern society that they must be made to render some obligations to the society (Isichei, 2007). Social responsibility, therefore, implies recognition by the media that they must perform a public service to warrant their existence (Ahuja, 1997). The main parts of the publishers were those that indicated possible government involvement in the press system.

This theory is relevant to this study because of the fact that information is the centrality of information to socio-economic, political progress and environmental development. A society suffers when there is mismanagement, hoarding or absence of credible information. Lack of right information breeds rumour networking with its counterproductive effect on the society. Rumour is powerful and its transmission is fast and strongly effective on many people – especially on those with very weak internal control mechanisms. Thus, right information shields the citizenry from

rumour and keeps them better informed in a quest for national transformation and environmental issues. Credible and quality information by the press helps the people repose confidence not only in the media practitioners but also in the leaders promotes legitimacy for the government. Thus, the mass media are vital weapons whose roles are paramount in providing understanding of different political, social, economic and cultural systems and environmental development of the society. They make events such as floods disasters and ideas such as NEMA intervention common knowledge, which is crucial to national-building and development.

Empirical Review

Adaja et al., (2020) did a study on “Newspapers reportage of natural disasters and its mitigating impact on Nigeria (2015 – 2017). The aim of the study was to examine the frequency of natural disaster vis-a-vis the nature of natural disaster. The study was anchored on the agenda-setting theory and adopted a content analysis method. The samples are were two Nigerian newspapers, The Punch and The Nation, which were randomly selected. The study revealed a high frequency of reportage on natural disasters. Out of the 293 editions studied, there were 256 stories on natural disasters. Also, the newspapers gave prominence to natural disaster stories as 18% of the stories appeared on the front page.

Sanusi et al., (2022) did a paper on “Newspaper coverage of development communication issues, a content analysis of two Nigerian’s daily. The goal of the research was 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.

Methodology

This study adopted a content analysis. Content analysis is the structural, purpose and statistical assessment of information characteristics. Since, this study has to do with press coverage of NEMA flood intervention activities in minimising the impacts of flood. The content analysis was used to analyse the manifest content of newspapers. The population for the study comprised the whole national dailies published in Nigeria within the period under review. According to the Nigerian Press Council, Abuja, there are 13 national dailies in circulation. Out of the 13 national newspapers, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, *ThisDay* and *The Punch* newspapers were purposively selected because of wide circulation and private ownership.

Another purpose for selecting the four national newspapers was that they allocated some pages exclusively to environmental issues in Nigeria on a daily basis. This is coupled with the fact that the four selected newspapers, the population of these four newspapers was 1,460 issues published between January and December, 2022 that was 365 issues for each newspaper. The time frame for the study was equal to twelve months, there were approximately 365 days in thirty six months and each of the four selected national newspapers published equal number of issues within twelve (12) months. For the twelve (12) months period, each newspaper published 1,095 issues.

Therefore, the four dailies would publish 1,460 issues. The population of these four newspapers were 1,460 issues published at January - December 2022.

Philip Meyer's recommendation of 322 was adopted to represent the population since the total population falls below 1,460. Meyer recommends that for a population within this range, 322 as the sample size. It is based on this that the researcher arrived at the sample size of 322. Since the sample size is 322, which represents only 22.05% of the population, to check attrition, the researcher raised the sample size to 24.1% which is translated into 352. Therefore, 352 issues of the newspapers made up the sample size of the study. The study adopted a systematic sampling procedure to select the sample content analysed. The researchers used coding sheets to analyse the prominence and frequency of newspaper publications on press coverage of NEMA flood intervention activities in South-south region of Nigeria. In this paper, the unit of analysis will be straight news reports, features, letters-to-editors, editorials and cartoons about the floods and NEMA intervention in Nigeria. Data for this study were analysed using quantitative method. The data obtained from coding of newspaper contents were arranged in tabular format. This format made presentation clear and calculation of percentage scores feasible.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Frequency of NEMA Flood Intervention Activities Issues in Newspapers

Newspapers	No. of Issues Coded	No. of Items on NEMA Flood Intervention Activities	Percentage
<i>The Guardian</i>	88	72	24
<i>Punch</i>	88	67	25
<i>ThisDay</i>	88	63	23
<i>The vanguard</i>	88	83	28
Total	352	285	100

From the Table 1, the data presented showed that *The Vanguard* newspaper carried the most number of stories on NEMA flood intervention activities in South-South region of Nigeria compared to the other three newspapers. However, the selected newspapers frequently report issues of NEMA flood intervention activities during the study.

Table 2: Prominence accorded NEMA Flood Intervention Activities by *The Guardian* Newspaper

Content/prominence	Front Pages		Back Pages		Centre Spread		Inside Pages		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Early warning system	3	1	-	-	5	2	6	2	14	5
Emergency shelter management	4	1	-	-	-	-	5	2	9	3
Evacuation planning and execution	-	-	2	1	4	1	-	-	6	2
Psychosocial support	2	1	-	-	2	1	5	2	9	4
Infrastructure repair and rehabilitation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Medical assistance and first aid	3	1	2	1	-	-	5	2	10	4
Flood and water distribution	3	1	-	-	5	2	-	-	8	3
Community education and awareness	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Coordination with stakeholders	4	2	-	-	5	2	-	-	9	4
Post-disaster assessment and planning	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	3	7	3
Total	19	6	4	1	21	7	28	10	72	25

The data presented in the Table above indicate that the majority of the stories covered about NEMA flood intervention activities in South-South region of Nigeria by *The Guardian* newspaper were placed on inside pages of the newspaper. This was followed by stories placed on the front pages.

Table 3: Prominence accorded NEMA Flood intervention Activities by Vanguard Newspaper

Content/prominence	Front Pages		Back Pages		Centre Spread		Inside Pages		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Early warning system	5	2	2	1	2	1	6	3	15	12
Emergency shelter management	3	1	2	1	-	-	5	3	10	4
Evacuation planning and execution	2	1	-	-	-	-	5	2	7	3
Psychosocial support	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	3	6	3
Infrastructure repair and rehabilitation	3	1	2	1	2	1	6	3	12	4
Medical assistance and first aid	2	1	-	-	2	1	4	2	8	3
Flood and water distribution	2	1	-	-	2	1	3	1	7	3
Community education and awareness	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Coordination with stakeholders	2	1	2	1	-	-	4	1	8	3
Post-disaster assessment and planning	3	1	-	-	2	1	5	2	10	4
Total	22	8	8	3	10	4	44	15	83	29

From the Table 3, the data presented show that the majority of the stories published by the *Vanguard* newspaper about NEMA flood intervention activities in South-South region were placed on inside pages of the newspaper. This was followed by stories placed on the front pages.

Table 4: Prominence accorded NEMA Flood Intervention Activities in South-South by *The Punch*

Content/prominence	Front Pages		Back Pages		Centre Spread		Inside Pages		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Early warning system	7	3	3	1	2	1	10	4	22	8
Emergency shelter management	3	1	2	1	2	1	4	2	11	4
Evacuation planning and execution	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Psychosocial support	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Infrastructure repair and rehabilitation	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	8	3
Medical assistance and first aid	5	2	-	-	-	-	5	2	10	4
Flood and water distribution	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	2	6	2
Community education and awareness	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Coordination with stakeholders	4	2	-	-	-	-	6	2	10	4
Post-disaster assessment and planning	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	21	7	7	3	6	2	33	12	67	24

As indicated in the Table above, the data presented show that the majority of the stories covered about NEMA flood intervention activities in South-South region by *The Punch* newspaper were placed on inside pages of the newspaper. This was followed by stories placed on the front pages.

Table 5: Prominence accorded NEMA Flood Intervention Activities in South-South by *This Day*

Content/prominence	Front Pages		Back Pages		Centre Spread		Inside Pages		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Early warning system	6	2	2	1	-	-	8	3	16	6
Emergency shelter management	3	1	2	1	-	-	5	2	10	7
Evacuation planning and execution	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Psychosocial support	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Infrastructure repair and rehabilitation	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	8	3

Medical assistance and first aid	5	2	3	1	2	1	-	-	10	4
Flood and water distribution	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Community education and awareness	-	-	2	1	3	1	4	2	9	3
Coordination with stakeholders	2	1	3	1	-	-	5	2	10	4
Post-disaster assessment and planning	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	18	6	14	5	7	3	24	8	63	22

As pointed in the Table above, the data presented show that the majority of the stories covered about NEMA flood intervention activities in South-South region by *ThisDay* newspaper were placed on inside pages of the newspaper. This was followed by stories placed on the front pages.

Table 6: Slant adopted by the Newspapers under Study on Coverage of NEMA Flood Intervention Activities

Newspapers	The Guardian		Vanguard		Punch		ThisDay		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Slant/Direction										
Biased	2	1	4	2	5	2	4	2	15	5
Unbiased	13	4	11	4	10	4	17	6	51	18
Neutrality	52	18	60	21	41	14	40	14	193	68
Sensationalism	4	2	8	3	7	2	6	2	25	9
Total	72	25	83	29	63	22	67	24	285	100

As indicated in the Table above, the data presented show that the majority of the stories covered about NEMA flood intervention activities in South-South region by *The Guardian*, *The Vanguard*, *Punch* and *ThisDay* newspapers were neutral. This was followed by unbiased stories,

Discussion of the Findings

Research Question 1: What is the frequency of coverage of NEMA flood intervention activities in *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, *ThisDay* and *The Vanguard* newspapers

The result revealed that *The Vanguard* newspaper carried the most number of stories on NEMA flood intervention activities in South-South region of Nigeria compared to the other three newspapers. However, the selected newspapers frequently report issues of NEMA flood intervention activities during the study. This finding aligns with the study of Adaja et al. (2020) on newspapers reportage of natural disasters and its mitigating impact on Nigeria from 2015 to 2017, which revealed a high frequency of reportage on natural disaster. The agenda setting theory upon which this study was anchored lend credence to this finding. The theory is highly relevant in understanding newspaper coverage of NEMA flood intervention activities and the high frequency of stories. It refers to the media's ability to influence public perception by selecting and

emphasising certain topics. In this context, if newspapers consistently highlight NEMA's flood intervention, it can shape public awareness and priorities regarding flood response. The frequency of stories indicates that media's role in setting the agenda, potentially influencing public opinion and policy discussions on emergency management.

Research question 2: What was the prominence given to NEMA flood intervention activities coverage in the newspapers under study?

The finding revealed that the majority of the stories covered about NEMA flood intervention activities in South-South region by *The Guardian*, *The Vanguard*, *The Punch* and *ThisDay* newspaper were placed on inside pages of the newspaper. This was followed by stories placed on the front pages. This finding refutes the study of Adaja et al. (2020) that newspaper gave prominence to natural disaster stories as the stories appeared on the front pages. Also, the study of Sanusi et al. (2022) when found that newspapers examined gave a considerable level of prominence to the stories reported. This finding corroborates the social responsibility theory that was underpinned by this study. The theory posits that the media's responsibility to serve the public interest and contribute to societal welfare. Placing stories on inside pages could be seen as a way to fulfil this responsibility by providing information on important issues, even if they are not sensationalised or given front-page prominence. Responsibility theory encourages balanced and informative reporting. Placing stories inside allows for more in-depth coverage, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of NEMA's flood interventions rather than focusing solely on attention-grabbing aspects. The agenda setting theory posits that media influence can shape public perception by deciding which issues receive attention. Even if not on the front page, the repetitive coverage inside newspapers can still influence the audience's understanding and perception of the importance of NEMA's intervention. The location of stories inside newspapers may reflect a deliberate editorial choice in agenda building. While not on the front page, the consistent coverage suggests that the media is still actively contributing to the public agenda by keeping the NEMA flood intervention in the public eye.

Research Question 3: What was the slant adopted by the newspapers under study to cover the NEMA flood intervention activities?

From the result of the study, it was revealed that show that the majority of the stories covered about NEMA flood intervention activities in South-South region by *The Guardian*, *The Vanguard*, *Punch* and *ThisDay* newspapers were neutral. This was followed by unbiased stories. The social responsibility theory that underpinned this study give backing to this finding. The social responsibility theory posits that media's duty to provide objective and balanced information, neutral coverage of NEMA flood intervention activities suggests a commitment to impartial reporting, avoiding sensationalism or bias. The theory underscores the media's role in serving the public interest. Neutral reporting on NEMA interventions contributes to providing factual and relevant information to the public, allowing them to form their own opinions and make informed decisions. Social responsibility theory holds that media should be accountable to society. Neutral coverage aligns with this principle, ensuring that the public receives accurate and unbiased information about NEMA's flood interventions, fostering trust in the media.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the significant role of Vanguard in shaping public awareness and perceptions related to disaster response efforts. The media's influence, particularly through Vanguard, becomes evident in its extensive coverage, potentially impacting the public's understanding and engagement with NEMA's interventions during flood events.

The study establishes the pattern in the placement of stories about National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) flood intervention activities, with the majority being located on inside pages of newspapers. This positioning is that while there is coverage of NEM's efforts, it may not always receive prominent visibility. The understanding of the placement of these stories provides insights into how media outlets prioritise and allocate space for disaster-related content within their publications.

The study underscores the prevailing trend in press coverage of National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) flood intervention activities, with the majority of the stories being in neutral in tone. This neutrality in media representation suggests a balanced and objective reporting approach, avoiding extreme biases in favour or against NEMA's efforts. The overall neutral stance in press coverage indicates a potential adherence to journalistic principles of fairness and objectivity in portraying disaster response activities.

Recommendations

Based on the result of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. It is advisable for NEMA to maintain a balanced engagement with other newspapers to ensure a diverse range of perspectives and wider reach. Such strategic media collaboration can contribute to fostering a well-informed public and garnering continued support for NEMA's vital intervention activities.
2. NEMA should collaborate more closely with media outlets to secure prominent positions for stories related to flood intervention for stories related to flood intervention activities. Proactive engagement with editors and journalists, providing compelling narratives and impactful visuals, can increase the likelihood of stories receiving front-page or prominent placements.
3. NEMA should proactively engage with the media, providing accurate and up-to-date information to ensure the continuation of unbiased reporting. Encouraging transparency and open communication channels with journalists can contribute to sustained and constructive portrayal of NEMA's flood intervention activities, fostering public trust and understanding

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