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PRESS COVERAGE OF AGRICULTURE-RELATED CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES IN NIGERIA: AN ANALYSIS OF DAILY TRUST 2014- 2016

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Introduction

Climate change, otherwise known as global warming has over the years come to be the biggest ecological problem facing humanity (Herbert, E Batta, Ashong, C Ashong & Abdullahi, S Bashir, 2013). Since its detection in the 60s, the international community swaps left to right scanning for solutions to it. As a result, a number of conventions on global warming at international, continental, regional and national levels were summoned. One critical area where all actors on climate change converge is the role of mass media in the quest to have a less warm world. The Rio-de Janeiro United Nations' Conference for instance, as Batta *et al* (2013) cited,

Abstract

This study analysed press coverage of agriculture related climate change issues in Nigeria using environment page(s) of Daily Trust published from January, 2014 to December, 2016 through census. Two trained coders were used to code data after validity and reliability test. Quantitative analysis of data and interpretation. It was uncovered that Daily Trust reports agriculture related climate change issues averagely and buried the stories in the inside pages. Also, it was found that no agriculture related climate change story was placed on either front or back or op-ed pages. Impact frame was the most reoccurring frame. Newspapers should embark on training and retraining of their editors and reporters on climate

Change reporting for better service delivery. It worth appreciating also that, editors should do all they could to make climate change an issue to the Nigerian public sphere; journalists should pick up interest in reporting technical issues such as climate change. Both policy makers and machineries for policy implementation should understand that the struggles against climate change could be fought and won on newspaper pages.

Keywords: Press, Coverage, Change, Issues, Daily Trust.

Recognized the crucial role of mass dissemination of “accurate information” on climate change from the mass media. Besides, article 22 of same underscored the importance of citizens and community participation in the campaign to fight global warming through adoption of various mitigation and adaptation strategies. Mass media outlets are therefore, key institutions capable of sensitizing people to scientific and traditional methods aimed at reducing the effects of global warming on their socio-economic lives.

Undoubtedly, global warming is science stuff. And, because of the specialty of science, nonscientists find it hard to decipher science registers. Media, as Climate Change Challenge Organisation, (2012) suggests, closes the information gap between community of scientists and the public through interpretation of the complex science language or jargons “for (the) people with average education.” This task is more applicable to the Nigerian press for the simple reason that, there is high level of illiteracy in the country. The north, particularly, because the region have the highest rate of illiteracy.

Tagbo (2010) noted the impacts of global warming on African agricultural sector to include food insecurity due to prolong draught, flooding, erosion, desertification, deforestation, oil spillage and unpredictable rainfall. Therefore, this study is set to explore press coverage of agriculture related climate change issues in Nigeria using *Daily Trust* as case study.

The Problem

Climate change is a dreading environmental problem that must be address. It is in line with this notion that, Barack Obama, immediate US president, in his *State of the Union Address* on February 12th, 2013 remarked that this generation must do more to fight climate change. Positioned at the center of

this fight is the media. This is because to fight climate change successfully, people must be educated on the effects of climate change on their lives as well as adaptation and mitigation strategies they need to adopt.

Several studies were conducted in the world, Africa and here in Nigeria on climate change coverage Robert J. Brulle, Jason Carmichael & Craig Jenkins, 2012; Evelyn Tagbo, 2010; Thadeous *etal*, 2011; Ukanu Michael Onyekachi, Akpan Church Solomon & Anorue Luke Ifeanyi, 2012; Chinenye Nwabueze, Frank Naemeka & Emanuel Okika, 2015. None of these studies centered on agriculture-related coverage of climate change issues in Nigeria, although, agriculture is one of the key sectors affected by climate change.

Besides, no northern-based newspaper was included in any of the researches the researchers came across. This is critical considering the reality that the north is the hub of agriculture in Nigeria. These factors inform the choice of *Daily Trust Newspaper* for this research. Therefore, there is dearth of literature in this aspect of climate change research in this part of the country. Several climatic conditions as observed have since started to alter the traditional ways of farming, up the Niger. These climatic conditions are foes to framers and indeed everybody. These conditions include change in rain pattern, increase drought period in the north, drying up of dams and lakes, flooding, desert encroachment, erosion, warm climate among others.

This study seeks to appraise press coverage of agriculture related climate change issues in Nigeria with *Daily Trust* as object of study. However, the study aims to achieve the following specific objectives: to determine the extent of coverage of agriculture-related climate change issues in the *Daily Trust*; to ascertain the placement of agriculture-related climate change matters in the *Daily Trust* newspaper; to determine frames of agriculture-related climate change stories in the *Daily Trust*.

This research will provide answers to the following questions: what is the degree to which *Daily Trust* report agriculture-related climate change issues? How does *Daily Trust* place agriculture-related climate change stories? How does *Daily Trust* frames agriculture-related climate change stories to its readers?

Literature Review

At this stage, there is no gain saying the fact that mass media play crucial role in the campaign against climate change globally. We can only rate media

performance in this regard through the lenses of media gurus. The press serves as central *interpretative system* of modern world (Peters and Heinrichs, 2005). This is because in their routine, media simplify complex issues relating to global warming for easy comprehension by all people.

Boykoff in 2007 comparatively studied UK and US newspapers' coverage of anthropogenic global warming using US's *prestige press*, found that extreme weather events and other critical issues influence report of global warming. Other studies revealed that nonscientific frames got better traction than other frames. Besides, media attention to global warming issues in those countries dwindles (Boykoff, 2007; Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004; Zehr, 2000; McComas & Shanahan, 1999; Trumbo, 1996 Weingart *et al*, 2000).

Furthermore, Schmidt, A *et al*, (2013) discovered that attention of African press to climate change issues is poor despite the effects of the phenomenon on the continent. The extent to which newspapers in Ghana and South Africa report climate change issues is not encouraging. Data suggests that press in those countries reports climate change issue minimally. With stories sourced mostly from external sources due to work force inadequacy especially in newsrooms. Besides, Southern African newspapers often framed stories on impacts of climate change. The stories were not reflective of urgency; negative event based, centered on politicians and buried in the inside pages (Mare, 2011; Tagbo, 2010).

Zooming down the self-appointed *giant of Africa*, Nigeria, environment news to most editors is trash stuff. Hence, total negligence or poor coverage of environment issues until 1987 thanks to Koko waste dump controversy (Oso, 2006). However, Batta *et al*, (2009); Chinenye *et al* (2015); Ukonu *et al* (2013) argued that Nigerian newspapers maintained low coverage of global warming with straight news and feature stories the frequently used genres without editorial or opinionated articles. To them, stories on global warming were mostly framed on politics of climate change, economics of climate change, socio-cultural issues. Adaptation and mitigation frames are also commonly visible.

Impacts of Climate Change on Agriculture in Nigeria

Agriculture is one of the sectors climate change affect. Global warming clamps on food production and food security in *Sub-Saharan Africa*. Agriculture is the second major sub sector of the Nigerian economy. It provides food, industrial

raw materials and means of foreign earnings to the nation. It is practice often in northern Nigeria due fertile land and available sources of water such as rivers, dams, lakes etc. it has come to be the main stay of the region.

Desertification is eminent in northern part of the country. The swift opening out of Southern Sahara Desert has worsened access to water in extreme northern states over the years. Drought and desert encroachment have rendered cultivable lands uncultivable (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2011).

Methodology

Content analysis has been selected as the design appropriate for this study because of its ability to x-ray contents of previous communication. To attend the set aims and to answer the research questions, *Daily Trust* Newspaper has been purposively selected as object of this study. This is because of its wide circulation, ideology and the region it is situated. Therefore, 1096 editions of *Daily Trust* published from January 2014 to December 2016 form the population of this study. Weekend titles inclusive. Further, the study purposively studies the environment page(s) of *Daily Trust*, publish every Wednesday. Wednesday editions in the period under study amounts to 157, and, this figure was censused.

The study identified the units of analysis used from scholarly works on climate change coverage such as Batta *et al*, 2013; Ukonu *et al*, 2012; Chinonye *et al*, 2015 & Tagbo, 2010 and incorporated them into the coding sheet as explained below:

1. Prominence of agriculture related climate change stories: this refers to the kind of emphasis the newspaper gives to agriculture related climate change stories through placement. *Front page* is the most important page of a newspaper; *back page* is next to front page in order of importance; *Op-ed page* is the fusion of two opposite pages.it is simply described as opposite editorial page. Editorial page is where an article displaying the official standpoint of a newspaper pertaining to an issue is placed. The page opposite bears opinionated articles; *inside page* is not as important as the other three pages.
2. Frames of stories: this means the genre or theme of agriculture related climate change stories. These sub categories are used to analyse frames of stories: *adaptation frame* refers to stories that talked about

strategies that assist people adjust their ways of life while living in a world whose climate is changing. *Mitigation frame* means stories whose themes are centered on blueprints aimed at reducing the impacts of global warming. *Impact frame* deals with stories that talked about effects of climate change. *Neutral frame* has to do with stories whose themes are not based on any of the three themes itemized.

3. **Extent of coverage:** this refers to total number of agriculture related climate change stories the newspaper under study published in contrast nonclimate change stories.

However, to ensure accuracy of data, the coding sheet was vetted and tested through piloting. Two graduates of Mass Communication were trained as research assistants. A reliability test was administered on them. Result of the test shows that the two coders can be relied upon.

The method of data analysis adopted in this study was quantitative because of the descriptive nature of the study. Data was presented in simple frequency tables and analysis and interpretation of it was done based on the research questions, which are:

RQ1 What is the degree to which *Daily Trust* report agriculture-related climate change issues?

RQ2 How does *Daily Trust* place agriculture-related climate change stories to the *Daily Trust* newspaper?

RQ3 How does *Daily Trust* frames agriculture-related climate change stories to its readers?

RESULTS

Data generated through coding sheet from newspaper editions are presented and discussed below.

Table1: extend of coverage

Variables	Frequency	percentage
Climate related stories	180	46%
Nonclimate stories	210	54%
Total	390	100%

Source: field survey

Table 1 shows the extent of coverage of agriculture related climate change matters in the *Daily Trust* from 2014 to 2016. In the period under study, the newspaper published on its environmental page, 180 stories relating to agricultural aspect of climate change. This figure represents 46% of issues covered on the page. Also, the paper published on the same page, 210 stories that are unrelated to agriculture related climate change issues, and, this figure represents 54%.

Comparatively, *Daily Trust* covers agriculture related climate change matters averagely. It emphasized issues that are unrelated to agriculture related climate change issues. This scenario is disturbing owing to the effects of climate change on agricultural sector of the Nigerian economy, with implications on food security of Nigeria and other third world nations. Drawing inference from data on table1, it can be argued that, the paper leaves climate change issues to be boiling in the background.

Table2: Placement of Agriculture related Climate Change Issues

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Front page	0	0%
Back page	0	0%
Inside page	180	100%
Op-ed	0	0%
Total	180	100

Source: field survey

Table2 presents data on the level of prominence *Daily Trust* attach to agriculture related climate change stories over the three years under study. From data the table contains, global warming stories published on the inside page accounts for 180 representing 100 percent.

Placement of stories in newspapers helps to shows the relative importance of stories to readers and, in one way or the other, shows how important the issue is to the newspaper organisation in question. So, agriculture related climate change matters are not important to *Daily Trust* given the level of prominence of such stories in the *Daily Trust*, because over the study period, the newspaper published not even a single story on either of its front or back pages, not even the editorial page. The paper buried agriculture related

climate change stories in the inside pages. It is difficult, through this kind of placement of climate change stories for a newspaper to be able set agenda for the public on the matter.

Table3: Frames of Agriculture Related Climate Change Issues

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Adaptation	23	12.7%
Mitigation	68	37.7%
Impact	75	41.6%
Neutral	14	8%
Total	180	100

Source: field survey

Table3 shows that in the period under study, *Daily Trust* framed 12.7 percent of its stories on agriculture related climate change issues on adaptation frame, 37.7 percent were framed on mitigation measures, 41.6 percent were framed on impacts of climate change and neutral frames had 8 percent. This simply shows that there are little or no efforts from government and other stakeholders to put in place strategies to either mitigate impacts of climate change or help people adapt to realities of changing climate.

Discussion

From analysis of data presented in tables above, it is clear that *Daily Trust* report agriculture related climate change issues averagely. Because over the study period, it was found that the paper published 180 agriculture related climate change stories in contrast to 210 unrelated stories. Tagbo (2010) after a comparative analysis of *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* concludes that two newspapers report climate change issues minimally. This is coming at a time when press in advanced countries pay greater attention to climate change issues largely due to increase believability of media reports on climate change from the public. Nigerians are therefore not fully informed about climate change because newspapers in the country are yet to consider climate change a public issue given the extent to which they report it.

The study also found that that agriculture related climate change issues in the *Daily Trust* are buried in the inside pages. In newspaper design, any design

element the subeditor place on the front or back or op-ed page, he is indirectly telling readers that, the element is important to the paper and off Course, to readers. Because they are the priceless pages of a newspaper. Based on data analysed on table2 it can be argued that climate change is not an issue of concern to the paper under study. A cross section of Nigerian editors Tagbo interviewed in her study reveals that, editors in Nigeria do not consider climate change as a front-page issue. This can be because editorial policy of the newspaper did not consider climate change as a matter of interest. Another reason is that most journalists in the field are locked in the old ways of reporting and as such, they are ignorant of the new and specilised means of practice. Ownership interest, profit making and normative set up of press in developing countries are other reasons Herman and Chomsky, (1988) advanced.

The most prioritized frame of agriculture related climate change issues in *Daily Trust* as evident by data gathered in the Couse of this study is the impact frame. Impact frame from data analysed accounts for 41.6 percent of total articles published within the period understudy. This is an indication of Nigeria's vulnerability to climate change. The findings of this study tallies with what Tagbo (ibid) found in *Vanguard*. This scenario is a pointer to the reality that there is no proactive measures from policy makers on climate change or, if there is any, it implementation is faulty. Besides, this finding is an indication that agricultural sector of the Nigerian economy is under siege by climate change as extremes events such as flooding, drought, desertification and erosion are affecting farm output and farmers' income.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the forgone discussions, it is save to conclude that *Daily Trust* did not do well in climate change issues. This is unacceptable in view of the deleterious effects of climate change on the core economic activity of the region it is based and the nation at large. The paper and indeed other papers in the country are socially responsible to the various regions they represent and the nation at large. To perform this obligation properly, they should not attempt to relegate critical issues such as global warming to the background, which has bearing effects on the socio-economic condition of the people. Also, abundance of "impact frame" simply shows that newspapers rely on disaster as news value. Most of this type reports are one time reporting without follow

up of events. With this attitude toward global warming coverage, it will be difficult if not impossible for the Nigerian press to set global warming as an agenda for both government and the population.

What follow are recommendations for the tripartite – government, media and journalists:

1. That government should be meticulous when formulating policies or initiatives aimed at stemming the effects of climate change. When in place, authorities must make sure that the network of machineries for their implantation grasped well their separate but collective implantation actions. Previous policies on climate change failed to yield the benefits for which they were planted partly because of corruption and lack of commitment.
2. That newspaper organisations in the country should embark on continuous training and retraining of their editors and reporters on climate change reporting for better service delivery and attainment of collective goal of mitigating the effects of climate change. This is the only way Nigerian press can influence and shape plans of Nigerian authorities at all levels of governance on climate change. Current demand for media information about climate change from the public cannot be satisfied with old fashioned thinking and approach to journalism of the current crops of journalists.
3. That journalists should pick interest in climate change reporting. Because it can be viewed as human service. Personal efforts should be made to develop individual skills needed to report the climate change beat.

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