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COVERAGE OF OPEN DEFECATION IN SELECT NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract

The media does not only inform educate and enlighten but also act as a driver to the developmental steps to better the society. This study examined the coverage of open defecation in select Nigerian online newspapers. The study used the Agenda setting theory as the theoretical underpinning of the study. Content analysis was also adopted as methodology for caring out the quantitative study, with the coding sheet as the instrument of data collection. The composite sampling technique was adopted for the study of 104 editions of the select newspapers. The findings revealed that in the 12 months that were studied, only 79 stories of open defecation were altogether found in the sampled papers. The study found out that the selected Nigerian newspapers did not give prominence to the coverage of open defecation. Results also showed that the stories covered were mostly of the straight news format. Finding also discovered that the direction of coverage given to open defecation issues in the select newspapers were negative. The study concluded that during the period of study the select newspapers did not give prominence to the coverage of open defecation thereby failing in their agenda setting role to the society. Thus the study recommended that newspapers should give prominence to open defecation in the light of the 2025 open defecation free Nigeria goal and to emphasise in-depth and interpretative coverage of health issues and other related matter.

Keywords: Agenda setting, Newspaper Coverage, Prominence, Open Defecation.

Introduction

Open defecation over time has been an issue of concern in rural and developing areas, to certain extent a man's environment or surroundings affect how healthy he is. Some human practice such as open defecation can lead to unhealthy and filthy environment this leading to several health issues, Odikamnoro, Ikeh, Okoh, Ebiriekwe, Nnadozie, Nkwuda and Asobie (2017), identify typhoid as one the infection that is caused by open defecation which leads to serious negative health impact. This states that open defecation is one of the major cause of many health issue in Nigeria. Coffey, Gupta, Hathi, Khurana, Srivastav, Vyas& Spears (2014) describes open defecation as defecating in an open environment rather than using toilet facility, open defecation can be done in bushes, rivers, roads, canals, streets to mention few. This practice has overtime proved to be common among rural dwellers probably due to like of adequate facilities or adequate information. UNICEF (2008) asserts that over 46 million people still practice open defecation in Nigeria and 33million of this figure are rural dwellers. Nigeria is now one of the countries with the lowest degree of access to decent sanitation.

Ahon (2022) citing a recent UN 2022 report, asserts that even though population growth is at its lowest level in decades, the world's population will hit 8 billion on November 15 2022. According to the projections, the world's population might increase even further, reaching 8.5 billion people in 2030 and 9.7 billion by 2050. The campaign to eradicate open defecation in Nigeria by 2025 is underway amid this population surge. In November 2018, President Muhammadu Buhari announced a state of emergency in the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) sector and issued a National Action Plan entitled 'Clean Nigeria: Use the Toilet' to jump-start the country's road towards being open defecation-free. To end the practice of open defecation, President Buhari issued Executive Order 009 on November 20, 2019, titled "The Open Defecation-Free Nigeria by 2025 and Other Related Matters Order." On Tuesday, January 25, 2022, in his office, the President signed a promise card to reaffirm Nigeria's resolve to putting an end to the scourge. The effort to eradicate open defecation is consistent with Nigeria's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (Ume-Ezeoke, 2022).

Nigeria in its effort to achieve Open defecation free (ODF) status by 2025 has been able to record 76 Local Government Areas from 12 states out of the 36 States and FCT that are Open Defecation Free. Parts of the condition of attaining the ODF status, communities must have eliminated open defecation by 100 per cent toilet use, increased ownership and sustainability of hygiene and sanitation services and imbibed total sanitation practices, which include personal, environmental and domestic hygiene" (Ahon 2022). November 19 2021 as the globe marked World Toilet Day, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) detailed that Nigeria has not made progress over the previous two years in the battle against open defecation as 46 million Nigerians still lack access to toilet facilities and indulge in the activity. The above condition only stresses the need for very robust health communication (Duru2021). UNICEF (2018) points several approaches and strategies such has health campaign messages on Radio, Newspaper, Television, Billboards were introduced to end open defecation in Nigeria. Since their creation in the 17thcentury, newspapers have continued to be a valuable resource in the society. Newspaper is a form of mass communication that can be used to influence public opinion and exercise political and economic sway (Apuke & Omar 2020). Newspaper also serves as sources of information, education, and entertainment which help to make them socialization agents. Falaju (2016) states that one major way to eradicate open

defecation is to provide adequate health information to them, this study examines the potential of Newspaper in creating awareness about open defecation through the frequency of coverage given to this open defecation problem.

In countries especially Nigeria, open defecation has persisted as a common practice despite its obvious drawbacks and detrimental effects this can be associated to lack of facilities, adequate information, cultural norms and value associated with the activity. Environmental contamination and a number of illnesses, including cholera, typhoid, and dysentery are caused by open defecation. This study investigates newspaper coverage on open defecation and their influence, potential of creating awareness on ending it.

Objective of the Study

1. Determine the frequency of reportage of open defecation in the select newspapers.
2. Ascertain the prominence given to open defecation issues in the select newspapers.
3. Find out the nature of reports given on open defecation by the select newspapers.
4. Ascertain the direction of coverage given to open defecation issues in the select newspapers.

Literature Review

Open defecation is the act of using a public restroom instead of going outdoors or in the open. The phrase is often used in writing about problems with water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) in underdeveloped nations. When individuals urinate in public places like fields, parks, rivers, and open ditches next to other people's homes, it poses a public health risk (Clasen, Boisson, Routray, Torondel, 2014).

Since the elimination of this unsightly practice should be considered a key component of development efforts and a proposed indicator for sustainable development, it is important to note that high levels of open defecation in a nation are typically associated with high child mortality, high levels of undernutrition, high levels of poverty, and wide disparities between the rich and the poor (WHO, UNICEF, 2014, p 11). Even if there are bathrooms, individuals need to be persuaded to use them instead of defecating in the open (Clasen, Boisson, Routray, Torondel, 2014).

Although a propensity for open defecation may result from long-standing cultural customs, a lack of access to restrooms, or perhaps both, it is crucial to adjust one's behavior in order to end the habit.

The Function of Communication in Changing Behaviour

According to the Regional Office for South Asia of the United Nations Children's Fund (2005), behavior change communication is a research-oriented consultative process that addresses knowledge, attitudes, and practices through clearly defined strategies using a mix of interpersonal group and mass media channels, including participatory method that is appropriate for the target audience. To modify behavior, communication is used. It operates on a variety of systemic levels, including those of the person, the family, the community, service provision, and an enabling environment. Behavior change communication focuses on elements outside of the person, such as families, communities, and sociocultural contexts that may contribute to behavior that is harmful to both the individual and the larger community.

It may be seen as a development process that aims to inform and educate people so they can change for the better.

Messages on behavior change communication may be sent via a variety of channels, but it is best to choose the one that will have the most impact on the community. Behaviour change communication is a two-way process; health communicators listen to community members while conversing with them. This allows the communicator to build tactics that are both culturally relevant and simple to comprehend that will help address the issues. There are several methods to communicate this kind of communication. The ability to be transferred through any form of communication is one of the characteristics of behavior change communication. Interpersonal communication, counseling, group discussions, performing arts, fine art, folklore, dances, etc. are all possible methods. The goal of behavior change communication is to persuade people to alter their behavior and steer clear of actions that might endanger both them and society as a whole.

Empirical Review

Kakade, O. N. (2015) studied the content of two Kannada language newspapers (Prajavani and Vijayakarnataka newspapers) found in the state of Karnataka, in southwest India, editions from 3rd October 2014 to March 2015 were studied. Total of 24 issues for each newspaper was analysed qualitatively. To get the perspective of journalists, in-depth interviews of print media journalists have been conducted. The study found out that In case of Prajavani, results devastatingly found that sanitation is at the last in their agenda with coverage. Prajavani published only 21 items on sanitation, mainly regarding basic amenity problems in villages. Meanwhile Vijaya Karnataka gave more space to sanitation when compared to Prajavani. The study aslo found that the papers concentrated on sanitation only when there are major problems or politicians or celebrities are involved excluding few stories. From the in-depth interview the study found that all aspects of sanitation should be reported, linking sanitation with environment and health. Present coverage lacks both volume and quality. the study recommended the Need for special correspondents for sanitation and orientation for journalists regarding sanitation should be stressed. Sustainable practices like recycling, waste management, functioning of govt. the strenght of the study lies in the mixed method used to gather data.

Using The Hindu and The Times of India Showkat (2016) content analysed the coverage of sanitation issues in Indi.a The findings reveal that newspapers have given an utmost importance to the sanitation policies in India reveals that the number of stories related to sanitation policies and issues published by The Hindu is higher than that of the stories published by The Times of India. The Hindu has published 40 stories in 29 issues whereas The Times of India has published 29 stories in 31 issues related to sanitation policies and issues. The sifting of the newspapers further revealed that the majority of the stories were related to personalities.

Kaliski (2015) concluded through her study that reforms insanitation are not supposed to be limited to simply construction of toilets, or supply of educational components or welfare programs to create demand. She suggested that there is a need to focus more on proper data collection and monitoring.

In Nigeria Pindiga& Sa'ad-Abdullahi (2021), analysed the reporting of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Nigerian press and the challenges impeding journalists from effectively covering the SDGs. Using content analysis and framing analysis of the news coverage by two national dailies, Daily Trust and Vanguard, as well as semi-structured interviews with a selection of Nigerian journalists, the study identified Four dominant news frames within which the two newspapers constructed the SDGs, namely problem frame, solution frame, action frame and responsibility frame. The result showed that the newspapers studied paid more attention to some of the goals than to others, indicating what the press considers as the most important or most urgent development targets. Furthermore, through the semi-structured interviews, result showed that Nigerian journalists are constrained by certain factors in reporting the SDGs. These include the journalists' lack of adequate understanding of the SDGs and poor working conditions, further narrowing the scope within which the SDGs are reported. The researchers concluded that the Nigerian press has a crucial role to play in the country's journey towards achieving the SDGs. However, there is need for sensitization of journalists and ensuring better working conditions for them.

Another Nigerian study was by Talabi, Adaja, & Sanusi (2019) who conducted a content analysis of newspaper coverage of sustainable development goals (SDGs) Campaign with the aim of knowing the importance attached to the issue of sustainable development in Nigeria. Four national newspapers: The Punch, The Guardian, Nigerian Tribune and The Nation were used for the study. The researchers used the simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample size of 1,152 out of a population of 2,188 editions published within January 2016 to June 2017. Their result showed that, although Nigerian newspapers presented SDGs campaign with a positive tone, nevertheless, the campaign publications were in form of news-story presentations, while the presentations were to a large extent placed inside the pages. They thus recommended that print media should give more prominence to development stories, present exclusive editorials and comprehensive feature articles that will aid in-depth analysis and enlightenment on SDGs programmes in order to positively prepare the public towards taking steps to achieving these goals.

Theoretical framework

This study is anchored on the Agenda setting theory which was put forth by Maxwell MacCombs and Donald Shaw. The theory talks about mass media influence and its effects. Every mass media outlet has the potential to have an impact on the opinions of its audience or readers on issues that are routinely covered. Newspapers that provide information, news, stories, and editorials on cleanliness and sanitation in general have a significant effect on readers and persuade them to take action, which has been recommended as a way of expediting the transformation process.

Agenda Setting Theory is "the ability of the media to enable an issue to be raised in significance in the eyes of the public by recurrent attention or coverage,"(Izuogu 2009, p. 3). The key concept in the agenda-setting theory is the potential of the mass media to reshape the audience thinking and perception of events (Anyadike 2009). According to Anorue, Obayi, and Onyebuchi (2012) the media, by the news stories it chooses to cover, determines not only what topics are important to the general population but also how much priority to accord each subject. Akpoveta (2007) points out that the mass media tends to draw public attention to a problem by continuously broadcasting and publishing about it. The notion unequivocally

asserts that although the media may not alter a person's perspective on a specific subject, they may alter that person's sense of what is significant (Agbo & Fab-Ukozor, 2000).

The agenda setting theory describes the ability of the mass media to choose and emphasize certain concerns (priming), hence causing these issues to be significant, (Ekeli 2006). The agenda setting procedure is often carried out via gate-keeping, which is also essential. the theory is pertinent to this study's focus on the manifest content of the chosen newspapers because the research focused on the degree of coverage, prominence, and story kinds through which open defecation stories are covered by the select newspapers.

Methodology

Content analysis was adopted for this study. Content analysis was considered the best method for this study because of its ability to systematically study media manifest content especially since the study concerns how select newspapers report open defecation. The researcher focused on two online newspapers versions in this study; namely The Guardian and The Punch newspapersthe papers were chosen purposively on the basis of having health column and undoubtedly they have a national recognition. The duration of the study was November 19th2020 (World Toilet Day) to November 19th 2021 (World Toilet Day). This duration falls under the two years period UNICEF stated that Nigeria did not make progress over the in the battle against open defecation as 46 million Nigerians still lack access to toilet facilities and indulge in the activity.

For the content analysis, the researcher used the composite week sampling technique, where one day is drawn every week of every month throughout the sampling period. According to Laar (2010) the composite week sampling technique is a tried and tested method and the work of Riffe, Aust, Lacy (1993) demonstrates that it is superior to both a random sample and a consecutive day sample when dealing with newspaper content. For the composite week sampling technique the start date was (Thursday) November 19 2020 – (Monday) November 15 2021 52 editions each for the two papers making it 104 editions published by the two newspapers in total. The composite week sampling did not include Saturdays and Sundays in the pick.

The following were the units of analysis used: News, opinions, feature, editorials, cartoon, pictures and letters to editor). Under each of the units of analysis, the following content categories were used for the analysis: Prominence (using front page lead, front page, inside page and back page), nature of the story (news, column, feature, editorials, and letters to editor), frequency (number of times each unit of analysis appeared) and Direction (using positive, negative and neutral).

Inter-coder reliability of the entire method employed in this research work was calculated using Holsti's formula (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003, p. 157).

Inter-coder reliability = 2M / N1+ N2
Where M - number of coding decision on which two coders agree.
N1 and N2 - total numbers of coding decision by each of the first and second coders.
For this present study two coders were engaged. Twenty eight manifest items randomly selected from November 19, 2020 to November 19, 2021 editions of the two selected

newspapers studied. The coders agreed on twenty four decisions, the data were used to calculate the inter coder reliability thus:
2(24) / 28+28 = 48/56 = 0.85

The result of the inter-coder reliability check by the formula was 0.85which is considered suitable, especially for a project with 28 codes which is a significant number. The project used two fully independent quantitative coders. Overall, the research team was confident in the reliability of the results of the coding exercise.

Data Presentation and Analysis
This data presentation is based on a total of 79 stories published on the two studied newspapers within the study period. The Guardian newspaper publisheda total of 46 stories; punch published 33 stories.

Table 1. Frequency of reportage of open defecation

Newspaper	**No.**	**(%)**
The Guardian	46	**(58.2)**
The Punch	33	**(41.8)**
Total	**79**	**(100)**

Table one shows that out of 79 items carried by The Guardian and The Punch Newspapers, The Guardian newspaper carried 46 items or 58.2%, while The Punch newspaper carried 33items or 41.8%. This means that The Guardian gave more coverage to open defecation during the time under study.

Table 2. Space allocation

Variables	**The Guardian**	**The Punch**	**Total (%)**
Over full page	-	-	**-**
Full Page	3	-	**3 (3.8)**
Half Page	14	9	**23 (29.1)**
Less than half page	29	24	**53 (67.1)**
Total	**46**	**33**	**79 (100)**

Majority of stories were published using less than half of a page (53 or 67.1%), followed by stories that took up to half a page (23 or 29.1%), while full-page stories were 2 stories (3.8%) and none exceeded one page.

Table 3. Page placement of stories

Variables	**The Guardian**	**The Punch**	**Total (%)**
Front page	4	2	**6 (7.6)**
Inside page	37	29	**66 (83.5)**
Back page	5	2	**7 (8.9)**
Total	**46**	**33**	**79 (100%)**

Table 3 shows that all two editions of the select newspapers had most of their stories tucked inside the pages of the newspapers. 66items (83.5%) appeared on the inside pages. The

implication is that Nigerian newspapers did not give prominence to the coverage of open defecation.

Table 4. Categories of news contents

Variables	The Guardian	The Punch	Total (%)
News stories	29	19	**48 (60.5)**
Feature Articles	7	8	**15 (19)**
Editorials	3	2	**5 (6.5)**
Columns	7	4	**11 (14)**
Letter to the editor	-	-	**-**
Total	**46**	**33**	**79 (100)**

The data on table 4 show that the most predominant category of news content or report on the select Nigerian newspaper coverage of open defecation was straight news items with 48 items (60.5%). This reveals that coverage of open defection was reported mainly as news stories.

Table 5. Direction of coverage

Story Slant/ Direction	The Guardian	The Punch	Total No.%
Positive	8	5	**13 (16)**
Neutral	2	1	**3 (6.8)**
Negative	34	27	**61 (77.2)**
Total	**46**	**33**	**79 (100)**

From table 5, it was observed that negative coverage accounts for most of the reports with 77.2 %, while neutral had 6.8% of the reports. This implies that the select newspaper negatively portrayed the coverage of open defecation in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that in the 12months that were studied, only 79 stories were altogether found in the sampled papers. This implies that the select papers under covered the open defecation little wonder Showkat (2016) and Kaliski (2015) all point out that communication of health related matters was at the heart of every health related campaign. When people are least informed the issue will prevail there by sabotaging the efforts of the government to see Nigeria attain open defecation free (ODF) status.

Further finding indicates that all the editions of the two select newspapers had most of their stories tucked inside the pages of the newspapers. Forty two items 66 (83.5%) appeared on the inside pages, six (7.6%) items appeared on the front page while 7 (8.9%) items appeared on the back pages. It is worthy of note that headlines on the front page were more of personality related than issue based especially those that featured the president. The stories This in line with the study of Talabi, Adaja, & Sanusi (2019) who also found that news papers choked all SDG related stories inside the pages of their newspaper. Also in space allotment for stories more than half the stories covered by both papers were Less than half a page (65%). The implication is that Nigerian newspapers did not give prominence to the coverage of open defecation issues thus can be translated to be sabotage even as the nation aspires to be Open

defecation free status. This also implied that the media has failed in their agenda setting role to the society. This is also in dissonance with the tenets of Agenda setting theory that the media have the capacity to cause an issue to be elevated in importance in the mind of the public through repeated focus or coverage (Anorue, Obayi, Onyebuchi, Odemelam & Ekwe 2012). The findings of this study are also in disagreement with that of Sa'idu & Jimoh (2017) who observed that on the front page allocation, editorials and back page columns in newspapers indicate prominence. That is to say that more front page coverage or editorial and back page columns enhance prominence. This view opposes this current result that found majority of the stories on Open defecation tucked in the inside page of the select dailies. Abhilasha & Kakade (2015) and Sa'idu & Jimoh (2017), also asserts that front-page articles, particularly editorials of newspapers, shape their identity, emphasizes the importance of front page stories and editorials.

The findings also revealed that straight news items constituted the major items on coverage of open defection issues. The implication of the findings is that open defection issues were reported mainly as straight news. On the contrary, although the select papers fairly used opinion article and columns to report the issue, the usage of other formats would create a balance and help the reader to be better informed from the write up of other opinion / column articles contributors. This is in consonance with Alfred, Ogwo & Ekwueme's (2017) that attributes imbalance in coverage and readers understanding of issues was due to the lack of strong relationship or nexus with the quantity of straight news covered and other genres such as feature opinion and in-depth news analysis.

Finally the study found that the direction of the stories was negative. This is because most of the reports on coverage of open defecation stories by the select newspapers were negative in its slant or direction 77.2 %. Headlines like "Open defecation must end in Nigeria""Nasarawa government arrests 61 for alleged open defecation""Gov AbdulRazaq orders eradication of open defecation in Kwara communities" from Guardian and "Two children beaten to death for open defecation" on the punch though the story is Indian related, in general all tone to these stories are harsh. This implies that the select newspapers negatively portrayed the coverage open defecation in Nigeria. This also implies that the papers used the severity and fear appeal to report the stories which could lead to health behaviour change. This finding is not in agreement with Talabi, Adaja, & Sanusi (2019) who found that SDG stories on Newspapers were of the positive tone. This is in contrast with Earl & Albarracín (2007) who feels fear appeals are exploitative processes employed by some groups and that instead of using fear appeals to get individuals to adopt health precautions, rational arguments should be used.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Researchers based on the result of this study conclude that the studied Newspapers (the Guardian and The Punch) during the period of study did not give prominence to the coverage of open defecation thereby failing in their agenda setting role to the society. This study therefore recommends that newspapers should emphasise in-depth and interpretative coverage of health issues and other related matter.

In line with the 2025 goal of making Nigeria open defecation free (ODF) Newspapers in Nigeria should partner the Federal government and pay serious attention to environmental,

water, sanitation and open defecation stories this part of their social responsibility which they ought to fulfil to the society. Owing to the fact that Nigeria has taken the abysmal place of India as the Open defecation capital of the world newspapers and indeed all mainstream and New media must give prominence to health related matters like Open defecation, using their front page, front page lead and back pages.

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