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THE FRAMING OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE EDITORIALS OF TWO NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS, 2021-2025

ABSTRACT

This study examined newspaper editorials on climate change and its impact on public health in Nigeria from 2021 to 2025, using a sample from *The Guardian* and *The Punch* newspapers. Based on the theories of agenda-setting and framing, a sample of 46 editorials selected out of a population of 3284 were analysed for the type of editorial, the dominant frames, and the slant of the editorials. In terms of the type, news editorials and speculative editorials were used most, with the environmental frame the dominant frame. In terms of the slant, most of the editorials were in support of more concerted efforts to mitigate the impact of climate change on public health. Despite the number of editorials published during the period under review, there was a dearth of editorials on climate change. The fact that just more than 1% of the total number of editorials published in both newspapers during the period focused on climate change is an indication of the (lack of) relevance of the topic. Given the implications for public health as a result of climate change, it is clear that, in the context of agenda-setting, the frequency of coverage should increase significantly for climate change to enter the public discourse. Based on the findings of this and other studies, a human interest focus is necessary to make the topic less abstract and more relevant to the audience's daily lives.

Keywords: journalism, newspaper editorials, news frames, news framing, agenda-setting, climate change, public health, Nigeria, *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, SDG 3, SDG 13

INTRODUCTION

The subject of climate change has garnered increased attention in recent years due to its adverse effects on both humans and the environment. There is no dispute regarding the impact of climate change on the physical climate system as it pertains to weather, temperature, and rising sea levels, among other factors. The effect is also felt through air

pollution and challenges in the ecosystem, giving rise to problems in public health (Al-Delaimy, Ramanatha & Sorondo, 2020). One of the sources of concern is the impact of climate change on global warming because as the atmosphere becomes warmer, humidity increases to about 7% close to the surface and 10 to 20% in the air. The increase in humidity also increases atmospheric thermodynamic energy to cause stronger storms, intense hurricanes, and dry spells in other climes (Baccini *et al.*, 2017; Xu & Ramanathan, 2017).

There are indications of emerging public health challenges due to climate change because of its adverse effect on water quality and quantity, the control of contagious diseases, and food security (Méndez-Lázaro *et al.*, 2018). Part of the fears and calls for concern is that the temperature could become more conducive for certain kinds of vector-borne diseases to incubate and spread to add to existing public health problems. The impact on human health is directly felt in climatic extremes, air contamination, and in marine, agricultural and disease species (Momoh-Salami *et al.*, 2023). Any attempt to challenge the loss of biodiversity or the deterioration of the ecosystem because of climate change is an indirect means of endangering the health of the public (Shivanna, 2022).

Pollution is a major contributor to climate change. The major climate pollutants are gases that absorb and emit infrared radiation, which can last for decades and up to centuries. The greenhouse gases work like a blanket in the air to trap infrared heat from the surface of the atmosphere, which warm the planet. Greenhouse gases are sourced from carbon dioxide (fossil fuel combustion, biomass burning) and methane (fossil fuel, agriculture, animal husbandry, sewage, and landfills) (Al-Delaimy *et al.*, 2020). Nigeria, the context for this study, has its fair share of climate change issues (Ighedosa, 2019) but the bottom line is that there is no particular global governance solution to address the climate change problem (Romero-Lankao *et al.*, 2018).

Growing evidence of global warming has been described as “terrible consequences” and “unprecedented disasters” – considered by many as the first time such a strong and precise expression is used to describe the phenomenon of climate change (IPCC, 2023; Sohret, 2021). Up to 97% of climate professionals are convinced that human activities are the primary causes of global warming (Bayeh & Alemayehu, 2019). Many of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals relate to this subject matter, but specifically SDG 3 (good health and well-being) and SDG 13 (climate action). The implications are that no country is exempt from the effects of climate change. It is estimated that climate change-induced geophysical disasters killed about 1.3 million people between 1998 and 2017 (UNDP, n.d.). In turn, SDGs 3 and 13 influence other SDGs, including SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation), SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), SDG 14 (life below water), and SDG 15 (life on land). This implies that climate change and public health are to be accorded the necessary attention in the media (Bayeh & Alemayehu, 2019).

The following research questions guided the study:

- ◆ RQ 1: What is the frequency of climate change advocacy in the selected national dailies' editorials from 2021 to 2025?
- ◆ RQ 2: What are the types of editorials on climate change in the selected national dailies from 2021 to 2025?
- ◆ RQ 3: Which frames were the dominant frames in the editorials in the selected newspapers on climate change impact on public health from 2021 to 2025?
- ◆ RQ 4: How were the editorials on climate change slanted in the selected national dailies from 2021 to 2025?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communicating development for climate change and SDGs in Nigeria

Development became a central subject matter in the global 20th century discourse when changes in the biosphere and in society were noted. Growth in the global population, the human economy, the extraction of natural resources, information generation and utilisation, and environmental degradation all influenced the perception of development (Burger *et al.*, 2019; Ceballos, Ehrlich & Raven, 2020). With all the attendant issues, by the first decade of the 21st century more than half of the world's population lived in cities, described as an urban transition (Day, Gunn & Burger, 2021). The population surge in large cities is believed to be partly attributable to cheap energy sources largely derived from fossil fuels. This aids industrialisation and creates room for increased demands for goods and services, which are also provided for by the biophysical earth system (Burger *et al.*, 2019).

In presenting the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR, 2023), titled "Times of Crisis, Times of Change: Science of Accelerating Transformations to Sustainable Development", it was stated that while some progress has been made on some aspects of the SDGs, the achievement of the global goals will be farfetched with ordinary incremental and fragmented change within the available time-frame (UNDESA, 2023). Increased awareness is key in improving the achievements of the SDGs (Guan *et al.*, 2019). Data indicates that awareness of the goals exists to the point that people know when a government is living up to its expectations or not (Ipsos, 2019; 2021). The underlying fact is that as climate change is a direct effect of human action, its control and management should also come from humans (Sohret, 2021; IPCC, 2023).

One of the means to address the problem is the use of communication to localise awareness (Youssef *et al.*, 2022). Communication should be specific to the environment to address critical concerns, including the principle of individual actions to address common problems. This kind of bottom-up approach could give people a sense of belonging in addressing their public health concerns (Ombere *et al.*, 2023).

Media and editorials

The media serves as a watchdog of government and other institutions of society. Fadeyev (2014) explains that news media has to keep government decisions in the public spotlight as government works on behalf of the people. In a democratic society, the media must be independent, professional and responsible (Millet, 2012) to stimulate debate on pertinent issues. In a newspaper, there are different journalistic genres, including news reports, features, opinion pieces and columns, editorials, editorial cartoons, and letters to the editor. Opinion pieces serve to provide different perspectives on issues reported on in the news. Opinion pieces and columns are used to express the opinions or viewpoints of individuals, while editorials are used to express the views of the publication (Conboy, 2005, in Firmstone, 2019). Ukunu (2005, in Azeez, n.d.) posits that investigative, interpretative and hard news reporting are incorporated into editorials, making it the melting pot for all kinds of journalistic writings.

Alfred (2021) states that a newspaper editorial is a subgenre of news that reflects the opinions of media organisations on an issue of national significance. Citing Okoro and Agbo (2003), Jegede (2019: 1) defines an editorial as a “critical evaluation, interpretation and presentation of significant, contemporary events to inform, educate, entertain and influence the reader”. Moreover, an editorial is a piece of frequently recurring opinion journalism that expresses the ideological or political standpoint of the newspaper (Lemoine, 2016). Also known as a leader or lead article, the editorial is the official view (Leppert, 2021) and the collective identity (Firmstone, 2019) of a newspaper. Thus, it is an opinion piece that represents the news organisation’s perspective.

Firmstone (2019) explains that “editorials allow newspapers to make allegiances known; support and oppose individuals; speak on behalf of their readers; speak to readers; and speak to politicians, parties, and other organisations”. Alfred (2021) posits that an editorial intends to persuade readers to see things from the publication’s perspective. Leppert (2021) adds that while other departments of the newspaper deliver news of events, editorial pages deliver the news of ideas. Alfred (2021) writes that editorials evaluate issues that have been reported on in the news by adding facts to proffer solutions to issues. Editorials in newspapers, like commentaries in broadcast media, portray the interpretation function of the media. The characteristics of editorials, according to Apuke (2016), include objectivity, precision, specialism, and advocacy. This means that, despite being the view of news organisation, editorials must be objective, and newspapers are to take responsibility for getting their facts right by obtaining the different sides of a story or an issue (Millet, 2012).

Uwakwe (2005, in Apuke, 2016) states that the different types of editorials are based on the functions they perform. These include persuasive editorials to convince the reader after presenting all sides of the issue and influencing them towards a cause; praise editorials to pay compliments for achievements; explanatory editorials (also called expository editorials) to answer questions by giving the reader more information on an issue; attack editorials to protect the watchdog role of the media; and crusading editorials to get a news organisation to fight for a cause that has generated controversies. Editorials could also perform the role of activists by raising alarm on issues, for example, climate change and its effect on public health.

Public health and nutrition

As stated above, climate change has far-reaching consequences that could affect people's health, for example, heat-related illnesses due to extreme heat events and respiratory problems due to exposure to smoke from wildfires. It also influences food production, leading to food insecurity and malnutrition. Extreme weather can further impair crop yields, which leads farmers to use hazardous chemicals to boost agricultural produce; thus, reducing the nutritional value of food crops. Heavy rainfall and floods can also contaminate clean water sources, which could result in waterborne diseases like typhoid fever, diarrhoea and cholera, especially in areas with poor sanitation and access to clean water (United Nations, n.d.).

Public health is compromised when the populace faces the threat of widespread illness, either from human activities or natural causes. Public health issues cut across the availability of healthcare services, surveillance, as well as the control of diseases, especially communicable diseases. It entails the provision of safe and healthy working and living conditions, sanitation, access to safe drinking water, health information and education (Duson & James, 2023; Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2023). Public health is a broad-encompassing area of human life with one of its core components being nutrition, because of its relationship with human health status (Birn, Pillay & Holtz, 2017). If individuals are not healthy, based on their nutritional status, it means that the health of the public will be affected. It thus becomes important to pay attention to issues connected with nutrition for the sake of public health.

One of the means for promoting public health and accomplishing the relevant SDGs is the adoption of universal health coverage because of its progressive inclusive form, social justice, and access to affordable healthcare (Muinde & Prince, 2022). Universal health coverage has two main objectives, namely, to protect the poor from financial risk and to increase citizens' access to healthcare. However, public health and nutrition remain challenging, particularly in poorer rural communities because of limited resources and healthcare services. Not only is there a disparity between urban and rural settings, but also between public and private health services because the latter is often available within urban settings, while rural areas face a lack of medication and supplies, inadequate emergency services, a lack of experienced healthcare workers, limited and overcrowded health care centres, and increased insecurity (Ngene, Khaliq & Moodley, 2023).

Framing of climate change

Communication and the media are important for the promotion of good health practices (Brown & Udomisor, 2015). Climate change could sometimes be perceived as a distant issue affecting other countries, which can lead to a poor understanding of the issues and effects. A lack of awareness about the effects of climate change could be attributed to the way climate change issues are framed by the media. Citing previous studies, Rossa-Roccor, Giang and Kershaw (2021) explain that to change this narrative, climate change should be framed as a human health and environmental issue to bring about transformative policy change.

Han, Sun and Lu (2017) identify six news frames that relate to climate change, namely, conflict, collaboration, human interest, attribution of responsibility, environmental and human impact, and leadership, with the environment and human impact frames as the most prominent in their study. Effects and mitigation frames were the two most common frames identified by Osindo (2014) in two Kenyan dailies.

In a systematic study of climate change literature, the most common frames identified in the articles were scientific, economic, and environmental; however, public health, disaster, and morality are gaining more scholarly attention (Badullovich, Grant & Colvin, 2020). Cramer (2008) identified the environmental frame as the most dominant, followed by political and scientific frames. Cramer (*ibid.*) explains that when climate change issues are not reported within the human impact frame, it makes the issue appear abstract to the public. Han *et al.* (2017) further established that the use of certain frames is linked to the kind of information source. In a study focused on television news websites, Abdellatif (2022) concluded that the dominant frames used were attribution of responsibility (mostly directed at governments), disaster, political struggle, and economic consequences.

Maibach *et al.* (2010) assert that introducing a human health frame to climate change could enhance public engagement. Their study (*ibid.*) concluded that the human health perspective could make the problem more personal, significant, and understandable to the public. In addition, the use of positive and health frames increases public support for climate policies compared to economic and migration frames (Dasandi *et al.*, 2022). Myers *et al.* (2012) report that when a story has a public health focus, it is likely to elicit emotional reactions in support for climate change mitigation and adaptation. According to Rossa-Roccor *et al.* (2021), the idea of framing climate change as a human health issue is beneficial because people are generally concerned about their health and that of their loved ones.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The agenda-setting theory is an appropriate framework to indicate how the media tells the public what issues to pay attention to (Baran & Davis, 2009; McQuail, 2010). The hypothesis is that the media does not tell people what to think but rather what to think about. This implies that the media wield some power to influence public decisions on certain issues. This provides a suitable perspective on understanding newspaper editorials on public issues.

As a public issue, climate change is directly associated with global warming, food production, health and nutrition. One of its realities is that it is not a problem that is peculiar to a part of society, but it has global implications. In Nigeria, climate change has had a significant effect on coastal areas due to the proximity to different warming variables like heatwaves (Day *et al.*, 2021; Ighedosa, 2019). In addition, humans are exposed to the weather through the temperature, precipitation, clouds, and winds, which vary in different places throughout the seasons (US EPA, 2022). Therefore, more attention is required in determining how to communicate and set the agenda

for climate change and public health in the country, especially given the fact that public health is not at the desired level in rural areas (Romanelli *et al.*, 2015; Ngene *et al.*, 2023).

The media plays an important role in creating awareness of the health dangers of climate change to bring about sustainable processes for development. Given that policy issues, public concerns and media interest form three different agendas (Dearing & Rogers, 1996), it would be appropriate that the three identified agendas – the priorities of the media, the public and policy – are synchronised in the way that the media carries out its function. Furthermore, there are indications that the policy formulation process can be seen as a good practice if stakeholders, such as elected and appointed officials, interest groups and individual citizens, are involved, which would guarantee its success (Meessen *et al.*, 2011).

Media framing theory posits that the way news stories are presented in the media can shape public opinion and attitudes towards specific issues (Entman, 1993). Media frames have the power to shape the public understanding of an issue, influence attitudes and behaviour, and impact public policy decisions (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2006). The primary assumption of the theory is that the media presents news through a set of frames or perspectives that could either emphasise or downplay the importance of a topic – in this case, climate change – to the audience. Framing has the potential to influence how the public perceive the causes and potential solutions to climate change issues, with the emphasis on some aspects of an issue over others. The way the media portrays climate change, especially through editorials, could have a strong impact on individual and global efforts to mitigate the issues.

Another assumption of framing theory is that news stories can contain both explicit and implicit frames, and these frames can have different effects on the public. Explicit frames are those that are clearly articulated in the news story, while implicit frames are those that are implied but not explicitly stated. Implicit frames are more powerful as they can influence public opinion without the audience realising it (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2006). The relevance of this theory to this study is in how newspaper editorials can shape public attitudes and perceptions towards climate change issues. The theory posits that media frames, constructed through the selection, emphasis, and exclusion of certain aspects of a story, can influence public understanding of an issue and affect policy outcomes (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2006; Nisbet & Scheufele, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

This study made use of content analysis. As a research design, it seeks to make meaning from texts contextually, through replicable and valid inferences (Krippendorff, 2004). The researchers adopted content analysis to determine the manifest content of the newspaper editorials on climate change.

The study sampled editorials of two Nigerian newspapers, *The Guardian* and *The Punch*, from 2021 to 2025. The online versions of these newspapers were used with search terms such as “editorial” and “opinion”, and a general scroll of the

daily publications in the archive. The search yielded a total of 3284 articles for both newspapers for the period of four and a half years. Furthermore, the climate change editorials retrieved were read to identify if they discussed the public health implications of the issue. Afterwards, a total of 46 articles were retrieved and considered for the analysis.

A code guide was designed to include the unit of analysis, content categories and descriptions in the contents for ease of understanding. The following were considered: frequency, framing, and slanting of climate change in the editorials. Other areas included the newspaper and the period of publication. The content categories under frequency included once a month, twice a month, more than twice a month, and none. Reviewing past literature on the framing of climate change issues, several frames were adopted for this study. Generic frames by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) were adopted, namely, conflict, attribution of responsibility, human interest, and economic consequence. Han *et al.* (2017) identified a “collaboration frame”, which indicates a “community of interest”, “joint efforts”, and “agreement”. Thus, the frames adopted for this study were the following: conflict, attribution of responsibility, human interest (human impact), economic consequences, collaboration, environmental, scientific, and public health. While there could be multiple frames used in an editorial, the dominant frame in each editorial was selected. The frames adopted for this study are defined below:

- ◆ *Conflict*: this frame represents disagreement between individuals, groups or countries.
- ◆ *Attribution of responsibility*: when the subject is identified and tagged as an individual, an organisation or the government, who is responsible for what happened or for what should have happened.
- ◆ *Environmental*: this frame has a primary focus on the environment.
- ◆ *Human impact*: a human angle, including how the issue affects people’s daily lives.
- ◆ *Scientific*: scientific research and technical data.
- ◆ *Collaboration*: willingness of collaboration between individuals, groups or countries on issues of climate change.
- ◆ *Political*: political side of climate change issues.
- ◆ *Economic consequences*: economic or financial impact of climate change on the country, region, organisation or individual.
- ◆ *Public health*: preventing diseases, prolonging life and promoting health through organised efforts and informed decisions.

The framing of climate change in the editorials of two Nigerian newspapers

The slant/direction of the editorial included:

- ◆ *Support*: when the editorial was favourably disposed to the position taken on the issue of climate change.
- ◆ *Against*: the editorial did not support the position expressed by the issue or policy under discussion as concerns climate change.
- ◆ *Neutral*: the editorial did not take any position regarding the issue of climate change and allowed the reader to take a position on the issue.

RESULTS

Research question 1: What is the frequency of climate change advocacy in the selected national dailies' editorials from 2021 to 2025?

TABLE 1: FREQUENCY OF EDITORIALS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Item	<i>The Guardian</i> Edition	<i>The Punch</i> Edition	Total (%)
January 2021	22 nd	-	1 (2.17)
August 2021	13 th , 22 nd , 25 th	4 th , 25 th	5 (10.9)
May 2022	3 rd	-	1 (2.17)
August 2022	-	4 th	1 (2.17)
September 2022	-	18 th	1 (2.17)
October 2022	7 th , 30 th	14 th	3 (6.52)
November 2022	-	22 nd	1 (2.17)
February 2023	-	7 th	1 (2.17)
March 2023	24 th , 26 th , 28 th , 31 st	31 st	5 (10.9)
April 2023	14 th	-	1 (2.17)
May 2023	-	11 th	1 (2.17)
July 2023	-	2 nd , 5 th	2 (4.34)
August 2023	-	18 th	1 (2.17)
September 2023	-	14 th , 15 th	2 (4.34)
October 2023	16 th	-	1 (2.17)
November 2023	-	26 th	1 (2.17)
December 2023	-	5 th	1 (2.17)
January 2024	-	26 th	1 (2.17)
March 2024	1 st	28 th	2 (4.34)
April 2024	10 th	29 th	2 (4.34)
May 2024	-	12 th	1 (2.17)
August 2024	-	9 th	1 (2.17)

Item	<i>The Guardian</i> Edition	<i>The Punch</i> Edition	Total (%)
September 2024	20 th	5 th , 13 th	3 (6.52)
October 2024	24 th	24 th	2 (4.34)
February 2025	-	21 st	1 (2.17)
April 2025	3 rd , 8 th	-	2 (4.34)
May 2025	16 th	-	1 (2.17)
June 2025	-	3 rd	1 (2.17)
Total	20 (43.5)	26 (56.5)	46 (100)

The data in Table 1 indicates the frequency of editorials on climate change within the period under review. There were 28 months, with 46 editorials on climate change. Most of the editorials (n=26, 56.5%) were from *The Punch* newspaper. There were three dates on which both dailies' editorials focused on the topic of climate change (25 August 2021; 31 March 2023; and 24 October 2024). The months with the highest number of editorials focused on climate change were August 2021 and March 2023. Comparing the combined total number of editorials for the period (n=3284) with the combined number of editorials that focused on the topic of climate change (n=46), it is clear that only 1.4% of the editorials had climate change as the focus.

Research question two: What are the types of editorials on climate change in the selected national dailies from 2021 to 2025?

TABLE 2: TYPE OF EDITORIAL

Item	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>The Punch</i>	Total (%)
News editorial	6	15	21 (45.6)
Policy editorial	2	5	7 (15.2)
Social editorial	5	-	5 (10.9)
Tribute editorial	-	-	0
Speculative editorial	6	5	11 (23.9)
Special editorial	1	1	2 (4.3)
Total	20 (43.5)	26 (56.5)	46 (100)

The data in Table 2 indicates that news editorials were the type used most (n=21, 45.6%), followed by speculative editorials (n=11, 23.9%). There were no tribute editorials during the period under review. While the newspapers used more or less the same number of speculative editorials, most of *The Punch's* editorials were news editorials (n=15, 57.69%).

Research question three: Which frames were the dominant frames in the editorials of the selected newspapers on climate change impact on public health, from 2021 to 2025?

TABLE 3: DOMINANT FRAMES IN EDITORIALS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Item	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>The Punch</i>	Total (%)
Conflict	-	-	0 (0)
Responsibility attribution	3	3	6 (13.0)
Human impact/interest	1	3	4 (8.69)
Economic consequence	3	2	5 (10.9)
Collaboration	1	3	4 (8.69)
Environmental	7	5	12 (26.0)
Scientific	-	-	0 (0)
Political	-	7	7 (15.2)
Public health	5	3	8 (17.4)
Total	20 (43.5)	26 (56.5)	46 (100)

Table 3 indicates the dominant frames in the editorials. The environmental frame was the dominant frame in the majority of the editorials (n=12 combined), followed by the public health frame (n=8 combined), and the attribution of responsibility frame (n=6 combined). Moreover, the political frame was the dominant frame in seven articles in *The Punch*, while there were no instances in *The Guardian*. The conflict frame and the scientific frame were not identified as the dominant frame in any of the editorials.

In terms of the environment frame, *The Guardian* used headlines including “Tree planting beyond the routine” (August 13, 2021); “The warning on a sinking Lagos” (August 22, 2021), and “Heal the environment, eliminate gas flaring” (October 16, 2023). Three of the editorials in *The Punch* had the human impact frame as the dominant frame, evident from headlines such as “Tinubu’s insensitive COP28 jamboree” (December 5, 2023) and “Tackling imminent devastating floods” (July 2, 2023).

Research question four: How were the editorials on climate change slanted in the selected national dailies from 2021 to 2025?

TABLE 4: SLANTING OF EDITORIALS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Item	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>The Punch</i>	Total (%)
Support	9	12	21 (45.6)
Against	9	6	15 (32.6)
Neutral	2	8	10 (21.7)
Total	20 (43.5)	26 (56.5)	46 (100)

Concerning the direction of the editorials, Table 4 indicates that most of the editorials (n=21 combined) were in *support* of the issue raised and the position taken. This implies that the newspapers were favourably disposed to the action taken on climate change. For instance, in support of the issue, one reads: “While hunger is pervasive, farmers are also plagued on all sides. Flooding, desertification and other harsh weather conditions sabotage their enterprise” (*The Punch*, October 25, 2023). One

could also sense the expectation in some of the editorials, for example: “Authorities, such as NIMET ought to be upbeat in keeping the people informed and educating them accordingly. It would appear that the organisation is not adequately equipped to carry out its statutory duties” (*The Guardian*, January 22, 2021).

DISCUSSION

The findings indicated that little attention was paid to the issue of climate change during the period under review, with only 1.4% of editorials focusing on the topic. This is in line with the findings of Nwabueze and Egbra (2016), who found that climate change was rarely reported on in the media in Nigeria and Ghana. Tagbo (2010, in Nwabueze & Egbra (2016) states that although Africa does not play a major role in carbon gas emissions, it could bear the burden due to a lack of awareness of the effects. This underscores the need for more discussions on the causes and the effects of climate change, especially as it affects public health. Anyanwu, Okpongkpong and Okeke (2019) underscore the importance of editorials in newspapers in influencing the agenda for policymakers. According to the agenda-setting theory, when the media prioritises an issue, it in turn becomes a topical issue in the mind of the public, leading to public discussions, which play a role in determining the public agenda and, ultimately, it positively affects policymaking.

In terms of the dominant frames in the editorials on climate change, the environmental frame was the dominant frame, which was used most frequently, following by the public health frame. Studies by Cramer (2008) and Nwabueze and Egbra (2016) found that the environmental frame is often the dominant frame in climate change reports, given the nature of the subject matter. Han *et al.* (2017) also identified the prominent frames for climate change reports as the environmental frame and the human impact frame, while Osindo (2014) reported the dominant frame used as the scientific frame. Rossa-Roccor (2021) explains that to bring about transformative policy change, climate change reports should be framed from a human health and environmental frame perspective. It is worth noting that news frames, through emphasising or downplaying certain aspects or issues, are capable of shaping public opinion and attitudes towards issues and it could also affect the audience’s understanding of these issues. Cramer (2008), in addition, asserts that when climate change issues are not discussed from the human impact angle it will appear abstract to the public.

The current study also investigated the slant or direction of the climate change editorials. The findings indicated that most of the editorials (n=21 combined) supported the specific position, while 15 in total were against the position. Harrison, Macmillan, and Rudd (2020) and Ukpog (2020) reported that climate change and health issues were often framed negatively. This could be a way to get people to see the urgency and threat that climate change signifies.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it is evident that the two newspapers did not dedicate sufficient space to climate change issues in their editorials. The environmental frame was used

to frame issues like flooding and other environmental problems caused by climate change. Climate change is a serious threat to the world, and how the media presents the issue could have far-reaching implications for policymaking.

In terms of limitations, the study could not go beyond the volume of data considered because it focused specifically on the two newspapers' editorials. Despite the total number of editorials published during the period under review, there was a dearth of editorials on climate change. The fact that just more than 1% of the total number of editorials published in both newspapers during the period under review focused on climate change is an indication of the (lack of) significance attached to the topic. Given the implications for public health as a result of climate change, it is clear that, in the context of agenda-setting, the frequency of coverage should increase significantly for climate change to enter the public discourse. Lastly, based on the findings of this and other studies, a human interest framing is suggested to make the topic less abstract and more relevant to the audience's daily lives.

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