

An Analysis of Dominant Health Issues, Voices and Victims in Health Reportage in Nigerian National Newspapers

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Abstract

This study examines three basic questions: (i) what health issues dominate Nigerian national newspapers? (ii) Who are the newsmakers in health news/reports in Nigerian national newspapers? (iii) Who are the victims in health news in Nigerian national newspapers? These research questions were empirically answered through the quantitative content analysis and inferential statistics adopted in this study. The author content-analysed health issues in Nigerian national newspapers from 2010-2013, focusing on 45 health issues within the purview of news, editorials, feature articles, opinion writing and letters to the editor. This study found that Nigerian national newspapers actually report health issues and the ten dominant ones include: health care delivery, health systems administration, HIV/AIDS, cancer, nutrition and balance diet, polio, maternal health, malaria, infant health and reproductive health. The health news-makers in Nigerian newspapers are health researchers through their various publications and ranked next to this group are the medical doctors. This study further found that children and women constitute the victims of health problems reported in Nigerian national newspapers. This study, therefore, concludes that given the enduring nature of newspapers, the archival quality and its comprehensive analysis, they will continue to remain a useful health resource in disseminating health information despite the explosive information and communication technologies.

Keywords: Health issues, Nigerian newspapers, health reporting, health news-makers, health victims

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INTRODUCTION

The dominant health issues in Nigerian national newspapers, those whose opinions make health news, and those that are mostly affected by health problems are the basis of investigation in this study. The Nigerian nation, like many other African countries and developing nations of the world, is bedevilled with a myriad of health problems (Akinlua, Meakin, & Umar, 2015; Federal Ministry of Health, 2012; World Health Organisation, 2005, 2013a) and the entire health care system has continued to suffer many set-backs (Welcome, 2011; World Bank, 2010). Nigeria is noted for various diseases and other health issues among which are malaria, HIV/AIDS, polio, infant mortality, cancer and maternal mortality, communicable diseases such as tuberculosis, measles, pertussis (whooping cough) and poor health facilities. Other health issues of concern in Nigeria include: poor primary, secondary and tertiary health care, shortage of health personnel and ineffective implementation of health policies (McFubara, Edoni, & Ezonbodor-Akwagbe, 2012).

The state of the health system, as well as the health status of the citizenry in Nigeria, has consistently been in a deplorable condition (Federal Ministry of Health, 2009) so much that the country's health profile has perpetually remained below national targets and far below international benchmarks (Federal Ministry of Health, 2012). For instance, it was documented that not until 2015, Nigeria and two other countries (Afghanistan and Pakistan) remained the only countries where polio was yet to be eradicated since the global efforts to eradicate polio around the world (World Health Organisation, 2013b). Despite the fact that malaria is preventable, treatable and curable, it remains the most prevalent parasitic endemic disease in Africa (Sachs & Malaney, 2002), and constitutes a major health problem in Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Health, 2010). Since the first case of HIV/AIDS was reported in 1986 in Nigeria, the pandemic continues to evolve with multiplier effects resulting into a total death of 2.1 million people (Federal Ministry of Health, 2012). While communicable diseases along with maternal, perinatal and nutritional conditions in Nigeria accounts for an estimated 67 percent of all mortality (Commonwealth Health Online, 2013), the country was once rated the fourth highest tuberculosis burden-zone in the world (Federal Ministry of Health, 2012).

In the last few decades, there have been several efforts, approaches and techniques adopted by national governments, international health and funding agencies to improve health systems across the world. These approaches are adopted in order to achieve good health outcomes among individuals and various communities. One of these approaches is the integration of mass media in addressing health problems (Rimal & Lapinski, 2009; Schiavo, 2007). This appears to have occupied the centre stage in the debates around elimination, reduction, prevention and management of diseases and how to raise the standard of health systems globally. Rimal and Lapinski (2009) argue that the need for dissemination of information about various diseases, prevention against diseases, which have now become global threats, underscores the use of the media as a complementary approach in improving the public health. The whole gamut of this approach domiciles within the scholarship of health communication. Hence, health communication as a field of enquiry is regarded as a theory and professional practice (Kreps, Bonaguro, & Query, 1998; Lupton, 1994).

The conception of health communication further succinctly underscores the integration of mass media and other forms of communication in addressing health problems in societies. According to Health Communication Unit University of Toronto (2009), health communication is defined as “the

process of promoting health by disseminating messages through mass media, interpersonal channels and events, including diverse activities such as clinician-patient interactions, classes, self-help groups, mailings, hotlines, mass media campaigns, events directed toward individuals, networks, small groups, organisations, communities or entire nations.” (p. 5) Similarly, health communication is regarded as “the process of increasing knowledge and understanding of health related issues to improve the health status of the intended audience.” (Muturi, 2005) Therefore, newspaper and other mass media are important health communication channels to complement the efforts of health care professionals and national governments in achieving improved health systems in societies. This is achieved through the dissemination of information by newspapers about various diseases and health issues in general, which inform and educate members of the public, thereby empowering their individual health agency.

Research Statement

Newspapers, like other mass media, have a central and critical role to play in disseminating information about health issues/problems in society, informing the general populations about health risks and medical solutions to enhance healthy living. The role of newspapers in this regard bothers on information (to the general public on health issues), communication (effectively by giving details and perspectives on health issues) and education (to achieve good health outcomes among the populace) (ICE). In this study, the context of Nigerian newspapers is investigated to determine what health issues and problems dominate Nigerian national newspapers, what section of the Nigerian society constitute health news-makers in Nigerian newspapers or set the public health agenda and what set of individuals suffer most from health problems/diseases among the populace as reported in Nigeria newspapers.

OBJECTIVES

1. To determine health issues/problems that dominate Nigerian national newspapers and their degree of reportage
2. To determine the public health agenda setters or health news makers in health reporting in Nigerian newspapers

3. To determine those who constitute victims of health problems in health reportage in Nigerian national newspapers

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1 What are the health issues that dominate Nigerian national newspaper and at what Degree?

RQ2 Who are the news makers in health news in Nigerian national newspapers?

RQ3 Who are the victims of health problems in health reportage in Nigerian national newspapers?

Role of newspapers in health reporting: A review

Since the emergence of newspapers in the 17th Century (George, Curran,

& Wingate, 1978; Tom, 2012; Weber, 2006), they have been very useful in society (Tom, 2012; Weber, 2006). Newspapers have contributed immensely to the various aspects of human development, including but not limited to, political development, economic development, social and religious development and the development of health systems. Martin (2003) notes that newspaper is a functional mass communication channel which contributes to the social dynamics of society through news reporting and news analysis. It is also argued that as a mass communication medium, newspapers serve as tools for shaping thoughts, and means of controlling economic and political powers (Copeland, 2003). It is espoused that “newspapers are not just about communication, but are also about community. For more than 300 years, daily and weekly newspapers have been an important part of community life, and newspapers are likely to remain important in one form or another

throughout the 21st century.” (Martin, 2003, p. 4) In view of this, several studies have identified newspapers as an important ally in communicating health news and reporting various diseases to individuals and communities (Ahmed & Bates, 2013; Atkin & Wallack, 1990). In doing this, newspapers potentially contribute towards improving the health conditions of individual members of society and general communities.

Newspapers have, from inception, been a major source of health information to the Nigerian populace. Apart from the fact that all Nigerian national newspapers have designated pages for reporting health issues, it has been documented that the first newspaper in the country, *Iwe Iroyin*

*Fun Awon Ara Egba Ati Yoruba*¹, made coverage of health issues one of its cardinal agenda items (Aina, 2007; Oladosu, 1993; Oladosu, 1993).

1 This literally means newspaper for the Egba people and the Yorubas. The Egba people are the natives of Abeokuta and its environs, while the Yorubas are the predominant ethnic group in the south west Nigeria. This is the reason why *Iwe Iroyin* started publication in Youruba language, the major indigenous dialect in the south west. The establishment of *Iwe Iroyin* in Abeokuta in 1859 makes Abeokuta to be popularly referred to as the cradle of journalism in Nigeria.

Historically, therefore, newspapers have been a major source of health information to the Nigerian populace. Globally, the trend of disseminating health information through newspapers has been recognised by national governments, health communication scholars and practitioners, health advocacy groups, health care providers and international health and funding agencies. This has consequently attracted the attention of many health communication researchers, examining the role of newspapers in reporting specific health issues (Donovan, 1993; Okidu, 2013; Rachul, Ries, & Caulfield, 2011), the general framework to health reportage (see Nwom & Oloyede, 2014; (Al-Naggar & Al-Jashamy, 2011; Torwel & Rodney, 2010) and portrayal and framing of health issues (Davidson & Wallack, 2004; Lawrence, Kearns, Park, Bryder, & Worth, 2007).

Newspaper and other forms of mass media have been identified as a constant backdrop to our daily lives in health matters (Seale, 2004). This is because newspaper and other mass media “contain a myriad of implicit and explicit information about health, which make them to be useful health resources in contemporary life, in addition to health information from health specialists.” (Seale, 2004, p. 2) Some of the major considerations given to newspapers by health communication researchers and scholars are the in-depth analysis, archival and advocacy approaches of newspapers in promoting public health issues (Rimal and Lapinski (2009) and promotion of new health and science discoveries (Phillips, Kanter, Bednarczyk, & Tastad, 1991).

Newspapers are also strategic in disseminating health information on the prevalent health issues and policies in society. This has considerably influenced many health researchers to adopt newspapers as a strategic mass communication channel to seek attention from government and international health and funding agencies (Dorothy Nelkin, 1987; D. Nelkin, 1996), including various advocate groups, who seek policy change from government (Jernigan

Wright, 1996). The fact that health information in newspapers can be shared by family members, friends and associates, or used as a basis of discussion and interaction by members of society with health professionals and practitioners (Brittle & Zint, 2003), make newspapers a core subject of investigation among health communication researchers. This may have also informed the submission of Nazione, Pace, Russell and Silk (2013) that the role newspapers play in improving health is multifaceted and interdisciplinary, encompassing almost any topic that concerns the well-being of people and health policy change.

Ankem (2006) identifies newspapers as important allies in any public health matters because they play the role of being source of information as well as advocate health awareness. In view of this, the United States Agency for International Development (2006), posits that this makes health authorities entrust newspaper, and the media in general, with essential health information, which is then relayed to the public in readily accessible formats. Boyd and William D. (2009) found that newspaper is one of the mass media that helps health workers to expand their audience reach because they (mass media) are effective in informing and perhaps persuading target audiences to adopt new behaviours or remind them of critical information about various health issues or diseases and where they can seek help.

In a study conducted in Ghana on newspaper coverage of health issues by Ghanaian newspapers, Diedong (2013) found Ghanaian newspapers as a medium for creating awareness on health matters through the publication of straight news stories and other editorial matters, which can provide a shared understanding of some of the serious health problems confronting people. The study, therefore, concludes that newspapers can play an important role in not only stimulating discussion on the problems and challenges of the health situation in society, they can serve as very good sources of empowerment and direction towards greater health (Diedong, 2013).

RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

This study adopts a quantitative research design within the methodological process of content analysis as this is the appropriate method for this research considering its focus. The focus of this study is to examine, in quantitative terms, health issues that dominate Nigerian national newspapers, the voices that make health news or set the public health agenda and the victims of health problems reported in Nigerian newspapers. The author adopts a quantitative approach to content analysis because the volume of mentions necessitates quantification by counting and frequency, and coding for statistical analysis to draw scientific conclusions (Macnamara, 2005). Quantitative research, as espoused by (Hopkins, 2008), is simply the whole process of quantifying relationships between variables. Quantitative content analysis:

Collects data about media content such as topics or issues, volume of mentions, ‘messages’ determined by key words in context (KWIC), circulation of the media (audience reach) and frequency. Quantitative content analysis also should consider media form (e.g. visual media such as television use more sophisticated semiotic systems than printed text and, thus, are generally regarded as having greater impact). (Macnamara, 2005, p. 4)

In general, however, content analysis “is any research technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics within text.” (Stone, Dunphy, Smith, & Ogilvie, 1966, p. p. 5) As postulated by Berelson (1952), content analysis is described as a “research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.” (p. 18)

Selected newspapers, population of study, sample and sampling technique

While it may be difficult to determine the actual number of existing newspapers in Nigeria today because of the chequered nature of newspapers in Nigeria, research once indicates that there are over one hundred (100) newspapers (Dragomir & Thompson, 2012), and about twenty (20) of them can be regarded as national in terms of circulation, readership and reach (Adeyanju & Okwori, 2005; Nigerian Press Council, 2009; Dragomir & Thompson, 2012). Of these twenty national newspapers, the researcher selected four among them viz: *The Punch*, *Daily Trust*, *The Guardian* and *Nigerian Tribune*. According to Dragomir and Thompson (2012), *The Punch* is ranked 1st, *Daily Trust* 4th, *The*

Guardian 5th and *Nigerian Tribune* 6th in terms of readership and coverage, among the twenty national newspapers in Nigeria.

It is noteworthy to state that these national newspapers were selected for this study based on certain criteria. All the four newspapers have national coverage, reach and circulation, which make them popular across Nigeria. The newspapers have been in existence for at least ten years in the country. These newspapers have consistently published since their establishment and enjoy readership across the length and breadth of Nigeria. Also, Okidu (2013) notes that these newspapers have a strong network of national correspondents and thoroughly bred professionals, which have over the years, earned them respect for their in-depth analysis and coverage of such national issues as politics, health, education, economy, sports, marine and insurance and so forth. In view of this, these newspapers have been widely cited in workshops, seminars, and training sessions on health communication in the country (Okidu, 2013).

The population of this study covers the entire editions of the newspapers studied published over a period of four years from the 1st of January, 2010 to 31st of December, 2013 excluding Saturday and Sunday editions. The researcher chose to study a four-year timeframe because most of the health communication studies conducted in Nigeria within the context of newspapers were undertaken within a short period, and at most two years (see Okidu, 2013; Uwom & Oloyede, 2014, Batta, 2012, Towel & Rodney, 2010). Consequently, the total amount of newspaper editions for the period of four years of weekday coverage are estimated as 1,040 for each newspaper (5 days x 52 weeks = 260 editions, x 4 years = 1,040) and 4,160 as total editions for the four newspapers (1,040 x 4 = 4,160).

The researcher adopted a composite sampling technique to determine the sample of the study. Composite sampling technique is a common method in content analysis studies whereby researchers construct a composite week for each month in the sample (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). "For example, a study might use a sample of one Monday (drawn at random from the four or five Mondays in the month), one Tuesday (drawn from the available Tuesdays), and so on, until all weekdays have been included." (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 166). This technique has been adjudged the most scientific and superior over random sampling and consecutive day sampling techniques, when analysing newspaper content (Lacy, Riffe, & Fico, 1998; Riffe, Lacy,

& Fico, 1998). This sampling technique is also considered effective because it controls the bias of cyclical trends in news coverage (Budd, Thorp, & Donohue, 1967; Riffle et al., 1998). Therefore, the composite technique was performed over the 48 months of the four years studied for each newspaper (2010-2013) to determine the selected newspaper editions for content analysis. Using the composite approach, this study specifically used a calendar to select each day of the week within the 48 months studied. This covers from January 1st 2010 to December 31 2013.

Through the application of a composite or constructive sampling technique for each of the newspapers, 211 newspaper editions were selected and content analysed. Therefore, for the four newspapers, 844 editions ($211 \times 4 = 844$) were content analysed as the sample from the total population of 4,160 editions. This sample size is approximately estimated at 21 percent of the entire population, which is adequate to make a representative judgement for the entire population. A sample size between 10 percent and 25 percent is recommended as acceptable when determining sample size in content analysis (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). The units of analysis focused in this study include conventional news stories, articles/column writings, editorials and letters to the editor that are related to health in all the selected national newspapers. Within the units of analyses, content categories were coded, which include health topics, speakers in health news/reports, victims of health problems.

Given the importance of validity, reliability and inter-coder reliability in content analysis studies, it is essential for researchers to painstakingly factor the components of validity and reliability in the whole process of the study design. This is viewed as fundamental because validity and reliability are research components through which researchers make a strong case for the data generated through content analysis (Potter & Riddle, 2007; Reel & Thompson, 1994; Smith, 1987). According to Hecht, Trost, Bator, and MacKinnon (1997), the questions of validity and reliability in content analysis studies should be carefully and essentially answered by researchers, especially when the results of content analyses are likely to be adopted in public health campaigns, which by extension, is related to the focus of this study.

Krippendorff (1980) notes that in the context of content analysis, reliability implies inter-rater reliability, inter-coder reliability or inter-rater agreement. Inter-coder reliability refers to the degree of agreement that exists between independent coders on the rating or code they assign to each object in the study (Krippendorff, 1980). Therefore, achieving reliability between coders is necessary in the

whole process. Reliability, which is also referred to as re-productivity according to Krippendorff (2004), is conceptualised as:

The degree to which a process can be replicated by different analysts, working under varying conditions, at different locations, or using different but functionally equivalent instruments. To be clear, agreement is what we measure; reliability is what we wish to infer from it. In content analysis, reproducibility is arguably the most important interpretation of reliability. (p. 215)

In content analysis studies, one of the common methods of measuring reliability is to measure the degree of agreement in percentage term between coders or raters (Stemler, 2001). According to Stemler (2001), this approach sums up the number of cases coded in the same way by two different coders and divides it by the total number of cases. The researcher adopted Cohen's kappa to calculate the degree of agreement between the researcher and one research assistant in the coding exercise in order to determine the reliability of the data. Cohen's kappa coefficient was chosen to calculate the inter-coder reliability because it accounts for agreement that is expected to occur by chance (Murphy & Ciszewska-Carr, 2005). Furthermore, Cohen's kappa is specifically designed to measure the level of agreement between two coders (Murphy & Ciszewska-Carr, 2005).

The researcher and the assistant coded the same 241 health stories, which determined the inter-coder agreement. This was estimated at 10.2 percent of the entire 2,368 health stories that were eventually coded for this study. Apart from the 10 to 25 percent recommended as a benchmark by Wimmer and Dominick (2011) in determining the sample and inter-coder reliability in content analysis, other previous studies have used 10 percent in their studies (see Batta, 2012; Caburnay et al., 2003; Laar, 2010; Uwom & Oloyede, 2014). The SPSS was used to calculate kappa coefficient. The kappa coefficient value found was .857, which suggests that there was almost perfect agreement between the researcher and the assistant in the coding exercise (Landis & Koch, 1977).

FINDINGS

The findings of this study indicate that there appears to be similar pattern of health coverage in Nigerian national newspapers as most of them substantially devote news stories for the reportage of health issues and partly through feature articles (Table 1 and Figure 1). Specifically, *The Guardian* reported health issues through news story than all other newspapers (68 percent) while *Daily Trust* (32.7 percent) and *The Punch* (32.5 percent) account for the largest health issues reported through

feature articles (Table 1 and Figure 1). It is important to note that Nigerian national newspapers, as reflected in this study, did not focus attention on the report of health issues through their editorial despite the strategic importance of editorials in newspapers. This is reflected in the degree of coverage through editorials, which is less than 2 percent by each newspapers studied (Table 1 and Figure 1). Overall, of all the newspapers studied, *The Punch* records the largest coverage of health issues with 30.1 percent and followed by *Nigerian Tribune* with 28.7 percent (Table 2 and Figure 2).

Table 1: Coverage of Health Issues through Units of Analysis in Selected Newspapers 2010-2013

Type	Daily Trust	Nigerian Tribune	Guardian	The Punch
News story	64.4	65.4	68	61.3
Editorial	0.6	0.7	1.6	1.3
Feature articles	32.7	17.1	22.5	32.5
Column writing /commentary	1.9	16.2	7.9	3.7
Letters to the editor	0.2	0.4	0	1.3
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
n	483	677	494	711

Figure 1: Coverage of Health Issues through Units of Analysis in Selected Newspapers 2010-2013

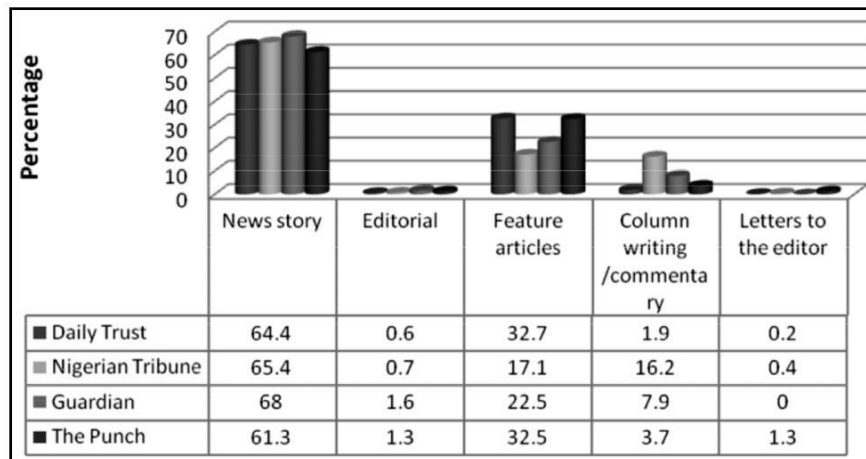
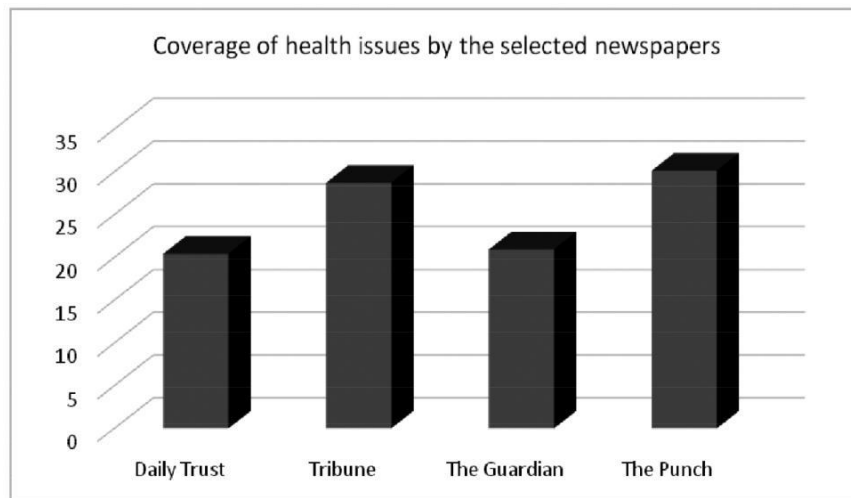


Table 2: Overall coverage of Health Issues by

Selected newspapers 2010-2013

Newspapers	Percentage
The Punch	30.1
Tribune	28.7
The Guardian	20.9
Daily Trust	20.4
Total	100%
n 2368	

Figure 2: Overall coverage of Health Issues by Selected Newspapers 2010-2013



RQ1: What are the health issues that dominate Nigerian national newspapers and at what degree?

In the general coverage of health issues by Nigerian newspapers, all the newspapers studied shared almost the same patterns of health reportage. In other words, health issues in Nigeria enjoy similar coverage across the newspapers studied. This is because health issues that receive low coverage, enjoy such a degree of coverage, not only in a single newspaper, but across the newspapers studied while those that receive relatively high coverage also enjoy such a degree of coverage across the newspapers studied (Table 3). The findings of this study further indicate that the 10 dominant health issues out of the 45 health issues content-analysed in Nigerian national newspapers include: healthcare delivery (10.6 percent), health systems administration (9.4 percent), HIV/AIDS (7.9 percent), cancer (6 percent), nutrition and balance diet (4.8 percent), polio (4.5 percent), maternal health (4.1), malaria (3.8), infant health (3.3) and reproductive health (2.4) (Table 4 and Figure 3).

Table 3: Coverage of Health Issues by Selected Newspapers 2010-2013

Health Themes	Daily Trust	Nigerian Tribune	The Guardian	The Punch
Malaria	2.5	5.2	3.7	3.5
HIV/AIDS	9.1	6.9	11.2	5.7
Polio	7.1	4.4	4.9	2.7
Tuberculosis	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.1
Diabetes	1.9	2.1	2.2	2.3
Hypertension	0.2	0.9	1.0	1.1
Asthma	0.2	1.2	0.4	1.1
Nutrition and balance diet	5.4	4.7	3.9	5.2
Mental illness	0.6	0.1	0.4	1.6
Cholera	2.7	1.0	2.2	2.0
Glaucoma	0	0	0.2	0.3
Ulcer	0.6	0.3	0	0.1
Meningitis	0.6	0.1	0.4	0.1
Measles	0.2	0.1	0.4	0
Skin infection	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.8
Diarrhea	0.2	0.7	0.4	0.4
Lassa fever	0.6	0.9	0.4	0
Whooping cough	0	0.1	0.2	0
Leprosy	0	0.1	0	0
Cancer	7.1	3.7	7.3	6.5
Stroke	0.6	0.9	1.6	1.1
Infertility/reproductive health	1.9	3.4	1.6	2.4
Heart disease	3.5	1.2	2.2	3.0
Arthritis	0	0	0.2	1.3
Neo/ante-natal care	0.2	1.0	.2	.3
Infant health/mortality	3.3	3.4	2.6	3.7
Maternity health/mortality	7.1	4.6	1.8	3.3
Ebola virus	0.2	0.1	0.2	0
Healthcare delivery	6.6	19	10.4	5.5
Healthcare system administration	10.0	6.1	12.4	9.9
Launch of new drugs / treatment	2.1	0.9	0	0.8
Policies, facilities, personnel, allowance	0.8	0.9	1.0	1.8

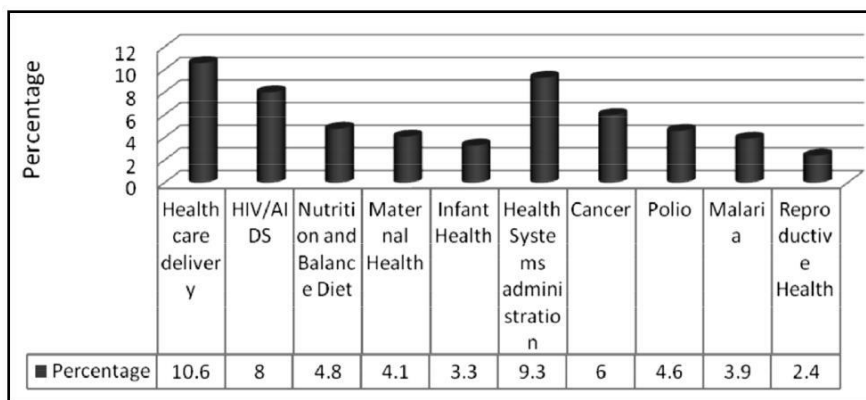
Bacteria/viral infection	0.4	0	0	0.8
Hepatitis	0.2	0.6	0	0.1
Traditional/herbal medicine	0.8	1.3	0.8	0.3
Eye disease	1.2	5.5	1.0	2.1
Nose related disease	0	0.6	0.4	0
Ear infection	0.6	0.7	0.2	0.4
Mismanagement of ailment/health	0.2	1.0	1.0	0.8
Alcohol, tobacco and drug intake	3.1	0.4	3.3	4.7
Other	16.4	13.7	17.9	22.7
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
n	482	677	492	706

Table 4: Overall Coverage of Health Issues in Selected Newspapers 2010-2013

Health themes	Percentage
Malaria	3.8
HIV/AIDS	7.9
Polio	4.5
Tuberculosis	1.3
Diabetes	2.1
Hypertension	0.8
Asthma	0.8
Nutrition and balance diet	4.8
Mental illness	0.7
Cholera	1.9
Glaucoma	0.1
Ulcer	0.3
Meningitis	0.3
Measles	0.2
Skin infection	0.6
Diarrhea	0.5
Lassa fever	0.5
Whooping cough	0.1
Leprosy	0
Cancer	6
Stroke	1.1
Infertility/reproductive health	2.4

Heart disease	2.4
Arthritis	0.4
Neo/ante-natal care	0.5
Infant health/mortality	3.3
Maternity health/mortality	4.1
Ebola virus	0.1
Healthcare delivery	10.6
Healthcare system administration	9.4
Launch of new drugs/treatment	0.9
Policies, facilities, personnel, allowance	1.2
Bacteria/viral infection	0.3
Hepatitis	0.3
Traditional/herbal medicine	0.8
Eye disease	2.7
Nose related disease	0.3
Ear infection	0.5
Mismanagement of ailment/health	0.8
Alcohol, tobacco and drug intake	2.9
Other	17.8
Total	100%
n	2368

Figure 3 : Dominant Health Issues Covered by Nigerian Newspapers 2010- 2013



RQ2: Who are the news makers of health news in Nigerian national newspapers?

Across all the newspapers studied, health researchers constitute the major news makers of health news in Nigerian national newspapers. This is because most of the health news in Nigerian national newspapers was sourced from a myriad of journals of health and medical research and the reports of international health agencies (32.6 percent). This is closely followed by medical doctors (16.4

percent), state (12.7 percent) and federal government officials (10.7) (Tables 5 and 6). These findings, therefore, speak directly to the RQ2 of this study. Contrary to the general assumption in Nigeria that medical doctors are the main voices through which health reporters generate health news, this research shows that the major source of health news in Nigerian national newspapers is the quantum of health researches within and outside the country (Table 6 and Figure 4).

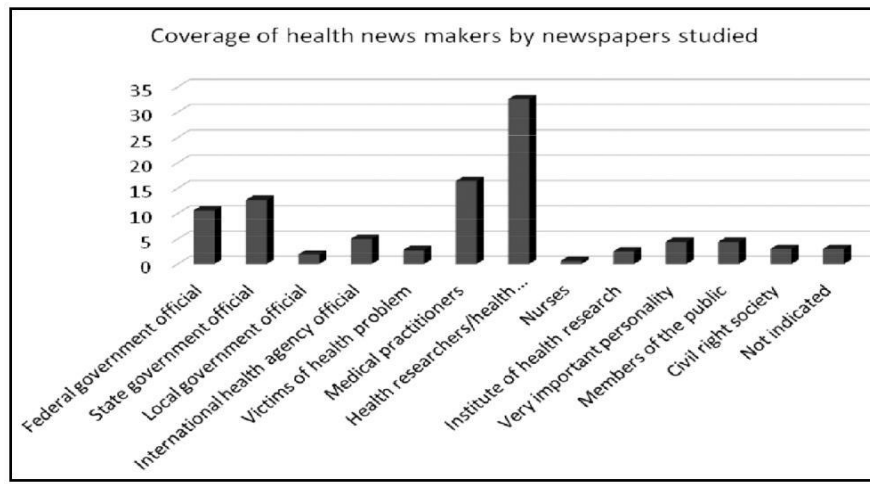
Table 5: News Makers of Health News in Selected
Nigerian National Newspapers 2010-2013

Speaker	Daily Trust	Nigerian Tribune	The Guardian	The Punch
Federal government official	13.5	9.0	11.0	9.9
State government official	13.0	20.2	8.6	8.2
Local government official	2.1	4.1	0.2	0.9
International health agency official	5.8	3.5	6.3	5.1
Victims of health problem	3.5	2.2	1.4	4.0
Medical practitioners	19.0	10.6	22.4	15.9
Health researchers	28.6	33.1	30.6	36.2
Nurses	0.4	0.4	0.2	1.1
Institute of health research	1.9	1.0	5.9	2.0
Very important personality	2.7	6.1	6.5	2.6
Members of the public	3.1	3.7	3.3	6.8
Civil right society	2.9	3.8	1.6	3.1
Not indicated	3.5	2.1	1.8	4.3
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
n	483	677	490	705

Table 6: Overall News Makers of Health News in Selected Nigerian National Newspapers 2010-2013

Speaker	Percentage
Federal government official	10.6
State government official	12.7
Local government official	1.9
International health agency official	5
Victims of health problem	2.8
Medical practitioners	16.4
Health researchers/health professionals	32.6
Nurses	0.6
Institute of health research	2.5
Very important personality	4.4
Members of the public	4.4
Civil right society	3
Not indicated	3
Total	100%
n	2368

Figure 4: News Makers of Health News in Nigerian National Newspapers 2010-2013



RQ3: Who are the victims of health problems in health reportage in Nigerian national newspapers?

Apart from the general populace, which is mainly affected by health problems in Nigeria, the specific group that is mostly affected by health problems is the children folk (20.1 percent) while the women folk ranks next to the children (12.6 percent). This is reflected in all the newspapers studied (Table 7). *The Guardian* specifically reported children as the most affected health victims more than all other newspapers studied (30.0) while *Daily Trust* specifically reported women as the most affected health victims among all the newspapers studied (17.5) (Table 7). Apart from the general populace, the overall analysis across all the newspapers studied indicate that children are the most affected health victims (20.1 percent), ranked next is women folk (12.6 percent), which is followed by men (10.1 percent) and medical workers and government (10 percent) (Table 8 and Figure 4).

It is noteworthy that medical workers and government as a variable in this study explains many problems around non-implementation of health policies by government, lack of health facilities, inability to ensure the general welfare of medical workers and shortage of health personnel among other issues, which have always led to engagements, dialogues and face-offs between medical workers and government officials. Consequently, one of the major ways through which medical workers in Nigeria express their grievances against government is industrial action or strike. Whenever there are problems between medical workers and government, leading to industrial action or not, Nigerian national newspapers give coverage to such face-offs and, they are reported on the health pages of newspapers.

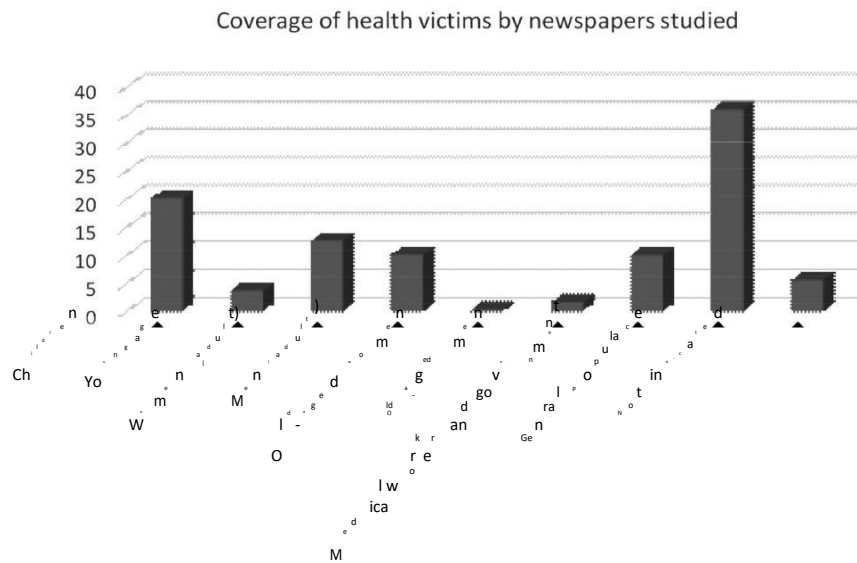
Table 7: Victims of Health Problems in Selected Nigerian
National Newspapers 2010-2013

Victim	Daily Trust	Nigerian Tribune	The Guardian	The Punch
Children	18.4	18.6	30.0	13.4
Young age	1.9	3.1	3.3	5.7
Women (adult)	17.5	13.3	8.1	11.7
Men (adult)	11.2	7.5	6.7	14.2
Old-aged women	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.6
Old-aged men	1.0	0.3	2.6	2.6
Medical worker and government	10.9	10.5	9.4	11.5
General populace	32.4	45.7	36.2	29.2
Not indicated	6.4	0.7	3.5	11.1
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
n	481	676	492	702

Table 8: Overall Coverage of Victims of Health Problems in
Selected Nigerian National Newspapers 2010-2013

Victim	Percentage
Children	20.1
Young age	3.7
Women (adult)	12.6
Men (adult)	10.1
Old-aged women	0.3
Old-aged men	1.6
Medical worker and government	10
General populace	36
Not indicated	5.6
Total	100%
n	2368

Figure 5: Coverage of Victims of Health Problems in Nigerian National Newspapers 2010-2013



DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Similar to the study of Torwel and Rodney (2010) and in relation to the findings of this study, newspapers disseminate information on various health issues to members of the public to inform them of health risks, disease outbreaks and other prevalent health issues. Therefore, it may be argued that the dissemination of information on various health issues by newspapers may help people, particularly those who are literate, to seek health information from newspapers. This also resonates with several studies, which have identified newspapers as an important ally in communicating health news and reporting various diseases to individuals and communities (see Atkin & Wallack, 1990; Ahmed & Bates, 2013; Seale, 2004). The finding of this study, which shows that Nigerian national newspapers report various health issues (Table 1), supports the argument of Seale (2004) that newspapers “contain a myriad of implicit and explicit information about health, which make them to be useful health resources in contemporary life, in addition to health information from health specialists.” (p. 2)

As previously reported in the study of Dorothy and Nelkin (1987), the finding of this research which shows that Nigerian national newspapers actually report various health issues, indicate that Nigerian newspapers may be a strategic mass medium through which health researchers and practitioners and advocate groups may seek the attention of government and international health

agencies for health. The finding of this study is also similar to the work of Diedong (2013). Diedong (2013) found newspapers as a medium of creating awareness on health matters through the publication of straight news stories and other editorial matters. The coverage of health issues by Nigerian national newspapers, as confirmed in this study, may be an avenue for health researchers to use the medium of newspaper to seek attention from government and international health and funding agencies (Dorothy Nelkin, 1987), including various advocate groups, who seek policy change from government (Jernigan & Wright, 1996). This is more important because research has shown that newspapers are a strategic medium of mass communication to draw the attention of national governments to pressing issues of national interest (American Public Health Association, 2000). Various government agencies, including ministry of health across the world, place important concern on media monitoring. This is demonstrated by designating specific officers to monitor media events and general media contents in both print and electronic media in order to integrate issues from media reports, public yearnings and aspirations into the policy formulation process (American Public Health Association, 2000).

Specifically, considering the dominant health issues in Nigerian national newspapers, which include healthcare delivery, health systems administration, HIV/AIDS, cancer, nutrition and balance diet, polio, maternal health, malaria, infant health and reproductive health (Table 4 and Figure 3), it may be argued that Nigerian newspapers are relatively responsive to happenings in society including health sector. This argument is based on the fact that these 10 dominant health issues are the common issues and problems ravaging the Nigerian society (McFubara, Edoni, & Ezonbodor-Akwagbe, 2012; Federal Ministry of Health, 2012; McFubara et al., 2012; Sachs & Malaney, 2002;

World Health Organisation, 2013b), and they are dominantly reported by Nigerian national newspapers out of the 45 health issues analysed. Furthermore, this study shows that health reporting in Nigerian national newspapers is not limited to the voices of the medical practitioners in Nigeria. Health reporters have now extended the frontiers of health news or information to health and medical researchers through journals of health and medical research within and outside the country. In other words, health reporting in Nigerian newspapers has now focused attention on the current findings published in health and scientific publications and various health reports. Through these health and medical publications, health reporters in Nigeria have been able to generate a pool of health news and reports.

Similarly, the finding of this study, which indicates children and women as the major health victims in health coverage in Nigerian national newspapers, may be a true reflection of national and international claims. Most of the health data and statistics in Nigeria on various health problems or diseases, for instance, malaria, HIV/AIDS and polio, indicate that children and women are the most affected groups (Federal Ministry of Health, 2010, 2012). In the international arena, children and women otherwise known as the vulnerable groups, and as confirmed in this study, have been identified as the most affected health victims on various health problems. Prominent among these diseases include malaria, polio, HIV/AIDS, whooping cough, diarrhoea (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013; World Bank, 2011; World Health Organisation, 2011a, 2011b)

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it may be concluded that newspapers in Nigeria have been a major source of health information to members of the Nigerian public as, over time, they have made publication of health news and analysis a common practice. It may also be concluded that newspapers in all societies remain veritable means of informing people and creating awareness about health issues.

Despite the evolution of information communication technologies, which have widened the communication platforms in the 21st century, it may be asserted based on the findings of this study that newspapers are still relevant in disseminating health information and may be a strategic medium for health researchers, advocate groups and health-based non-governmental organisations to seek attention from government and international health and funding agencies.

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