

Analysis of the *Guardian* and *Vanguard* Newspapers' Reportage of Environmentally Displaced Persons in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study was carried out to find out how Environmentally Displaced Persons (EDPs) in Nigerian are reported in *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers from April to July 2018. The newspapers were purposively selected because they have wide readership and are circulated nationwide. Content analysis research approach was adopted with the major focus on frequency, prominence and subject/contents. The results were analysed using SPSS version 20.0. From the result of the data analysed, only 27 reports on EDPs were obtained from the selected newspapers. Findings also indicate that majority (96%) of the reports appeared mainly inside of the pages of the newspapers. As regards the subject/content on EDPs, flood and other factors such as conflict/violence featured six and 13 times with (22.1%) and (48.1%) respectively. Based on the findings, it is recommended that the Nigerian newspapers should improve their coverage of EDPs so as to call proper attention to the situation and encourage support to remedy the situation.

Keywords: EDPs, Media reports, Newspapers, Natural displacement, Human-made displacement

Introduction

Globally, the total number of displaced persons is currently estimated around fifty million, with the majority of these people in Africa and Asia (Oduwole & Fadeyi, 2013). Fifteen million internally displaced persons can be found in Africa, with an increase of 7.5% between 2013 and 2014 (Onaedo, Oni & Sejoro, 2017). Nigeria, the Africa's largest populated country, has experienced waves of displacement, both small and large scale, caused basically by natural and man-made disasters that have affected most of the 36 states in the country (Okon, 2018).

An estimation by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) reports that from July to October, 2012, a total of 2.1 million residents were sacked by flood in Nigeria (Onaedo et al., 2017). Also, as noted by the National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons (NPIDP, 2012), very large numbers of Nigerians are internally displaced yearly as a result of conflicts, natural disasters and development projects (Ibrahim & Wodi, 2017). Buttressing this point, the data gathered by Internal Displaced Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), exposed that Nigeria has 3.3 million persons displaced by conflict – the highest number in Africa (Okon, 2018). Breaking it down, as of April 2015 and at December 2015, IDMC recorded more than 1 million IDPs with the total figure of 2,152,000 IDPs identified in Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe. Between January 2013 and February 2014, about 470,565 and 143,164 persons were displaced in Nigeria by internal conflicts and natural disasters, respectively (Osagioduwa & Oluwakorede, 2016 in Onaedo, et al. 2017).

Consequences of displacements on victims and the country are numerous. In the very words of Aloba and Obaji (2016) “while the act of displacement itself often may violate the human rights of those affected, the subsequent loss of access to homes, lands, livelihoods, personal documentation, family members, and social networks can deleteriously affect the ability of displaced persons to assert and relish an entire range of fundamental rights”. Writing further, they lamented that “the longer displacement continues, the greater is the risk that traditional family and social structures break down, making displaced persons to be dependent on outside aid and vulnerable to economic and sexual exploitation”.

The media are the major means of information dissemination and to catch a glimpse of the happenings in the society or meet a psychic need, some read newspapers or magazine or both, while some others watch and listen to television and radio respectively (Nwabueze, Frank, Nnaemeka, Umeora and Okika, 2015). Therefore, the media are very critical in raising awareness about the problems of the society particularly those of the EDPs and finding solutions that will enhance a

positive development and peaceful co-existence” (Ibrahim et al., 2017). Nwabueze *et al.* (2015) corroboratively note that the media have the responsibility of setting agenda and shaping the way the public understand certain issues, its impact and the need for action. Based on this, the aim of this study is to investigate how *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers reported EDPs in Nigeria. The study is expected to yield results that will provide a guide for understanding of the situation concerning EDPs in Nigerian and areas that need intervention and improvement for government, policy makers and the media in Nigeria intervention efforts.

The Problem

As stated by Ogunjinmi, Onadeko and Ogunjinmi (2013), the roles of media in enhancing environmental awareness and consciousness among the public cannot be overemphasised as they are among the elements that can greatly contribute to the encouragement of environmental awareness in poor urban and rural-based communities. In Nigeria, thousands of people have been displaced due to natural and human-made causes. The plight of these displaced persons ought to be reported for public knowledge as well as government and philanthropic interventions. Also, several empirical studies reviewed have examined how the media captured displaced persons in Nigeria with the major focus on conflict/violence induced displacements (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2017). Thus, it becomes pertinent to determine the frequency of report on EDPs in *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers, prominence given to news reports on EDPs and the subject/content of the reports on EDPs. Therefore, the study was motivated by the need to determine the coverage of the EDPs in Nigeria by *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to:

1. determine the frequency of reports on EDPs in *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers;
2. ascertain the prominence given to news reports on EDPs in *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers; and
3. To find out the subject matter/content of the reports on EDPs in *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers.

A Review of Related Literature

Displacement can be described from various angles. To Aloba *et al.* (2016) situations in which individuals and groups are compelled or obliged to leave and remain away from their homes, but remain within the borders of their countries is known as internal

displacement. Displaced persons according to international law involves are:

Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obligated to flee or to have cause to leave their homes or place of habitual residence in particular, as a result of or in order to avoid the effect of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and they must have either been within their own national borders (as internally displaced persons) or they must have crossed an internationally recognized state border (as refugees) (Ladan (2006) in Oduwole & Fadeyi, 2013).

On the part of Hens (n.d.), persons who are displaced within their country of habitual residence or who have crossed an international border and for whom environmental degradation, deterioration or destruction is a major cause of their displacement, although not necessarily the sole one, belong to environmentally displaced people. For the purpose of this study, the focus is on Environmentally Displaced Persons (EDPs).

The principal factors or causes of environmental displacements include natural events necessitating disaster relief such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, floods, droughts, heat, and cold waves. Human-made causes are most fundamental causes and are seen as predictable environmental causes of the displacements. They include depletion of water, soil and other resources and/or environmental degradation, dam construction, nuclear testing, hazardous waste site construction, eco-system degradation, mega projects and industrial accidents. On the other hand population pressure, diseases, malnutrition and poverty are secondary causes which originate from primary factors. In all these situations, the impact is manifested as a disruption of the human ecology of the affected area (Hens, n.d.; Besthorn & Meyer, 2010). Jayawardhan (2017, p.105) explained that “environmental displacement or migration is either slow onset or rapid onset”. To Jayawardhan, rapid onset environmental displacement is when people are displaced due to natural disasters associated with climate change because of the effect of rising ocean temperatures on ocean movements and storms.

In Nigeria, a good number of examples indicate that people are forced to leave their land because it can no longer support them (Hens, n.d.) due to natural and man-made disasters. According to Abdulrahman and Zuwaira (2016), the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) between 2013 and 2015 has increased to about 5 million within and outside Nigeria. As exposed by Mohammed (2017), causes of displacement include natural disasters and environmental degradation, inter-

communal/inter-ethnic clashes, disputes over land, boundary conflicts between indigenous people and settlers, communal and ethno-religious clashes, as well as electoral violence. In addition, both federal and state governments' activities such as demolitions, the oil explorations in the Niger-Delta region leading to environmental degradation and pollution, loss of the people's sources of livelihood are also causes of displacement in Nigeria (Onaedo *et al.*, 2017).

As regards natural induced displacement, annually, Nigeria is greatly exposed to natural threats by a number of disasters, the most common being floods occurring in lowlands and river basins where people live in densely-populated informal settlements (IDMC, 2018). Displacement as a result of flood is caused not only by rains and overflowing watercourses, but has also occurred due to the release of water from dam reservoirs in Nigeria as well as in upstream countries (IDMC, 2018). A striking example is the reports of flood from July to October, 2012, in Nigeria (Onaedo *et al.*, 2017). This incident according to Adekola and Lamond (2018, p.1146) “impacted 33 of 36 states in the country, including 14 that were considered severely affected. A total of 37 million people were impacted and the disaster displaced 2.1 million, killed 363, left over 18,200 injured and destroyed or damaged more than 618,000 houses”. In Anambra state it affected an estimated 10,000 homes (Okpala, 2013). Another example is flooding incident in July 2018 caused by torrential rains on Nigeria's border with Niger which has left 49 people dead and 20 missing (Vanguard July, 2018).

Several studies have been conducted on displacement, the induced causes and the significant effects. Empirical study conducted by Okon (2018) exposed that studies carried out in Nigeria on internal displacements covered issues such as causes and factors of internal displacement, internal intervention for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), psychosocial challenges of IDPs, provision of education for IDPs and inclusive electoral process for IDPs in Nigeria. As regards the effects of displacement, studies show that natural disaster such as flooding has negative or catastrophic impact leading to displacement, forced migration, hardship, and reduction in food production (Amadi & Ogonor, 2015). Data from various studies exposed that the major cause of flood specifically in Nigeria is as a result of non-functionality of the drainage system and total absence of the drainage system (Olajoke, Akeem & Ikotun, 2013). On health, evidence indicate that fever/malaria, malnutrition in children and adult male, cholera, cough, cold, diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections, post-traumatic stress disorder and depression were the major health problems of the IDPs particularly in Africa (Ogbanga, 2015; Owoaje, Uchendu, Ajayi & Cadmus, 2017).

Concerning governments' effort, studies conducted by Oduwole et al. (2013), Onaedo et al. (2017); Adekola et al. (2018) revealed neglects on the part of state government in ensuring better, effective and functional policies. Also that action taken by the government in attending to the plights of IDPs in Nigeria is on extemporised basis with no solid and durable solution. The study equally found out, that environmental disasters such as that of flooding is unavoidable and therefore measures should be directed at 'living with water' for emergency response, damage reduction as well as the aftermath.

Other empirical evidence from studies in the area of media social roles indicate that the mass media have not efficiently executed their surveillance function in the coverage of environmental issues and as well have not influenced public knowledge. This can partly be ascribed to low coverage and prominence given to environmental issues. Studies also show that environmental issues such as climate change and flooding are reported only when specific events and current research findings emerge (Akpan, Anorue & Ukonu, 2012; Batta, Ashong & Bashir, 2013; Muiyiwa, 2014; Atieno & Njoroge, 2014; Nwabueze et al., 2015; Ajaero, Okoro & Ajaer, 2016).

A recent study conducted in Nigeria on conflict/violence induced displacement observed that print media captured the situation in IDP camps as well as proffer solutions on how to effectively tackle the challenges (Ibrahim et al, 2017).

From the foregoing, even though there are studies on displacements, there is a dearth of studies on media coverage of natural-induced displacements in Nigerian. Hence, this study will explore this gap.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Social Responsibility Theory (SRT). The theory is an extension of the Libertarian theory of the press which places emphasis on the moral and social responsibility of persons as well as institutions which operate the mass media (Okoro & Naji, 2012). The theory is based on the principle that the press must be responsible to represent all aspects and interests in the society. In other words, the theory suggests that the mass media should permeate and represent all the strata of the society (Stephen, 2014). Capturing it succinctly, "it presupposes that newspapers must have social conscience, be devoted to public welfare and public Service; they should be responsive to problems in the society" (Johnson, Layefa, Taiwo, 2016, p.7). Linking this theory to this study, the media in executing their social duty is expected to shape opinion and provide basis for understanding of different issues of EDPs in the society. Thus, it is the responsibility of the Nigerian press to frequently report issues on EDPs by providing several media contents through accurate, objective and

balanced reports. The theory is suitable in this study as it enhances understanding of how the print media carry out their social responsibility in reporting problems of EDPs in Nigeria.

Methodology

Content analysis research approach was used for this study. It is appropriate when one's aim is to examine the manifest content of communication in the print media. The population of the study consists of the editions of two selected Nigerian national dailies -*The Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers from 1st April, 2018 to July 31st, 2018 (i.e. $122 \times 2 = 244$) (weekend editions inclusive). This period was chosen because of environmental hazards that are common in many parts of Nigeria during the time frame. The newspapers were purposively selected because of the wide readership and circulation strength. Also, since they are daily newspapers, information published in other newspapers are equally reported in the selected newspapers.

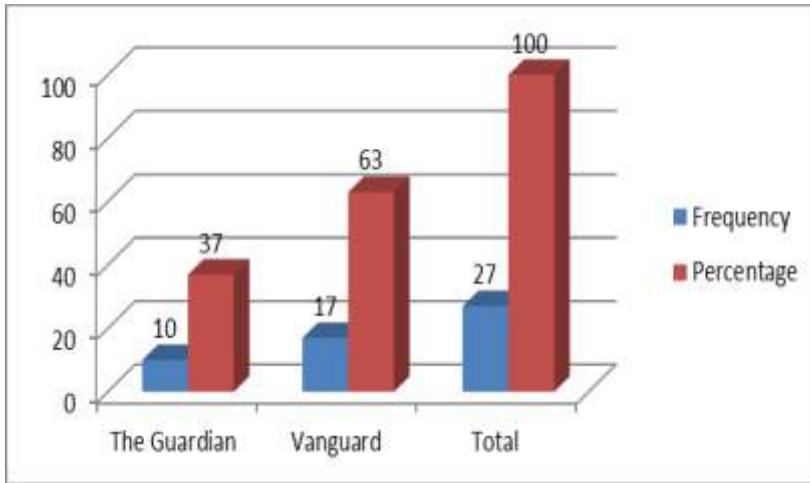
The sample size was determined, using the composite week procedure. As noted by Wimmer & Dominick (2011, p.163), “a study might use a sample of one Monday (drawn at random from the four or five possible Mondays in the month), one Tuesday (drawn from the available Tuesdays), and so on, until all weekdays have been included” Based on the above mentioned, the editions of the newspapers for the months under study were elected based on the days of the week. Hence, one Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and one Sunday were chosen at random in a month. In this study, a sample size of Fifty-six (56) issues was used for the two selected newspapers. To determine this, seven (7) editions of a particular newspaper were examined in a month and 28 editions in four months. In all, fourteen (14) editions of the two (2) selected newspapers were studied in one month and 56 editions in four months. Hence, the sample size for this study is 56.

The units of analysis in this study was the news, features, editorials, opinion articles and pictures which are the genre of media content that give an accurate, objective and in-depth account of an occurrence. The following were categorised under each of the units of analysis: **Frequency** (number of times each unit of analysis appeared), **Prominence** (using Front Page, Inside Page and Back Page) and **Subject/content** (using flood, erosion, fire outbreak, industrial construction, oil and gas, climate change and conflict/violence). With the aid of SPSS software version 20.0, frequency and simple percentages were analysed for the study. Data were presented using bar, line chart and table.

Results

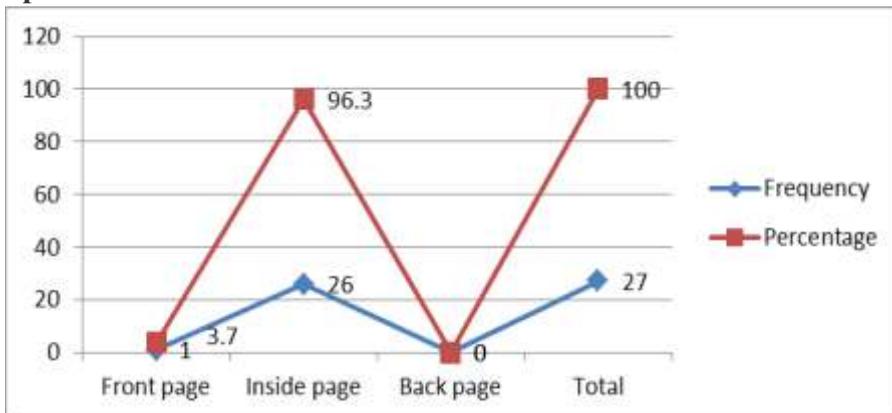
From the data analysis, a total of 27 reports on EDPs were obtained out of 56 editions of newspapers studied. The results are shown below.

Fig 1: Frequency of the reports in *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers



From the Figure 1 above, *The Guardian* newspaper presented 10 (37%) reports on EPDs while *Vanguard* newspaper had 17 with (63%) reports. This shows that *Vanguard* newspaper published the highest number of stories on EDPs within the period of study. Also, looking at the frequency of the report, it also implies that the two newspapers devoted little attention to news stories on EDPs in Nigeria.

Fig.1: The level of prominence on EDPs by *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers



In Fig.2 above, front page had 1(3.7) story while 26 accounts with (93.3%) on EDPs appeared inside page while back page had no report. This shows that the two newspapers placed majority of the stories on EPDs inside the pages of the newspapers sampled.

This implies that the newspapers did not give prominence to the stories on EDPs. This is because stories that appear on the front page of the newspapers are regarded as very prominent followed by those that appear on the back page. The stories that appear on the inside pages are regarded as not prominent or important.

Table 1: Themes of news reports on EDPs in *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers

Themes	Frequency	Percentage
Flood	6	22.1
Erosion	1	3.7
Fire outbreak	1	3.7
Industrial construction	1	3.7
Oil and gas	3	11.1
Climate change	2	7.4
Other factors	13	48.1
Total	27	100

In the Table 1 above, erosion, fire outbreak and industrial construction featured only once with (3.7%), climate change presented 2 (7.4%) stories. 3 (11.1%) reports were devoted to oil and gas. Flood recorded 6 (22.1%) while other issues had majority of the reports with 13 (48.1%). The implication of the above result is that the two newspapers gave more attention to other factors that lead to environmental displacement.

Discussion

The analysis of the study presented remarkable disclosure on the magnitude of coverage given to EDPs in Nigeria. From the results, it could be seen that the newspapers under study carried reports about the EDPs in Nigeria, even though not much coverage was given to the subject/content of the study. From the analysis in Fig 1, *Vanguard* newspaper published (63%) reports more than *The Guardian* newspaper which recorded (37%). This shows that despite the growing rate of displacements in Nigeria, the newspapers under study are yet to give sufficient reports to environmental induced displacements and the victims. With the trivial coverage, it

shows that issues of environmental disasters as well as the affected persons are handled with levity and still considered as being on the verge for public debate.

The implication of this finding is that the selected newspapers in carrying out their social responsibility roles did not give much coverage to issues on EDPs in Nigeria. Due to increase cases of natural disasters that have led very large numbers of Nigerians to be displaced “the press is duty bound to serve public interest by providing” (Johnson *et al.*, 2016.p.7) frequently news reports on issues pertaining to EPDs for public knowledge.

Most times, newspapers use placement to show the importance attached to news stories, hence, the more a news story appears on front page of a particular newspaper, the priority it has over others. Additionally, in rating news stories, less attention is given to stories that are placed in the inside pages, while more attention is given to stories that appear in front pages of newspapers. In the words of Ibrahim *et al.* (2017, p.183) the interest of media organisation determines what to be emphasised and what not to. Therefore, placing news story either on the front or back page accentuates the importance on pertinent issues and as well, calls the attention of the readers quickly than when placed inside of the pages of the newspapers.

Relating the aforesaid to the question on prominence, it showed that majority of the stories on EDPs by *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers were placed right inside of the pages of the sampled newspapers. Only one story made it on the front page with no story on the back page. This is evident in Fig.2 of the data presentation where inside page recorded the highest reports on EDPs with (96.3 %). The above result indicates that the two newspapers have not adequately show-cased the situation and the plight of the EDPs for public knowledge and for the intervention of State government. This finding concurs with the studies by (Muyiwa, 2014; Atieno & Njoroge, 2014; Nwabueze *et al.*, 2015), who observed that mass media, particularly print media in Nigeria have not efficiently executed their surveillance function in the coverage of environmental issues due to low coverage and prominence given to environmental issues.

From the analysis on the subject /contents of the reports on EDPs in Fig.3, flood as the most common environmental or natural factor of displacement featured 6 times. This is observed in the news story by *The Vanguard* newspaper on June 21th, 2018, page 12 with the headline: Flood Sacks Shops, Homes in parts of East-West Road. Another report on flood was captured by *The Guardian* newspaper on June 3rd, 2018 on page 9 with the heading: Lagos Community, Hotel Differ on Cause of Flood. Human-man induced factors such as, fire outbreak, industrial constructions, oil and gas incidents received little attention while other factors such as conflict, violence and insurgency received the highest record with (48.1%). This can be seen in the

reports published by *The Guardian* newspaper with the heading: Port Harcourt: Anger, Anxiety as Soot takes over Skyline, Environs. This report is evident on page 8 of May 6th, 2018. As regards conflict, violence and insurgency, *Vanguard* newspaper published a report on April 12th, 2018 with the headline: Attacks on Benue Communities Extension of Terrorism, says Ortom. *The Guardian* also had a report: Plateau: 219 Corpses Recovered, 133,000 people displaced which featured on page 2 of July 1st, 2018.

The implication of the above results is that despite the fact that natural hazards are part of the major devastating induced causes of environmental displacements; the two newspapers studied: *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* paid more attention to only stories on conflict/violence induced displacements. In the analysis, it was also observed that in the 27 reports on EDPs, few reports were based on government and philanthropic interventions for displaced persons. For instance the *Vanguard* featured a report: Dangote to launch 200 housing units for IDP in N East on page 10 of June 4th, 2018.

Based on the above stated, it can be said that the situation of EDPs were not well captured for more reports on State government and humanitarian supports. In addition, most of the reports on EDPs by *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* were reported when specific natural incidents occurred. An example of this is evident in the report over erosion menace which featured only once on *Vanguard* newspaper on page 40 of April 20th, 2018. Another story on climate change was reported in *The Guardian* newspaper on 3rd June on page 12 due to the imminent threat of food insecurity. Since it is legitimately the responsibility of the media to inform the members of the society on all issues without restraint, it is then, the duty of the press to bring to the society issues on EDPs with a view to exposing those negative effects on individual, national development and peaceful coexistence. Without frequent reportage of issues on natural and man-made causes of displacements, cases on EDPs, would continue be on the increase as well as be a major challenge to the society.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings, this study concludes that the two newspapers examined did not execute their social roles in their coverage as there was paucity of reports on EDPs. Issues on EDPs as well as the causes ought to be reported frequently for public knowledge and understanding. In terms of prominence, issues on EDPs were not considered important as majority of the reports published were embedded on their inside pages. In conclusion, the major reports on EDPs by the two newspapers were catalysed by specific incidents in Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. There is still need for more frequent coverage of EDPs for better public knowledge and understanding of plights of the victims. This can be achieved through in-depth and investigative reporting.
2. More prominence should be given to reports on EDPs as this will help in drawing the attention of not only the general public for humanitarian support but also government assistance in the areas that need interventions.

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