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Framing of Rural Development Issues in Nigeria Print Media

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Abstract:
Textual, audio, visual presentations of events and issues to the society with adequate emphasis and constant coverage in the print media set an undeniable agenda for the citizen to be mindful of the events or item of discourse. The issue of rural development is central to the overall growth of a country and media setting rural development agenda is their social responsibility to the people. It is a fact that myriads of maladies of rural communities in Nigeria remain unattended to by the government with formulated policies that lack executable powers as absence of rural media philosophy compounded the problems and the voiceless remain obscure. The study adopts content analysis of print media content manifest. The population for this study are four widely read newspapers: Punch, The Guardian, This Day and The Nations. Systematic random sampling was employed to select 140 editions from 1092 editions that covers from January to June, 2017. The research instrument employed was coding sheet with content categories and unit of analysis: editorial, features, photographs and news items that serve as parameters. Findings revealed that there were 1945 news items as contained in the four newspapers covering the chosen content categories out of which 67 news items were devoted to rural development. The 3.4% news items on rural development revealed that the media did not set agenda for rural development. The study concludes that media as a way of social responsibility did not fully protect the fundamental human right of rural dwellers if media content on rural communities does not translate to public agenda and eventually leads to policy agenda formulation.

Keywords: media manifest, philosophy, development, rural, framing

1. Background to the Study

Communication plays strategic roles in preserving the democratic tenets, facilitating active civil engagements of the citizens by knowledge generation and sharing that resulted in personal growth and development. The concept of framing is essentially important to solve contentious issues as it relates to a council/state/region/nation at large.

Gutenberg Johannes of German origin invention of movable printing machine in 1455 birthed the emergency of the first and oldest medium of communication – newspaper. The core purpose for establishment of the medium anchors on to educate and inform the public of events and happenings in their environment. From historical perspective, the establishment of newspaper varies from country to country. Newspaper can be defined as a medium for sharing opinions, news, belief and philosophy. The first newspaper in Nigeria was published by Reverend Henry Townsend, christened "Iwe Irohin fun awon ara Egba ati Yoruba". The publication of the newspaper inculcates and conscientise the people to have reading habits. Newspaper serve as a catalyst that arouse nationalism spirit and agitation for independence.

Lagos Times by Robert Campbell in 1862 was a radical newspaper that promotes literacy and reading among the people. The editorial policy of Lagos Times "The press is a safeguard public right", the statement is in tandem with assumption No. 5 & 6 of social responsibility theory. The press performing the functions of correlation of different elements of the society and surveillance of the environment that hinges on objectivity, truth and fairness rest on framing of events and issues in a specific and precise manner to persuade and influence people's action and reaction. Also, framing of happenings with concentration and consistent reporting of such issue set public agenda that translate to government agenda.

Media influence, shape and inform the public opinion by framing events and issues in a particular way. Framing in communication define an issue, analyze media content and effect. The concept had gained recognition and equally unequivocal attention in communication parlance. Groups, individual are conscious of how the media present issues to their advantage or disadvantage. Framing of rural development in print media is core to setting agenda that would be accepted by the generality of the people and later be adopted by Nigeria government.

Nigeria is among other African nations christened as developing from the former nomenclature of 'Third World' with antecedent and undebatable facts of under-development that manifest in high level of illiteracy, poverty, lack of social amenities to mention a few. Anaeto & Anaeto cited Todara Smith (2003:17) asserts that development is conceived as a multi-dimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of poverty.

Conceptualizing this definition, Nigeria still groans and is over-burdened with poverty that arises from unequal distribution of wealth and resources on the part of government. Conceptual and empirical researches had confirmed that rural areas in Nigeria are under siege of abject poverty, lack of roads and no primary school for children residing in rural areas that trekked miles to another village for education. The most appropriate and suited concept is development communication that focused on rural communities.

Development can be described as a step-by-step process and appropriate distribution of resources and utilization of the allocated fund to the need-oriented program that will add value to the recipients of such program either in urban or rural areas.

Media practitioner had been catalysts to development and growth that had been witnessed in Nigeria. At inception the media was used to advocate and educate the citizenry. Presentation of issues and events in a particular way with prominence, continuity and focus by media influence actions and responses. Development communication emerged from the struggle of the Third World countries to chart a way to formulate media philosophy and application of modern media in developing countries.

1.1. Problem Statement

Communication had been described as expression of needs, interests, opinion, belief and philosophy of an individual/group to heterogeneous or classified groups. It is on this premise that it could be agreed that communication and development have a symbiotic relationship because no development/ growth can take place without appropriate medium/media expressing, enlightenment, informing the citizen.

The post activities after World War II and Cold War resulted in the monumental recognition of the word 'development' to mean industrialization, modernization, widely acceptance of democratic form of government, capitalism as economic philosophy to fast track development: socially, politically, economically, technological and in infrastructure.

In Nigerian, the population had the estimates of 80% Nigerians domiciled in rural communities. Onabajo (2003), FAO (2007). At the mention of rural communities/areas some conjured images of: poverty, high level of illiteracy, no accessible roads network, and lack of social amenities. Colgate (2009) supported Nwabueze (2009) Odedeji (2003) asserted that the rural dwellers are predominantly farmers.

The hydra tentacle problems of rural communities with empirical facts ranges from under-development or no development at all that are evidenced in poor housing infrastructure, lack of pipe borne water, lack of electricity, etc. The magnitude of the problems are encouraged by non-inclusion of rural development in government policies and non-formulation of rural media philosophy that is core to any developmental activities or goals. The media landscape in Nigeria is elitists, urban centered with government and individual hegemonic prevalent in all spheres.

The media have social responsibility to the citizen by covering events/issues beneficial and of general interest to the entire citizenry irrespective of their locality. Media serves as advocates for rural development when editorials in newspapers are bombarded with rural development issues, special column to feature identified communities with its problems. Information gap between rural and urban, negative framing of rural development or inadequate coverage of rural development, lack advocacy for rural development are cogent issues that need urgent solutions.

The media took the coloration of the society that manifests in cosmetic dressing of the state capital dotted with artificial water sprinkler, Over-head Bridge where not needed, round-about with art work point to misplaced priority by the government decorated and galvanized by the media. This study seems to examine the framing of rural development in newspaper to identify the dominant news item, frames, frequency and extent. The core objective of this study is to examine the media contents in relation to rural development amongst other objectives:

1. Examine the editorial content for rural development coverage.
2. Identify the dominant news items in the newspaper
3. Examine the prominence given to rural development issues in print media
4. Investigate the dominant themes of framing rural development.

Thus, it is important to draw the under-listed salient questions to help actualize the objectives of its study. The questions that shaped and the guarded this investigation include the following:

1. Does editorial content of newspaper capture rural development issues?
2. What are the dominant news items in the newspaper?
3. What is the prominence given to rural development issues in newspaper?
4. What are the dominant themes in the framing of rural development

1.2. Justification of the Study

The study will benefit rural communities and organizations (civil societies, social movements, international agencies & NGOs) that are organically connected to the grassroots and advocate for its development and growth. These organizations are already frustrated because the government had neglected and marginalized the rural communities. It will equally encourage scholars of communication for development who had labored vigorously to see the appropriate change and development of the rural communities.

Also, the study was undertaken to challenge media practitioners: journalists and editors of their social responsibilities to the citizen irrespective of their locality and failure to focus on rural communities makes underdevelopment abated. The study will benefit rural communities as dedicated and special columns will facilitate/mobilize development to rural areas. On the other hand, the study would awaken government, policy maker's conscience to mobilize and concentrate on developing the rural communities.

2. Literature Review

The situation of African nations necessitates divers approach to find solutions to myriads of under-development malady that befell the continent. Several summits and conferences from World powers because of the advocacy and agitation from the south on balance of information and free flow of information among other things led to the concept of 'development' with the adoption of Marshall Plan that helped to rebuild Europe after World War II but failed to accomplish its purpose in African nations and therefore the continent remain undeveloped.

Development is a broad concept that is multidimensional as it could mean industrialization, economic growth, modernization, political and social change. The aftermath of World War II resulted in heavy industrialization to rebuild the European countries from its economic, social and financial ruins. This led to the first paradigm of development viewed from economic perspective using GNP to measure the viability of a nation. The failure of this paradigm led to the emergent shift in paradigms.

The failure of this economic development to achieve set goals led to agitation from other nations of the world that challenged the dominance of the media landscape by the Western media. The bias of the western media was obvious in negative reportage on African nations they first christened as 'Third World' and diplomatically changed to 'developing countries'.

The agitation of Non-Aligned Movement aroused the advocacy of the South clamoring for balance flow of information at NWICO summit. The issue of development of developing nation was equally part of the agenda. Contradictions emerged from NWICO summit as the World powers reject the resolutions of the summit as they walked away.

Anaeto & Anaeto (2010) asserts that the word development implies growth advancement in the life of a person or society. He viewed development as all-encompassing economic, social, political and cultural growth of a society. Todaro & Smith (2003) anchors on development as a multi-dimensional process involving major changes in social structure, popular attitudes and national institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of poverty.

Several summits and conferences organized by UNESCO coupled with the UN Millennium Goals targeted eradication of poverty and illiteracy in the world. Based on assertion of Todaro et al (2003) adoption of multi-dimensional development with cultural identity, domestication of development plans as formulated of each sovereign nation would result in positive growth and development of the citizen and as it transforms an individual, such change would have multiplier effect on the entire society. Developmental plans designed with consideration for all citizen's culture, values, norms, language with active participation from planning stage to execution would yields greater results.

The word 'rural' conjured a mental picture of abject poverty, illiteracy, poor living condition, inaccessible roads, lack of social amenities: electricity, pipe borne water, (Daramola, 2014). Domesticating the word development to plan and drive growth to all nooks and crannies of the countries is the duty of a responsible government. Developmental plans would remain a mirage without cordiality between development and communication. Development cannot occur or happen without appropriate vehicle to drive the plans to the strategic places where it is needed and choice of medium that suits the level of the people concerned.

Development communication could be described as integration of methods, strategies, technologies and principles of communication to assist in realization of socio-economic, political and cultural growth of rural communities.

Nigeria as a nation had instituted several developmental programs geared towards developing its citizen in all locality. Operation Feed the Nation (1979) was a program launched by former President Olusegun Obasanjo to diversify the economy from total reliance on mono product – petroleum to multi-product by exploring and concentrating on agriculture. The program was to empower all Nigerians to accept farming in order for the nation to stop reliance on importing goods and other nations of the world. Worthy of note is Directorate of Foods, Roads & Rural Infrastructure (1986) considering its focus on rural electrification, building market places amongst other was an effort in right direction. DFRRI died immediately the initiator left office and the program could not record landmark success.

Better Life for Rural Women was established in September, 1987 with core objectives/goals of improving and bringing growth and development to rural dwellers with specificity on rural women in general. The program sought to empower women which was realized to some extent via adult education, skill empowerment programs with funding after completion of the training. This program was short-lived. Succession of government in Nigeria always leads to demise of programs initiated by predecessors.

Sustainability of Nigeria nascent democracy anchors on freedom of Information and the Press. This was corroborated by Vreese (2005), that stated that media is a cornerstone institution in our democracies. On this assertion, democracies anchors of protecting the rights of the citizen: fundamental human right, right to freedom, freedom of speech and freedom of the press. In order to fulfill this obligation to the citizen, the people have the right to know, understand government policies as it regards their wellbeing, including people domiciled in rural communities.

Emergent of framing as a tool for media manifests analysis has gained recognition amongst scholars of pedigree and with diver's perspectives on the concept of news framing. Print media, the oldest medium of communication had been used to advocate, campaign and equally performed its statutory function of surveillance of environment, correlation of different elements of the society, socialization and transmission of culture among other. It is a fact that millions of people turned to newspaper every day to source for information as it's relates to their interest.

Human being irrespective of color, tribe and religious affiliation each day seeks to know how issues, events and situation are presented by the media, this is referred to as framing and it has become a powerful parameter to analyze journalistic manifest and practices. (Bruggemann, 2014). Based on Vreese (2014) assertion, news readers of newspapers are interested in frames on issues and events that happened and the prominence, frequency, position of such news, the textual/wordings of the issue reveals its importance to the target audience or readers.

Bruggemann cited Gamson, Croteau, Hayne and Sasson, pontificates that frames are patterns of interpretation rooted in culture and articulated by individual. Entman (1993) asserts that frame have several locations, that involves the communicator, the text, the receiver and the culture. Frames in the news may influence learning, interpretation and evaluation of issues and events. Vreese (2014). He further opined that framing had influence on the society as it contributes to the shaping social level processed such as political socialization, decision making and collective action.

Attribution of responsibility is a generic frame based on journalistic conventions and practices. Bruggeman (2014) opined that there is main distinction between generic and issue specific frames. Generic frames apply to a multifaceted of topics while issue specific frames denotes the more concrete interpretation framework established on specific issues. Issues specific frames define problem, diagnosed the case, evaluate and recommend/proffer solutions. Entman (1993).

Valkenburg (2000) designed and identified five news frames as follows: conflict, human interest, attribution of responsibility, morality and economic consequences. The responsibility frames could be used to identify problems and proffer solution and on the other hand issues on rural development rest solely on government. Government malfeasance was evident in total neglect, failure of programs designed for rural areas, non-involvement of rural dwellers in planned programs, failure to identify the urgent needs of rural dwellers and the media's failure   to carry out her social responsibility to 80% Nigeria citizens domiciled in rural community. Daramola (2010).

Odunlami (2017) cited Entman (1993) opined that "to frame is to select aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. Based on Entman assertion, media through journalistic conventions could concentrate focus on rural development setting the agenda in order to make government focus its attention of problems confronting rural dwellers and prescribed solutions to such problems through communicative text.

Shoemaker & Reese (1996) opined that there are factors that determine how journalists and new organization frame issues. Framing in the newsroom is majorly influenced by internal: editorial policy, ownership interest, type of ownership and news and government policy. This was corroborated by Herman, S & Chomsky, N (2002) that opined that the media perform functions and propagandize on behalf of some hegemonic power to dominate, control the media's sphere. This was possible through structural factors such as ownership and control that filters the news items amongst other four filters of news as asserted. Advertisers and multination's dictate what a medium would broadcast or have to publish for the citizen's consumption. It was opined that those who have the production power equally possess the cultural and technical capabilities. The Nigerian rural dwellers are extremely poor that the only sure way of their representation was media that was public-interest oriented.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Theories are specifically designed to explain, describe a phenomenon and put it in perspective. This study anchored on Social Responsibility Theory and Framing. The chosen theories will thereby put this discourse in perspective as it explains concepts and phenomena.

Social responsibility theory is one of the normative theories that emerged from Hutchins Commission of 1947 under the chairmanship of Robert Hutchins, Chancellor of Chicago University. The commission was set up to examine and identify areas where Libertarian theory had succeeded and failed. The Hutchins Commission coined the word 'social responsibility. The theory emphasized and advocate for free press void of government interference and any organization domination and manipulation as the press function as surveillance of the environment and correlates different elements of the society.

The core of social responsibility theory is the call to media to be responsible for fostering productive and creative great communities. Baran & Davis (2006) cited Siebert, Peterson & Schramm (1956). McQuail (2006) asserts the basic assumptions of social responsibility to be as follows:

1. Media should accept and fulfill certain obligations to the society.
2. These obligations are mainly to be me by setting high or professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance.
3. In accepting and applying these obligations media should be self-regulating within the framework of law and established institutions.
4. The media should avoid whatever might lead to crime, violence or civil disorder and give offence to minority group.
5. The media as a whole should be pluralist and reflect the diversity of their society, giving access to various points of view and rights of reply.
6. Society and the public have a right to expect high standards of performance, and intervention can be justified to secure the, or a, public good.
7. Journalist and media professionals should be accountable to society as well as the employer and market.

Social responsibility assumptions 1,5, &6 are relevant to the concept of framing issues and events that reflect the importance of development. To promote pluralistic and reflecting on the diversity of the society calls for positive framing on issues and events that anchors on public interest. The diversity and peculiarity of communities must be presented in a way to represent the people's interest and be the voice for the neglected millions of Nigerians residing in rural communities and are in dire needs of developmental activities. Social responsibility theory challenged the ingenuity of journalists and media professionals to adhere strictly by presenting unbiased but objective, balance view on rural developmental issues.

2.2. Framing Theory
The base for the emergent of framing has its root in the work of Berger and Luckman 1967 titled 'The Social Construction of Reality'. Other scholar postulated the theoretical idea that social reality has to be made and given meaning (interpretation) by human actors. (McQuail, 2006). Ervin Goffman (1974) developed frame analysis to provide a systematic account of how we use expectations to make sense of everyday life. (Baran & Davis, 2007). Alfred Schutz (1972) asserts the notion that society as an objective reality pressing on individual is countered with the alternative view that structures, forces and ideas of society are created by human beings, continually recreated and reproduced and also open to challenge and change.
 McQuail (2006) asserts that social construction refers to the processes by which events, persons, values and ideas are first defined or interpreted in a certain way and given value and priority, largely by mass media, leading to personal construction of large picture of reality. Goffman used the term 'frame' to refer to a specific set of expectations used to make sense of a social situation at a given point in time. The study reckons with Goffman used of frame and thereby select four newspapers for analysis to examine in specificity how 'rural development issues' specific frames are defined in print media for emphasis and importance.

2.3. Method of Study
This paper adopts content analysis research approach. Berelson (1952) defined content analysis as a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication. Krippendorff (1980) corroborates Berelson (1952) with the definition of content analysis as a research technique for making replicable and valid references from data to their context. Examining the two definition the emphasis is on system, objectivity, context and validity of inferences that could be drawn from the communication manifests. Content analysis could be: written messages (newspaper, magazine, and books); broadcast messages (Radio, TV, Internet radio, online TV); messages or music on tapes, CD, DVDs, Films, Documentary, art work could be analyzed.
The data for content analysis were generated from newspapers. This was done by analyzing the frequency, dominant news items and frames. Parameters adopted for collection, processing and analyzing data are basically editorials, features, news items, photographs on the chosen content categories with inclusion of rural development.
The study examines the newspapers' content of: *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *ThisDay* and *The Nation*s between January and June, 2017. The population was selected purposively considering their wide coverage, readership and neutrality as a national daily. Systematic random sampling was adopted to select 140 editions from 1,092 editions from the sampling frame within the period under review, the starting point for selection was 5th in each month editions, and the interval was 5. The units of analysis were: editorial, photographs, features and new items based on research topic. A coding sheet was prepared with content category and unit of analysis. Content analytical category for this study are: Rural Development, Urban Development, Politics, Economy, Health, Education and Sport. The parameters adopted for textual/unit of analysis are: editorial, photographs, new items and features. Tankard (2001) presented list of units of analysis of framing mechanism out of which 7 were chosen in accordance with his assertion.

3. Results and Discussion
Based on the core objective of this research to examine the media content in relation to rural development, the appropriate analysis the following research questions were examined for better understanding of the study.
Research Question 1: Does editorial content of newspaper capture or center on rural development?

Content Categories	Punch				Guardian Newspaper				The Nation				ThisDay				Total
	ED	F	PH	NI	Ed	F	Ph	NI	ED	F	PH	NI	ED	F	PH	NI	
Rural Dev.	-	2	-	16	-	-	7	13	2	-	4	12	2	2	-	7	67
Urban Dev.	4	3	-	56	6	6	11	18	1	1	-	5	2	4	13	18	148
Politics	3	7	-	19	-	13	-	60	2	2	-	131	-	-	-	99	336
Economy	4	1	-	94	2	-	-	48	2	-	-	120	-	2	-	250	523
Health	1	2	-	30	-	-	-	23	-	-	-	25	-	-	-	56	139
Education	-	-	-	61	-	-	-	21	1	-	-	53	1	-	-	64	201
Sport	-	-	-	96	-	-	-	142	-	-	-	179	-	-	-	114	531
Total	12	15	-	372	8	19	18	325	10	3	4	525	5	8	13	608	1,945

Table 1: Cross tabulation of newspapers by news story.
Legend: Ed- Editorial   F- Feature   Ph - Photograph   NI- News Item

From the data tabulated in Table 1, there were 67 news items on rural development comprises of: 4 editorials (6%); 4, Features (6%); 11 photographs (16%) and 48 (72%) news items. The data revealed that editorial content on rural development was extremely insignificant and low to set public agenda.

Research Question 2: What are the dominant news items in the newspaper?

From Table I above that tabulate the content categories and units of analysis for this study. The data show that rural development had 67 news stories, urban development had 148, politics with 336 news stories, economy had 523, Health had 139, education had 201 and sports with 531 news stories. It is evident that the four analyzed newspapers had sports dedicated pages with lavished pictures and comprehensive news stories on sports and this was followed by economy with 523 news items that spread across, editorials, features, dedicated pages on business and economy with variants of international business pages. The identified dominant news items in the print media during the period under review was Sports.

Research Question 3: What is the prominence given to rural development issues in the newspaper?

The prominence given to rural development issues in the newspaper was calculated using percentage, the results revealed that rural development had 3.4% prominence in the newspaper during the period under study. Urban development had 7.6%, Politics was calculated at 17.3% while Economy was 26.9% with Health took 7.2%, Education 10.3% and Sports 27.3%. Comparing the percentage of each content categories clearly shown that rural development issues had the least prominence in the four-newspaper sampled for this study.

Research Question 4: What are the themes (Complaints, Neglect & Advocacy) in the framing of rural development?

	Punch	Guardian	The Nation	This Day
Complaints	2	5	-	2
Neglect	3	5	-	2
Advocacy	4	4	3	6
Total	**9**	**14**	**3**	**10**

Table 2: Themes in the framing of rural development

Analysis on the Table 2 above showed that the dominant theme of rural development framing to be advocacy: challenging government to focus on rural development for the betterment of the people domiciled in rural areas. Amongst the voices are international organizations, Non-government agencies (NGOs) who worked to alleviate the poor standard of living of rural communities. Out of 67 new-stories comprising of editorial, features and news items on rural development, 36 were either complaints, neglect or advocacy from different quarters of the society.

It was discovered that some projects analyzed in this study as development programs are donations from Non-governmental agencies, Individual, international organization like World Bank, UNICEF sponsored Youth and women empowerment program. The study identified that there are ongoing/proposed and few commissioned projects in the country. The concentration on rural communities was extremely low as scanty projects are assigned to rural communities.

4. Conclusion

This study asserts that the four newspapers under review focused a little on the issue of rural development, though the issue of development was so significant that two of the four newspapers devote their editorial column to discuss the urgency of the need for government to concentrate on rural development. Appreciable numbers of news items on urban development were recorded with international agencies, non-governmental agencies dominate as sponsors for programs on youth and women empowerment. Donations from individuals' and organizations. Findings revealed that some of the news items on rural development were advocacy to challenge the government to fulfill their statutory obligation to the people. It was also discovered that few of news items on rural development were complaints from the people. The study concludes that the print media as a matter of social responsibility cover news on development but there was no emphasis and this resulted in print media not being able to set agenda for government and the people despite the agitation from people to see transformation in form of personal growth, good roads, hospital, electrification, skill empowerment and literacy amongst many were still far from realization.

Recommendations

Considering the magnitude influence and social responsibility of the media to the people, with potent power to convey development and growth in all spheres to needed locations. It was on this premise coupled with the findings of this paper that this study, recommends that the media contents must especially the editorial cover largely on rural development. From data analyzed, Sports had the highest percentage based on the four papers reviewed; each had dedicated papers with lavished photographs on sporting activities. Therefore, this study recommends dedicated pages on rural development coverage as a way of responsibility to the people.

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