

BROADCAST MEDIA COVERAGE OF 2022 FLOOD IN OGUTA AND OHAJI/EGBEMA LGAs, IMO STATE

**Chibuzor Cosmas Nwoga¹, Chukwuemeka OnonujuNwankiti², Chioma Rose Chime-
Nganya³, Ogban Obin Ogbin⁴, Ogonnaya Lynda Ngwu⁵**

^{1,2,3,4,5} Department of Mass Communication, Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-
Alike, Ikwo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

*chibunwoga@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: The thrust of this study was to evaluate broadcast media stations' reportage of flooding in Nigeria, using Oguta and Ohaji/Egbema LGAs of Imo State as reference points. The study anchored on the Framing theory adopted the content analysis method to evaluate flood disaster stories in NTA, Owerri and IBC, Owerri. 244 programme guides of the two stations from July 2022 to October 2022 were chosen. A sample size of 56 was determined using the composite or construct week method. Findings showed that the main format usually adopted by the broadcast media for reportage of flood disasters was the Straight news; the tone of flood disaster stories evokes fear and panic; the quality of flood stories covered were unbalanced; the broadcast stations do not adequately cover the causes, impact, and strategies to curb flood disasters in their reportage. Recommendations were that NTA, Owerri and IBC, Owerri, as well as other broadcast media in Nigeria, should minimise the use of straight news and adopt more feature presentations/documentaries, opinions/interviews; their news and reports of flood disasters should be framed and presented in such a way that it would instil hope, trust and preparedness, not evoke fear, panic, and anxiety, to the people; they should avoid "afghanistanism" and balance their news reportage; and there should be a synergy between the broadcast media, Federal and State emergency and rescue agencies to warn and educate the public about flood disasters.

Keywords: Broadcast Media, Flood, Disaster Stories, Reportage, Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Each year, Nigerians witness flooding in different parts of the country. That of 2022 was massive, resulting in loss of lives, property and farmlands. The incident also caught the attention of the international media, with BBC reporting that Nigeria is suffering its worst flooding in a decade, forcing 1.4 million people from their homes (Amogu, 2023); spontaneous rainfall is attributed as one of the major factors causing the flooding. Also, some critics argue that the release of excess water from Lagdo dam reservoirs is one of the primary causes of flooding in the country (Ayomide & Akindutire, 2022).

The 2022 flood in Nigeria tells a sad story – it is a tragedy with a complex plot with themes of displacement, hunger, and scarcity. In it are sub-themes of death, negligence, and fecklessness; every victim with his own story, and every community their tales and narratives detailing their plight. Citizens in affected areas live in uncertainty, despair, and fear, while a few struggle to hope and display love and compassion amid adversity (Ominabo, 2022). According to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), 662 persons lost their lives, 3,174 suffered injuries, and 2,430,445 individuals were displaced, while over 108,393 hectares of farmlands were destroyed across the country by the 2022 flood disaster in Nigeria (NEMA,

2022). Some flood-affected states in 2022 include Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta, Edo, Lagos, Kano, Adamawa, Jigawa, Benue, Borno and Imo. The 2022 flood was believed to be the worst that Nigeria has experienced in decades, as it created humanitarian crises and compounded economic challenges in the affected areas. Some communities were inaccessible and cut off from goods and services.

Footages of the live experiences of people across the state were pathetic. People could be seen cooking and living on the water; some slept on the road for lack of shelter, and others surrendered to fate and insisted on living in flooded houses despite the danger. Recounting the flood victims' misery, Ominabo, (2022) said, "When I visited some impacted areas some days ago, I saw misery robed in human souls. I saw a people weaned of joy and peace as they lamented their ordeal and current predicament. Every visitor is seen as an emissary of hope who must carry their messages to the government and other development stakeholders. Their voices are a refrain of monotonous groans of hope".

Imo State, like many other states in the country, recorded devastating floods around September 2022, which is believed to be the worst in recent years. Floods submerged no fewer than 33 communities in the Ohaji-Egbema and Ohaji Local Government Areas of Imo State. The development rendered several people in the affected areas homeless. The majority of residents in these agrarian communities are farmers and fishermen. It was heart-wrenching as people of these two recounted their woes. The flood disasters came with grief and biting hardship for farmers and fishermen in the council areas. The floods submerged farmlands, and for weeks, their fishing activities were stalled due to the flood disaster that hit their communities.

During the disaster period, the media was expected to play a key role, serving as an intermediary between the people and the government before, during, and after the disasters. The media was also expected to educate the masses and inform them of impending dangers and alert the relevant government agencies of the impending disaster. However, evidence from previous studies in Nigeria indicates that people seem to have a negative perception of media reportage of issues.

Thus, this study evaluated the performance of broadcast media coverage of the 2022 flood disaster in Imo State, Nigeria, focusing on the Oguta and Ohaji/Egbema LGAs of Imo State, the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA), Owerri, and the Imo Broadcasting Corporation (IBC), Owerri.

Statement of Problem

In the last three decades, the number and severity of flood events in Africa have increased (Ajibade et al. 2013; Jalayer et al. 2015), causing social, economic, and environmental impacts (Adelekan 2010; Douglas et al. 2008; Lwasa 2010). In 2012, Nigeria experienced one of its largest floods in a century (Mmom & Aifeseh, 2013), destroying assets worth over US\$9.5 billion.

Disaster coverage has been an issue that calls for urgent attention, particularly as it is observed that people are usually caught unawares when floods come, leading to perceptions that broadcast media, especially radio and television, may not have effectively played their role in creating awareness through adequate coverage. Even when coverage is done, the manners in which the reports are framed and presented do not succinctly prepare the people for the flood. Rather stories that evoke fear and panic, instead of hope, fill the media space. The broadcast

media is expected to present news reports that draw the public's eye to specific topics, providing interpretation to current issues, which expectedly spurs people to action.

The media's surveillance function is not effectively used to warn people of impending danger. Effective reportage could change people's perception of the need for preparation. Hence, the thrust of this study was to evaluate broadcast media stations' reportage of flooding in Nigeria, using Oguta and Ohaji/Egbema LGAs of Imo State as reference points.

Conceptual Review

Flood Menace in Nigeria

Flood is a natural phenomenon which contributes to the major environmental crises in the 21st century, which some researchers conclude have resulted in the loss of lives, the collapse of mud houses, and destroyed livestock and farmlands, causing food shortages and starvation. It has health implications and water-borne diseases like cholera to the victims, paralyzed business activities, damaged infrastructure, displaced people and their properties, caused overflow of dams (Barweni et al. (2012).

A common environmental problem in Nigeria is flood and it is said to occur when a body of water moves over and above an area of land which is not normally submerged. It could also be seen as the inundation of an area not normally covered with water through a temporary rise in the level of stream, river, lake or sea (Agbonkhese et al., 2014). Nelson (2001) viewed flood as a natural consequence of stream flow in a continually changing environment. Sada (1988) defines flooding as unusually high rates of discharging; often leading to inundation of land adjacent to streams, and it is usually caused by intense or prolonged rainfall. The occurrence of flood represents a major risk to riverside populations and floodplains, in addition to causing substantial impacts on the environment, including aquatic fauna and flora, and bank erosion (Agbonkhese et al., 2014).

According to Gwary (2008) and Adeoti (2010), cited in Agbonkhese et al. (2014), flooding occurs in Nigeria in three main forms, which are: river flooding, urban flooding and coastal flooding. The heavy rainfall, coupled with bad human activities in relation to the environment and lack of drainage infrastructure in most Nigerian cities, has left hundreds of people distressed and homeless. It should be mentioned that flooding in cities can contaminate water supplies and intensify the spread of epidemic diseases, such as diarrhoea, typhoid, scabies, cholera, malaria, dysentery, and other water-borne diseases. Human activities such as rapid industrialization and urbanization, population growth, exploitation of natural resources and location of infrastructures exacerbate the occurrence of floods.

Causal factors of flood in Nigeria, which include indiscriminate dumping of refuse on drainage channels to channel adjustment and poor drainage conditions, have been observed by Agbonkhese et al. (2014). Floods are the most recurring, widespread, disastrous and frequent natural hazards of the world. It is worth noting that all floods are not alike; while some floods develop slowly and last for a period of days, flash floods can develop quickly, sometimes in just a few minutes and without any visible signs of rain. Urban flooding has resulted in major loss of human lives and destruction of economic and social infrastructure such as water supply, electricity, roads and railway lines.

In Nigeria, floods remain the most common and significant natural disaster, and according to Onwuka, Ikekpeazu, and Onuoha (2015), floods constitute a major environmental problem in Anambra state as more than 30% of the state's population reside in riverine areas with fishing and agriculture as their main sources of livelihood. Other parts of Nigeria have also been experiencing floods, and the first flood recorded in Nigeria was at Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State in 1948, followed by other serious floods. According to Etuonovbe (2011), an estimated 1,549 have lost their lives to floods, whereas more than a million have been displaced by flood events in Nigeria since 1948. However, Nigeria experienced a devastating flood in 2012, and it was estimated by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA, 2012) that between July and October 2012, about 7,705,378 people were affected by the flood, 2,157,419 were registered as internally displaced persons (IDPs), 363 people reported dead, and more than 618,000 houses damaged or destroyed in 33 out of 36 states in the country. Subsequently, in the aftermath of the flood, Odidi (2012) reported that "even the flood was worse than Boko Haram menace in Nigeria."

The prediction of the 2012 flood came at the beginning of that year. Meteorologists at the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NIMET) warned Nigerians to prepare for more rains, which would last until the third week of July, as there were indications of an "above normal rainfall in some parts of the country." This information was handed down to people through the media, informing them about the risks associated with the flood. People were also advised to engage in proactive measures that could combat the effects of the floods and minimize their effects. However, these media messages were seemingly ignored, which led to the devastating effects of the flood as almost all states of the federation reported colossal destruction of properties, farmlands, animals, and even loss of human lives (OCHA, 2012).

The 2022 Flood Disaster in Nigeria

The year 2022 witnessed flooding as never seen in recent years in different parts of the country. The damage caused was massive, resulting in the loss of lives, property and farmlands (Amogu, 2023). The 2022 Nigeria floods affected many parts of the country. According to Federal Government data, the floods displaced over 1.4 million people, killed over 603 people, and injured more than 2,400 persons. About 82,035 houses had been damaged, and 332,327 hectares of land had also been affected. While Nigeria typically experiences seasonal flooding, this flood was the worst in the country since the 2012 floods. As of October, over 200,000 homes were completely or partially destroyed by the floods. On 7 October, a boat carrying people fleeing the floods capsized on the Niger River, causing 76 deaths. The flooding was caused by heavy rainfall and climate change, as well as the release of water from the Lagdo Dam in neighbouring, as well as the release of water from the Lagdo Dam in neighbouring Cameroon, which began on 13 September. Flooding, which affected Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and the surrounding region, began in the early summer of 2022 and ended in October (NEMA, 2022).

The raging floods destroyed thousands of houses, hectares of farmlands, and several critical national assets. Comparing the 2012 flooding to that of 2022, NEMA Director-General Ahmed Habib told newsmen that the 2022 flooding had the highest death toll since the 2012 flooding (NEMA, 2022).

However, the flood disaster did not come without a warning. On Sept. 7, the Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency (NIHSA) predicted an "abnormal" rainy season for 2022, only comparable to what was witnessed in 2012 (Amogu, 2023).

The GRADE Report of 2022 on Nigeria's flood disaster analysis estimated that the total direct economic damages, based on currently reported statistics as of November 25th, 2022, were in the range of US\$3.79 billion to US\$9.12 billion, with the best (median) estimate at US\$6.68 billion. This includes damages to residential and non-residential buildings (including building contents), as well as damages to infrastructure, productive sectors and cropland (Erunke, 2023).

The Media Reportage and Natural Disaster Management.

The media is a veritable tool in the reporting of disasters, which makes it an important tool in disaster communication management. Over the years, media has usurped for itself immense power that makes it an agent of change in society. The media educates, informs, persuades, stimulates, entertains, and mobilizes the public on different events. The media, which includes the radio, television, newspaper, and the new media, has the power to mobilize the public for change through the way reports are framed. Floods have become one of the most ravaging and common natural disasters in society (Killenberg, 2008).

All over the world, disasters occur. At every incident, the mass media are expected to provide leadership in a way that warns the public before, during, and after the disaster. The media play a crucial role in educating and training the people about disasters and hazards, collecting and delivering information about affected regions, informing relief organizations about affected regions, informing relief organizations, government officials and the people of certain requirements and facilitating debates about the preparedness and response for and to disasters. Media should extensively address the issue of disaster prevention and mitigation (Nazari, et al, 2011).

The media plays a significant role in nation-building and national integration through deliberate framing of reportage that promotes development and unity by carefully setting agendas for the audience in the manner in which reports are given, the tone, the time, and the angle at which they presented the information (Godswill et al. 2019). The mass media have been assuming an increasingly important role in society. On the one hand, they are often described as a mirror, portraying existing norms, qualities and problems that could enable society to evaluate and adjust itself accordingly. On the other hand, their ability to distort reality and their influence on the public is widely recognised (Ekron, 2011).

Generally, the responsibility of media towards society consists of three main functions:

- i. The knowledge gap: The task of disseminating information to help fill knowledge gaps and raise the population's awareness.
- ii. Agenda setting: Selecting what issues to promote for the audience and how to frame them can help determine what people perceive as a priority.
- iii. Cultivation of perceptions: Audience perceptions are shaped by the way media present information (Finnegan & Viswanath, 1997).

In the context of flood management, the media occupy an intermediate position between decision-makers and the population, a position that confers upon them the essential but delicate responsibility of bridging between the two parties. This complex task requires the accomplishment of all the three social functions listed above (knowledge gap, agenda setting and cultivation of perceptions), obliging media to assume an active role in every phase of the management process, from prevention and awareness-raising to emergency warnings, to relief measures and restoration.

Evidence from studies in Nigeria indicates that people seem to have a negative perception of media reportage of issues. For instance, Afolabi (2010) noted that the mass media have not been timely in their report of conflicts and insurgencies. Other researchers also show that the Nigerian media have not effectively played a surveillance function in the reportage of conflicts and insurgencies, nor have they displayed a high level of objectivity in their reports (Okpara, 2010; Oputa, 2011; Lawrence, 2011; Hamida & Baba, 2014). This can partly be attributed to the fact that most media organisations in the country are owned by state (sub-national) governments and individuals, and as such, they are primarily used to promote the interests of their owners. In addition, it has been revealed that the Nigerian mass media do not give significant coverage and provide effective awareness of climate change issues even as they fail to offer adequate explanations of environmental issues in general (Batta, Ashong, & Bashir, 2013; Moeti, Maraisane, & Marou, 2008; Ukonu, Akpan, & Anorue, 2012).

This can be seen in the reports on the 2012 flood, as the majority of the flood messages were presented in the straight news format, devoid of in-depth reports that could increase the populace's knowledge of the causes and risks associated with the flood.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the Framing theory, which Goffman Erving (1974) opined as a theory of mass communication. Framing refers to how the media packages and presents information to the public. According to the theory, the media highlights certain events and then places them within a particular context to encourage or discourage certain interpretations. In this way, the media exercises a selective influence over how people view reality (www.communicationstudies.com, 2024).

Framing theory, according to some theorists, is closely related to agenda-setting theory, but the focus of framing theory seeks to give interpretation to current issues rather than a particular topic. Both Framing and agenda-setting theories focus on how media draws the public's eye to specific topics – in this way, they set the agenda. Framing takes this a further step in the way in which the news is presented, creating a frame for that information. This is usually a conscious choice by journalists and media men. In this case, a frame refers to the way media as gatekeepers organise and present the ideas, events, and topics they cover (masscommtheory.com, 2023).

The basis of framing theory is that the media focuses on sensitive issues through the use of field meaning by making the audience think in a particular manner. In other words, the manner through which information is presented to the audience influences how information is processed. Frames are abstract or structured, meaning that one should think about that issue.

RELATED EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Ayomide (2022), in his study, analysed data from July-August 2022 on floods and asserted that in developing countries like Nigeria, emphasis should be placed on the media to ensure that the way of reportage promotes development in different areas of the country and also instil a sense of hope and assurance in the mind of the populace, especially during the occurrence of a natural disaster such as flooding. Findings, among many others, showed that broadcast media in Nigeria have been instrumental in the coverage of floods in Nigeria, thereby bringing information to the audience as it unfolds.

Englund et al. (2022), in their study of Swedish tourists, repatriated from the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, explored how survivors six years after the disaster perceived their encounters with journalists and exposure in the media, as well as their level of trust in the media, compared with government and authorities. They affirmed that the communication key is building trust and that a critical part of disaster communication is media coverage in the interface of the afflicted, media, and authorities. Findings showed Tsunami survivors mainly perceived interactions with journalists as being professional, showed heightened confidence and trust in Swedish radio and TV as compared to the Swedish authorities, and the participants' level of trust in the media was associated with their perceptions of journalists, and media coverage, the performance of journalists on site, and their own media exposure. However, a great number, though in the minority, saw their encounters and exposure to be negative, and the results suggest a link between personal experiences or perceptions and trust in the media.

Detrani (2016), in a study on the mass media and disaster, asserted that the media can play a critical role before, during and after natural disasters; the media are vital for warnings to be effective and perhaps be the sole most needed source of public information in an eventuality of a disaster. Findings also showed that media reports that distort what happens in a disaster led to misunderstandings and that the inability of officials to issue a warning may be a perception that early warning leads to panic, a belief sustained by the media. However, the study further revealed that victims of natural disasters welcome the presence of the media, trust them and do not see media men as intruders.

Houston et al. (2012), in their study on Disaster News: Framing and Frame Changing in Coverage of Major U.S. Natural Disasters, examined mass media framing and presentation of major American natural disasters within the period between 2000 and 2010. Findings revealed that mass media cover natural disasters for shorter periods than they do other issues; that media coverage tends to focus on the current impact of disasters on humans, the built environment, and the natural environment; that disaster economics is an important topic; that disaster media coverage generally focuses on the state and region related to the event; and that disaster news is largely about what is happening now.

Iqbal et al. (2014), stated that media is the most important source of information on hazards and disasters for people. Media play an important role in raising awareness and providing information to the masses. This role becomes crucial when it comes to reporting during disasters. The research concluded that currently, no code of conduct is available by authorities for reporting the disaster. However, some training is provided to the reporters. There is a need for National authorities to formulate a code of conduct for disaster reporting and disseminate it to the entire news channel so the channels and reporters are bound to cover the disaster within the limitations. In the end, Guidelines are provided for Disaster Reporting that may help to alert the officials and emergency and aid organisations about the specific needs of the affected people in the wake of disaster and in the provision of accurate, timely, and sensitive information to the public.

Aronu (2014) assessed the impact of the media and feedback systems in managing disasters in Nigeria. The findings revealed that the media made no significant contribution to the 2012 disaster management, and the feedback system during the disaster also made no significant contribution.

Using the flood years of 2019, 2020 and 2022 as benchmarks, Okeke et al. (2023) examined the exposure, believability and compliance of farmers in Anambra North to early warning

messages on flood mitigations. Findings, among others, revealed that compliance with the flood early warning messages was generally low among the farmers as most of them did not relocate or observe other safety measures. The study concludes that there is still a gap between the level of exposure, believability and compliance to the flood early warning messages. It was recommended, among others, that efforts should be made to educate the populace on the damages of flood and that flood-resistant IDP centres should be sited in flood-vulnerable communities.

Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal (2006), in their article - *The Dominance of Fear over Hope in the Life of Individuals and Collectives* – sought to elucidate major emotional forces that play a determinative role in the dynamics of conflicts, in general, and in intractable conflicts, in particular. They handled the *contention* of why fear overshadows hope in a person's life and collections based on accumulated experiences and emotions. Findings reveal that fear, as a primary emotion, is founded in the current experiences and based on the recollected past, processed both knowingly and unknowingly, which causes withdrawal and has the potential to lead to pre-emptive aggression. Hope, on the other hand, being a secondary emotion, involves cognitive activity, which requires anticipation and the search for new ideas and thus is based on complex processes of creativity and flexibility. Therefore, hope is often preceded and inhibited by spontaneous, automatically activated and faster fear. Fear and hope can each become a collective emotional orientation and, as such, organize society's views and direct its actions.

Research Design

A Content analysis method was adopted for the research study. Content analysis is a method of inquiry widely used in communication studies to make “replicable and valid inferences from data to their context” (Krippendorff, 2004). The study population consists of all audio-visual contents of NTA, Owerri and IBC, Owerri, from July 2022 – October 2022 on flood in Nigeria, which is a 244-day programme guide (122 for each media station). NTA, Owerri and IBC, Owerri were chosen because of their ownership; NTA, Owerri is a federal government-owned station, while IBC, Owerri is a state government-owned media. The two broadcast media stations, being the only two television stations in Imo State over the years, also have a large audience, which makes them unavoidable for people of the State. The signal reach of both stations was, at inception, built for the old Imo State, which included the current Abia State and parts of Ebonyi State; this makes the two stations available in two other states.

The sample size was determined using the composite or construct week method (Luke, Caburnay & Cohen, 2011) to get a total of twenty-eight programme guides, and fifty-six for the two TV stations under consideration. The unit of analysis for this study consisted of every news story, feature, documentary, opinion, interview and any other genre with the theme flood. A coding guide was, thus, developed to code this theme. Using the coding sheet designed for the study, the selected sample of newspapers within the study period was examined for: 1. Frequency: Number of times a particular news story appeared in the newspaper; 2. Type/Nature of story: Be it straight news, feature, documentaries, commentaries. This also refers to the story being educative, informative or other; 3. Slant (Media coverage direction): Favourable, unfavourable, neutral; 4. Source of story: This refers to the story being a dairy event, an enterprise story or other; and 5. Tone: This refers to the tone of the reportage.

Time and resource constraints may have inhibited the accuracy of this study's findings. The flood in question occurred in 2022, and the study was conducted in 2024, due to flooding

becoming a recurring decimal in Nigeria. The audio-visual contents of NTA, Owerri, and IBC, Owerri, used were from July 2022 to October 2022.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Flood Stories Reported

Table 1: Total Number of Flood Coverage

Months	NTA, Owerri	IBC, Owerri	Total
July	2	1	3
August 2024	5	2	7
September 2024	8	2	10
October	11	5	16
Total Stories	26	10	36

October 2022 recorded the highest number of flood disaster stories within the study period, with 16 stories. July 2022, however, recorded the lowest number of flood disasters with 3 stories.

Format of Media Coverage

Table 2: Format of Media Coverage on Flood Disaster

Type of Story	NTA, Owerri	IBC, Owerri	Freq.	%
Straight news	13	5	18	50
Feature presentations / Documentaries	4	3	7	19.4
Opinion/interviews	9	2	11	30.6
Total	26	10	36	100

For the types of flood disaster stories covered, straight news recorded the highest (50%) with 18 stories, features presentations/documentaries recorded seven stories (19.4%), and opinion/interviews recorded 11 stories (30.6%). This shows that the main format usually adopted by the broadcast media for reportage of flood disasters is Straight news.

Tones of Media Reportage

Table 3: Tones of Media Reportage on Flood Disaster

Tone of Story	NTA, Owerri	IBC, Owerri	Freq.	%
Hope	6	3	9	25
Fear/panic	12	5	17	47.2
Criticism	8	2	10	27.8
Total	26	10	36	100

Stories that evoke fear/panic recorded the highest percentage (47.2%), with 17 stories; stories that are criticisms recorded 10 (27.8%), and stories that bring hope recorded the least, with 9 (25%). This shows that the tone of flood disaster stories evokes fear and panic in the people.

Quality of Media Reportage

Table 4: Quality of Media Coverage During Flood Disasters

Quality of Story	NTA, Owerri	IBC, Owerri	Freq.	%
Balanced	5	2	7	19.5
Unbalanced	18	7	25	69.4
Negative	3	1	4	11.1
Total	26	10	36	100

Table 4 shows the quality of flood stories covered. Unbalanced stories recorded the highest number, 25, representing 69.4%. Stories that were balanced had 7 (19.5%), while stories that were negative recorded 4 (11.1%). This shows that the quality of flood stories covered was unbalanced.

Media Coverage on Causes, Impact, and Strategies of Flood Disaster

Table 5: Effective Media Coverage on Flood Disasters

Flood key issues coverage	NTA, Owerri	IBC, Owerri	Freq	%
Effective coverage	10	4	14	38.9
Ineffective coverage	16	6	22	61.1
Total	26	10	36	100

Table 5 above shows the effective media coverage of the causes, impacts, and strategies of flood disasters. The data shows that effective coverage recorded 14 (38.9%), while ineffective coverage recorded 22 (61.1%). This shows that the broadcast stations do not adequately cover the causes, impacts, and strategies of flood disasters in their reportage.

Nature of Coverage

Table 6: Nature of Flood Disaster Coverage

Nature of Coverage	NTA, Owerri	IBC, Owerri	Total	%
Educative	8	3	11	30.6
Informative	18	7	25	69.4
Total	26	10	36	100

Table 6 shows the nature of the coverage of the flood disaster examined. It indicates that 69.4% of the coverage was informative, while 30.6% was educative. With informative stories, there is no background information to provide an adequate understanding of the issue. With educative stories, the reader is provided with in-depth knowledge and understanding about the issue.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first objective of the study was to identify the formats used by broadcast stations in their report of floods in Nigeria. To address this objective, a research question - What are the formats used by broadcast stations in their reportage of floods in Nigeria? – was raised. Findings showed that the main format usually adopted by the broadcast media for reportage of flood disasters is the Straight News, mostly press releases as well as diary events, which are news reports from organised events or programmes such as press conferences, inauguration ceremonies, seminars and workshops. This finding was supported by Ayomide and Akindutire (2022) and Adeyeye and Egbulefu (2022). Therefore, it is not surprising that the highest type of flood disaster stories (Straight news) is based on the highest source of flood stories, which are diary events. This is an indicator that there were limited educative stories on flood disasters in NTA, Owerri and IBC, Owerri within the study period, as many of the regular news stories carried by both media stations are based on the speeches and statements of public officials. The lack of Feature presentations/documentaries, which mostly give an in-depth analysis of an issue or topic being reported, did not augur well with the creation of awareness about flood menace. Even Opinions/interviews, which also contain analysis and background sections, were minimally used. This shows that there are not many engagements between the media stations and the public. Where there were engagements, the reports are framed in such a way that it would skew discourse in a particular direction, usually that of fear, panic, and anxiety, instead of hope, preparedness and trust.

The second objective of the study was to determine the tones used by broadcast stations in their reportage of floods in Nigeria. To address this objective, a research question - What are the tones used by broadcast stations in their reportage of floods in Nigeria? – was raised. Findings showed that the tone of flood disaster stories evokes fear and panic in the people. This finding is supported by Idamah, (2024), Ayomide and Akindutire (2022), Detrani (2016), Houston et al. (2012), and Goffman (1974), who asserted that the manner with which media reports are being framed goes a long way in creating what to think in the minds of the audience, the dominant frame of reportage by the broadcast stations is Fear/panic (47.2%). Hope (25%) came rear. This shows that the government media houses a tone of reportage that communicates fear/panic in the minds of the audience.

The third objective of the study was to ascertain the quality of media coverage during flood disasters. To address this objective, a research question - What is the quality of media coverage during flood disasters? – was raised. Findings showed that the quality of flood stories covered was unbalanced. The broadcast stations, especially NTA Owerri, are involved in “Afghanistanism”, which is the practice of reporting on faraway countries, places, persons or problems when there is something that ought to be taken care of near home that is very severe. NTA, Owerri's quality of flood stories covered was unbalanced as it concentrated more on flood reports culled from NTA Abuja than on local flood disasters in Oguta and Ohaji/Egbema. This finding is also supported by Governor et al. (2024), Adeyeye and Egbulefu (2022) and Ayomide and Akindutire (2022). This finding, however, is contrary to Shan (1996), who stated that the media must focus on social and economic development reportage; he emphasized that reports should be able to promote development in society through positive and balanced reportage. The data showed that the direction of reportage by both broadcast stations is mostly balanced (69.4%).

The fourth objective of the study was to evaluate broadcast media coverage of the causes, impacts, and strategies to control flood disasters in Imo State, Nigeria. To address this

objective, a research question - Does broadcast media reportage adequately cover the causes, impact, and strategies to control flood disasters in Imo State, Nigeria? – was raised. Findings showed that the broadcast stations do not adequately cover the causes, impacts, and strategies of flood disasters in their reportage. Data from the content analysis indicated that there is no frequent flooding coverage by broadcast media in Nigeria. This is supported by Ayomide and Akindutire (2022), Englund et al. (2022) and Ajaero, Okoro and Ajaero (2016). Disaster coverage with an emphasis on Flood coverage has become an issue in society; media houses use their channel to reach out to their audience, as rightly noted by Kleinberg (2008). The media reports flooding activities to warn people, call for help, or inform them. However, the finding of this study is that the broadcast media does not effectively cover all aspects of flood disasters in their reportage.

Conclusion

Flooding in Nigeria is an annual problem, yet the adverse impacts can be mitigated through effective communication and management. Therefore, studies that can lead to better communication and management of the risks associated with flooding are extremely valuable. This requires understanding the information present in the available data and the prediction of extreme events. The northern part of Nigeria has been identified as the region most affected by flooding. Also identified are the two local government areas of Oguta and Ohaji/Egbema of Imo State. We, therefore, concluded that Nigerian broadcast media do not play a significant role in informing the people about an impending flood disaster; they do not mobilize the masses very well during natural disasters; they do not manage situations adequately; and the manner the broadcast media handles the aftermath of the flood disaster is usually rather poor.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, it is recommended that the NTA, Owerri and IBC, Owerri, as well as other broadcast media in Nigeria, should minimise the use of straight news and adopt more feature presentations/documentaries, opinions/interviews. This will enable it to give a more in-depth analysis of flood menace and touch on the various forms of the issues that would benefit the people in its coverage. Their news and reports of flood disasters should be framed and presented in such a way that it would instil hope, trust and preparedness, not evoke fear, panic, and anxiety in the people. The broadcast stations should avoid “Afghanistanism” and balance their news reportage, and there should be a synergy between the broadcast media, Federal and State emergency and rescue agencies to educate the public about flood disasters, warn them of hazards, and provide information and advice to victims before, during and after flood as well as helping to activate the local disaster response.

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