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Implications of Environmental Reporting in Nigerian Newspapers on Attitudes of Ilorin Elite Towards Environmental Care

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Abstract

The Nigerian environment is experiencing a high level of degradation leading to the tendency for wanton anthropogenic modification of the environment. These modifications, which occur as an attempt to meet the need for food, shelter, recreation and infrastructural facilities, have negative impacts on the environment. Environmental sustainability can only be attained soon if the attitude of environmental care is imbibed by the populace. The media are an important institution in the creation of awareness of existing and emerging critical issues that affect the environment. This study examined the implication of Nigerian newspapers' environmental reporting on the attitude of the elite class towards environmental care, with a focus on elites in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. The survey research method was adopted while a structured questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. A sample of 410 respondents was selected using the stratified sampling technique. However, 403 copies of the questionnaire administered were retrieved, representing a 98% response rate. The analysis of data found that most of the elite became environmental enthusiasts as a result of frequent reading of environmental stories in Nigerian newspapers. Although the newspaper was not their only major source of awareness and education on environmental issues, it played a significant role in improving their environmental care attitude.

Keywords: Environmental care; Environmental issue; Environmental reporting; Ilorin elite; Newspaper

Introduction

Several factors have been identified for the failure of numerous initiatives to solve the problem of environmental degradation. Prominent among these factors include unhealthy socio-cultural practices, poor environmental sanitation education and awareness, low literacy level, bad governance, disdain for the rule of law, and various forms of indiscipline (Agagu, 2009). Ladan (2015) states that in most towns and villages, waste management is at an all-time low. Most areas in urban centres in Nigeria lack public waste disposal facilities, forcing residents to bury or burn their trash or dispose of it haphazardly and refuse heaps are unattended to in many cities and peri-urban areas (Ladan, 2015). It is also established that collection by local government authorities is generally inconsistent while garbage recycling is minimal, and waste storage, collection, transportation, compaction, and final disposal procedures are all uncoordinated (Akinro et al., 2012). Furthermore, some of the waste products are hazardous; others, such as "pure water" sachets and polythene bags, are either non-biodegradable or difficult to decompose (Akinro et al., 2012). Similarly, medical waste that is improperly handled and disposed of poses a significant risk to waste collectors and scavengers, and can lead to infections such as HIV/AIDS, tetanus, hepatitis, and other diseases (WHO, 2017 cited in Ayuba et al., 2018). The above suggest that many Nigerians have a negative attitude toward environmental care and this could be one of the reasons why every state in the Nigerian federation is affected by one or more environmental issues at varying degrees.

However, it is widely believed that environment and environmental news and information are significant topics of conversation among the public and elites these days. Thus, media outlets play an important role in reporting happenings that are related to environmental challenges and issues (Pompper, 2004; Signorielli, 1993 cited in Boyagoda, 2017). Of course, the information is disseminated to the public by the media, which has a significant impact on them (Andina-Diaz, 2007). Researchers have, therefore, focused attention on media power in disseminating environmental news to raise public awareness about the environment. As a result of the media's strength as agenda-setters, it is believed that media are at the heart of what the world thinks about including the present and emerging environmental crises. The power possessed and wielded by the media in informing people about what issues are important and, possibly, galvanizing audiences to urge the government and other institutions to act is described by agenda-setting theory (Freedman, 2014).

Research has found that environmental news is only covered by Nigerian media when a significant calamity such as a flood, earthquake, erosion, or landslide occurs, or when there

are few political or economic stories to report (Obar et al., 2019). This, however, should not be the case, as studies have revealed that the rate of environmental challenges is rising alarmingly (United Nations Environment Programme, 2016; National Emergency Management Agency, 2013). Developing countries are likely to be the worst hit as a result of their limited capacity to plan against and/or survive the devastating impacts of environmental degradation. Besides, there is a view that the Nigerian government (federal, state, and local levels) and corporate organizations are slow to address numerous environmental issues (Oredipe et al., 2019). The constant environmental degradation is seen in the toxic wastes left behind by numerous industries during the manufacturing process. The degradation of the environment looks to be unabated, and Nigerians are getting exposed to health risks as a result of harmful activities by businesses and individuals (Oredipe et. al., 2019).

More so, traditional occupations and sources of income, such as fishing and farming, have been hampered, and the citizens are exposed to a variety of environmental pollution. Many Nigerians, particularly those in oil-producing states, have protested, asking that corporate organizations operate following international best practices, safeguard the environment, and assure the growth of host communities over time. Newspapers, it is argued, play a crucial role in bringing environmental rights issues to the forefront, particularly to attract concerned authorities, corporate organizations, and other stakeholders (Obar et al., 2019). On the theoretical front, while there are numerous studies on coverage of environmental issues in Nigeria, sociological explanations concerning the implication of the newspaper coverage on the attitude of the audience towards environmental care appear uncovered. This study is therefore an attempt to examine the implication of newspaper coverage on the attitudinal change of the audience. Despite the growing number of newspapers in Nigeria that are meant to expose the multiplicity of environmental rights issues, the country's environment continues to deteriorate.

Further, it has been asserted that the ability of the media to set an agenda for public discussion of environmental issues affects both the scope of coverage and audience perception of those issues (Teklesilassie, 2015). This is in line with the submission of Resse (2007) that agenda-setting suggests that the media control what viewers think about. Many of the earlier studies on environmental issues covered in Nigerian media come to an end here. This study took a step further by investigating the relationship between exposure to environmental issues covered by the Nigerian media and the attitude of the audience towards environmental care. The broad objective of this study was to find out the implication of newspapers' environmental

reporting on the attitude of Ilorin elite towards environmental care while the specific objectives are to: a) determine the level of exposure to environmental news in Nigerian newspapers among Ilorin elite; b) examine the level of readership of environmental news in Nigerian newspapers among Ilorin elite; and c) examine the impact of environmental news in Nigerian newspapers on the environmental care attitude of Ilorin elite.

Research Hypothesis

Similarly, the study is guided by the following hypotheses:

H₀: Reading environmental news in Nigerian newspapers will not impact positively the environmental care attitude of the elite in Ilorin.

H₁: Reading of environmental news in Nigerian newspapers will impact positively on the environmental care attitude of the elite in Ilorin.

Environment in a Critical Lens

There have been different definitions of the concept of environment proffered by different scholars and organized bodies/agencies. However, from whatever angle one perceives the term ‘environment’, it simply depicts what surrounds us. According to Miller (1975), the term ‘environment’ could be perceived as the aggregate of external conditions that influence the life of an individual or population, specifically the life of man and other living organisms on the earth’s surface. Bankole and Surajudeen (2008) added that the environment supports the existence and survival of humans by supplying oxygen, water, food, raw materials, shelter, sinks for wastes created by humans, and in fact, his fundamental needs for progress and technological advancement. Changes in environmental elements and capacities are always occurring due to the interaction of man’s activities and natural phenomena. Flowing from the definitions cited above, the environment can simply be referred to as the physical structures that are all around human beings, including the land, the air, and the water.

However, Ukwuoma et al. (2021) note that as mankind advanced throughout history, artificial environments were built. Because they support human life, everything from palaces built for ancient kings to contemporary cities are seen as man-made physical environments. There is a complex physical environment created by humans in the world today. Humans exist in a highly technological as well as developed society, previously natural physical environments the human-made environments which were forests; reserves are currently being cleared to create a place for the innovative artificial physical environment. Importantly,

Owolabi et al. (2019) maintain that the quality of the environment is perhaps one of the elements working against the Nigerian government's efforts to reduce the country's high and rising poverty. This is because, through environmental and health education among other channels, Nigerians' capacity and ability to be productive and positively contribute to the country's economy would be adversely affected by the quality of the environment. This may be connected to the hypothesis of Kuznet's environmental curve, which contends that the relationship between environment quality and GDP per capita takes the shape of an Inverted-U (Kuznets, 1955). As a result, several economic indices, including poverty, health, and education, are linked to GDP per capita (Owolabi et al., 2019).

Ibrahim and Babayemi (2010) note that environmental care, otherwise known as environmental protection, is mostly the process of the maintenance and improvement of the environment. It has reached the status of a collective move seeking changes in guiding principles and individual approaches to affirm the safeguarding of mineral deposits and the environment. Environmental protection is more imperative for nations that are still undergoing development like Nigeria which usually encounters several socio-environmental challenges. For instance, increasing urbanization makes pollution of the environment to be a problem for communal well-being in Nigeria (Ibrahim and Babayemi, 2010). The Federal Ministry of Environment (FMENV) among other significant agencies in the sector has been making efforts to teach and inform the public on issues that contribute to a healthy environment by making use of the mass communication channels involving both the new media, print media, and broadcast media. Among the recommendations made by the environment ministry is that secondary schools should set up Environmental Conservation Clubs. The Nigerian Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, were to work out modalities for the advancement of educational masterplan and curricula of the environment for both Nigerian formal and informal educational schemes (Babalola et al., 2010). However, there still exist significant restraints to the efficient administration and improvement of the environment despite the noteworthy progress made in providing information that is pertinent to the environment. These thus entail uncomfortable policies and principles, inadequate database, institutional conflicts, insufficient enforcement, poor and ill-timed funding as well as lack of citizen's knowledge (Babalola et al., 2010).

The Elite

According to Odubajo and Alabi (2014), elitism as a concept has attracted a series of attention over time, with various scholars justifying the explanation of the concept based on the series of directions that relationships can tow. In the view of Robert (1964) cited in Odubajo and Alabi, (2014), elites should not be limited to makers of governmental policy. She noted that elites are composed of a broader group that can be broken down into several elites, although the members of all of them are well-informed persons who, because of their prestige or power, can exert influence on the decision-makers.

Hossain and Moore (2002) also explain that elites are the people who make or shape the main political and economic decisions. They listed elite to include ministers and legislators; owners and controllers of TV and radio stations and major business enterprises and activities; large property owners; upper-level public servants; senior members of the armed forces, police and intelligence services; editors of major newspapers; publicly prominent intellectuals, lawyers and doctors; and — more variably — influential socialites and heads of large trades unions, religious establishments and movements, universities and development NGOs.

The above clarification is in line with the submission of Hoffmann-Lange (2017) that the elite group includes top members of the following major sectors:

- Politics
- Public Administration
- Armed forces
- Private business
- Mass media
- Academia and education
- Voluntary associations, especially business associations and labour unions
- Religious movements,
- Major professional associations, and
- Influential cultural institutions.

Environmental Journalism: Issues and Debates

Several studies have been conducted on how media have reported environmental issues in a bid to inform the audience. As far back as (2012), Alan discovered in his study that environmental stories, such as climate change stories, were considered a ‘new’ story for African journalists. This, according to the author was a challenge that had been encountered before – specifically in the coverage of HIV/Aids. The author argues that climate change and

HIV/AIDS present systemic challenges to news production due to their complex science, political influence, and humanitarian urgency, which conflict with under-resourced newsrooms and inadequate news agendas.

Jjuuko (2020) also investigated environmental journalism in the six nations of East Africa namely Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, and South Sudan. It was discovered that environmental journalism in these nations is all about the livelihood and food security of the people, especially the poor. The author discovered a progressive deterioration of the ecosystem as well as firsthand accounts of people's struggles to make ends meet while dealing with environmental issues. It was concluded that the public had not been well served by the largely superficial and subpar media coverage of environmental issues in East Africa. Nonetheless, a few environmental journalists managed to make a big difference against all odds.

A study conducted by Okpara (2020) gathered data by administering a structured questionnaire to selected journalists from two West African nations (Nigeria and Gambia). The study found that a major challenge noted by the respondents was the lack of effective supervision and enactment of environmental laws in their nations. The journalists also said they were not adequately aware of local environmental policies. The author felt that this might be partly due to ineffective dissemination plans and communication strategies adopted by ministries in charge of environmental issues in the respective countries.

Kamboh et al., (2022) analyzed editorial coverage of environmental issues in four English-language newspapers during the COVID-19 pandemic. They discovered that when it came to supporting environmental causes, the editorialists either disregarded the connection between environmental problems and the pandemic or, if they did, provided very little coverage. As a result, it appears that they were unable to fulfil their normative duty.

The above submissions indicate that the mass media are yet to be ranked as the highest sources of information for the audience on environmental issues, and they (the media) have yet to significantly influence public knowledge. However, there is a need to examine the implication of environmental stories in the media on the attitude of the audience towards environmental care. The elite class of Ilorin is the focus of this study.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on agenda-setting theory and a two-step flow model.

Agenda Setting Theory

According to Asemah (2011), the agenda-setting theory was first proposed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald L Shaw in 1972/1973. However, the idea of the media being responsible for the pictures in our heads can be traced back to Lippmann (1922). Cohen (1963) further developed the concept by suggesting that the media may not be successful in telling people what to think, but they are successful in telling people what to think about.

The agenda-setting theory explains the relationship between the emphasis that the mass media puts on an issue and the public's reaction to that issue (Littlejohn and Foss, 2009). Cohen (1963) explains that the theory was initially developed to explain how the media can change political behaviour during elections. However, it has since been expanded to cover how the media frames and primes issues for their audiences. Not only limited to such, the discussion also covers how the mass media colours a particular event for their media audiences (Matsaganis and Payne, 2005). Therefore, most of the things we think or worry about, most of the issues we discuss, are based on what we have read, listened to or watched in different mass media. The media makes us think or feel that certain issues are more important than others in the same society.

Hallinan (1995) argues that the public agenda set by the media coverage is not necessarily what the public is concerned about, but may simply be the issues they are aware of. If an issue such as environmental degradation has been discussed heavily in the media, then the public is likely to think of environmental degradation when asked which issues are important.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) discovered that the main effect of news media was agenda setting, that is telling audiences and readers what not to think, but what to think about whether social, political, local or national, and that public issues are generated by the media. Consumers do not only learn about an issue but also how much importance is attached to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position (McCombs and Shaw, 1972).

Concerning this study, applying agenda-setting theory by media workers implies that they will feature news on the environment in such ways that it becomes a major issue in society or provokes public discussion which may influence the government to align its programs and policies with the public discussion provoked. It can create environment consciousness and awareness in the minds of people, and at the same time, educate and reinforce the populace on the importance of the conduciveness of the environment to healthy living.

Two-Step Flow Model

The two-step flow model was formulated in 1948 by Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet in the book, *The People's Choice*, after research into voters' decision-making processes during the 1940 U.S. presidential election. It stipulates that mass media content first reaches "opinion leaders," people who are active media users and who collect, interpret, and diffuse the meaning of media messages to less-active media consumers. According to the authors, opinion leaders pick up information from the media, and this information then gets passed on to less-active members of the public. This implies that many people receive information from opinion leaders through interpersonal communication rather than directly from mass media (Postelnicu, 2016).

Ethan (2011) notes that the historical context of the theory is important because it denotes a shift from the dominant belief that the mass media have powerful, direct, and uniform effects on people, long known as the magic bullet theory. The theory of the two-step flow of mass communication was further developed by Lazarsfeld together with Elihu Katz in the book, *Personal Influence* (1955). The book explains that people's reactions to media messages are mediated by interpersonal communication with members of their social environment. A person's membership in different social groups (family, friends, professional and religious associations, etc.) has more influence on that person's decision-making processes and behaviour than does information from mass media (Postelnicu, 2016).

This simply means that the elite (who form the bulk of the opinion leaders) with more knowledge and resources on environmental issues might be more engaged in influencing the attitude of many citizens on environmental care than those who are not opinion leaders. This explains why this study focuses on the elite class.

Methodology

Since this study intends to find out the impact of newspaper coverage of dominant environmental issues on the attitude of the elite in Ilorin, the survey research method becomes appropriate. This is based on the argument of Ponto (2015) that information has been obtained from individuals and groups through the use of survey research for decades. It can range from asking a few targeted questions from individuals on a street corner to obtaining information related to behaviours and preferences to a more rigorous study using multiple valid and reliable instruments. Also, the population of this study justifies the use of survey research. Elites in Ilorin (as used in this study) are relatively large. Hence, there is a need to employ a research method that can take care of the large population. The population of this study are the elite

class of Ilorin. It must be noted that the number of members that constitute the population of this study was extremely difficult to arrive at. This is because the lack of a database from relevant institutions and organizations made it difficult to determine the number of people that constitute the elite in Ilorin. However, according to the statistics provided by (2022), Ilorin has an estimation of 1,000,000 inhabitants. Knoema's DataHub (2022) put the literacy rate at 48.1%. However, since not all literates can be categorized as elites, the researchers estimated that at least 30% of the inhabitants of Ilorin belong to the elite class. This simply means that the population of this study is 300,000.

Consequently, in line with the submission of Hoffmann-Lange (2017), the elites used in this study were top members of the following groups in Ilorin:

- i. Academia
- ii. Religious organizations,
- iii. Indigenous associations.

Besides, since it is not feasible to collect data from an entire population of interest, therefore, a subset of the population or sample is used to estimate the population responses (Ponto, 2015). A sample is a smaller part of a statistical population where properties are studied to gain information about the whole (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). Going by the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table, a population with 300,000 members will attract 384 respondents. However, the researchers decided to do over-sampling by selecting four hundred and ten (410) respondents as a sample. This is safer since it was envisaged that some copies of the questionnaire might not be retrieved on the field. The stratified sampling technique was employed. The stratified sampling is a sampling strategy used when the population is composed of several subgroups (Denscombe, 2003). This is necessitated by the fact that members who constitute respondents for this study were selected from different groups and associations.

The type of instrument used for research depends on the type of data to be collected and the method of research adopted (Oyewole and Olorede, 2014). Since this study makes use of a survey research method, the data collection instrument used is a questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to elicit data from the elite class of Ilorin to know the implication of environmental news on their attitude towards environmental care. The method used in the analysis and interpretation of the quantitative data collected through the survey research method is a statistical method involving the use of simple percentages and tables. The method of data analysis should always reflect the methodology used in any study. Therefore, percentage tables and figures were used to present and interpret the quantitative data generated

through the coding sheet. Also, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (version 23) was used to process the quantitative data gathered through a questionnaire for presentation, interpretation and discussion. However, the Spearman’s Correlation analysis is adopted to test the hypothesis. This type of test is a non-parametric used for Likert Scale data. According to Zaidation and Bagheri (2009), a mean score below 3.39 was considered low, a mean score from 3.40 up to 3.79 was considered moderate and a mean score above 3.8 was considered as high as illustrated in the table below.

Table 1: Comparison bases of the mean score of the five-point Likert Scale instrument

Mean Score	Description
<3.39	Low
3.40-3.79	Moderate
>3.80	High

Source: Zaidation and Bagheri (2009)

Findings

In carrying out the study, 410 elites within Ilorin were selected as respondents but 403 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved representing a 98% retrieval rate. The data are thus presented as follows:

Table 2: Demographic Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	335	83.1%
Female	68	16.9%
Total	403	100%
Age		
31-40 years	96	23.8%
41-50 years	198	49.1%
51 and above	109	27.1%
Total	403	100%
Educational Qualification		

ND	24	5.9%
HND	151	37.8%
B.Sc/B.A/B.L	120	29.8%
M.Sc/M.A/M.Ed	94	23.3%
Ph.D	11	2.7%
Other	3	0.7%
Total	403	100%
Occupation		
Civil service	138	34.2%
Public service	125	31.0%
Private employment	68	16.9%
Self-Employment	69	16.9%
Other	3	0.7%
Total	403	100%
Years of work experience		
0-5 years	29	7.2%
6-10 years	57	14.1%
11-15 years	84	20.8%
16-20 years	84	20.8%
21-25 years	76	18.9%
26-30 years	51	12.7%
31-35 years	22	5.5%
Retiree	0	0%
Total	403	100%

In table 2, the demographic information of the respondents is presented. The table illustrates that the majority of the respondents are male (83.1%). The remaining 16.9% are female. Similarly, the table shows that in terms of the age of the respondents, close to a quarter of them are between the ages of 31 and 40 years. It follows that almost half of them are between the ages of 41 and 50 years (49.1%) while the remaining 27.1% are between 51 years and above. The educational qualifications of the respondents show in the table that more than one-third of the respondents have a Higher National Diploma (HND = 37.8%), followed by those

who possess Bachelor’s Degree (29.8%) and those who Master’s Degree (23.3%). Similarly, 5.9% of them possess only National Diploma (ND) while only 2.7% possess a doctorate. In terms of occupation, the majority of them are either civil servants (34.2%) or public servants (31.0%). Those who work in private employment owned by other people are 16.9% while those who are self-employed themselves account for 16.9%. The years of experience of the respondents indicate that the bulk of the respondents have experience between 11 and 20 years (41.6%). Apart from this, 18.9% have been working for up to 25 years while another group of 14.1% have been working for between 6 and 10 years. Similarly, 5.5% are nearing retirement as they have been working for up to 35 years.

Table 3: Exposure to environmental news in Nigerian newspapers among the Ilorin elite

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I read national newspapers regularly.	403	1.00	5.00	3.7925	.82882
I show interest in any environmental content I come across in national newspapers.	403	1.00	5.00	4.0287	1.14890
Nigerian newspapers carry adequate contents on environmental issues in Nigeria.	403	2.00	5.00	2.8698	.71846
Nigerian newspapers give depth treatment to environmental issues.	403	2.00	5.00	2.3907	.76402
My readership of environmental stories in national newspapers expose me to major environmental issues in Nigeria	403	1.00	5.00	3.6004	.80469

Without my exposure to environmental stories in national newspapers, I would not have been aware of most of the environmental challenges facing Nigeria.	403	1.00	5.00	2.7506	1.05681
Valid N (listwise)	403				

Table 3 presents the statements that measure the exposure to environmental news in Nigerian newspapers among the Ilorin elite. Out of the six measuring statements, the respondents agree with three of the statements because the attained Mean coefficients are between 3.4 and 4.2. The statements are “I read national newspapers regularly” (3.7925), “I show interest in any environmental content I come across in national newspapers (4.0287) and “My readership of environmental stories in national newspapers expose me to major environmental issues in Nigeria” (3.6004). However, they disagree with the fact that “Nigerian newspapers give depth treatment to environmental issues (2.3907). On the other hand, they are undecided with the statement that “Nigerian newspapers carry adequate contents on environmental issues in Nigeria” (2.8698) and that “Without my exposure to environmental stories in national newspapers, I would not have been aware of most of the environmental challenges facing Nigeria” (2.7506).

To explain if the Mean coefficients which establish certain discoveries are reliable or not, Standard Deviation coefficients are examined. The Standard Deviation further explains how dispersed the data is concerning the data. In this case, the Standard Deviation coefficients are lower than the Mean coefficients across all the statements. In some cases, they are even lower than 1. These low Standard Deviation coefficients indicate that data are clustered closely around the Mean, thereby more reliable. The results of Mean and Standard Deviation indicate that the level of exposure to environmental news in Nigerian newspapers among Ilorin elites is somewhat high, which addresses the first objective of the study. This gives the respondents the chance to assess the newspapers on how they report environmental news. According to the respondents, the Nigerian newspapers do not give in-depth treatment to environmental issues.

Table 4: Readership of environmental news in Nigerian newspapers among the Ilorin elite

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
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I read environmental stories on national newspapers regularly.	403	1.00	5.00	3.7810	.47397
Most of the contents on environmental issues in the national dailies are presented in news story format.	403	1.00	5.00	3.7751	.75339
I have come across a lot of feature articles on environmental issues in the national dailies.	403	1.00	5.00	2.4711	1.17900
Editorials on environmental issues in the national dailies are scanty.	403	1.00	5.00	3.6674	.82933
So many pictures are often used in the national dailies to portray the state of environmental challenges in Nigeria.	403	1.00	5.00	2.3834	.80927
Environmental news in Nigerian national newspapers is based on local issues	403	1.00	5.00	2.8996	1.09348
Environmental news in Nigerian national newspapers is based on foreign issues	403	2.00	5.00	3.8393	.66627
Valid N (listwise)	403				

Table 4 presents the level of readership of environmental news in Nigerian newspapers among the Ilorin elite. As the table shows, the interval that is used to determine the outcome is 0.8 while the lower limit is 1 and the upper limit is 5. Seven measuring statements are used as presented in the table. The Mean and Standard Deviation also indicate how dispersed the data are with the respondents. The table shows a low Standard Deviation across all the statements. In some cases, they are even lower than 1. This is an indication that data are clustered closely around the Mean and it is reliable. It shows a normal data distribution. Moreover, the values of Mean across the seven statements show that the people agree with four of the statements,

disagree with two and are neutral/undecided with one. From the table, there is a high level of environmental news readership among the respondents as the Mean coefficients of the four statements range between 3.4 and 4.2. They agree to statements that (1) I read environmental stories in national newspapers regularly (3.7810), (2) Most of the contents on environmental issues in the national dailies are presented in news story format (3.7751), (3) Editorials on environmental issues in the national dailies are scanty (3.6674) and (4) Environmental news in Nigerian national newspapers is based on foreign issues (3.8393).

The familiarity with newspaper environmental stories continues with the following statements (1) I have come across a lot of feature articles on environmental issues in the national dailies (2.4711) and (2) So many pictures are often used in the national dailies to portray the state of environmental challenges in Nigeria (2.3834). They also refuse to agree with the statement “Environmental news in Nigerian national newspapers is based on local issues” with a Mean of 2.8996. The results of Mean and Standard Deviation indicate that the elites were familiar with the reportage of environmental news in Nigerian newspapers due to the high level of readership. This establishes a damning verdict on the newspapers and they have reported environmental news in Nigeria. This addresses the second objective of the study

Table 5: Impact of environmental news in Nigerian newspapers on the environmental care attitude of Ilorin elite

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Exposure to content on environmental issues in Nigerian newspapers stimulates my consciousness of environmental issues in Nigeria	403	2.00	5.00	3.8851	.81899
Reading environmental stories in Nigerian newspapers improved my knowledge of the causes of environmental problems in Nigeria.	403	1.00	5.00	4.3694	.88558

Content on environmental issues in Nigerian newspapers educates me on ways to develop an environmental care attitude.	403	1.00	5.00	3.2950	1.08795
Exposure to environmental stories in Nigerian newspapers influences my attitude towards the positive preservation of natural resources.	403	1.00	5.00	3.9054	1.22615
I have an environmental care attitude.	403	1.00	5.00	4.4662	.91697
I am an environmental enthusiast in my general dealings.	403	1.00	5.00	4.2235	.59194
Valid N (listwise)	403				

Table 5 shows that the determinant interval used is 0.8 while the lower limit is 1 and the upper limit is 5 to establish the findings. The values of Mean across the six measuring statements indicate a positive attitude towards environmental care. The respondents largely “strongly agree” or “agree” with the statements. For instance, strongly agree with the fact that “Reading environmental stories in Nigerian newspapers improved my knowledge of causes of environmental problems in Nigeria and “I am an environmental enthusiast in my general dealings” (4.2235). Similarly, they agreed that their “Exposure to contents on environmental issues in Nigerian newspapers stimulates my consciousness of environmental issues in Nigeria” (3.8851) and “Exposure to environmental stories in Nigerian newspaper influences my attitude towards positive preservation of natural resources” (3.9054).

But the only area they could neither agree nor disagree with is whether the contents of newspapers on environmental reporting educate them enough to form this positive attitude. They remain undecided on “Content on environmental issues in Nigerian newspapers educate me on ways to develop environmental care attitude” (3.2950). The Standard Deviation across the statement also indicates how dispersed the data are with the respondents. The table shows a low Standard Deviation across all the statements. In some cases, they are even lower than 1. This is an indication that data are clustered closely around the Mean and it is reliable. Therefore,

the results of Mean and Standard Deviation indicate, to a great extent, a positive attitude of Ilorin elites towards environmental care, due to their exposure to environmental news in Nigerian newspapers. It means that they care for the environment.

Testing of Hypothesis

To test the only Null hypotheses, Spearman’s Correlation test is adopted. This type of test is a non-parametric used for Likert Scale data.

Therefore: -

H₀: Reading environmental news in Nigerian newspapers will not impact positively the environmental care attitude of the elite class in Ilorin

H₁: Reading environmental news in Nigerian newspapers will impact positively the environmental care attitude of the elite class in Ilorin

Correlations

		RDS	ATT	
Spearman's rho	RDS	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.277**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	403	403
ATT	ATT	Correlation Coefficient	.277**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	403	403

The Spearman’s correlation shows that the significance level is 0.000 which is less than 0.005 significance level. This means the correlation between reading environmental news in Nigerian newspapers and the environmental care attitude of the elite class in Ilorin is very significant. Similarly, the correlation coefficient between reading environmental news in Nigerian newspapers and the environmental care attitude of the elite class in Ilorin is 0.277. The Spearman’s correlation of 0.000 is less than 0.005 significance level. This indicates that there is less than a 5% chance that the attitude of the Ilorin elites toward environmental care is based on only the reading of environmental news published in the newspapers. Other factors are responsible for the established attitude. Therefore, the null hypothesis that “Reading environmental news in Nigerian newspapers will not impact positively on the environmental

care attitude of the elite class in Ilorin” is not true and is hereby rejected. The alternate hypothesis is upheld. As it has been found, reading impacts attitude with support from other factors.

Discussion of Findings

The data presented reveal that the level of exposure to environmental news in Nigerian newspapers among Ilorin elites is somewhat high. This is because the majority of the respondents agreed that they read newspapers regularly and they also show interest in environmental news in Nigerian newspapers (as shown in Table 3). The level of education of the respondents could be a factor in the high level of exposure to newspapers since the majority of the elites in Ilorin were well-educated. The discovery of a high level of newspaper readership among elites in Ilorin (Table 3) supports the finding of Ogbiten (2007) that people of higher educational qualifications read newspapers more than those with lower educational qualifications. The data presented in Table 4 reveal that the elites did not only read environmental news in Nigerian newspapers to a higher degree, but they were also familiar with the story format used in reporting environmental issues. For instance, the majority of the respondents agreed that most of the contents on environmental issues in the national dailies were presented in news story format; editorials on environmental issues in the national dailies were scanty and; many pictures were used in the national dailies to portray the state of environmental challenges in Nigeria. However, the point of departure is the refusal of the majority of the respondents to agree with the statement “Environmental news in Nigerian national newspapers is based on local issues”. This means that the majority of the environmental news stories they have come across in Nigerian national newspapers were based on foreign issues. More so, most of the respondents also agreed that they had come across many feature articles on environmental issues in the national dailies.

The data presented in Table 5 revealed that the attitude of Ilorin elites on environmental care is positive due to their exposure to environmental news in Nigerian newspapers. This negates the finding of Akpan et al. (2012) that Nigerian newspaper reports on climate change, which is an environmental issue, do not significantly influence the Nigerian public. However, the majority of the respondents were silent on whether the newspapers were able to educate them on ways to develop an environmental care attitude. This simply means that there could be other ways by which the respondents were educated on environmental care attitudes. This supports the finding of Akpan et al. (2012) that Nigerian newspapers were not the only major

sources of information on climate change for the Nigerian public. Conversely, several studies (Ugboma, 2002; McCarthy and Brennan, 2009; Babalola et al., 2010) have reported the effectiveness of the mass media, particularly the radio and television in creating awareness about public environmental issues. This is often associated with their wide geographical coverage and the relatively cheap cost of acquiring and using them. Most of these studies did not see the print media as a major source of environmental awareness and education for the Nigerian public.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it may be concluded that the environment remains a crucial element in humanity's effort to survive and as such, deserves to be efficiently reported by the media. This role belongs to what is known as environmental journalism which is the art of gathering and reporting information about various phenomena relating to human's physical surroundings. Exposure to newspaper reports on environmental issues tends to have much effect on the attitude of the readers, most especially when they are reported often. The multiplicity of causes of environmental issues makes it difficult to delineate the causes and consequences of environmental degradation in terms of a simple one-to-one relationship. The causes and effects are often interwoven in complex webs of social, technological, environmental and political factors. However, it could be noted that if the newspaper reports set an agenda to the public as effectively as possible, this study holds that the people's environmental care attitude will, over time, be improved. The media's role in environmental education is important because it is through newspapers, magazines, radio, and television that people gain awareness. With proper conduction, media can offer good communication tools that can be used as educational aids to reduce the gap between scientific knowledge and civic awareness.

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