

NEWSPAPERS FRAMING OF NATIONAL DRUG LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY (NDLEA) ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIA



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Abstract

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency was set up in 1989 for preventing illegal narcotraffic and utilisation in Nigerian society, thus this study examined the Nigerian newspapers' framing of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) activities in Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were: To find out how frequently Daily Trust and the Vanguard newspapers reported the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency's (NDLEA) activities in Nigeria and to ascertain the dominant frame used in the coverage of NDLEA activities in Nigeria by the select newspapers. The scholars utilised the content analysis method. The sample size was 126 which was derived using Nwanna's 1998 stipulation. The sampling technique was the census method. The period of study covered one year (1st December 2021 to 30th November 2022). The researchers discovered that Vanguard newspaper covered the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency's (NDLEA) activities in Nigeria more than the Daily Trust newspaper. Further findings indicated that the dominant frame used in reporting NDLEA activities in Nigeria was the arrest of drug courier frames. The study concludes that the Vanguard newspaper was more active and frequently covered NDLEA activities in Nigeria than the Daily Trust newspaper. The scholars recommended that the media should report more activities of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in Nigeria more often and an awareness and sensitisation frame should be used in reporting the issues by studied newspapers.

Keywords: *Select, Newspapers, Framing, NDLEA, Activities*

Introduction

Drug abuse and trafficking were alien to Nigeria in the early 60s and 70s, but towards the late 80s, the issue began to increase. People were selling drugs both locally and internationally. Youths were getting more and more into this prohibited act of drug smuggling, thus resulting in social and health hazards to the

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human race. The Military government then had to take quick action in order to curb illegal drug trafficking or smuggling in the country. This gave birth to the formation of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) on 29th of December, 1989 under the Pronouncement of Decree No. 48, 1989 to curb the act of drug trafficking and to reduce its insurgence in society. According to Targba (2020), the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) was formed by the federal government with the major aim of prohibiting the production and selling of illegal drugs in Nigeria and the agency also claims to be the largest drug enforcement agency in Africa.

This body is responsible for investigating drug smuggling-related cases, tracking down drug traffickers, and punishing them. This agency works at airports, seaports, and beyond just to track down drug trafficking and to enforce drug laws, destroy Narcotic plants and substances, investigate financial proceeds from the drug business, play a notable function in drug research as well and educate members of the populace on the effects of drug abuse and drug misuse (Chime, 2023). However, between 2021 and 2022, December, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency arrested 26, 458 drug traffickers. According to NDLEA Chairman, Buba Marwa,

“In 24 months, we fruitful arraigned 3,733 culprits who were convicted and handed various jail terms in court. According to the verdict number, 2,346 have been registered in the year 2022 solely, which is excessive in the chronicle of the agency and nearly doubled over the maximum at any point set down in the 33 years of NDLEA. This is rarely adventure but still an outcome of competence, willpower, dedication, and industrious of our agents, men, and women” (Chime, 2023).

Newspapers cover issues and information on a broad spectrum of societal challenges which include; news, politics, education, science and technology, religion, commerce, maritime, crime, health, etc. The average daily newspaper carries extra news compared with radio, television, or a different medium (Alozie, 2009). The media in Nigeria have become part of the social institutions. They also set an agenda. McCombs and Reynolds (2002 as cited in Chime-Nganya, Ezegwu & Ezeji, 2017), opine that the shape of framing of reports and the importance predisposed to an issue get along in adjudicating general understanding as well as awareness of the matter. Such reportage also sets the agenda for public opinion and discussion. The manner NDLEA activities are reported or framed by newspapers will interest the reading public, however, it is not known how it is framed, hence, and this study examined select newspapers' framing of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) activities in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The role of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. They prosecute drug offenders among other things. Most of these issues have been reported through various channels of mass media. The newspaper is among the largest conventional devices of information media and has never failed to report societal issues. The print media, more especially newspapers have been identified as one of the most efficient means of communication. Frames in media are an important part of the study of the choice and explanation of news. Many studies have been carried out on media framing in Nigeria and elsewhere. For instance, Ezegwu, Udoyo, and Ovuike (2017) investigated newspaper claspings of the Gambian political crisis and its effect on University of Uyo students' impression of the matter. Oke, Nwokamma, and Harold (2019) investigated newspaper reports of the outcry for reorganization in Nigeria. The authors utilised the content analysis method. Amongst the works of media framing of issues in Nigeria, there is limited empirical evidence that has looked at media framing of activities of government agencies, like NDLEA. However, this study looked at select newspapers' framing of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) activities in Nigeria, by ascertaining the volume of coverage, frequency of coverage, and dominant frame utilised in the report of NDLEA activities in select Nigerian newspapers. This study aims to fill that knowledge lacuna.

Research Questions

The following research questions were designed to guide the study:

1. What is the volume of coverage given to the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency's (NDLEA) activities in Nigeria by *Daily Trust* and *Vanguard* newspapers?
2. How frequently have *Daily Trust* and the *Vanguard* newspapers reported the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency's (NDLEA) activities in Nigeria?
3. What is the dominant frame used in covering National Drug Law Enforcement Agency's (NDLEA) activities in Nigeria by select newspapers?

Overview of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA)

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) was established on the 29th of December, 1989 under the proclamation of Decree No. 48, 1989. This body is responsible for regulating drug issues in the country. NDLEA in an attempt to solve Drug problems in Nigeria set of rules and regulations that guide every citizen of this country. This agency being harmed by the federal government engage in a series of campaign and awareness of the effect of illicit drug intake, drug trafficking, and drug misuse. They are an agency that deals with

punishing drug users and ensuring that the country is safe from the risks of hard drugs. They engage in destroying farms and plantations of cocaine, marijuana, and other narcotic weeds.

Other Functions of NDLEA

The Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency has been formed to discharge specific roles in order to fight drug trafficking and drug smuggling, as well as, the use of drugs within Nigeria. There are other functions assigned to the Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency. Below are some of them anywhere:

1. Prevention of Illicit Trafficking of Hard Drugs

Prevention of illicit peddling of stimulants, such as, the narcotic drug was one of the functions assigned to the Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency. So, the primary responsibility of the Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency was to ensure that it enacted some measures with the intent of stopping drug movement within and around Nigeria's borders.

2. Traces and Seizes Financial Proceeds from Drug Businesses

Another role of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency is to ensure that, it checks and follows the financial flow of drug businesses. It is incumbent on the role of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency to find financial proceeds that acquired drug-related trade and wrongdoing, and, examine and confiscate such financial proceeds.

3. Eradicates Narcotic Plants and Substances

In most cases, it is advisable that the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency start its duties from the top of the chain. It is one of the functions of the Agency to make sure that, it eradicates the illegal growing of opiate plants as well as, those other substances.

4. Builds on the Effectiveness of Its Efforts in Eradicating the Illicit Drugs

The Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency's role is not confined to law enforcement, its roles also include its obligation to ensure that, it continues tweaking the eradication machinery of drug-related business for the motive of improving effectiveness.

5. Examination of drug-related crimes

The main duty of the NDLEA is to routinely discover acts and means of finding out drug-related crimes which are the cultivation, trading, and use of hypnotic drugs and substances.

6. Partnering with international agencies to fight drug trafficking

Though a federal agency, the agency has international obligations. Its role is to supervise all sedative-related affairs both within and outside Nigeria and impose international drug laws

7. Informing the public

The NDLEA informs the general public about sedative substances; peril and abuse. They monitor public places such as seaports, airports, and borders to stop the importation and exportation of hard drugs.

Framing Theory

The study was anchored on framing theory. The purpose of framing theory originated from the work of Gregory Bateson and was advanced by sociologist Erving Goffman in 1974 (Ardevol-Abreu, 2015). The theory explains the mental schema through which an individual's experiences are organised. Framing theory is connected to the agenda-setting theory; however, attention is on presenting reality in such a way that the readers are led to interpret events the way the media or other opinion molders that use the media as a platform would want people to see it. The framing theory focuses on which topics or issues are selected for coverage by the news media. It looks at the particular ways those issues are presented.

In relation to journalism and communication studies, this theory alludes to the approaches that journalists adopt in reporting news, including disasters like building collapses. To frame implies tilting a story toward a particular direction. This theory suggests that the manner facts are made known (framed) determines the way people understand such a message. Baran & Dennis (2009 as cited in Ezegwu, Ezeonyejiaku, & Asodike, 2018) further explained that this theory examines the idea of how people use expectations to make sense of every life. This theory is relevant to this study because it explains how media reportage of an event contributes to shaping the perception of the people. Therefore, the way the newspapers frame events of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) activities in Nigeria, the pictures they gather and present, and the logical account of the event that transpired have some influence on the readers of the newspapers. In other words, framing implies that the way a concept or issue is presented to readers has a very strong effect on the perception that people hold about the issue.

Empirical Review

Udeh-Akpeh (2017) evaluated the NDLEA radio campaign's impact on drug use among young people in Onitsha Metropolis. The researcher adopted the survey method. The researcher found that radio crusade messages generate consciousness on a particular subject like substance abuse by a person in society. The researcher suggested that how the young people received their conviction and the content of such opinions ought to be acknowledged and examined because it is when the worldview is concerned that change in attitude towards drug usage would be abated.

Udeh-Akpeh's (2017) study was on the NDLEA radio campaign's impact on drug abuse among youths in Onitsha Metropolis in Anambra State and the study used a survey research design. The current study is on media framing of NDLEA activities and it adopted a content analysis method. Although, both studies are titled towards drug-related issues in terms of similarity.

Oke, Nwokamma, and Harold (2019) investigated newspaper coverage of the agitation for rearrangement in Nigeria. The authors adopted a content analysis method and two newspapers were studied; *The Nation* and *Punch* newspaper. The results of the study indicated that there was significant coverage of restructuring issues by the two newspapers and the coverage was generally positive. The study recommended that issues of popular concern should always be presented in a captivating, attractive, comprehensible, and meaningful manner to allow for a proper understanding of the pros and cons by the public.

Oke, Nwokamma, and Harold's (2019) study is related to this study in that both studies used the content analysis method in their approaches. However, Oke, *et al* (2019) studied investigated newspaper coverage of the clamour for restructuring in Nigeria. Whereas the present study is on media framing of NDLEA activities. Oke *et al* (2019) used agenda-setting theory as a theoretical frame whereas the present study used framing theory. Both studies examined two newspapers.

Dike (2021) examined the achievements and negligence of the NDLEA in preventing drug issues in Nigeria from 1989 to 2015. The researcher adopted qualitative and quantitative research methods. The researcher discovered various factors that have contributed to both the failure and achievements of NDLEA in quelling drug issues in Nigeria. The inquisitor further notes that the public is ignorant of the harmful effects associated with illicit drug dealing. The researcher recommended that to achieve 100 percent success, there should be space for public cooperation through the presentation of enlightenment programmes.

Dike's (2021) study is different from this study in terms of methodological approach. Dike (2021) used mixed methods whereas the present study utilized content analysis. However, Dike's study focused on the achievements and failures of the NDLEA in reducing drug issues in Nigeria from 1989-2015, whereas the present study focused on media framing of NDLEA activities (from 1st December 2021 to 30th November 2022).

Guanah, (2018) carried out a content analysis of Nigerian newspapers' reportage of education news. The researcher anchored the study on the agenda-setting theory. The researcher discovered that all the stories under the volume of coverage of educational news in the three (*Punch*, *The Guardian*, and *Vanguard*) selected newspapers got attention, that is to say, the volume of coverage of education news was high. The researcher further found that newspapers gave

adequate coverage to education news, but did not give adequate prominence. The researcher suggested that newspapers should give priority to reporting education news and that newspapers should give prominence to education news by reporting them on their front and back pages.

The present study is related to Guanah (2018) study especially in methodological approach, as both of them adopted content analysis method. While the current study examined two newspapers, Guanah (2018) studied three newspapers (*Punch*, *The Guardian* and *Vanguard*). The present study was interested in framing of NDLEA activities in Nigeria whereas Guanah (2018) study looked at Nigerian newspapers' coverage of education news.

Ezegwu, Obichili, Linus, & Omokhapue, (2021) investigated a newspaper report on the execution of the Federal Government Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) policy in Nigeria. The study utilised the content analysis research method. The researchers found that the reportage of the IPPIS policy in Nigeria was overshadowed by straight news articles with fifty-one (51%) percent, while features had 19% of the issues. Further findings revealed that the dominant theme used in the coverage was the retrenchment of workers and looting of government or savings of cost for the government theme. The researchers recommended that the media should set an agenda on government policies, especially when such policy is novel, and Nigerian newspapers should endeavour to highlight in-depth and interpretative reportage of national issues through features, inquisitive reporting, and editorial, and opinion articles.

Ezegwu, *et al.*, (2021) studied newspaper coverage of the execution of the Federal Government Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) policy in Nigeria. Whereas the current study looked at the framing of NDLEA activities in Nigeria. Both studies used the content analysis method. Ezegwu *et al.* (2021) discovered that the dominant theme used in the coverage was the retrenchment of workers and looting of government or savings of cost for the government theme, whereas, in the present study, the dominant frame used in reporting NDLEA activities in Nigeria was the arrest of drug courier frames.

Methodology

Content analysis research design was used for this study. Content analysis according to Asemah *et al* (2017) is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and qualitative description of the manifest content of the communication. The total population of the study is 314. The researchers purposively selected three days a week. From each month. Hence, this population of the study consists of Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays editions of *Daily Trust* and *Vanguard* newspapers (Online editions) published from 1st December

2021 to 30th November 2022 which covered one period of one year. The units of analysis were straight news, interviews, features, editorials, and opinion articles.

In determining the sample size for the newspaper, the researcher employed Nwanna's (1998) stipulation of 40% for a few hundred in sample size determination (percentage formula). This resulted in sampling 63 editions each for the two newspapers selected. A census technique was adopted in selecting all the editions of the newspapers since the population is small.

$$\frac{n}{100} = \frac{NV}{100} \quad n = \frac{314 \times 40}{100}$$

$$n = 125.6 - 126$$

Units of Analysis and Content Categories

The units of analysis were straight news, interviews, features, editorials, and opinion articles. For the content categories, the following content categories were employed in the study to help guide the coding of the selected newspaper samples.

- i. Volume of coverage:* volume of coverage was measured by number of stories or reports from two studied newspapers for a period of one year (from 1st December 2021 to 30th November 2022). See table one.
- ii. Frequency of coverage:* This refers to how often the studied newspapers publish their stories in terms of months.
- iii. Dominant frame:* In this study, this entails choice words or language used by the studied newspapers in reporting NDLEA activities in Nigeria. The following frames were identified; arrests of drug couriers' frame, seizure of illicit drugs frame, and campaign/ awareness frame. The dominant frame was arrests of drug couriers' frame.

Inter-coder Reliability

The inter-coder reliability for the study was calculated using Nwodu formulae (2017, p.99).

$$\text{Where: } A = \frac{Po - Pe}{100 - pe}$$

Where Po= Observed percentage agreement.

Pe= Expected percentage concurrence by chance.

An internal coder agreement

In this study, the observed percentage agreement is

80 and the expected percentage is 50.

Below is the calculation:

$$\text{Therefore; } \frac{80 - 50}{100 - 50} = \frac{30}{50} = 0.66$$

This shows that the instrument has internal consistency.

Data Presentation and Analysis

In all, 103 out of 126 sampled for the study had reports of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency's (NDLEA) activities, *Daily Trust* published 43 issues, and *Vanguard* published 57 issues. The data are presented in the tables below in line with the research questions.

Table 1: Volume of coverage attributed to National Drug Law Enforcement Agency's (NDLEA) activities in Nigeria in *Daily Trust* and *Vanguard* newspapers.

Newspapers	Number of stories	Percentage
Daily Trust	46	45
Vanguard	57	55
Total	103	100

Researchers' Content Analysis, 2023

The table above indicates that *Vanguard* newspaper recorded the highest number of stories in the reportage of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency's (NDLEA) activities in Nigeria with 55% in comparison to *Daily Trust* newspaper which has 45% stories. Comparatively, *Vanguard* newspaper covered the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency's (NDLEA) activities in Nigeria more than *Daily Trust* newspaper.

Table 2: Frequency of coverage attributed to National Drug Law Enforcement Agency's (NDLEA) activities in Nigeria in *Daily Trust* and *Vanguard* newspapers

Month	Daily Trust Newspaper	Vanguard Newspaper	Total%
December 2021	4	3	7
January 2022	3	4	7
February 2022	3	4	7
March 2022	5	3	8
April 2022	3	5	8

May 2022	4	4	8
June 2022	3	5	8
July 2022	4	4	8
August 2022	4	5	9
September 2022	4	6	10
October 2022	3	4	7
November 2022	6	10	16
Total	46	57	103(100%)

Researchers' content analysis, 2023

The data above indicate the frequency of coverage of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency's (NDLEA) activities in Nigeria by *Daily Trust* and *Vanguard* newspapers within the period of study. A closer look at the raw data revealed that there was an increase in the reportage of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency's (NDLEA) activities in Nigeria in November in both sampled newspapers, the newspapers recorded 16%.

Table 3: Dominant frames used in covering National Drug Law Enforcement Agency's (NDLEA) activities in Nigeria by *Daily Trust* and *Vanguard* newspapers.

Frames	<i>Daily Trust</i> Newspaper	<i>Vanguard</i> Newspaper	Total %
Seizure of illicit drugs	14	15	29(28%)
Arrest of Drug couriers	19	26	45(44%)
Campaign/ awareness	8	9	17(16%)
Others	5	7	12(12%)
Total	46	57	103(100%)

Researchers' content analysis 2023

The data in Table 3 explains that both sampled newspapers adopted frames like the seizure of illicit drugs, arrest of drug couriers, campaign or awareness, and some other frames like disposal frames, but the dominant frame was the "arrest of drug couriers frame" recording 45%.

Discussion of Findings

From the data analysed, it was noted that the media gave attention to the coverage of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency's (NDLEA) activities in Nigeria as 103 out of 126 sampled newspapers covered the issues of Drugs and NDLEA's performance towards its eradication. Specifically, the researchers found that the *Vanguard* newspaper covered NDLEA activities more than the *Daily Trust* newspapers in terms of volume. The researchers discovered that *Daily Trust*

published 46(45%) issues whereas *Vanguard* published 57 (55%) issues. Thus, the volume of coverage of NDLEA activities in Nigeria within the study period was high. In a related study, Guanah (2018), found that all the stories under the volume of coverage of educational news in the three (*Punch*, *The Guardian*, and *Vanguard*) selected newspapers got attention, that is to say, the volume of coverage of education news was high. On an individual basis, *Punch* newspaper published 814 items, *The Guardian* newspaper published 753 items and *Vanguard* published 380 items.

The researchers discovered that NDLEA activities were frequently covered in Nigeria, especially towards the end of 2022, specifically in November, the reports on National Drug Law Enforcement Agency's (NDLEA) activities in Nigeria rose to 16%. This finding agrees with Oke, Nwokamma, and Harold's (2019) study. The researchers discovered that newspapers frequently covered the clamour for restructuring Nigeria within the study period. The increased report of NDLEA activities in the month of "ember" may attributed high rate of arrest and seizure of drugs usually witnessed within that period. This is frequently because as the year runs to its end, people tend to fight harder to meet up with their set targets and expectations geared towards the Christmas and New Year celebrations. For instance, *Daily Trust* has this report: "NDLEA makes biggest cocaine seizure, recovers drug worth #193bn in Lagos warehouse" (*Daily Trust*, Monday 19, September 2022), "Hope Ikorodu 3194 billion cocaine was not arranged to finance 2023 election- Reno Omokri" (*Vanguard*, September 20, 2023).

More so, the report reads that a former assistant to ex-President Goodluck Jonathan, Reno Omokri has expressed doubts over the #194 billion cocaine seized by officials of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, NDLEA in Ikorodu area of Lagos State. Omokri, in an affirmation via his Twitter (X) handle, said he hoped that the cocaine was not a plan by an unquestionable person to finance his 2023 election. "Drug trafficking: NDLEA arrests Italy-bound bodily challenged man at Lagos Airport" (*Daily Trust* Sunday 4, 2022). "2022: Kano NDLEA seizes 838kg of drugs, arrests 1078 suspects (Daily Trust 29, December 2022). NDLEA nabs drug queen with drugs at Lagos Airport" – *Vanguard*, 2022, "NDLEA arrests 48 suspects, convicts 5 in Edo" – *Daily Trust*, 2022.

Further findings indicated that the dominant frame used in reporting NDLEA activities in Nigeria was the arrest of drug courier frames. This was dominant in the studied newspapers with arrests of drug couriers' frame recording 45%. Other frames include the seizure of illicit drugs frame and campaign/ awareness. The implication here is that the studied newspapers made efforts to inform Nigerians how NDLEA has been arresting drug couriers from different angles, which could be seen in their use of arrest of drug couriers' frames. This finding is in consonance with the tenet of framing theory which says that the media will

always frame important issues the way they wish to (Erving Goffman, 1974 as cited in Ardevol-Abreu, 2015).

Also, the finding corroborates the tenet of framing theory as used in this study. According to Chong & Druckman (2007) cited in Ezegwu, Ezeonyejiaku, & Asodike, (2018), the major premise of framing theory is that an issue can be presented from different perspectives and constructed as having implications for multiple values or considerations. Also, this theory suggests that the manner information is delivered (framed) determines the way people understand such a message.

Conclusion

The study examined select newspapers' framing of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) activities in Nigeria, two national newspapers were selected, *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers. The researchers concluded that *Vanguard* newspaper covered the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency's (NDLEA) activities in Nigeria more than the *Daily Trust* newspaper. The study also affirmed that the dominant frame used in reporting NDLEA activities in Nigeria was the arrest of drug courier frames.

Recommendations

As regards the findings of this study, the following suggestions were made:

1. The media should report more on the activities National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in Nigeria, this will help to inform Nigerians and the world at large.
2. Drug abuse, trafficking, crime, and smuggling are serious crimes; thus, the media should frequently report the efforts of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in these areas.
3. In some cases, awareness and sensitisation frames should be used in reporting the issues by studied newspapers.
4. More attention should be given to the campaigns and awareness of the War Against Drug Abuse (WADA) and they should also adopt more frames that can help the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in changing the mindset of people towards the abuse of hard drugs.

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