Coverage of the 2024 cholera outbreak in Nigeria by two selected newspapers

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Abstract
This study examined the coverage of the 2024 cholera outbreak in Nigeria by *Daily Trust* and *The Punch* newspapers. It focused on the newspaper role in informing, educating, and mobilizing the public during the outbreak. Using content analysis, 106 newspaper editions published between June 9 and July 31, 2024, were reviewed to evaluate the frequency, prominence, formats, and sources of cholera-related stories. Findings revealed that there was high frequency of reports on the outbreak right from when it started. Also, the outbreak was given prominence owing to a substantial part of its stories appearing on the front pages of the selected newspapers. However, most of the stories on the cholera outbreak were predominantly straight news formats. Government sources were heavily relied upon, while voices from victims, NGOs, and health workers were underrepresented. This paper concluded that the newspapers did well in setting agenda for the cholera outbreak in 2024 to ensure awareness. It was recommended that Nigerian newspapers should diversify formats of articles on disease outbreaks to include editorials and human-interest pieces to provide depth of information not only for awareness but also prevention of further spread of such diseases. The newspapers should also incorporate a broader range of sources to enhance the depth of stories. These measures could further strengthen the media's role in addressing public health crises in Nigeria, especially during disease outbreak.
Key Words: Cholera, Outbreak, Newspaper, Health, News

Introduction

On June 9, 2024, the Lagos State Government declared a cholera outbreak in the city after 436 suspected cases were reported. By June 15, the number of suspected cases had surpassed 500, with 43 confirmed cases and a 5.4% case fatality rate among the suspected cases (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 2024; World Health Organization, 2024). By July 19, 2024, the outbreak had spread to 187 Local Government Areas, with a cumulative case fatality rate of 2.8% since the beginning of the year (*Channels TV,* 2024). The disease claimed 103 lives out of 3,623 recorded cases across 34 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) (*Vanguard*, 2024). According to Dr. Jide Idris, Director-General of the

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Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), the majority of affected individuals were children under five, with males accounting for 52% of cases and females making up the rest (*PM News*, 2024; *Vanguard*, 2024).

Cholera is a highly contagious and dangerous infection that can lead to rapid spread and high mortality. However, it is treatable with oral rehydration solutions or intravenous fluids. Prevention involves access to clean water, proper sanitation, vaccination with oral cholera vaccines, health education, and good food hygiene practices (World Health Organization [WHO], 2024).

Cholera outbreaks in Nigeria have been recurring since the 1970s, largely due to extreme poverty, lack of access to safe drinking water, poor sanitation, and government neglect in improving the living conditions of citizens, particularly in rural areas (Idoga, Toycan & Zayyad, 2019). The disease tends to spread more during the rainy season due to poor drainage systems, sanitation practices, and limited access to clean tap water (Abubakar, Dalhat & Nguku, 2016; Ajayi & Smith, 2019).

Health remains a key concern globally, as reflected in the third Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) focusing on ensuring good health for all. In Nigeria, common health issues include Malaria, TB, HIV/AIDS, cholera, and others. The media play a crucial role in shaping public awareness and influencing health behavior (Ajaegbu & Akoja, 2022). Effective communication of health issues, especially epidemics like cholera, is critical for public awareness, disease prevention, and government health initiatives (Eke, Oke, Bufumoh & Apata, 2023).

Given the importance of health information, this study investigates how *Daily Trust* and *The Punch* newspapers have addressed the cholera outbreak in 2024, focusing on their role in educating and informing the public about the crisis.

The recurring cholera outbreaks in Nigeria, including the recent one in 2024, shows Nigeria is prone to a variety of issues (Eneh, Onukansi, Anokwuru, Ikhuoria, Edeh. Obiekwe, Dauda, Praise-God & Okpara, 2024). They include lack of access to potable (safe to drink) water, lack of continued surveillance even after an outbreak has ended; flooding; poverty (although currently cholera treatment is free in all government facilities); lack of health facilities; illiteracy; lack of infrastructure for water supply and waste disposal; and conflict, leading to overcrowded conditions for displaced people (Anorue et al, 2021; Anetor & Abraham, 2020; Eneh et al, 2024; Gulumbe, Aminu, Yusuf, Liman, Faggo, Abubakar, Abdulrahim & Usman, 2023). There is an urgent need for citizens to be enlightened on the causes and preventive measures of cholera**.** The media has the obligation to collect data gathered from the environment (surveillance function), analyze it (correlation function), organize the public (mobilization function) against a problem, circumstance, or movement, and even provide them with entertainment (entertainment function) (Lasswell, 2007). The media is expected to make sufficient impact in the fight against cholera by setting-agenda around the disease (Gevah & Ezeah, 2020). This is because a disease that could affect 3,623 people and claim 103 lives in less than two months requires apt attention from relevant stakeholders, including the media.

Furthermore, while studies have been conducted on cholera in Nigeria (Elimian, Musah, Oyebanji, Yennan, Jinadu, Williams, Ogunleye & Ikweazu, 2019; Ibrahim, Sufiyan, Olorukooba, Gobir, Adam & Amadu, 2016; Ngwa, Wondimagegnehu & Okudo, 2017; Ogbeyi, Bito, Anefu & Igwe, 2017), they did not explore how the Nigerian media covered the disease right from its outbreak. Additionally, although some studies (Ajaegbu & Akoja, 2022; Asemah, 2015; Eke et al., 2023) examined how Nigerian newspapers covered health crisis, none focused specifically on cholera outbreak but general health crisis. This study, therefore, examined if Nigerian newspapers performed their duty of informing the public and raising awareness on the 2024 cholera outbreak.

Research Questions

1. What is the frequency of cholera stories in *Daily Trust* and *The Punch* newspapers?
2. What level of prominence is given to cholera stories in the *Daily Trust* and *The Punch* newspapers?

3. In what format were the cholera stories most frequently published?
4. What were the sources of the cholera stories reported in *Daily Trust* and *The Punch* newspapers?

Cholera: A Reoccurring Pandemic

Cholera is an acute enteric infection caused by the bacterium *Vibrio cholera*, often resulting in severe watery diarrhea. It is contracted either directly through contaminated water or indirectly through contaminated food. While many infections are mild or asymptomatic, cholera can be serious and potentially fatal (Smith, 2024). Prevention measures include using clean water for drinking, cooking, and food preparation, as well as ensuring proper sanitation to minimize exposure (Phaahla, 2023).

Globally, cholera causes an estimated 2.9 million cases annually, leading to 95,000 deaths, primarily in low- and middle-income countries. Cholera epidemics have affected nearly every continent, with developing nations being the most impacted due to infrastructural challenges. As a result, cholera remains a significant public health concern (WHO, 2021). Infectious diseases, including cholera, are prevalent in African countries and have historically been leading causes of death (Dye, 2014). Common infectious diseases in developing nations also include smallpox, dengue fever, hepatitis, and HIV/AIDS (Idoga, Toycan & Zayyad, 2019).

In Nigeria, cholera first emerged between 1970 and 1990, with annual outbreaks primarily occurring in unsanitary areas during the rainy season (Adagbada, Adesida, Nwaokorie, Niemogha, Coker, 2012). Cholera remains a major health threat in the country, with frequent outbreaks highlighting weaknesses in the healthcare system (Sow, Haruna, Amos, Olajide, Amene, Odususi, Abia, Safari, Sorinola, Alaka & Musa, 2022). Notably, the epidemic at an internally displaced persons camp in Borno State in 2015 resulted in 385 cases and 13 deaths (Abubakar et al., 2016). Similarly, a 2017 outbreak in Kwara State led to 1,558 cases and 11 deaths (WHO, 2017).

Cholera first appeared in Nigeria in Lagos, with the initial cases numbering 22,931, resulting in 2,945 deaths. Subsequent outbreaks in the late 1970s and 1990s caused significant fatalities, and cholera continued to claim lives in the following decades, with major outbreaks in 1991 and 2010 (Lawoyin, Ogunbodede, Olumide & Onadeko, 1999; WHO, 2016). As of December 2021, Nigeria had reported over 109,000 suspected cases and 3,604 deaths (NCDC, 2021).

In 2024, Nigeria experienced another wave of cholera outbreaks, which prompted public warnings. In June 2024, Lagos State reported 324 suspected cases and 15 deaths. Other states like Oyo, Ogun, Abia, and Delta soon followed with suspected cases. By June 2024, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) recorded 1,528 suspected cases and 51 deaths across 31 states and 107 Local Government Areas (UNICEF, 2024; The Punch, 2024). These statistics underscore the persistent nature of cholera in Nigeria, highlighting the urgent need for interventions to control its spread and prevent future outbreaks.

Cholera outbreaks remain a significant public health issue in many countries, including Nigeria, where systemic and resource-related barriers exacerbate the problem. Despite efforts such as the establishment of the National Cholera Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and deployment of Rapid Response Teams, several challenges hinder effective responses. The COVID-19 pandemic has further strained healthcare systems, disrupted vaccination campaigns, and exposed critical gaps in infrastructure and public health preparedness in Nigeria. Key challenges include:

Overburdened Healthcare System and Workforce Shortages: In June 2021, amid escalating outbreaks, the NCDC launched the EOC and deployed Rapid Response Teams (RRT) to distribute medical supplies and enhance risk communication (Reliefweb, 2021). However, the focus on COVID-19 has strained cholera control efforts, with suspended humanitarian programs and disrupted vaccination campaigns exposing vulnerable communities to preventable diseases like cholera (Oladapo, Oyetola, Obidiro, Olajide, Osuagwu-Nwogu & Olaitan, 2021). Nigeria's health workforce density—4 doctors and 16.1 nurses/midwives per 10,000 patients—is far below WHO's recommended threshold of 1

doctor per 600 patients and 23 health workers per 10,000 patients. This shortfall leads to unequal healthcare access, particularly in remote areas hardest hit by cholera (World Bank, 2021a; WHO, 2016).

Disruption of Vaccination Programs: The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the spread and impact of endemic diseases like cholera, Lassa fever, and meningitis. By May 2020, 99 countries reported suspensions of immunization activities, including oral cholera vaccines (UNICEF, 2020). This disruption in vaccination campaigns and other key cholera control measures, such as disease surveillance and risk communication, has fueled the current surge in cholera cases in Nigeria (Kayode, Babatunde, Adekunle, Igbalajobi & Abiodun, 2021).

Insufficient Access to WASH Services: In 2019, 29% of Nigerians lacked access to basic drinking water services, 38.1% lacked improved sanitation facilities, and 80% had no access to basic handwashing facilities (World Bank, 2021b). In rural areas, 39% of households lacked basic water supply services, 50% had no access to improved sanitation, and 29% practiced open defecation (World Bank, 2021b). The Nigerian government declared a State of Emergency in 2018 and initiated a National Action Plan to ensure universal access to sustainable and safely managed WASH services by 2030 (World Bank, 2021b). However, limited resources, poor access to clean water, open defecation, and inadequate sanitation and hygiene practices complicate efforts to control cholera outbreaks. The WHO emphasizes that safe water and sanitation are critical preventive measures against cholera, yet these resources remain out of reach for many resource-limited countries, including Nigeria (World Bank, 2021b).

Media and Health Communication Campaign

Health communication, a subset of development journalism, plays an advocacy role, including campaigning for health-friendly legislation. It involves studying and using communication strategies to inform, influence, and motivate individuals to improve health and enhance quality of life (Eke et al., 2023). The media, as a powerful institution, is pivotal in influencing government policies, shaping health-related behaviors and perceptions, and improving the healthcare system and well-being of Nigerians (Muanya & Ozioma, 2021). One effective strategy is timely, detailed, and thorough reporting of health issues to draw the attention of relevant stakeholders (Ajaegbu & Akoja, 2022).

The media serves critical roles, such as setting the public agenda on health matters, improving health outcomes and behaviors, persuading people during health emergencies, and advocating for policies. It fulfills these roles by informing the public through various programs and employing creative methods to reach diverse audiences (Ajaegbu & Akoja, 2022).

Saraf and Balamurugan (2018) highlight the need to enhance the performance of mass media by ensuring accurate and trusted sources for health information, improving the technical knowledge of medical reporters, and focusing on significant health issues. Gevah and Ezeah (2020) emphasize that the media can educate the public by frequently reporting public health issues, recommending appropriate health behaviors, and proposing policies to address reported issues. This consistent and focused coverage is fundamental to combating public health challenges.

Agenda Setting Theory

The Agenda Setting Theory, originating from Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1922), highlights the media's role in shaping public perceptions by determining what people prioritize through coverage (Lippmann, 1922). Bernard Cohen (1963) noted that while the media may not dictate what people think, it significantly influences what they think about. McCombs and Shaw formalized this concept during the 1968 U.S. election, finding a correlation between media coverage and public concerns (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

The theory asserts that the media filters and shapes reality, and its focus on specific issues influences public perception of importance (McCombs, 2004). Through frequent and prominent coverage, certain issues become more accessible in public memory, driving their prioritization (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Folarin (2002) emphasized factors such as report frequency, prominence, and cumulative effects.

While the theory predicts public opinion and explains issue prioritization, it is criticized for assuming passive, well-informed audiences and for challenges in measuring its impact (Rogers & Dearing, 1988; Fiske, 1986).

This theory is relevant to this study since it examined how Nigerian media coverage of cholera influenced public awareness and priorities, highlighting the role of frequency, prominence, and sources in shaping health discourse and responses. The theory provides insight into whether media focus heightened public attention to the cholera outbreak or awareness of preventive measures, shaping national discourse and public health priorities.

Empirical Review

Ajaegbu and Akoja (2022) looked into how much the media contributed to defining the public agenda for the health sector in order to inspire the governed and the government to work together to create a healthy state. Purposive sampling and content analysis research methodologies were applied. The Guardian, The Punch, The Vanguard and Daily Sun newspapers were selected in this one-week research. A total of 58 health reports were found and examined regarding the identified medical problems. At the time, COVID-19 was the most widely reported serious global health concern. The majority of the health problems were covered by the mainstream media. The media paid little attention to health concerns. The results of this study indicate that newspapers placed greater emphasis on health issues.

Nwakpu, Ezema and Ogbodo (2020) analyzed how Nigerian media portrayed the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on public perception and responses. Using a quantitative approach, including content analysis of four national newspapers (*The Sun*, *The Vanguard*, *The Guardian*, and *The Punch*) and a questionnaire, the study examined coverage from January to March 2020. Out of 1,070 items analyzed, straight news reports dominated (71.3%), followed by opinions (15.8%), features (11.2%), and editorials (1.7%). *The Punch* provided the most coverage (28.9%), followed by *The Sun* (24.9%), *The Guardian* (24.1%), and *The Vanguard* (22.1%). The newspapers' framing encouraged Nigerians to adopt precautionary measures, raising awareness about COVID-19 safety and prevention, which contributed to containing the virus. The study recommended that newspapers maintain balanced coverage and avoid creating unnecessary fear or panic during public health crises.

Apuke and Bahiyah (2020) examined media coverage of COVID-19 in Nigeria, focusing on coverage frequency, story format, news sources, media tone, and themes. Content from four widely read newspapers (*Daily Sun*, *Vanguard*, *Daily Trust*, and *Leadership*) was analyzed between February and April 2020. The study found that Nigerian media effectively raised awareness about the pandemic but lacked depth, as most stories were brief and predominantly straight news. The media mainly cited the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and government officials, and the tone of coverage often induced panic. Common topics included cases, death rates, and concerns about Nigeria's preparedness, while public sensitization and education were underrepresented. Ethical considerations for healthcare workers received minimal attention. The study recommended that the media focus more on public education and avoid alarmist tones in their coverage.

Eke et al. (2023) analyzed national newspaper coverage of health issues in the Niger Delta, Nigeria. The study examined 312 editions of *The Sun*, *The Vanguard*, and *The Nation* published from June 6, 2021, to June 5, 2022. Using Philip Meyer's sampling guide, 248 issues were selected for analysis. The data were presented in tables and analyzed using simple percentages. The study found that *The Sun* newspaper covered the most health stories in the Niger Delta. The newspapers generally portrayed health issues in a positive light, with a focus on soot-related concerns. The study concluded that the newspapers provided positive portrayals of health issues but recommended that the media should offer more balanced, neutral coverage and avoid unnecessarily negative portrayals. The study emphasized the media's social responsibility and agenda-setting functions.

Method

This study employed content analysis as its research method to systematically and objectively analyze the coverage of cholera in selected national newspapers from June 9 to July 31, 2024. Content analysis was chosen because it enables consistency in findings if different researchers follow the same process (Alphonsus, Etumnu, Talabi, Fadeyi, Aiyesimoju, Apuke & Gever, 2022). The study period was purposively selected due to the critical cholera outbreak period, which led to many deaths in Nigeria (*Channels TV,* 2024; *PM News*, 2024; *Vanguard*, 2024). The study population comprised all editions of *Daily Trust* and *The Punch* newspapers published during the study period (June 9 to July 31, 2024). These two national dailies were chosen for their wide circulation and daily availability. A total of 106 editions (53 from each newspaper) were analyzed. Given the small population size, a census approach was adopted, meaning all editions within the study period were selected for analysis (Glen, 2012; Pavelko & Grabe, 2017).

A coding sheet was used to collect data, with three coding parameters:

Prominence: Measured by the placement of cholera stories, with categories including front page (FP), inside pages (IPs) and back page (BP).

Story Format: Identified the form of cholera coverage, such as straight news, editorials, cartoons, and opinions.

Sources: Focused on the lead voices in the cholera stories, under the assumption that these sources influence the credibility of the reports. Health professionals, state and federal governments, other government representatives, globally recognized orgazation, non-governmental organizations, groups that assist victims, medical professionals, and media outlets are the main voices in the reports.

The data from this study were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Descriptive statistical tools, including simple frequency counts and percentages, were used to analyze the data. The results were then described and interpreted in relation to the research questions formulated at the beginning of the study.

Data Presentation

Analysis was carried out using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 23. Percentages (%) and frequency counts were generated for the analysis.

Table1: Number of stories on cholera per newspaper

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	*The Punch*	68	66.0	66.0	66.0
	Daily Trust	35	34.0	34.0	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	100.0	

From the data gathered between June 9, 2024, and July 31, 2024, the two selected newspapers (*The Punch* and *Daily Trust)* reported a total of 103 articles on cholera. The breakdown of coverage reveals that *The Punch* published 68 articles, accounting for 66% of the total, while *Daily Trust* published 35 articles, making up 34%. On average, there were 1.94 articles per day addressing cholera across both newspapers during this 53-day period. Specifically, *The Punch* published approximately 1.28 articles daily, nearly twice the daily output of *Daily Trust*, which averaged 0.66 articles per day.

Table 2: Formats of Stories used in reporting cholera by selected newspapers

	Story Formats					
	Straight News	Editorial	Opinion	Features	Cartoon	Total

Valid	*The Punch*	Count	66	1	0	0	1	68
		% within newspapers	97.1%	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	100.0%
	Daily Trust	Count	33	0	2	0	0	35
		% within newspapers	94.3%	0.0%	5.7%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	99	1	2	0	1	103
		% within newspapers	96.1%	1.0%	1.9%	0.0%	1.0%	100.0%

Table 2 reveals that the reporting of cholera by selected newspapers predominantly relied on straight news, which accounted for 96.1% of the 103 articles published. Other formats, such as opinions (1.9%), editorials (1%) and cartoons (1%), were minimally used to report the disease. Also, none of the newspapers had feature stories on the disease. This pattern suggests a focus on factual reporting, with limited exploration of analytical or creative storytelling methods.

Table 3: Prominence given to stories used in reporting cholera by selected newspapers

			Prominence			
			Front	Inside	Back	Total
Valid	*The Punch*	Count	27	40	1	68
		% within newspapers	39.7%	58.8%	1.5%	100.0%
	Daily Trust	Count	13	21	1	35
		% within newspapers	37.1%	60.0%	2.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	40	61	2	103
		% within newspapers	38.8%	59.2%	1.9%	100.0%

Table 3 reveals that of the 103 articles on cholera, 38.8% appeared on the front page, signaling significant importance. However, the majority (59.2%) were placed on inside pages, potentially reducing their visibility. Only 1.9% of the stories were featured on the back page, suggesting that cholera coverage was rarely treated as light or peripheral news. This placement pattern highlights a high level of prominence given to cholera issue.

Table 4: Sources of Stories on cholera by selected newspapers

		The Punch	Daily Trust	Total
Valid	Health Specialist	10	3	13
		14.7%	8.6%	12.6%
	Federal Government	21	5	26
		30.9%	14.3%	25.2%
	State Government	21	20	41
		30.9%	57.1%	39.8%
	International Organisations	3	1	4
		4.4%	2.9%	3.9%
	Non-Governmental Organisations	2	0	2
		2.9%	0.0%	1.9%
	Victims	2	0	2
		2.9%	0.0%	1.9%
	Health Workers	3	3	6

	4.4%	8.6%	5.8%
Media Organization	6	3	9
	8.8%	8.6%	8.7%
Total	68	35	103
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

From Table 4, the sources of stories on cholera in the selected newspapers reveal a heavy reliance on governmental and institutional channels. State governments were the most frequently cited sources, contributing to 39.8% of the stories, followed by the federal government at 25.2% and health specialists at 12.6%. Together, these sources accounted for 77.7% of the coverage, highlighting a preference for official and expert perspectives. Other contributors, such as media organizations (8.7%) and health workers (5.8%), provided additional institutional insights. However, grassroots perspectives were minimally represented, with victims and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) each cited in just 1.9% of the stories, and international organizations contributing to 3.9%.

Discussion

The analysis of cholera coverage in *Daily Trust* and *The Punch* newspapers highlights several key trends that reveal the effectiveness of the newspapers in setting the agenda for public awareness and response. Over 53 days, a total of 103 articles were published across both newspapers, averaging fewer than two articles per day. This volume of coverage suggests a prompt attention to the cholera outbreak. However, *The Punch* provided more extensive coverage than *Daily Trust* newspaper.

In terms of prominence, 38.8% of cholera stories appeared on the front page, while the 59.2% were on the inside pages. The front-page placement signifies a degree of importance to ensure widespread public awareness of the outbreak. This resonates with the findings of Ajaegbu and Akoja (2022), who found that major health issues like COVID-19 received more prominent front-page coverage. Grabber (1989) cited in Asemah (2015) notes that it is likely that media audiences consider issues prominently reported on the front pages of newspapers, with big headlines and pictures, as most important.

Furthermore, the reports were more informative as majority appeared as straight news. A significant 96.1% of the articles were straightforward news reports, which may have limited the depth of coverage. There was a noticeable minute opinion piece (1.9%) and editorials (1.0%) that could have provided deeper analysis. This could be that the newspapers focused on factual reporting of the cholera outbreak which might later serve as background information upon which opinions and feature articles could be written by various writers. This pattern mirrors findings from Apuke and Bahiyah (2020), who noted that media coverage of Covid-19 pandemic was dominated by brief news reports. Also, Nwakpu et al. (2020) also found 71.3% of covid-19 report to be dominated by straight news.

Moreover, the newspapers relied on state and federal authorities for information, with 65% of stories citing official sources. This is because government agencies are believed to provide the most credible, accurate, and up-to-date data during disease outbreak and emergencies. This would ensure public trust and responsible reporting on the part of the media. This finding tallies with the finding of Apuke and Bahiyah's (2020), where Covid-19 coverage predominantly featured the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and other government officials.

RQ1: What is the frequency of cholera stories in *Daily Trust* and *The Punch* newspapers?

The study reveals that *The Punch* newspaper published significantly more stories on cholera than *Daily Trust* within the study period. While both newspapers demonstrated a commitment to informing the public about the outbreak, *The Punch* showed greater consistency and frequency in its reporting. This suggests that *The Punch* was more proactive in setting the media agenda around cholera, offering wider coverage that could enhance public awareness and engagement on the issue.

RQ2: What level of prominence is given to cholera stories in the *Daily Trust* and *The Punch* newspapers?

Cholera stories were given considerable prominence in both newspapers, with a substantial number featured on front pages, indicating editorial recognition of the seriousness of the outbreak. Most of the remaining stories appeared on inside pages, showing a continued but slightly less visible emphasis. Only a small fraction of stories appeared on the back pages, suggesting the topic was rarely treated as secondary or light content. Overall, the placement of these stories reflects a deliberate effort by the newspapers to prioritize public health reporting.

RQ3: In what format were the cholera stories most frequently published?

The majority of cholera-related content was published in the form of straight news reports, focusing on the timely dissemination of factual information. Other formats such as opinions, editorials, and cartoons were rarely used, and there were no feature articles. This indicates that the newspapers prioritized immediate and concise reporting over in-depth or analytical storytelling, which may reflect a need to provide quick updates during a public health crisis rather than explore broader social or human-interest angles.

RQ4: What were the sources of the cholera stories reported in *Daily Trust* and *The Punch* newspapers?

The cholera stories relied heavily on official sources, including government agencies and health specialists. These sources were frequently used, likely due to their perceived authority and credibility in public health matters. Institutional voices dominated the coverage, while perspectives from victims, local communities, and non-governmental organizations were scarcely represented. This reliance on official sources underscores a preference for accuracy and accountability but may have limited the depth and diversity of the reporting.

Conclusion

The media may set the agenda by repeatedly reporting on health crises, which gives them the ability to draw our attention to certain topics. *Daily Trust* and *The Punch* newspapers provided coverage on the cholera outbreak as they prioritize the issue at the initial stage (first two months) of the outbreak. Many stories appeared on the front pages, with government and its agencies as the major sources. Additionally, the use of straightforward news stories could serve as background information for other articles like editorials, features or opinion pieces for a more comprehensive exploration of the crisis. That would in turn encourage public dialogue about the broader implications of the cholera outbreak. Overall, the newspapers did well in setting agenda on the 2024 cholera outbreak by prioritizing the issue through consistent reporting and placement. To make the set agenda more effective, the newspapers should increase the frequency and prominence of cholera coverage, incorporate diverse formats, and include a broader range of sources, particularly voices from affected communities and global organizations. These approaches would ensure more engaging, balanced, and impactful reporting on the cholera crisis.

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