

ECOFEMINISM AND CLIMATE CHANGE: WHERE ARE THE WOMEN IN THE NIGERIA 2022 FLOODING COVERAGE?

*Sarah Chidiebere Joe, **Obed Hailsham

Department of Development Communication Studies Faculty of Communication and Media Studies

Abstract

This research delves into the coverage of climate change in *The Guardian*, *The Nation*, *Daily Sun*, and *Daily Trust* Nigerian newspapers, shedding light on the gendered aspects of this critical issue. Climate change, much like other crises linked to socioeconomic exploitation, exhibits gender disparities in its impacts. Owing to socio-cultural and economic disparities, the climate crisis disproportionately affects women and marginalised groups, endangering their livelihoods, health, and safety. Through a qualitative analysis of 160 climate change articles, this study unveils several concerning patterns: the limited representation of women, the portrayal of women primarily as vulnerable victims, and the utilisation of visuals that accentuate their suffering and vulnerability. Furthermore, in articles addressing the consequences of climate change, the specific impact on women often gets overlooked, as these effects are often discussed in more generalised terms. This research advocates from an ecofeminist standpoint, asserting that the exclusion of women's experiences in climate change discourse perpetuates the misconception that the climate crisis affects everyone uniformly and equally. This oversight magnifies gender disparities, diminishes the socioeconomic contributions of women, and hinders effective action, occasionally leading to inaction in confronting this global threat.

Keywords: Ecofeminism | Climate Change | Flooding | Nigeria | Content Analysis

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Introduction

In 2022, Nigeria witnessed a flooding incident described as the most severe in its history. This calamity resulted in the tragic loss of over 600 lives, the complete or partial destruction of approximately 300,000 homes, and the devastation of nearly 400,000 hectares of farmland. Moreover, it led to the displacement of approximately 2.4 million people (Alkassim, 2022; Ogune, 2023). As pointed out by Ominabo (2022), this national tragedy was not unforeseen, as warnings had been issued well in advance. Regrettably, governmental authorities failed to take adequate precautions or demonstrate the necessary commitment to preventing this catastrophic event. They resorted instead to providing mere weather forecasts and rain warnings. Although Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) issued a warning in September 2022 about potential heavy flooding following the release of excess water from Cameroon's Lagdo dam (Mom, 2022), experts reached a conclusion that the Nigeria 2022 floods were a consequence of a more troubling trend, Climate Change. For instance, a study by the World Weather Attribution (WWA) consortium found that the devastating floods were the outturn of biogeographical (human-induced) climate change (Agence France-Presse, 2022).

Climate change is adjudged one of the world's most critical global concerns, eclipsing other threats such as war and terrorism. The ecological consequences of climate change such as drought, hurricanes, tropical storms, wildfires, heatwaves, and flooding from 2016-2018 cost the world \$650 billion (DiChristopher, 2018), while the World Bank estimates that the requisite global infrastructure to tackle issues attributed to climate change would cost \$90 trillion by 2030 (Black, 2022). Climate change according to the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) refers to alterations in the state of the climate whether owing to biogeographical or anthropogenic activities, which can be statistically determined by investigating changes in the mean or variability of its properties over an extended period (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2011, p. 1). These prolonged shifts in temperature and weather patterns due to natural or man-made actions have had devastating health, environmental, and socioeconomic repercussions in many parts of the world including Nigeria. Whereas some of the world's most developed countries account for the increase in greenhouse gases and rising global temperatures, some of the world's poorest nations suffer about 80% of the negative consequences of these 'overconsuming' nations (Gaard, 2015, p. 23). Again, while the global north is better equipped at dealing with climate-related crises owing to the availability of food, infrastructure, clean water, and healthcare, the global south, especially economically disadvantaged persons within these regions, suffers the harshest fallouts.

Additionally, the impact of climate change varies across genders, with women (especially those living in less developed nations) bearing the brunt of its grave effects. An example of this is the agricultural sector, which serves as the primary source of livelihood for many women. Unfortunately, farming contributes significantly to the increase in greenhouse gas emissions and is also susceptible to the effects of climate change, leading to decreased livestock and crop yields (The World Bank, 2021; Duru et al., 2022). Moreover, despite women in Africa, especially in Nigeria, being responsible for 70% of food production, their ownership of land in the country is less than 10% (Udeghunam, 2021). On top of that, over 50% of rural women in Nigeria face socio-cultural oppression, political exploitation, and limited access to healthcare, technology, and education. These systemic inequalities make women and children more vulnerable, exposing them to the negative impacts of climate change.

Scholars such as Françoise d'Eaubonne, Vandana Shiva, Susan Griffin, Ynestra King, Maria Mies, Carolyn Merchant, Ariel Kay Salleh, Karen Warren, Val Plumwood, Bina Agarwal, and Greta Gaard over the last five decades have via an ecofeminist lens, established the relationship between the oppression of women and the abuse of the environment. This connection between environmental exploitation and gender injustice has been summarily attributed to capitalist patriarchy and the systemic inequalities made possible by it. Thus, while women are more open to the damaging effects of ecological disasters, they have been structurally excluded from conversations that could bring about more lasting solutions to this global problem even though they are most affected by it. As Greta Gaard noted, "gender roles restrict women's mobility, impose tasks associated with food production and caregiving, and simultaneously obstruct women from participating in decision-making about climate change, greenhouse gas emissions, and decisions about adaptation and mitigation" (Gaard, 2015, p. 23). This invisibility and othering of women in climate change discourse can be imputed to the dearth of effective and robust climate change communication.

Although content produced by the media is socially constructed and a reflection of the thoughts and opinions of the privileged in society such as scientists, academics, and political actors (Boykoff & Roberts, 2007), it wields enormous influence in shaping collective public consciousness about societal issues such as climate change (Schafer & O'Neil, 2017). As one of the primary sources of information about climate change, legacy media platforms owing to their higher credibility status create awareness as well as validate or delegitimise agents within the discourse and as such set the parameters for knowledge about the subject. It follows, therefore, that deficient information could hamper responsiveness to and reduction and prevention of anthropogenic climate change. In addition, the absence of comprehensive coverage could facilitate insufficient comprehension and ill-preparedness against biogeographical climate change (Weiner et al., 2021, p. 2). With the calamitous effect of climate change on women and the exclusion of women from climate policy conversations in mind, this study investigated the media coverage of the Nigeria 2022 flooding. This research answered four key questions: What types of articles were used to capture flooding stories? Who were the main actors in the articles and photographs accompanying the stories? How were women represented in the 2022 flooding coverage? What role did women play in the 2022 flooding stories? By focusing our attention on Nigeria, we contributed to the literature about Africa-based climate

change research. As Mike Schafer noted, most climate change research focuses on European and North American countries (Schafer, 2015, p. 854). Two, in recognition of the relevance of imagery in the communication process, this study examined both texts and visuals used in reporting the 2022 flooding in Nigeria. By incorporating visuals in our analysis, we responded to O'Neil and Smith's (2014) call to investigate the visual sides of climate change communication. Furthermore, whereas much media-based climate change research is carried out from the theoretical lens of agenda setting or framing, this study was conducted from the perspective of ecofeminism.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework Ecofeminism and Climate Change

The term Ecofeminism, a blend of feminism and environmental theories, was first employed and made visible in *Feminism or Death*, a 1974 book written by the French labour activist, environmentalist, and feminist, Françoise d'Eaubonne. However, her idea, which centred around the intersection between the oppression of women and the exploitation of the environment had already been captured in Rachel Carson's 1962 work, *Silent Spring*. Although with the passage of time, ecofeminism has come to mean different things to different theorists, at its core, many ecofeminists believe in the link between the exploitation of women and nature; the need to grasp the nature of this link as a pathway to deciphering the subjugation of women and nature; the inclusion of ecological discourse in feminism practice; and the incorporation of the feminist lens in resolving ecological problems (Warren, 1987, pp. 4-5). Thus, ecofeminism is neither a feminist nor environmental theory, but a movement, practice, and theoretical lens that bridges the feminism-ecology gap.

Plumwood (1986) sub-divides ecofeminist exponents into three main groups: Those who situate the problem of both nature and women as part of a cluster of dualism originating in classical philosophy that can be traced through complex history to contemporary society; those who site the issue for nature and women in the pre-enlightenment to industrialisation era; and those who explain the link between women and nature-based differences such as sexually- differentiated personality formation or consciousness. (p.121). Ecofeminist scholarship explores the intersection between the oppression of women and the abuse of the environment in two ways: value hierarchical thinking and oppositional dualisms. Ecofeminists argue that there exists a dichotomy perpetuated by the patriarchy that creates distinctions between masculine and feminine. This dichotomy exists both on a horizontal and vertical plane. On the horizontal plane is the assumption of polarity between what is masculine and what is feminine. On the vertical plane, however, there is the assumption of a transcendental form of dualism that puts the masculine on top and the feminine below. This transcendental dichotomy enables the higher to exist by itself but the lower is defined in relation to its utility and value to the higher. (p.132). Simone de Beauvoir provided more insight into the nature of this duality as follows:

... Man thinks himself without woman. Woman does not think herself without man." And she is nothing other than what man decides; she is thus called "the sex." Meaning that the male sees her essentially as a sexed being; for him she is sex, so she is in the absolute. She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other (Beauvoir, 1949/2011, p. 26).

Ecofeminists argue that the dichotomy that exists in masculine/feminine relations also exists in human/nature relations and that efforts at disrupting the status quo must be carried out through a fundamental renegotiation of what it means to be human (Plumwood, 1986, p.134). Despite the many positives of ecofeminism, scholars have identified many shortfalls (see Biehl,1999; Nanda, 1991; Agarwal, 1992; and Jackson, 1993). Jackson (1993) for instance, described ecofeminism thought as "ethnocentric, essentialist, blind to class, ethnicity and other differentiating cleavages, ahistorical and the material sphere" (p. 398). Biehl (1999) in arguing that ecofeminism reinforces stereotypes by perpetuating the patriarchal typecasts of men's expectations of women, stated that ecofeminists "freeze women as merely caring and nurturing beings instead of expanding the full range of women's human potentialities and abilities" (p. 15). Bina Agarwal drew attention to the essentialist nature of ecofeminism by explaining that the philosophy is handicapped by its failure to distinguish women by class, race, and ethnicity. In return, ecofeminists have contended that ecofeminism seeks to put an end to all other forms of oppression since the ideologies that facilitate class, race, and ethnicity-based discrimination are also responsible for the oppression of nature and women. In fact, contemporary ecofeminist scholarship stands in opposition to the essentialist roots of

ecofeminism, taking a more nuanced look at systems of oppression and how they intersect to create racialised, sexist, sexual, classist, and specieist subversions. Scholars like Gaard (2015) take a much more intersectional approach to ecofeminism, exploring how interlocking oppressive systems play roles in environmental crises, arguing that current masculinist systems and ideologies have produced climate change and first-world overconsumption. Gaard argues for a queer-feminist post-humanist climate justice perspective to both climate change analysis and solution (p.20).

In this study, ecofeminism is conceptualised as relating to “the oppression and domination of all marginalised groups (women, people of colour, children, the poor) to the oppression and domination of nature (animals, land, water, air, etc.)” (Zein & Setiawan, 2017, p. 1). It is applied here as a theoretical lens to understand the possible link between patriarchy-based oppression and the exploitation of women and the environment in the analysis of climate change stories in selected Nigerian newspapers. This is critical given the nature of the Nigerian state as inherently patriarchal. As Offiong et al. (2021) noted, Nigeria is governed and controlled by men, who have put in place cultural practices and laws that have othered women. This has materialised in a wide range of discriminatory practices and economic inequalities that have rendered women second-class citizens in a country where they are about half of the population and contribute significantly to its economic growth. Climate change has been identified as a key contributing factor to torrential rainfalls in Nigeria. When flooding incidents occur, people die, homes are destroyed, jobs are lost, and women suffer the most. Climate change affects different genders differently because more women depend on natural resources for their livelihood. In most parts of the world, women are mainly responsible for providing food, water, and fuel (UN Women, 2022). However, they have lesser access to or own these natural resources such as land. Thus, when climate-related crises such as floods happen, women are more prone to diverse vulnerabilities including gender-based sexual violence, trafficking, child marriage, and maternal death. Furthermore, in places like Nigeria where there is a lack of preparedness for crises, weak infrastructure, and unfavourable policies, women are more likely to die when disasters occur. Against this background, women were, therefore, more likely to suffer from the impact of the Nigeria 2022 floods, which led to the destruction of over 200,000 hectares of land, loss of many lives, disruption in the educational sector, and more.

Like climate change, the media is not gender-neutral given that these platforms are driven by androcentric codes and thus, serve to sustain these beliefs. As Gallagher (1980) noted, “those with the ownership and control of media industries also have the power to silence and render invisible women’s voice, ideas, experiences, problems, and achievements” (Byerly, 2002, p.136). Also, Tuchman (2000) in discussing the portrayal of women in the media drew attention to the “symbolic annihilation of women in mass media” via blaming, diminishing, and exclusion (p. 150). Some of Tuchman’s arguments can be visualised in van Zoonen’s (1995) work where she noted with respect to the media, that women were underrepresented while men were overrepresented. Women were depicted in the family context and men were captured in the context of work. Whereas women were portrayed as having no power, passive, emotional, dependent, submissive, and indecisive; men were rendered as powerful, active, rational, independent, resistant, and resolute. Ash et al.’s (2022) analysis of texts and visuals in more than two million web articles by the New York Times and Fox News from 2000 to 2020 echoes van Zoonen’s work with regard to the underrepresentation of women and the overrepresentation of men. Other scholars have also noted the exploitation of the images of women and their children in the context of crises (Berkowitz, 2005; Gardner, 2007; Rosen, 2014; Joe, 2020). According to Joe (2020) the photographs of women and children “are usually deployed as compelling exhibits to raise awareness about the sufferings of many, evoke the emotion of viewers, attract aid funds, and possibly alter government policies on a range of subjects” (p. 169). Against this background, this study examined the Nigeria 2022 flooding coverage in a bid to understand the representation and role of women in articles published by selected Nigerian newspapers.

Media Coverage of Climate Change

Climate change has attracted considerable attention, both scholarly and popular. Within the communication and media literature, using diverse methods, scholars have investigated the place of the media in climate change coverage (see Moser 2010; Carvalho, 2010; Schafer, 2012; O’Neil, 2013; Ayomide, 2022) and how coverage impacts the effects of and solutions to climate change (Ajaero & Anorue, 2018; King et al., 2019). Researchers have also examined the number of media articles generally addressing the issue or specific instances of climate-related

crises (Davidson et al, 2019; Weiner et al., 2021). While some of the research focused on one country, others have carried out country-level comparative and longitudinal studies (Boykoff, 2008; Ajaero & Anorue, 2018; O'Neil, 2020). In executing these investigations, researchers have adopted a variety of theoretical lenses including agenda setting and framing (see Schafer & Schlichting, 2014; Schafer & O'Neil, 2017; Feldman & Hart, 2018; Ajaero & Anorue, 2018).

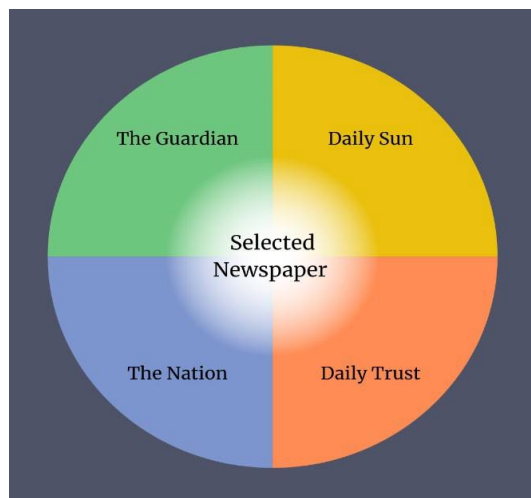
Moser (2010) via a historical overview, consolidated existing understandings, assumptions, and gaps regarding effective climate change communication while Carvalho (2010) restated the role of the media as the primary source of information and the principal influence shaping public awareness and concern about climate change. Carvalho also asserted that the media significantly impacts citizens' perception of their political agency and subjectivity, constructing distinct 'subject positions' and influencing inclinations towards action or inaction, which in turn affects political engagement with climate change (p. 172). O'Neil's (2020) visual content analysis of climate change images in UK and US newspapers from the perspective of framing, unpacked how dominant and excluded climate change imagery shapes our collective climate change consciousness. Weiner et al. (2021) conducted a content analysis of hurricane coverage in US newspapers and made two key observations. First, climate change coverage is influenced, to some degree, by nearness to a natural hazard, which in turn helps mitigate politically polarised reportage. Second, reporting natural disasters, including those not typically or evidently associated with climate change, occasionally serves as a medium for climate change coverage. King et al.'s (2019) investigation of Canadian media coverage of climate change impacts on health showed a negative influence on health, especially infectious and chronic non-infectious ailments. The study also indicated that less than 50% of the articles considered climate change solutions. Ayomide (2022) adopted the framing theoretical lens in highlighting the difference in the Nigeria 2022 flooding reportage by privately held and publicly owned television stations in Nigeria. The researcher noted that the "dominant frame in the tone of reporting in the private media are government critique and capable of inciting fear and panic in the minds of the audience" (p. a662). Ajaero and Anorue (2018) cross-country comparison of newspaper framing and climate change mitigation revealed the dominance of the action frame and the environment frame in Nigeria and Ghana respectively. The authors noted that flooding was the primary climate change issue emphasised in the reportage by both countries.

Although the literature indicates a substantial focus on climate change, there is a dearth of understanding about climate change coverage in the African continent (Schafer, 2015, p. 854). This study addressed this gap by providing empirical insight from Nigeria, Africa's largest economy with a specific focus on an incident that has been labelled the most devastating of its kind in the country's history. Although climate change effects in Nigeria are witnessed in terms of drought, deforestation, and gully erosions, flooding remains the most popular climate-related crisis, and the most media reported in the country (Ajaero & Anorue, 2018). Also, whereas the few Africa-based climate change studies that exist spotlight media framing of climate-related episodes (see Nwabueze & Egbra, 2016; Ajaero & Anorue, 2018), this study conducted a qualitative content analysis with arguments grounded in ecofeminism. Moreover, while Ayomide's (2022) investigation of the 2022 flooding coverage drew data from television stations, this research is a content analysis of selected Nigerian newspapers. Even though the literature indicates that television and daily newspapers are the main sources of climate change information (Sampei & Aoyagi-Usui, 2009), newspapers are historically important in the Nigerian context (see Joe, 2020). It is also important to highlight that the papers selected for this study were drawn from the country's main publishing hubs, Abuja and Lagos. These publishing centres reflect the structural composition of the Nigerian press (Joe, 2020) and as such can provide deeper insight into the role and representation of women in Nigerian newspapers with respect to climate change/flooding coverage.

Method

This study employed qualitative content analysis to investigate the 2022 Nigeria flooding stories in four independently owned and popular newspapers - *The Guardian*, *The Nation*, *Daily Sun*, and *Daily Trust* between August and December 2022. The selected papers cover a wide range of local and international content on a daily basis and are widely circulated across the country.

Figure 1
Selected Newspapers



We extracted a total of 160 articles from the respective newspapers' websites, using keywords such as *flood*, *flooding*, *climate change*, and *natural disaster*. Figure 1 illustrates that we obtained an equal number of articles (40) from each of the chosen newspapers. For this study, we developed a codebook that underwent multiple revisions and included essential details about the newspapers and key variables relevant to our research (refer to Table 1). To ensure consistency among the coders, two research assistants applied the codebook to analyse 36 of the articles. We addressed all misunderstandings and achieved a satisfactory score ($K > 87$) considering the nature of our research. Cohen's Kappa (K) is a widely-used measure to assess the level of agreement between coders (Hallgren, 2021). The codebook provided insights into the content of the 160 articles and facilitated understanding of the types of articles used to capture flooding stories; the main actors in the articles and photographs; and the representation and role of women in stories about the 2022 flooding in the examined papers.

Table 1
Codebook used for the analysis of sampled newspaper articles.

Code	Subcode	Description
Name of Newspaper	Daily Sun	
	Daily Trust	
	Guardian	
	Nation	
Month of publication	August 2022	
	September 2022	
	October 2022	
	November 2022	
	December 2022	
Type of article	News	
	Feature	
	Editorial	

	Column	
	Opinion	
	Other	
The main actor in the article	Political officeholder Politician Organisations & Agencies Journalist Others	Whether the main actor holds a political office in the country, identifies with one of Nigeria's 18 political parties, a representative of an organisation/agency, a journalist, or is an ordinary citizen.
Main actor gender	Female Male	Whether the actor can be identified as a woman or a man.
Photo	Present Absent	
Description of Persons /Object in Photo	Political office holder Politician Journalist Other (women & children) Other (Men) Other (Logo, Maps, Charts, Flood scenes, Buildings)	Whether the main actor holds a political office in the country, identifies with one of Nigeria's 18 political parties, a representative of an organisation/agency, a journalist, or is an ordinary citizen.
Gender of the main actor in the photo	Female Male	Whether the actor can be identified as a woman or a man.
Representation (If the main actor in the article is female)	Passive Active	Whether the actor is depicted as acting or being acted upon.
Role (If the main actor in the article is female)	State/Non-state Agent Survivor Victim	Whether the actor is represented as a state/non-state agent, as surviving the flood or is a victim of the incident
Representation (If the main actor in the photo is female)	Passive Active	Whether the actor is depicted as acting or being acted upon.
Role (If the main actor in the photo is female)	State/Non-state Agent Survivor	Whether the actor is represented as a state/non-

Victim

state agent, as surviving the flood or is a victim of the incident

Findings and Discussion

This study set out to answer four questions - What types of articles were used to capture the 2022 flooding stories? Who were the main actors in the articles and photographs accompanying the stories? How were women represented in the 2022 flooding coverage? What role did women play in the 2022 flooding stories?

Figure 2
Type of Article

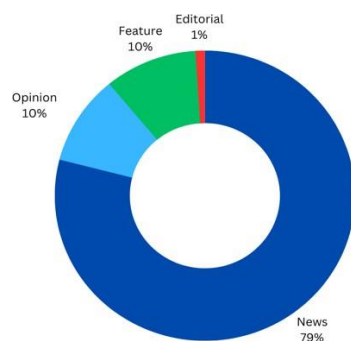
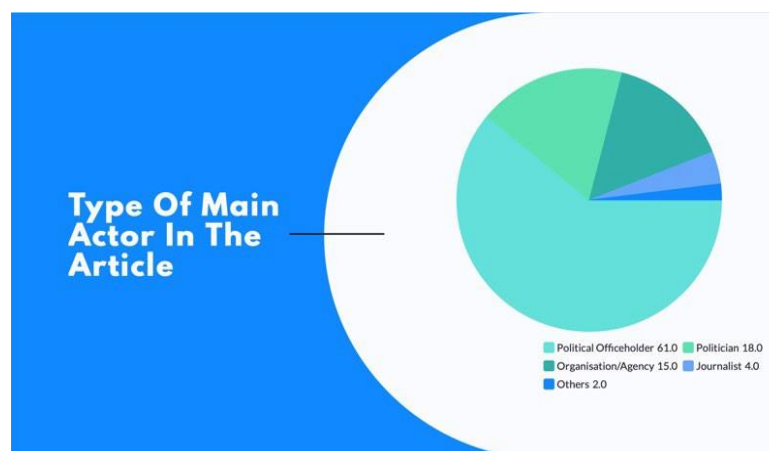


Figure 3
Type of Main Actor in the Article



Types of Articles

The data presented in Figure 2 revealed that the majority of the articles (79%) were published as news stories while 10% each were located in the Features and Opinion sections respectively. For instance, the article titled "Bayelsa Gov't Approves N450m For Flood Victims" from the *Daily Trust* can be classified as a news story, as it contains fact-based information about the monetary assistance approved by Governor Duoye Diri of Bayelsa state to help affected individuals and facilitate their relocation. On the other hand, the article labelled "Combating The Nation's Flood Disaster" from the same newspaper is an opinion piece, providing comprehensive information about the nationwide impact of the flood and including quotes from various sources such as the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet), Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency, National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), United Nations (UN), and the Society of Landscape Architects of Nigeria (SLAN), among others. Similarly, while the article "Bayelsa flood: Sylva slams Bayelsa government, says it is irresponsible" by the *Daily Sun* is a news story, the piece titled "Flood prevention is the beginning of wisdom" by the same newspaper is an opinion article highlighting Nigeria's lack of preparedness for the consequences of the flood despite early warnings. As can also be seen in Figure 2, only 1% of the articles investigated were in the editorial section of the studied papers. An example is the article titled "Checking the flood disaster" written by the Editorial Board of *The Guardian* newspaper, where the writers advocated the need for short- and long-term solutions to flooding in Nigeria. According to the board:

With more than 600 deaths and over a million people displaced by flood this year, it is time for Nigerian authorities to come to terms with the reality that climate change and haphazard town planning, among others, have fully endangered many parts of the country. Neither the authorities, nor Nigerians, can afford to go on with life as usual; and importantly, there must be concerted efforts by all stakeholders towards preventing future devastations by flood, in

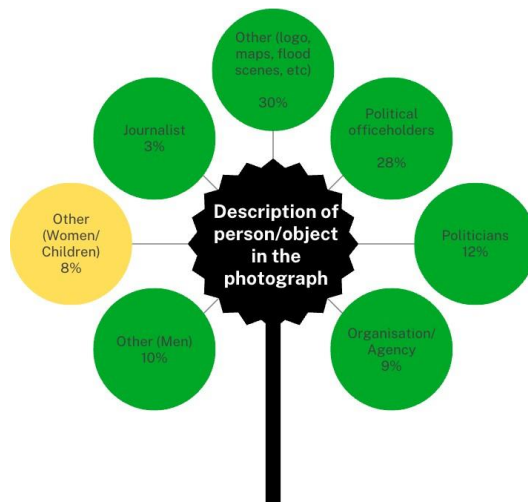
addition to finding short-term solutions to the current situation (Editorial Board, 2022, para. 1).

The ubiquity of news stories indicates that the coverage of the 2022 flooding was primarily episodic, leaving little room for features, opinion, and editorial pieces which would have allowed for a more robust understanding of flooding and possibly, its intersection with climate change; the inclusion of 'othered' voices; more in-depth explanations about the problem and more sustainable solutions. The paucity of features and opinion pieces (including editorials) about the flooding incident, which as is detailed in the literature section is one of the most talked about expressions of climate change in Nigeria, is a probable explanation for limited understanding and knowledge about climate change, its effects, and holistic solutions.

Main Actors in the Articles and Photos

We observed that political officeholders such as the president, governors of states, and federal ministers made up 61%, politicians 19%, and heads and representatives of various organisations and agencies (governmental and nongovernmental) made up 15% of the main actors in the articles (see Figure 3). Apart from documentary images of flood scenes, logos, maps, and buildings (n=30%), photographs of political officeholders (n=28%) and politicians (n=12%) were the most used to accompany articles about the 2022 floods in the selected newspapers (see Figure 4). This outcome is in keeping with the logic of legacy platforms where persons holding state offices are thought to have privileged and credible information and thus, are relied upon by journalists as sources of verifiable information.

Figure 4
Description of person/object in the photograph



Furthermore, while persons who are identifiable as Men made up 82 % of the main actor in the articles, Women accounted for a mere 18% (see Figure 4). An intriguing aspect of the exclusion of women is their omission from subject matters directly impacting their lives, such as agriculture and childbirth. To illustrate, an article published in the *Daily Trust* featured a team of 10 male writers (Hussein Yahaya, Vincent Yusuf, Magaji Isa Hunkuyi, Abubakar Akote, Tijani Labaran, Abiodun Alade, Eyo Charles, Usman Bello, Basse Willie, and Jude Aguguo Owuamanam) who sought perspectives from a total of 19 individuals while discussing the challenges faced by farmers who had received approximately N1 trillion in loans from banks (Yahaya et al., 2022). Out of these 19 individuals, only two were identified as women. This is concerning given that women are known to dominate the farming sector in Nigeria, contributing around 70% of food production (Udegbuma, 2021; World Economic Forum, 2018). Moreover, *The Nation's* article titled "Flood: Delta records 22 newborn babies in IDP camps" failed to name women or the mothers of the mentioned infants (*The Nation*, 2022). The near invisibility of women in 2022 flooding coverage mirrors earlier findings on gender representation in the media. As is detailed in the literature section, women are

typically underrepresented while men are overrepresented in the media. Whereas the media privileges the powerful, others who are regarded as lesser in influence or access are often excluded (van Zoonen, 1995; Vega Montiel, 2015). These types of outcomes are owing to the systemic inequities that have facilitated the stifling of women even in issues that affect them the most.

Representation and Role of Women in the 2022 Nigeria Flooding Stories

Apart from the limited visibility of women in the reports, the study revealed the textual and visual rendering of women as victims and images of suffering and vulnerable women as the visual synecdoche of the women in the Nigeria 2022 flooding coverage. By examining Figures 5, 6, 7, and 8, it is evident that in the larger majority of the articles where women were featured, they were characterised as passive and without agency (n=68%). They were also primarily labelled “victims”. These jointly emphasised their vulnerability to the devastating impacts of the floods and their reliance on others for saving and protection.

Figure 5
Representation of Women in the Articles

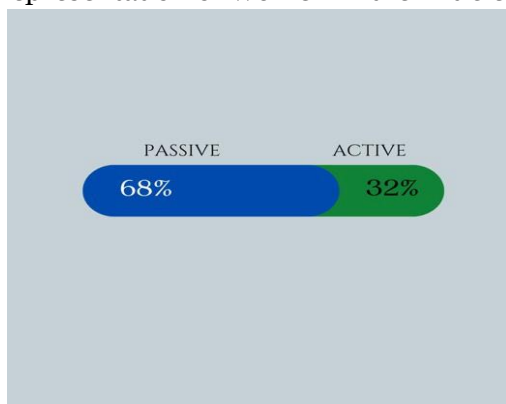


Figure 6
Representation of Women in the Photographs

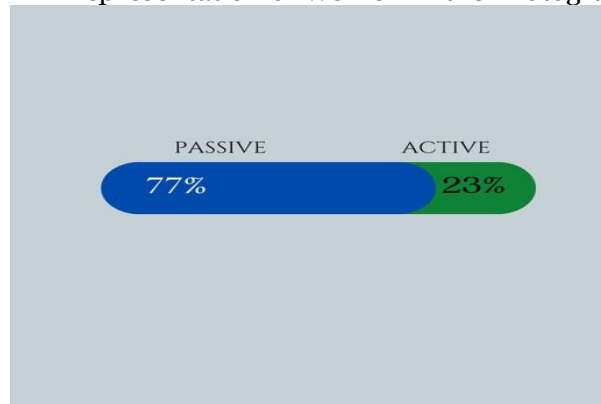


Figure 7
The Role of Women in the Articles

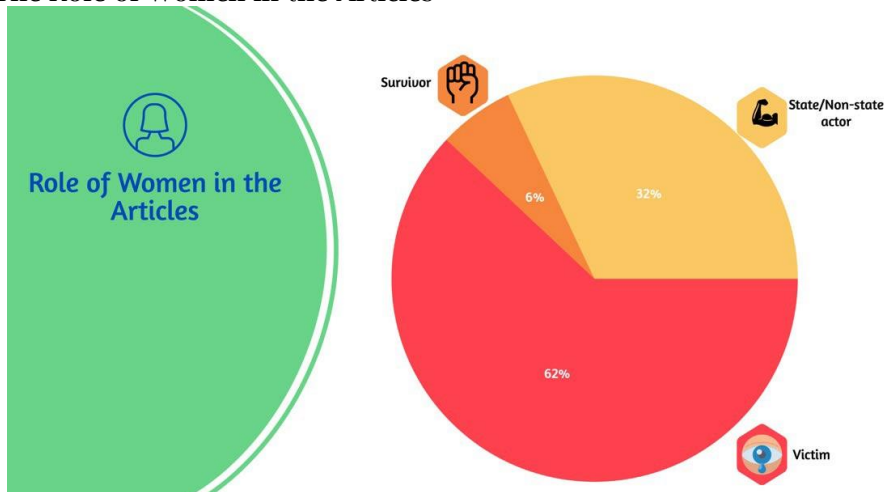
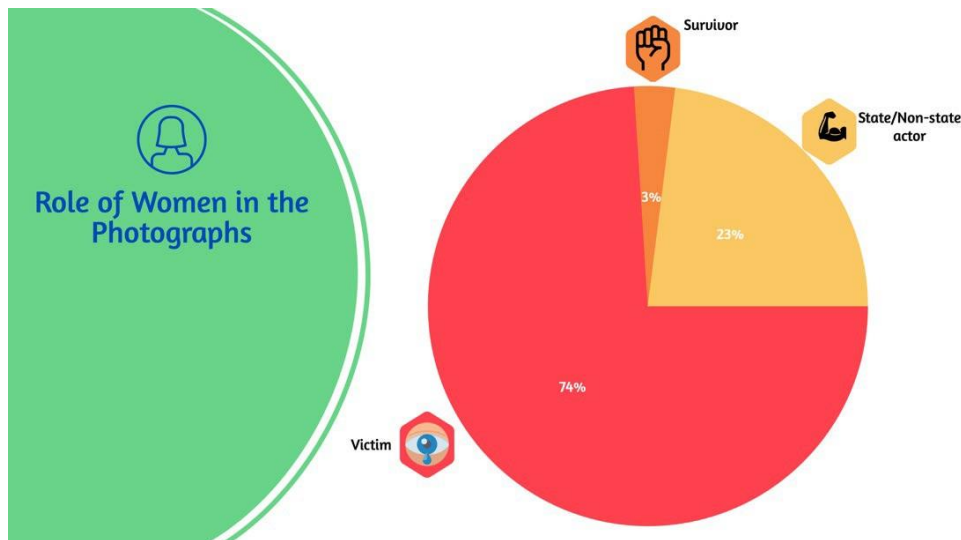


Figure 8
Role of Women in the Photographs



Furthermore, it was observed that the photographs of women were utilised as symbolic representations of the devastating consequences resulting from the unprecedented 2022 floods in Nigeria. As an illustration, an article titled "Flood: 16-Year-Old Drowns in Bayelsa, Other Victims Cry For Help" from the *Daily Trust* featured an image (refer to Figure 9) of a sorrowful woman in tears. The woman's posture, with a hand resting on her slightly bowed head, slightly parted lips, and a gaze that captivates rather than demands attention, strongly suggests that she is grieving and suffering, likely due to the loss of her son. In Figure 10, the subjects are women and children (with one woman and child sitting on the floor). The presence of various items such as trays, plates, buckets, slippers, and basins in the room, implies that the location is a temporary space where the women and children are forced to live as a result of the flooding. Figure 11 portrays a group of men, some dressed in military and paramilitary attire, walking along a severely damaged road, while on the other side of the photograph, women are seen carrying objects and wading through a vast expanse of water. Notably, one man is depicted carrying a woman who is clutching a bag.

Figure 8
Crying woman



Note: "Flood: 16-Year-Old Drowns In Bayelsa, Other Victims Cry For Help", *Daily Trust* (2022, October 12), *Daily Trust*.

Figure 9
Women with children



Note: "Flood victims in fresh battle for survival", by *The Nation* (2022, October 29), *The Nation*.

Figure 10

Men walking on a damaged road and women walking through a large body of water.



When examining Figures 9, 10, and 11, two notable aspects emerge. The initial intriguing aspect is the contrast between men and women. While the men are portrayed as dynamic, displaying a posture that exudes strength, the women are depicted as reliant, passive, and subdued. This depiction reinforces the traditional binary categorisation of masculinity and femininity, where men are positioned as superior and self-reliant, while women are relegated to a subordinate and dependent role. This gendered dichotomy is a significant concern that ecofeminists strive to address and critically analyse. The second noteworthy aspect pertains to the visual and textual emphasis placed on women and children, which is a recurring pattern often observed in media coverage of crises (Gardner, 2007; Rosen, 2014). As discussed in the literature section, photographs featuring women and children serve as powerful presentations and captivating displays capable of eliciting emotional responses and attracting funding for aid. This aligns with Zarzycka's (2016) argument that "the image of a vulnerable child holds a prominent position in the spectacle politics of emergency news and aid initiatives" (p. 29). The efficacy of such imagery explains its prevalence and prominence in the media. For instance, both the *Daily Sun* and *The Guardian* utilised the same image (refer to Figures 12 and 13) in a news article highlighting the National Orientation Agency's (NOA) appeal for humanitarian assistance for those affected by the floods, and in a feature piece that detailed the devastating impact of the floods. In both photographs, a woman wearing a chador (a veil commonly worn by Islamic women) can be seen carrying a large mattress, with her posture suggesting that she is navigating through the vast expanse of water surrounding her. Additionally, there are some children, out of focus, carrying various objects in the frame. These photos, akin to Figures 9 and 10, serve as compelling visual representations indicating the catastrophic consequences of the 2022 floods. While these photos showcase women as the faces of the devastating impacts of the floods, nothing in the article points to the socio-political and cultural inequities that have placed women in this position.

Figure 11
Woman carrying mattress in the flood



Note: "Tales of death and destruction as flood sweeps through communities", I. Jude (2022, October 27), *Daily Sun*.

Figure 12
Woman carrying mattress in the flood



Note: "NOA appeals for humanitarian aid to flood victims", D. Suleiman (2022, October 22), *The Guardian*

While the majority of women depicted in the flood stories were shown as passive and dependent, a few were presented as active and influential. A prime example is Sadiya Umar Farouq, the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management, and Social Development. Across various articles in the selected newspapers, she was portrayed as the voice and representative of the state, entrusted with addressing the aftermath of the flooding incident nationwide. In Figures 14 and 15, she is shown wearing a chador, a garment that distinguishes her as a Muslim woman. The chador carries symbolic connotations related to power, identity, gender, and religion (Milani, 1992, p. 21). While it is sometimes viewed as a symbol of the oppression of women in Islam (Chan-Malik, 2011, p. 121), it has also served as a symbol of resistance against oppressive regimes (Pliskin, 2009, p. 125). Her clear complexion, makeup, eyeglasses, and vibrant attire highlight her privilege within the Nigerian context. Her slightly parted lips and posture suggest that she was photographed while addressing the press. It is worth noting that she was speaking to journalists and representatives from some of Nigeria's major and influential media organisations, as evidenced by the branded microphones of the country's national network - Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Nigeria's 15-time best television station - Channels Television, and others (refer to Figure 15). Overall, these photos portray her as a figure of power and privilege, in line with her influential role as a minister and spokesperson for the federal government during times of crisis.

Figure 13
Sadiya Umar Farouq



Note: Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, Sadiya Umar Farouq in a press conference. From "flooding: Over 500 killed, 1.4m, 90,000 homes destroyed" by O. Obi & A. Nnamani (2022, October 14), *Daily Sun*.

Figure 14
Sadiya Umar Farouq



Note: Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, Sadiya Umar Farouq in a press conference. From "Understanding flooding in Nigeria and finding solutions", by F. D. Ogunnigbo & Ogunwumi (2022 November 8), *The Guardian*.

Even though Sadiya Umar Farouq stands out as the most prominent female figure in the reports, it is important to note that she is no ordinary woman and therefore, not a visual synecdoche for women in 2022 flooding reports. As a Nigerian Minister, she is significantly removed from the experiences of the women portrayed as dependent and passive victims. Being a political officeholder places her in the highest echelons of Nigeria's elite class, further distancing her from the realities faced by the women depicted in Figures 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13. The article titled "Bayelsa not among 10 most flooded states, minister replies Clark, other critics" exemplifies her power as she has the authority to arbitrarily categorise and label states as most or least affected by the floods. This categorisation plays a crucial role in determining the allocation of federal resources and assistance, making it highly significant.

Conclusion

This aim of this research was to critically evaluate how women were depicted and the function they played in newspaper coverage of the 2022 flooding in Nigeria. Our study revealed that most stories were concentrated in the news section of the newspapers. Articles in the feature and opinion sections collectively made up 20%, with a mere 1% published as editorials. This study argues that the paucity of feature, opinion and editorial pieces accounts for the limited understanding of climate change and more specifically, the place of women in the climate change discourse. The study also found that most of the articles featured prominent political officeholders. This outcome is in line with the logic of legacy platforms like newspapers, where journalists primarily rely on official sources for news (Joe, 2020). Whereas men were overly represented, women appeared in only 18% of the articles. Again, this finding mirrors earlier representations of women in the media (van Zoonen, 1995). We also found evidence of women portrayed textually and visually as weak, passive victims who lack agency, serving as icons of sorrow to evoke the audience's sympathy and attract funding. This study's most notable finding is the evidence of exclusion and omission of women from discussions on issues that majorly concern them such as childbearing and agriculture.

There are several important areas where this study makes original contributions to media, ecofeminism, and climate change research. As we navigate the climate crisis, it is essential to have a clear picture of its far-reaching effects. Hegemonic patriarchal structures have made it so that we don't automatically notice how minoritised groups are affected differently by issues such as climate change. These structures protect themselves by perpetuating the assumption that everyone is affected equally by these issues, leading us to speak and contemplate said issue in generic terms, thereby furthering the oppression of already oppressed groups. First, the study not only draws attention to the textual data but also highlights the various ways women are depicted in the reportage around Nigeria's 2022 flooding. This research is one of the firsts to examine both the textual and visual depiction of women in climate change coverage in the Nigerian context. Two, this study adds to the ecofeminism debate by making a distinction between the different classes of women and by so doing challenges the argument that ecofeminism thought is "ethnocentric, essentialist, blind to class, ethnicity and other differentiating cleavages, ahistorical and the material sphere" (Jackson, 1993, p. 398). Thirdly, the codebook utilised for this study could aid future research in this area.

Due to the limited resources at the disposal of the researchers, as well as the desire to dig deep into the data, the study only examined 160 newspaper articles from four newspapers. This is not nearly enough. An equally detailed qualitative analysis needs to be done on a more robust selection, to get a macro understanding of the role women play in the reportage of climate change as well as the discourse around solutions and managing effects. This study also only zoomed in on Nigeria's 2022 flooding. We very much recognise that this is not the only manifestation of climate change and we recommend future research highlights other manifestations of climate change. We also recognise that this study may be used as a justification for a monolithic way of viewing the Nigerian female experience, we want to state that we do not believe that the findings of this study are true for all women, but they are true for the women captured within the data. A nuanced comprehension of the Nigerian female experience is needed to understand the findings of the study.

For future research, we recommend a larger qualitative content analysis be carried out on a wider array of newspapers, in order to see if the findings of this study are consistent on a macro level. We also recommend that a literary analysis be carried out on newspaper articles to see the literary roles of women in these articles. This might lead us to a much more nuanced understanding of patriarchal hegemony and how it manifests itself in the Nigerian context. In addition, more research is needed to understand the audience's conceptualisation of the effects of

climate change and how it affects various minoritised groups including women. This will provide us further insight into the formation of ideas and ideological standpoints and how audience demand might shape the construction of media reportage on various issues such as climate change.

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