



Agenda-setting and analysis of contributions of nigerian newspapers to poverty-reduction

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ABSTRACT

Background: Poverty remains one of the most pressing socio-economic challenges in Nigeria, with a large proportion of the population living below the national poverty line. The press plays a vital role in shaping public discourse, setting agenda for the society, and analysing topical issues impacting the society. Although previous studies have explored media representation of poverty, there remains a gap in regionally comparative analyses of how Nigerian newspapers cover poverty-related issues. This study aimed to examine the types of poverty-related issues frequently covered in Nigerian newspapers, determine regional differences in coverage patterns, and assess the prominence accorded to such issues. **Methods:** The study employed quantitative content analysis as its method, using a composite sampling technique to select 322 newspaper editions from *Vanguard* (South-based) and *Daily Trust* (North-based) over a three-year period. Data were coded using a structured content coding guide. **Findings:** The findings revealed a total of 737 poverty-related stories, with *Daily Trust* publishing slightly more (376) than *Vanguard* (361). Regional framing differences were evident: *Daily Trust* focused more on education (23.4%), healthcare (19.7%), and sanitation (10.4%), while *Vanguard* emphasized food insecurity (19.4%), unemployment (14.4%), and inadequate social welfare (10.2%). However, most of the stories were placed on inside pages, indicating low prominence. The analysis suggests that although both newspapers contribute to agenda-setting on poverty, the limited front-page coverage may hinder the visibility required to drive meaningful policy engagement. **Conclusion:** The study concludes that Nigerian press needs to partner more with relevant stakeholders, towards the realisation of the aspirations of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on Poverty alleviation. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** This research provides new insights as it offers a regional comparative perspective to poverty discourse in Nigerian media studies.

KEYWORDS: agenda-setting; newspapers; poverty-related issues; prominence; SDGs.

1. Introduction

Poverty is a significant global challenge, affecting millions across various regions and societies. In response, numerous efforts have been made globally to combat poverty (Ekeh et al., 2024). Central to these efforts are the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which prioritize the eradication of extreme poverty (SDG 1) by 2030 (Aderounmu et al., 2021). However, less than five years to the set date, poverty persists and is even increasing in several parts of the world, including Nigeria.

Globally, the number of people living in extreme poverty was 767 million in 2015, but this figure decreased to less than 600 million by 2019 (UNDP, 2016). Despite significant advancements in poverty eradication over the past 25 years, approximately 766 million

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people, including 385 million children, were living on less than US\$1.90 a day in 2013 (WFP, 2016). Furthermore, the most recent multidimensional poverty data released in July 2023 by the UNDP in collaboration with the University of Oxford revealed that approximately 1.1 billion out of 6.1 billion people are living in acute multidimensional poverty across 110 countries (Ekeh et al., 2024). The situation is particularly evident in developing regions, with sub-Saharan Africa accounting for approximately 534 million of the world's poor. Nigeria illustrates this troubling trend, as it struggles with significant poverty despite its abundant resources, which include human capital, agricultural potential, petroleum, natural gas, and vast untapped mineral wealth. According to the Brookings Institution (2018) cited in Ekeh et al. (2024), Nigeria is the poverty capital of the world, having overtaken India in terms of extreme poverty levels.

In recent years, media coverage of socio-economic issues like poverty has become increasingly important in promoting national development. This is because the media hold immense power to disseminate information, raise awareness, and influence perceptions and behaviours on a mass scale (Gulzar, 2023). Through various channels such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio and social media, journalism can spotlight socioeconomic disparities, advocate for policy changes, amplify marginalized voices, and mobilize collective action towards addressing poverty.

In the extant literature, recent studies such as Ajetunmobi (2023), Kerins et al. (2023), amongst others, have emphasized the media's role not just in reporting socio-economic problems, but also in framing them in ways that can shape public response and policy priorities. Also, empirical studies such as Champagne et al. (2024) suggest that selective framing, source attribution, and placement of stories influence how seriously the public and policymakers take issues like poverty. However, it is evident that there is a dearth of studies that offers a comparative evaluation of how newspapers in different regions within Nigeria, present poverty-related issues.

The aim of this paper was to examine press coverage of poverty-related issues in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to: examine the types of poverty-related issues frequently covered by Nigerian newspapers; discover the differences in the pattern of coverage of poverty-related issues between selected southern and northern newspapers in Nigeria; and examine the prominence given to poverty-related issues by selected newspapers in Nigeria. *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers were selected for their wide circulation, editorial influence, and representation of Nigeria's geo-political divide. *Vanguard*, has a predominantly Southern readership and is known for its liberal editorial stance and national policy focus. *Daily Trust*, with strong northern market penetration, is widely regarded as a leading voice for northern Nigeria and often reflects region-specific socio-political concerns. Both newspapers have national reach and editorial independence, which makes them ideal for a balanced comparative analysis that reflects different regional framing approaches to poverty-related issues.

Poverty manifests through various interrelated issues that hinder individuals and communities from achieving a decent standard of living. Among the most pressing poverty-related issues are food insecurity and hunger, limited access to education, unemployment, lack of healthcare, inadequate access to clean water, basic sanitation and hygiene facilities, energy access, and insufficient social welfare schemes. Each of these factors contributes to a cycle of poverty that perpetuates hardship and suffering, thus affecting progress and development.

Food insecurity and hunger is a critical component of poverty as it directly impacts individuals' ability to meet basic nutritional needs. According to Ezeh (2024), food insecurity occurs when individuals do not have reliable physical or economic access to sufficient, safe, nutritious, and socially acceptable food needed for a healthy and productive life. When households lack reliable access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food, they face hunger, malnutrition, and various health issues. Some of the factors responsible for food insecurity includes; economic constraints, conflict, and poor agricultural practices, among others.

The World Health Organization estimates that around 60 percent of all childhood deaths in the developing world are linked to chronic hunger and malnutrition (WHO, 2024). In these regions, persistent malnutrition weakens children, leaving them more vulnerable and less able to combat common childhood illnesses such as diarrhea, acute respiratory infections, malaria, and measles (Ezeh, 2024). The foregoing explains why international organizations like the United Nations prioritized addressing hunger and malnutrition in their global development agenda, especially in both the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, SDG 2 aims to "end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture" by 2030 (Saccone & Valino, 2022).

Unemployment is a critical poverty-related issue that has far-reaching implications for individuals and communities. As a result, families may experience food insecurity, inadequate shelter, and limited access to medical services, further entrenching them in poverty. According to Iduseri et al. (2022) some of the factors responsible for unemployment are economic downturns, inadequate job training programs, and a mismatch between skills and available job opportunities. Also, structural issues within the economy, such as lack of investment in certain sectors, can increase unemployment rates. The implications of unemployment are beyond economic hardship; they can lead to social unrest, decreased mental health, employment gaps among others (Waltower 2023).

The unemployment rate in Nigeria stands at over 15% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023), and only about 19% of the population benefits from social safety net programs, compared to 25% regionally and 41% globally (World Bank, 2021). These interrelated issues perhaps account for the reason why Nigeria has been dubbed the "poverty capital of the world," as a large portion of its population continues to battle with the harsh realities of economic deprivation and social inequality.

Another critical aspect of poverty is the lack of healthcare, which remains a fundamental human right. Millions of people living in poverty lack essential healthcare services due to barriers such as high costs, limited availability of facilities, and a lack of health insurance. In regions where health care services are limited or inaccessible, individuals may experience higher rates of preventable diseases and poor health outcomes. For instance, without proper access to vaccinations, maternal care, and essential medical treatments, communities and individuals are more susceptible to outbreaks of infectious diseases, chronic health conditions, and diminished quality of life (Witting, 2023).

According to the WHO and World Bank 2023 Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Global Monitoring Report, approximately 4.5 billion people worldwide lack access to essential health services (WHO, 2023). This lack of access results in significant health disparities, particularly in low-income countries, where the challenges are more pronounced. Each year, approximately 5.7 million people die in low and middle-income countries due to poor quality health care, while an additional 2.9 million lose their lives because of a lack of access to care (World Economic Forum, 2019). Furthermore, maternal mortality rates remain alarmingly high in these regions, with approximately 545 deaths per 100,000 live births reported in low-income countries, compared to just 4 deaths per 100,000 in high-income countries like Australia and New Zealand (UNICEF, 2023).

Limited access to clean water is another poverty-related issue predominantly affecting developing countries around the world. Approximately 2 billion people globally lack access to safe drinking water (UNESCO, 2023). This situation leads to severe health consequences, including the spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera, dysentery, and typhoid fever, which disproportionately impact vulnerable populations in low-income and rural areas (Olatunji & Thanny, 2020 & 2021). Approximately 1.4 million individuals lose their lives annually due to diarrhea linked to unsafe drinking water, inadequate sanitation, and poor hand hygiene (UNICEF, 2023). Estimates indicate that about 28.6 percent of these deaths are among children, totalling nearly 400,000 children under the age of five (UNICEF, 2023). This showcases the severe impact of water-related issues on the youngest and most vulnerable populations.

Energy is essential for basic services like lighting, heating, cooking, and powering healthcare facilities, schools, and businesses. Without reliable access to energy, households are forced to rely on traditional, often unsafe sources like wood, charcoal, or kerosene, which contribute to environmental degradation and pose health risks due to indoor air pollution (Zewdie, 2023). The absence of energy access also restricts the use of technology, including computers and mobile devices, which are increasingly essential for education and job opportunities (Husnita et al., 2023).

Inadequate social welfare schemes, also known as safety nets, are a significant poverty-related issue affecting vulnerable populations. Social welfare programs are designed to provide financial support and essential services to those in need, such as unemployed individuals, low-income families, the elderly, and people with disabilities (Kagan, 2024). However, in many low- and middle-income countries, these programs are either insufficient or poorly implemented, leaving millions of people without the necessary support to meet basic needs like food, shelter, healthcare, and education.

Approximately 25 million Nigerians face food insecurity, with 33% unable to meet their basic food needs (Peterside, 2024). Furthermore, more than 66 million people in Nigeria lack access to safe drinking water (Adamu et al., 2022). The country grapples with energy poverty, as about 43% of the population, or 85 million people, do not have reliable access to electricity (World Bank, 2021). Educational deprivation is another pressing issue, with approximately 10.2 million children of primary school age, and another 8.1 million of junior secondary school age out of school, and 74 percent of children aged 7–14 lacking basic reading and math skills. (UNICEF, 2024). This issue is even more prevalent in northern Nigeria, where the number of out-of-school children is significantly higher, compounding the region's economic and social challenges. According to recent data, Kebbi State leads with 67.6% of its children out of school, followed closely by Sokoto at 66.4%, Yobe at 62.9%, Zamfara at 61.3%, and Bauchi at 55.7% (Ojo, 2024).

Also, Nigeria has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, at approximately 576 deaths per 100,000 live births, making it the fourth highest on earth (UNICEF, 2024). A plethora of empirical studies have investigated newspapers coverage of poverty-related issues in Nigeria (Dango, 2021; Olannishile et al., 2022; Ezeah & Emeafor, 2019; Ajaegbu & Akoja, 2024; Offiong et al., 2024; Ogunyemi et al., 2025; Maitalata & Aliogba, 2023). However, none of these studies have specifically explored the most prevalent poverty-related issues reported in Nigerian newspapers. More importantly, these studies have largely overlooked how regional differences, especially in editorial orientation and local development priorities may shape the frequency of newspapers coverage of poverty related issues. This absence of a regional comparative perspective is a gap in literature, and given the importance of regional identity in Nigerian media consumption and political representation, a comparative analysis between southern and northern-based newspapers is necessary to better understand how geography influences media attention to poverty.

Olanishile et al. (2022) examined how Nigerian newspapers framed issues concerning out-of-school children (OOSC) by analyzing content from *Punch*, *Vanguard*, and *Daily Trust*. Using qualitative content analysis, the study employed van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and the thematic and episodic approaches of Framing Theory. The analysis identified five media frames: OOSC were portrayed as vulnerable and impoverished victims, silenced voices, products of state and policy failure, outcomes of non-state actors' failure, and children in crisis in need of collaborative interventions. Also, the study revealed framing strategies such as source avoidance to mask negativity, the use of authoritative, positive self-presentation, negative other-presentation, blame attribution, and the use of foregrounding and metaphors (both direct and implied).

A related study carried out by Ezeah and Emeafor (2019) examined the framing of youth unemployment in Nigeria in *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers. Adopting content analysis as the research method, the study analysed how these newspapers highlighted youth unemployment. Findings revealed minimal coverage, with only 15 stories on unemployment published across 192 editions. The newspapers employed 24 frames, with

the "call for action" frame being the most dominant, followed by the "entrepreneurship" frame. The study recommended collaboration among the government, private sector, civil society organizations, and the media to ensure that youth unemployment is addressed comprehensively and sustainably.

Ajaegbu and Akoja (2024) investigated how the media shapes public health agendas to mobilize the government and citizens toward a healthier society. Using content analysis, the study examined health-related reports in *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, *The Vanguard*, and *Daily Sun* over a one-week period. Among 58 health reports identified, COVID-19 dominated the coverage. However, most health issues were presented as straight news and received limited attention in comparison to other topics. The study recommended that newspapers place greater emphasis on health-related problems to enhance public awareness and engagement.

In addition to Nigerian-based studies, research from other developing countries have provided insights into how the media construct poverty narratives. For instance, Ali (2021) examined poverty reporting in Ethiopian newspapers and discovered that government officials dominated as sources, while the voices of the poor, opposition parties, and civil society were largely excluded. This led to a predominantly economic framing of poverty, thus reducing its multidimensional realities to narrow technocratic terms. Similarly, Hodor (2021) found that Ghanaian newspapers like the *Daily Graphic* and *Ghanaian Times* gave limited prominence to poverty issues and often framed them as either problems being addressed or burdens. The poor were rarely represented directly, and journalists cited economic pressures, newsroom routines, and editorial priorities as reasons behind these framing choices. From the foregoing, one can deduce that the framing of poverty in postcolonial media landscapes is not merely an editorial or journalistic decision but one shaped by institutional, ideological, and political pressures. Situating the Nigerian experience within this broader context shows how poverty reporting is tied to deeper questions of media access, power, and representation.

Theories are crucial to understanding how media shapes public discourse. This study adopted the Agenda-Setting Theory and Framing Theory to explore how poverty-related issues are portrayed in Nigerian media.

The agenda-setting theory posits that the media doesn't necessarily dictate what to think, but rather influences what topics to think about. Consequently, the editorial decisions made by editors, newsroom personnel, and broadcasters play a crucial role in shaping the public agenda (Ajibulu, 2022). In congruence with this view, Asemah et al. (2022) reveals that the factors involved in agenda setting include the frequency of reports, the prominence of the reports, the level of conflict generated by the reports, and the cumulative effects of these reports over time. This indicates that both traditional and new media set the agenda for their audience by deciding which issues will be perceived as important by the public (Ajibulu, 2022).

While Agenda-Setting identifies the *salience* of issues, Framing Theory seeks to explain how those issues are presented in the media. According to Entman (1993) as cited in Adeniran et al. (2019), framing involves selecting certain aspects of reality and making them more salient in a communicative context to promote a particular interpretation. Framing influences public understanding by emphasizing specific causes, consequences, moral evaluations, and solutions. In line with poverty coverage in the media, this theory helps explain whether media portray poverty as a structural problem, a personal failing, or a governance issue, and whether the poor are depicted as victims, agents, or burdens. The Framing Theory shows that media power does not lie only in setting the agenda but also in shaping how audiences interpret and respond to poverty narratives. This is very relevant in Nigeria, where media houses operate within distinct regional, political, and ideological contexts that influence framing choices.

Thus, the Agenda-Setting and Framing Theories is highly relevant in this study. While Agenda-Setting explains how newspapers draw public attention to poverty, Framing Theory explains the representational strategies used to construct its meaning. Together, these theories justify the study's focus on the frequency, emphasis, and framing of poverty-related

coverage in Nigerian newspapers. Against the above backdrop, the need for a content analysis of Press coverage of poverty-related issues is imperative, anchored on both the Agenda-Setting Theory and Framing Theory. Thus, through the frequency, prominence, and emphasis of newspapers' coverage on poverty related issues the press can prioritize and generate the necessary awareness and engagement needed to drive action towards eradicating poverty.

2. Methods

This study employed content analysis as the research method. Content analysis is a research method used in social sciences and management that enables researchers to systematically, quantitatively and qualitatively examine written or recorded content, such as texts, videos, music, or pictures (Ajibulu, 2022). The content analysis research method is suitable for this study as it enables an in-depth examination of how poverty-related issues are presented in the media, revealing patterns, themes, and biases in reporting.

This study employed quantitative content analysis to examine the types of poverty-related issues that are frequently covered by Nigerian newspapers, it also uncovered differences in the pattern of coverage of poverty related issues between southern and northern newspapers in Nigeria.

The study population included all national newspapers in Nigeria. For this study two newspaper were selected to represent the population of the study. These newspapers are *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust*. The rationale behind this selection is based on the geographical diversity of these publications; *Vanguard* newspaper is based in the southern region of Nigeria, while *Daily Trust* newspaper originates from the north. This regional representation enabled a comparative analysis of how poverty-related issues are covered in different parts of the country, providing insights into the variations in media narratives and frames that may arise from regional perspectives.

The universe or the population of the newspaper editions from which the sample of this study was selected were the entire editions of the two selected newspapers published over three years, from the 1st of January, 2020 to 31st of December, 2022 excluding Saturday and Sunday editions. The rationale for selecting a three-year timeframe is that it provides a comprehensive view of trends and changes in the coverage of poverty-related issues over time. This duration allows for an analysis of how media narratives may have evolved in response to shifting socio-economic conditions and public discourse on poverty in Nigeria.

For each of the newspapers, 161 editions were selected and analyzed. Consequently, a total of 322 editions served as the sample size for this study. To determine the sample, a composite sampling technique was employed. This method is regarded as more scientific and superior to random sampling and consecutive day sampling techniques when analysing newspaper content. The composite technique was applied across the 36 months of the three-year period (2020-2022) for each newspaper to select the editions for content analysis. Using this approach, the researcher used a calendar to select each day of the week within the 36 months under review, spanning from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2022.

The unit of analysis for this study comprises the smallest elements examined in the content analysis of *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers coverage of poverty-related issues in Nigeria. These include news stories, which report daily events related to poverty; editorials, which express the newspapers' official positions on poverty-related matters; and feature articles or opinion pieces, which provide in-depth analyses and personal viewpoints on poverty issues.

The study focused on two content categories: Prominence and issues. In this study, prominence was evaluated based on the placement of content related to poverty-related issues within *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers. This category measured the visibility and significance given to these issues by analysing where the reports appear within the newspapers. Front-page coverage was deemed most significant, followed by the back page, center spread, inside front page, inside back cover, and inside pages, which were considered

the least prominent. This hierarchy helped determine how much priority the newspapers gave to poverty-related reports.

The issues category analyzed the specific poverty-related topics covered in the newspapers. These included food insecurity and hunger, limited access to education, unemployment, lack of healthcare, inadequate clean water and sanitation, limited energy access, and insufficient social welfare schemes.

The content coding sheet served as the instrument of data collection. The coding sheet was used for quantitative content analysis to systematically record and categorize instances of poverty-related issues in the selected newspapers. The sheet included predefined categories such as; prominence and specific poverty-related issues. This allowed the researcher to easily track and quantify data across different newspaper editions. The data collected through the coding sheet was entered into Microsoft Excel, which helped to organize and analyse the information. Each column in the spreadsheet represented a different category, while each row corresponded to a specific newspaper edition or article.

To ensure consistency in the coding process, inter-coder reliability was tested using Holsti's formula, which measures agreement between coders. A total of 10 percent of the sample, which comprised 36 editions, was randomly selected and independently coded by the researcher and a trained postgraduate student. After comparing the coding results, the reliability coefficient was calculated as 0.90. This indicates a high level of agreement and confirms the reliability and objectivity of the coding procedure.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Coverage of poverty-related issues in nigeria by vanguard and daily trust newspapers

The findings in Table 1 reveal a significant distribution in the coverage of poverty-related issues by *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers over the three years (2020-2022). The total coverage of poverty-related issues over the three years shows that both newspapers reported on 737 instances, with *Vanguard* covering 361 stories and *Daily Trust* covering 376 stories. The findings imply that, overall, *Daily Trust* slightly outpaced *Vanguard* in the frequency of coverage, though the two newspapers maintained relatively comparable attention to the topic over the three-year period.

Table 1. Frequency of Publication Poverty-Related Issues Covered by *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* Newspapers (2020–2022)

Year	Vanguard	Daily Trust	Both
2020	152 (42.1%)	190 (50.5%)	342 (46.4%)
2021	102 (28.3%)	109 (29%)	211 (28.6%)
2022	107 (29.6%)	77 (20.5%)	184 (25%)
Total	361 (100%)	376 (100) %	737 (100%)

The data presented in Table 2 reveals that food insecurity and hunger was one of the most prominently covered issues, with *Vanguard* newspaper reporting 70 stories (19.4%) and *Daily Trust* covering 62 stories (16.5%), for a combined total of 132 stories (17.9%). This high frequency indicates that food insecurity was a central topic in discussions about poverty across both newspapers. Similarly, limited access to education emerged as a major concern, with *Vanguard* covering it in 62 stories (17.2%) and *Daily Trust* reporting 88 stories (23.4%). This resulted in a combined total of 150 stories (20.3%), which makes it the most extensively covered issue. Unemployment was another significant issue. *Vanguard* reported 52 stories (14.4%) on unemployment, while *Daily Trust* covered it in 31 stories (8.2%). The combined total of 83 stories (11.3%) shows that while unemployment is an important concern, it was not as prominently covered as food insecurity or education. Both newspapers provided substantial coverage to lack of health care, with *Vanguard* reporting 72 stories (19.9%) and *Daily Trust* covering 74 stories (19.7%). The combined total of 146 stories (19.8%) reflects the importance of healthcare as a central issue in the poverty

discourse. Limited access to clean water and sanitation was covered the least, with *Vanguard* reporting only 13 stories (3.6%) and *Daily Trust* covering 39 stories (10.4%). With a total of 52 stories (7.1%), it is clear that while this issue is significant, it did not receive as much attention in the newspapers as some of the other poverty-related issues. The issue of limited access to energy garnered moderate coverage, with *Vanguard* reporting 55 stories (15.2%) and *Daily Trust* covering 53 stories (14.1%), resulting in a combined total of 108 stories (14.7%). Finally, inadequate social welfare scheme was one of the least covered issues, with *Vanguard* reporting 37 stories (10.2%) and *Daily Trust* covering 29 stories (7.7%), for a combined total of 66 stories (8.9%). Despite its significance in poverty reduction, social welfare schemes received relatively limited attention in both newspapers.

Table 2. Types of Poverty-Related Issues Covered by *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* Newspapers (2020–2022)

Poverty-Related Issue	Vanguard	Daily Trust	Both
Food Insecurity and Hunger	70 (19.4%)	62 (16.5%)	132 (17.9%)
Limited Access to Education	62 (17.2%)	88 (23.4%)	150 (20.3%)
Unemployment	52 (14.4%)	31 (8.2%)	83 (11.3%)
Lack of Health Care	72 (19.9%)	74 (19.7%)	146 (19.8%)
Limited Access to Clean Water & Sanitation	13 (3.6%)	39 (10.4%)	52 (7.1%)
Limited Access to Energy	55 (15.2%)	53 (14.1%)	108 (14.7%)
Inadequate Social Welfare Schemes	37 (10.2%)	29 (7.7%)	66 (8.9%)
Total	361 (100%)	376 (100%)	737 (100%)

Tables 1 and 2 provide data on the types of poverty-related issues frequently covered by Nigerian newspapers. From Table 1, it is evident that both newspapers paid attention to the coverage of poverty related issues, with *Vanguard* covering 361 stories and *Daily Trust* covering 376 stories, thus making a total of 737 stories.

Data presented in Table 2 show that the selected newspapers covered a range of poverty-related issues, although the level of attention given to each issue varied. Both *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* consistently reported on key concerns such as food insecurity, limited access to education, unemployment, lack of healthcare, limited access to energy and inadequate social welfare schemes. While all these issues were acknowledged, some received more prominence than others. Education and food insecurity stood out as major areas of focus, showing the newspapers' awareness of their importance in the poverty conversation. Healthcare and access to energy were also well reported, indicating their relevance in public discourse. On the other hand, issues like access to clean water, sanitation, and social welfare schemes were given comparatively less coverage.

3.2. Difference in patterns of coverage of poverty-related issues

Table 3. Differences in coverage of poverty-related issues between southern and northern newspapers

Poverty-Related Issue	<i>Vanguard</i> (Southern)	<i>Daily Trust</i> (Northern)	Newspaper with more coverage
Food Insecurity and Hunger	70 (19.4%)	62 (16.5%)	<i>Vanguard</i>
Limited Access to Education	62 (17.2%)	88 (23.4%)	<i>Daily Trust</i>
Unemployment	52 (14.4%)	31 (8.2%)	<i>Vanguard</i>
Lack of Health Care	72 (19.9%)	74 (19.7%)	<i>Daily Trust</i>
Limited Access to Clean Water & Sanitation	13 (3.6%)	39 (10.4%)	<i>Daily Trust</i>
Limited Access to Energy	55 (15.2%)	53 (14.1%)	<i>Vanguard</i>
Inadequate Social Welfare Schemes	37 (10.2%)	29 (7.7%)	<i>Vanguard</i>
Total	361(100%)	376 (100%)	737 (100%)

The data in Table 3 highlights the differences in the coverage of poverty-related issues between *Vanguard* (Southern) and *Daily Trust* (Northern) newspapers from 2020 to 2022.

The data indicates that both newspapers give varying levels of attention to poverty-related issues.

Regarding food insecurity and hunger, *Vanguard* reported more frequently, with 70 stories (19.4%), compared to *Daily Trust*, which had 62 reports (16.5%). This suggests that *Vanguard* gave greater emphasis to food insecurity. On the other hand, *Daily Trust* reported more frequently on limited access to education, with 88 reports (23.4%) compared to *Vanguard*'s 62 reports (17.2%). This suggests that education access is a poverty-related issue in Northern Nigeria. In the case of unemployment, *Vanguard* newspaper had a higher frequency of coverage with 52 reports (14.4%), while *Daily Trust* had 31 reports (8.2%). This highlights the southern newspapers' focus on unemployment as a significant poverty-related issue.

Both newspapers devoted a substantial amount of coverage to lack of health care, with *Daily Trust* slightly leading at 74 reports (19.7%) compared to *Vanguard* 72 reports (19.9%). This indicates that health care remains a crucial issue in both regions. Similarly, *Daily Trust* provided more coverage on limited access to clean water and sanitation, with 39 reports (10.4%), compared to 13 reports (3.6%) covered by *Vanguard* newspaper. This suggests that access to clean water and sanitation is a more pressing issue in the northern region. Regarding limited access to energy, *Vanguard* newspaper provided more coverage, with 55 reports (15.2%), while *Daily Trust* had 53 reports (14.1%). The difference is slight, which suggests that limited access to energy is a poverty-related issue prevalent in southern and northern Nigeria. Finally, inadequate social welfare schemes received more coverage in *Vanguard* newspaper with 37 reports (10.2%) compared to *Daily Trust* 29 reports (7.7%). This indicates that the southern newspaper gave more attention to inadequate social welfare schemes as a prominent poverty related issue.

3.3. Prominence Given to the Coverage of Poverty-Related Issues

Table 4. Prominence of Poverty-Related Issues in Selected Newspapers

Prominence	Vanguard	Daily Trust	Both
Front Page	30 (8.3%)	32 (8.5%)	62 (8.4%)
Back Page	1 (0.3%)	7 (1.9%)	8 (1.1%)
Inside Front Page	1 (0.3%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.1%)
Centre Spread	5 (1.3%)	6 (1.6%)	11 (1.5%)
Inside Back Cover	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Inside Pages	324 (89.8%)	331 (88.0%)	655 (88.9%)
Total	361 (100%)	376 (100%)	737 (100%)

The data presented in Table 4 highlights the level of prominence given to poverty-related issues in *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers. The majority of the stories in both newspapers were located on the inside pages, with *Vanguard* publishing 324 stories (89.8%) and *Daily Trust* 331 stories (88.0%), amounting to 655 stories (88.9%) in total. While this suggests extensive coverage, the prominence of such reporting remains limited when page placement is considered. For instance, *Vanguard* featured only 30 front-page stories (8.3%), one of which, published on September 3, 2020, addressed rising prices and food security concerns. *Daily Trust* also included 32 front-page stories (8.5%), such as its April 23, 2020 piece on the lack of access to electricity for the poor. Editorial coverage was minimal yet notable; *Vanguard* published an editorial on January 11, 2022, titled *Rising Food Prices: Declare War on Hunger Now*, which appeared on page 18, reflecting some degree of editorial prioritization. However, such instances were rare. Also, important issues such as water scarcity were relegated to less prominent pages in *Daily Trust*, with a March 31, 2021 report on Kano communities' water challenges appearing on page 33, and a March 22, 2022 article on contaminated water usage published on page 22. This limited use of highly visible sections such as the front page, editorial pages, and centre spread showcases the newspapers' overall tendency to downplay poverty issues in terms of spatial hierarchy, thus limiting their perceived urgency in public discourse.

3.4 Discussion

The findings of this study are in tandem with presupposition of existing literatures such as Peterside (2024), Adamu et al. (2022), Olatunji & Thanny, (2020, 2021) who established that poverty related issues such as food insecurity and limited access to clean water are significant poverty-related challenges in Nigeria. The findings also corroborate reports from organizations like the World Bank (2021) and UNICEF (2024), which highlight critical areas such as limited access to electricity in Nigeria and educational deprivation, where millions of children remain out of school and unable to acquire basic reading and math skills.

Furthermore, the newspapers' emphasis on inadequate healthcare as a significant poverty-related issue corresponds with UNICEF's (2018) report that Nigeria has one of the highest maternal mortality rates globally, at 576 deaths per 100,000 live births. Likewise, frequent reporting on unemployment mirrors the National Bureau of Statistics' (2023) finding that over 15% of the population remains unemployed. The coverage of inadequate social welfare schemes as a poverty-related challenge is also in congruence World Bank (2021) observation that only 19% of Nigerians benefit from social safety net programs, a figure significantly below regional and global averages.

The low level of prominence given to poverty-related issues in *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers suggests that the selected newspapers failed to prioritize poverty alleviation in their reportage which tends to undermine the capability of the press to contribute maximally to the attainment of SDG1 (Aderounmu et al., 2021). The present finding is in tandem with the outcome of a similar study by Ajaegbu and Akoja (2024) which established that health-related problems were accorded limited prominence by the selected Nigerian newspapers. to enhance public awareness and engagement.

The findings from this study also align with the core postulations of the Agenda-Setting Theory, which posits that the media plays a pivotal role in influencing public perception and prioritizing societal issues. The selected newspapers, through their coverage of poverty-related challenges, effectively emphasized the multidimensional nature of poverty in Nigeria. Through the coverage of critical issues such as food insecurity, inadequate healthcare, limited access to education, unemployment, and social welfare deficiencies, these newspapers have showcased their commitment to shaping public discourse and advocating for socio-economic change. But by embedding poverty-related issues in the inside pages of the selected newspapers, the media role in the achievement of SDG1 seems downplayed.

Both newspapers cover similar poverty-related issues, but they emphasize different concerns based on regional challenges. *Vanguard* newspaper focused more on food insecurity, unemployment, and energy access, while *Daily Trust* newspaper placed greater emphasis on education, water and sanitation, and health care. These differences reflect regional realities, as northern Nigeria, where *Daily Trust* is predominantly read, faces a higher prevalence of poverty-related challenges due to structural, historical, and socio-economic factors.

Beyond these structural disparities, the differences in coverage can also be attributed to deeper socio-political dynamics and media institutional factors. The editorial orientation and ownership structure of *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* likely shape their coverage priorities. *Daily Trust*, owned by Media Trust Ltd and headquartered in Abuja, may be more attuned to northern audiences and regional developmental concerns, thereby covering issues such as access to education and clean water which are particularly predominant in northern states. In contrast, *Vanguard*, with a more southern orientation and Lagos-based operations, may focus on challenges like unemployment and energy access that resonate more strongly with its readership.

The emphasis by *Daily Trust* on education, for instance, showcase the dire situation in northern Nigeria, which is home to the majority of the country's out-of-school children. This is consistent with Ojo's (2024) findings, which reveal alarming levels of educational deprivation in states such as Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara. Thus, the study shows that,

just as Nigeria is a country of different culture, language, ethnicity, and religion, so is the diversity and multi-dimensional nature of poverty in the country.

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that Nigerian newspapers, especially *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* covered a broad range of poverty-related issues, but these issues were not prioritized. Also, the different and multifaceted nature of poverty in Nigeria were reflected in the newspapers' reports, including food insecurity, limited access to education, unemployment, inadequate healthcare, poor access to clean water and sanitation, limited access to energy, and inadequate social welfare schemes. However, the level and focus of coverage varied between the two newspapers and two distinct geographical divides of Northern and Southern Nigeria. *Daily Trust*, which represents the northern region, devoted slightly more attention to issues such as education, healthcare, and sanitation. In contrast, *Vanguard*, based in the southern part of the country, placed more emphasis on food insecurity, unemployment, and social welfare concerns. Despite the consistent coverage of poverty-related topics, both newspapers gave these issues limited prominence. A cogent reason for the limited prominence of poverty coverage is hinged on the fact that both newspapers operate in a resource-constrained media environment where financial limitations and the prioritization of commercial interests via advertisement revenue, reduce the depth and frequency of poverty reporting. These limitations hinder the media's ability to influence public policy and drive accountability. To address poverty effectively in line with Sustainable Development Goal 1 (No Poverty), it is important to not only promote media coverage of poverty but also to strengthen the capacity of the press through increased investment, institutional support, and collaboration among government, civil society, and the private sector.

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Author Contribution

T.S.A, conceived the research idea, produced the initial proposal, carried out the field work and produced the initial draft of the research report as part of his Master's degree dissertation in the Department of Public Relations and Advertising of the Faculty of Communication, Lagos State University. Overall percentage contribution by T.S.A, is 75 %. However, R.W.O, had a 25% contribution by providing the supervisory oversight through critical evaluation of the research proposal, validating the designed research instrument, cross-checking data analysis and providing editorial input.

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