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Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of World Food Safety Day: A Study of Selected Newspapers in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The maxim that our food is our drug holds sway in recognition of the critical role which safe foods play in the health state of the people. In the event of development and spread of foodborne illnesses and its implication to human lives and economies of states, the UN in collaboration with FAO and other agencies in December 2018 marked June 7th for commemoration of world food safety day. The aim of this day is to create awareness on the need to keep human food safe from processing to consumption. Six years after the establishment of this day, little is known about the effort of the print media in making the day popular among the masses. Against this background, this study examined newspaper coverage of the world food safety day with focus on Vanguard, Daily Trust and This-Day newspapers. The six months study finds expression in the agenda setting and social responsibility theories of mass communication with quantitative content analysis as the method of study. A sample of 72 editions of the three newspapers were selected from the six months using composite week sampling technique. Data on the units and contents categories were obtained using the codding system. Findings revealed that although the world food safety day was given prominent coverage in terms of placement, it is inadequately covered in the media. It was recommended that media should intensify effort to create robust awareness of the world food safety day to ensure healthy future for individuals and communities.

INTRODUCTION

Around the world, food safety is a critical health concern directly influencing global public health, food security, and economic development of nations. According to Lv, Liu, Geng, Kou, Xin and Yang (2018) food safety is one of the key global issues facing human beings which they are continuously fighting against. Considering the challenge posed to the world by the food supply and safety, Godfrai, Beddington, Crute, Haddad, Lawrence, Muir, Pretty, Robinson, Thomas and Toulmin, (2010) stated that about 9 billion people is the population that the world will be fighting to feed by 2050. Importantly, it is not enough to feed this people but to feed them with safe food for a sustainable future**.** Studies have shown that while some millions of the world population become sick over consumption of unsafe foods, hundreds of thousands die every year from diseases related to consumption of unsafe food. This simply implies that while safe food saves lives and enhances individual and public health safety, unsafe food consumption kills and stagnate the economic growth of nations (Fung, Wang & Menon 2018).

It was in an attempt to critically combat this burden, that the World Food Safety Day was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2018. The aim of this day is to reduce the burden of foodborne diseases globally. The special purpose for this day was to place emphases on the importance of safe food production, management, and consumption practices among the world population for safety of lives and resources. Further, the day is a day to advocate for stronger regulatory frameworks and international cooperation to ensure global food safety for security of lives

and enhancement of economic growth and development. The day was primarily dedicated to creating as well as raising global awareness aimed at promotion of actions that can lead safety of foods for the safety of lives. The importance of food safety to human being was reflected in the action of setting apart 7th June of every year for the commemoration of world food safety day (WFSD). With this yearly recognition of this day, critical stakeholders such as the government, the media, food manufacturers/producers and consumers prioritize food safety as a key element in achieving one of the sustainable development goals (Feed the Future, 2021).

In Nigeria, a country with a diverse agricultural landscape and significant food production, food safety becomes very important. Significantly, the challenges posed by foodborne diseases, insensitive handling of foods, and weak enforcement of food regulatory laws highlighted the need for continuous and frequent education and creation of awareness of the implications of unsafe food in every human society. Awareness creation at all time is the special function that the media owe the public especially when it relates to actions that can lead to safety of human lives. According Owolabi (2019), the mass media, especially newspapers, have crucial roles to play in shaping public opinion and raising awareness about the themes of important national issues such as world food safety day. Among the expected functions that the newspapers have the power to play include shaping public discourse, guiding policy formulation and informing the public about best practices and emerging health risks of indulging in the consumption of unsafe food. Studies (Golian, Nagyová, Andocsová, Zajác & Palkovič, 2018) have shown that even in recent time, some consumers buy and eat every food provided the price is less, tastes sweet and attractive aroma without paying attention to where such food were prepared. These people that exhibit this behaviour do so for lack of knowledge of the fact that their lives are put at risk from eating carelessly. It is a slack in the expected roles of the media that lead to lack of careful examination of what people eat to live.

As a critical global issue, WHO (2022) report demonstrated that one in ten people fall ill every year from consuming contaminated food. The report further stated that 420 000 people die from unsafe food consumption yearly. This is an indication that food security is worth media attention in the interest of their social responsibility theory of the press which places on the media the onus to serve humanity. Generally, the burden of foodborne diseases is usually severe on residents of developing countries like Nigeria, where safe food regulatory policies are poorly executed with healthcare systems corruptly under-resourced (WHO, 2019; 2020). The fact that unsafe exert significant effect on residents of developing countries was captured more clearly in Fung, Wang and Menon, (2018) where the authors stated that global burden of foodborne diseases and deaths, is most significant among young children living in low-income regions. This is because food hygiene and water sanitation in low-income countries are below the recommended optimal standards.

For Nigeria with all indices of low-income country, the best option in combating unsafe food among its poor citizens is massive awareness creation on the dangers associated with its consumption. At this point, newspapers, as a traditional and widely accessible form of media in Nigeria, have the potential to make the world food safety day popular among the people by advancing for and making the activities of the day known through effective coverage of the events marking the day. Their coverage of the event is what will educate and inform the public on safe food practices, highlight the importance of regulatory measures, and make the critical stakeholders accountable to safe food culture. However, the extent and quality of newspaper coverage of food safety issues, with particularly references to the activities marking the World Food Safety Day, still remains underexplored.

It was against this background that this study examined the coverage of World Food Safety Day in select Nigerian newspapers, focusing on how these media outlets present information related to food safety for public enlightenment and adoption of food safety culture. The objective is to understand the extent of coverage, the nature of the content, and the framing of food safety issues in the context of World Food Safety Day. By examining how newspapers highlight this global

observance, the study aims to assess the potential of the media in raising awareness and promoting food safety practices in Nigeria.

Statement of problem

It is among the responsibilities of the mass media to inform and educate the people about different health safety measures, including food safety, for the people to be aware of certain avoidable health behaviours that can lead to health challenges and waste of resources. Despite the effort made in establishing World Food Safety Day, people are still suffering from different ailments caused by foodborne diseases. Around the globe, several people engage in unhealthy food safety attitudes and end up with one health problem or the other. The reason for indulgence in such unhealthy attitudes can be traced to a lack of knowledge of the expected food safety behaviours. The hospital is littered with people seeking health services for different food-related diseases. This study, therefore, is set to examine the coverage of World Food Safety Day by Nigerian newspapers, considering that the people need to be aware for them to act in line with the health-required behaviours. If the mass media fail to discharge their duties effectively, people's knowledge of the expected food safety culture will remain a health challenge to humanity at all times. Although scholars have looked at food safety measures and their implications, how the media covered World Food Safety Day has not been given adequate empirical research from the newspaper perspectives. Against this background, this study examined coverage of World Food Safety Day among select newspapers in Nigeria.

Research questions

Relying on the expected responsibility of the mass media towards ensuring the safety of the people through effective coverage of health-related issues, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the frequency of coverage given to World Food Safety Day by the select national dailies.
2. Whether the select newspapers gave prominence coverage to the World Food Safety Day
3. What is the dominant purpose of coverage of World Food Safety Day among the select newspapers understudy
4. What is the dominant media genre used in the coverage of the World Food Safety Day by the select newspapers.

Scope of the study

This study covered select newspapers published within the months of June for six years starting from 2019 to 2024. The newspapers covered include *Vanguard*, *Daily trust* and *This-Day* newspapers. Any newspaper other than these three newspapers stated above were not covered in this study. Thematically, the study is looking at the frequency of coverage of world food safety day, the media genre used in the coverage, the prominence given to the day and the purpose of the coverage as published by the newspapers under study. Any unit or content category beyond the four mentioned above was not covered in the study.

Significance of study

This study is one of the most important of its kind in recent times because it is looking at the contribution so far put forward by the newspapers in the dissemination of information concerning World Food Safety Day in Nigeria. Physically, this study will serve as a wake-up call to the responsibility of the media in enhancing safe food consumption for future health safety of the people.

Social responsibility theory

The origin of the social responsibility theory can be traced to the inventive thinking and ideas of Political free thinkers, the proponents of libertarian ideas and those that introduced and nurtured a democratic leadership spirit like John Milton (1644) cited in Uzochukwu and Ikegbunam (2022). Further, earlier media scholars have argued that the social responsibility theory evolved from the postulation of the libertarian ideology (Nwabueze, 2014; Agbanu, 2013). In the academic field as a

theory of public concern and media responsibility, the theory was made public by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm in 1956 (Anaeto and Solo-Anaeto, 2010) cited in Uzochukwu and Ikegbunam, (2022). The social responsibility became necessary following the expression of dissatisfaction on the libertarian theory of the media by the This was seven years US commission on freedom of press (David, 2015; Kobiruzaman, (2021). Significantly, the major aim of this theory is to advocate for total press freedom with little or no censorship (Kobiruzaman, 2021). Ikegbunam and Agudosy, 2020) added that the foundational base of the theory was an effort to improving in *objectivity* in content dissemination to achieve and sustain responsibility in social issues *interpretation* in the society. It places the media on the side of humanitarianism while requesting public accountability from the government without acting in a way that incites the public against the government or a society against another (Ikegbunam & Agudosy, 2020; Uzochukwu & Ikegbunam, 2022). Generally, covering issues as they relate to World Food Safety Day in the national newspapers is a humanitarian function to the masses, which the above theory places on the media as a responsibility. Reporting World Food Safety Day in the Nigerian media will draw attention to the humanitarian function of the press and at the same time expose the people to the danger that unsafe food can be to life.

In this respect, the media are expected to explore the ample opportunity provided by the World Food Safety Day to inform the people on the health implications of unsafe food consumption and the resulting foodborne diseases. It is the view of the researchers in this study that coverage of the events marking World Food Safety Day in the national dailies is a social responsibility role that the media must execute to save humanity.

Relating this theory to the current study, it is imperative to state that the duty of the newspapers is to attract public attention to the health need for taking care of what people eat with a view to stopping them from getting foodborne diseases, which take both the lives of the affected persons and derange the economy of the nation. As partners in health development and protectors of lives of the people, Nigerian newspapers are expected to inform the people of the world food safety day and educate them on the dangers of eating food that are not safely processed and prepared. Effective coverage of events marking the world food safety day makes the media an institution for the actualization of the global SDGs. Against this backdrop, social responsibility theory was considered apt for this study.

Agenda theory

Propounded by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972, the Agenda Setting theory according to Asemah, Nwammuo, & Nkwam-Uwaoma, (2017), explains the important of raising an issue for public attention in the media. While citing Ikpe (2012) Adeosun and Asemah (2023) argued that the theory has metamorphosed from agenda setting to agenda building. This theory argues that the mass media set an agenda in their coverage of events unfolding in the society for the public to follow. Earlier, Asemah 2020), while citing Orewere (2006), described the theory by referring it to the ability of the mass media to influence the level of the public's awareness of issues. The import of this view expressed in Asemah above is that the mass media help the public to be aware of an issue in society through their attention to the said issue. This is done through the media's ability to choose and display content that meets the news staff's assessment of what is news. In all media organisations, reporters in the field, editors in the newsroom and all other newsroom staff and broadcasters play an important part in shaping the public agenda. This is because they decide what gets to the public domain. Readers learn not only about a given issue but also how much importance to attach to the issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position in the media of reporting (Anwumabelem & Asemah, 2021).

The above view supported those of Wimmer & Dominick (2000, p. 408) cited in Aliagan, Yahaya, and Babatunde (2022), who argued that "agenda setting suggests that the public agenda or what kind of things people discuss, think or worry about is powerfully shaped and directed by what the media choose to let them read or watch. It is against this background that media experts believe

that by giving a particular topic or event prominent treatment in the media over some time, would make the audience believe that the issue is indeed important (Nwafor, Odoemelam & Duru, (2013) cited in Mingyi, (2023). This theory explains how the frequency, prominence, and direction of the newspapers' report of world food safety day event would increase public awareness and knowledge of dangers associated with unsafe food consumption. Relating the theory to the current study, it is the view of the researchers that information disseminated by select newspapers to the people concerning the world food safety day will form the bases of public discuss and policy issue in the society. Making the right food consumption decision

World Food Safety Day: A critical review of previous themes

World Food Safety Day is usually marked with themes that call people around the world to take action on what is needed to manufacture, preserve, distribute, and consume food safely all the time. The purpose of these themes was to draw the focus of every year to what is expected of the public to do to be free from all kinds of foodborne diseases. In 2019, which was the first year World Food Safety Day was commemorated, the United Nations came up with a theme that struck the minds of very individuals to the need for safe food culture and practice. The theme, which can best be called the virgin theme, is ***"food safety, everyone's business".*** This theme is a call for action among all human beings in the world, organisations, communities, and individuals. The message of this theme is clear considering the negative impact of unsafe food on both human lives and the economy of nations. The consumption of unsafe food is a risky health behaviour that affects everyone at the same time. The theme is communicating to the global society the fact that it is not in any way the function or duty of any specific set of people to safeguard our food but the role of everyone in the society. This theme is apt and deserves media attention to explain its implications and means of achievement aimed at getting the society free from the dangers of unsafe food. The theme requires that everyone should brace up to combating the risk of unsafe food by taking precautionary actions against to enhance safe food consumption, processing or distribution. The viability of this theme sustained it through to 2020 as the United Nations again used the same theme to call people to positive actions for food safety.

In 2021, theme **"Safe food today, for a better tomorrow"** was presented as the target of the fight against unsafe food globally. Again, the theme above is implying that a safe eaten today will enhance a better tomorrow in the lives of the consumers. Safe today, for a better tomorrow. This means that if we need a better tomorrow, we must strive to eat safely today because our lives are dependent on the food we consume. Unfortunately, many have lost their lives or wasted their money simply because of what they just ate into their stomachs. Justifying the theme above and giving it the needed interpretation by the media will make more people aware of the theme and be part of the call for safe food for a better future.

The 2022 World Food Safety Day was closely related to the 2021. The theme ***"Safe food, better health"*** is another call on the important of safe food consumption to the health of food consumers. This theme is calling on the world population to pay attention to the food they eat, as that determines the health they have afterwards. The danger of foodborne diseases was intensified here, which is expected to be further taken to the people for more concerns to be raised.

In 2023, the theme of World Food Safety Day is **"Food safety saves lives"**. This theme again looked at the importance of safe food to the lives of the people. It is a call for the people and all concerned stakeholders to consider their safety while consuming food to live. The theme for the 2024 World Food Safety Day is *Food safety: Prepare for the unexpected*. This year's theme is a pointer to the fact that lives are at serious risk with the consumption of unsafe foods at any time. It stirs up the mind of all around the world that foodborne disease kills with a view to getting the people to be conscious of what they eat on daily bases. The theme emphasizes the reason why people must be prepared for food safety incidents paying attention to the fact that no matter how mild or severe they can be, unsafe food can claim the lives of victims. Food safety incidents support the fear that some situations arise where there is a confirmed health risk that is associated with food consumption.

Impliedly, eating anything carelessly can expose the consumers to the dangers envisaged above. Communicating this frequently and prominently in the focal points of newspapers will help in creating public awareness to the hiding danger before the masses.

World food safety day and media framing of expected attitude towards safe food

The mass media have over the years been seen as source of information for the people especially those who lacks the opportunity to see what happened in different locations of the world. Among men, it has been a lifetime activity to wish to know what is happening around them. This is what gave birth to the need for information and presently the commercialisation of news, just like every other commodity in the market. Importantly, the manner in which the media gather, package and disseminate reports on events in the world determines the manner in which people take them and act on them. In a consideration of the media power in setting agenda, Atadoga 2020) argued that media framing and presentation of a news story is most likely to influence how the event covered in the news is perceived by those reading the stories, especially those who have no access to alternative sources. The researchers in this study believe that if this view, as claimed, is true, presenting the dangers of consuming unsafe food will help people to adopt a safe food consumption culture as a result of their perception of the coverage. Individuals frequently exposed to news stories about an event are likely to build their reality of said event from the sense they make from the stories they read or watch.

In a content analysis study, the scholars in the study defined frequency of coverage as the repeated publishing of stories in any media form on an event by newspapers within the period covered in the study. Stories on an issue can be identified and examined in two or more news stories or pages in a given newspaper edition. For instance, stories on World Food Safety Day may appear in three different news stories or pages in a particular news edition. As well, a particular World Food Safety Day theme or activity can get massive media coverage and be published repeatedly in different pages of the same edition or another newspaper. This kind of repeated publication of a given issue in several pages of media forms constitutes what (Sulaiman, 2017) called media frenzy. Naturally, what men hear often directly or indirectly influences their views about that particular issue. This means that publishing stories on World Food Safety Day frequently will exert significant influence in adopting healthy eating behaviour among the readers. This was captured more clearly in Marimba (2017) cited in Apuke and Uhwe, (2020), who notes that mass media use many determinants, including frequency among others, to expose their audience to events considered newsworthy among media room staff.
If the notion is that whatever is published is important and worthy and can be relied upon by the public, then it means that frequent reportage of events that concern the food safety behaviours of food consumers is likely to generate a favourable food safety culture. With frequent coverage of World Food Safety Day events in the media, the populace will know about the day and all its surrounding activities, which will enable them to form a topic of public discussion in society and even on social media platforms to promote a safe food culture among food vendors and consumers (Jiří, 2014). When events of World Food Safety Day are reported frequently by the newspaper, they will be perceived by the readers as the most important because the newspaper projects such events above other issues that are happening in society. Doing this will attract public attention to World Food Safety Day activities and events, which is most likely to generate attitudes that can lead to the practice of safe food cultures among the people. It will equally motivate both individuals and communities to be conscious of the food they distribute and/or consume to be free from foodborne diseases.

Empirical review of literature

In a study on the examination of contributory factors of foodborne diseases, Fekadu, Kinde, Dagnaw, Dessalegn, Dejene and Gessese, (2024) looked at the knowledge, attitude, and practices of food handlers working in public food service establishments in Lemi Kura sub-city in Addis Ababa. The study used a cross-sectional study of 400 food handlers randomly selected from public food service establishments. The study spanned from December 2022 to September 2023. Both

questionnaire and observation research methods were used in data collection, and findings revealed that 65.5% of the respondents had good knowledge about food safety, which translates to a positive food safety attitude among them. It was further revealed that the age of food handlers, training, age, and work experience are significantly associated with a good attitude towards food safety. Moreover, the study demonstrated that educational level and employment status of the respondents have a statistically significant association with good practice towards food safety. The study recommended that formal educational and training programs aimed at positively influencing the knowledge and attitude of food handlers are necessary to improve good food handling practices among the people. This study is related to the current one in the sense that it is looking at good food handling practice as a means of avoiding foodborne disease and other related implications of unsafe food consumption. However, the study differs from the current one in the area of method and area of study. While the previous study adopted the mixed method of survey and observation, the current one is using content analysis with a view to exploring the efforts of the media in disseminating information related to World Food Safety Day. Again, as this study is premised in Ethiopia, this current one is premised in Nigerian media. This current study, which is interested in the role of the media in creating awareness and enhancing good food attitude among the masses, becomes very necessary from the recommendation of the previous study.

In another study, Aljasir (2023) used an integrative literature review method in examining knowledge and practice of food safety attitude among food handlers and consumers in Gulf countries. The target of the study was to identify factors affecting knowledge and practice of food. This study screened 164 studies from which 37 fell within the inclusion criteria. The review found that while food handler studies show insufficient food safety knowledge, consumer studies showed varying levels of food safety knowledge. Further, while there is poor translation of existing knowledge into practice among food handlers' studies, consumers' studies demonstrated that existing knowledge is inconsistent with the practice of food safety behaviours. The study found that the training and educational level of the respondents formed the dominant factor positively affecting food safety knowledge and practices. It was recommended that urgent attention from the Gulf regulatory bodies to develop targeted food safety training and education programs to enhance awareness and implementation of food safety principles should be initiated. This study again is a study conducted outside Nigeria and with a different method other than the one being used in this current study. The recommendation of the previous study reveals that lack of knowledge is the main issue affecting food safety practice among the people. the implication of this is that education of the masses should be increased. As one of the functions of the media, education of the masses is also important to enhance safe food practice in Nigeria.

In a closely related study, Uzochukwu and Ikegbunam (2022) conducted a content analysis of newspaper coverage of World Cancer Day among Nigerian newspapers. The target of the study was to find if the newspapers gave prominent and adequate coverage to World Cancer Day in a bid to ensure a free cancer society. The study used the content analysis research method with social responsibility and agenda-setting theories as the theoretical framework. The study found that although the media gave adequate coverage to World Cancer Day, stories on the event were buried inside pages. It was also found that awareness and persuasive purpose dominated the purpose of coverage, while episodic and thematic frames dominated the framing of cancer in the newspapers. The study concluded that the newspapers did not give enough coverage of World Cancer Day. It was recommended that the media should intensify efforts to provide adequate and prominent coverage of the event and also endeavour to engage in reports that can draw government attention to the need for sound health facilities to enhance early cancer detection and control. This study is related to the current one considering that they were both looking

Further, in a 391-study of meat handlers, Abunna, Kaba, Mor and Megersa (2022) conducted a cross-sectional survey among meat handlers in abattoirs and retail meat stores in Bishoftu, Ethiopia.

The objective of this study is to understand meat handlers' knowledge, attitudes, and practices of food safety measures. The study gathered data through interviews and a questionnaire adapted from previous studies. Data from the study revealed that although an overwhelming majority of the meat handlers in the region under study had a high knowledge level of food safety measures, there are poor food safety practices among them. The study concluded that knowledge is associated with a good attitude but not with the practice of food safety measures. It was recommended that regular education on the implications of unsafe food consumption should be initiated to make people see reason to adopt the safe food practice culture. Further, efforts to enhance regular hands-on training and enforcement of general and personal hygiene are recommended. This study is related to the current one in the sense that it looks at food safety initiatives with special attention to meat handlers in Ethiopia. The study differs from the current study in the sense that it used a different method and was conducted in a foreign country. This study became relevant in the Nigerian academic sector because it will expose the role and efforts of the media in creating this awareness needed for the people to be educated in order to practice safe food culture.

While premising on the role of food safety in the prevention of foodborne illnesses, Guennouni, Admou, Bourrhouat, El Khoudri, Zkhiri, Talha, Hazime, and Hilali, (2022) assessed food safety knowledge and practices among health care professionals and food handlers working in the kitchen of a Moroccan university hospital. The study also adopted a cross-sectional study of 72 doctors, dietitians, hygiene technicians, and hospital kitchen employees. The study assesses their knowledge of hazard analysis and critical control point systems, food poisoning, cross-contamination, and food storage and their practices in terms of food safety. Findings revealed that the food safety challenge mostly known to the respondents is cross contamination and food storage. It was also found that while food safety knowledge among dieticians and hygiene technicians were higher, those of the hospital kitchen workers and doctors were a bit lesser. As well, respondents' knowledge about food storage was significantly associated with gender, age, occupation, and level of education whereas correct food practices were observed among an overwhelming majority of hospital kitchen staff higher than that of the health care professionals. It was concluded that there is the need for preventive and corrective actions such as training and education about food safety to improve the knowledge and food safety practices of hospital professional. This study is also related to the current study for paying attention to the need to control foodborne diseases through preventive actions. However, while the current study is interested in examining the media effort in fostering food safety practices through the activities of the world safety day, the previous study is interested in the activities of the knowledge and practice of safe food culture among food handlers in a hospital and professionals.

While paying attention to the burden of foodborne diseases among the Chinese population, Chen and Feng (2021) reviewed previous efforts made to identify food safety knowledge gaps for both commercial and residential food handlers in China. The study analysed food safety education studies published in the past 20 years in China. The study analysed a total of 35 studies which met the criteria for inclusion. Findings from the majority of the studies revealed that Chinese commercial and residential food handlers had insufficient food safety knowledge, especially in the areas of foodborne pathogens and safe food-handling practices. It was also found from the studies and their reports that the factors impacting food handlers' knowledge levels were level of education, gender, income level, residency (rural vs. urban), the use of Media, college students' major, and food safety training experiences. The study also shows that the majority of food handlers did not always follow recommended food safety practices. This study suggests that there is a lack of knowledge among food handlers in China. This study is related to the current one in the sense that they were both looking at food safety but from different angles. While the previous study is on efforts to improve food safety knowledge and practice among food handlers in China, the current study is paying attention to the efforts of the media in enhancing knowledge and practice of food safety among Nigerians.

In acknowledging the fact that foodborne disease is a serious health issue of global concern, Hamed and Mohammed (2020) conducted a cross-sectional study to determine the knowledge, attitudes and self-reported practices of 994 food handlers in Sohag Governorate. The study is on food safety and the factors affecting their knowledge, attitudes and practices of food safety measures. Findings revealed that food handlers in the area had poor knowledge of food safety, which translated to inadequate compliance with food safety practices. The study recommended that educational and training programmes should be initiated to improve their knowledge, attitudes and practices. This study relates to the present one in the target on foodborne diseases and food safety practices. However, it differs in area of study and method. While the present study is using content analysis research approach in understanding the media effort towards food safety day, the previous study adopted survey in understanding knowledge and practice of food safety measures among food handlers.

Finally, relying on the important of eating quality and safe food, Nagyová, Andocsová, Géci, Zajác, Palkovič, Košičiarová and Golian (2019) investigated how consumers perceive higher quality food with special focus on whether they read information included on the food packaging. The study surveyed a total of 478 respondents living in Slovakia. Findings revealed that although an overwhelming majority of the respondents buy higher quality food because of health-related reasons, it is a little more than one quarter of the respondents read the information on food label. The implication of this finding is that there is need for massive awareness on the need for safe food. This makes the present study apt in the sense that it has come to provide media effort towards informing and educating the masses about the food safety culture for them to remain safe from foodborne diseases. The study is related to the previous one given that they are both looking at food safety for health purposes. On the other hand, they differ in method and area of target.

In sum, a look at all this literature shows that there is a dearth of literature on studies on food safety in Nigeria and World Food Safety Day in general. Particularly, the media angle to the need for food safety around the world has not been sufficiently explored. That is one of the reasons this present study is considered apt at this material time. Considering the human and material cost of unsafe food consumption, understanding how the media covered World Food Safety Day in Nigeria is seen as an important study. This is because the study can trigger media attention to stimulate effective information dissemination to encourage knowledge and practice of food safety culture triggered by newspaper coverage of World Food Safety Day.

Method of study

This study is conducted using the quantitative content analysis research method. The essence of using the content analysis method is to analyse the manifest content of the daily newspapers selected for study with a view to finding whether there is adequate and prominent coverage of World Food Safety Day. The adoption of this method also helps the researcher to identify the dominant purpose of coverage of World Food Safety Day and the media genre used by the three newspapers covered in the study. The area covered in this study is Nigerian newspapers. The universe of this study is three newspapers from Nigeria, which are *Vanguard, Daily Trust,* and *This-Day* newspapers, which were specifically selected for the study. The concentration of this study on newspapers was informed by the fact that newspapers provide better details that allow readers to follow up and obtain more information than the broadcast media on the need and implications of World Food Safety Day. The selection of Nigeria as the area of study was because, being the giant of Africa, Nigeria has the largest population and economy on the continent and is therefore expected to take the lead in the campaign for safe food culture in Sub-Saharan Africa. Since this is an exploratory study on the coverage of World Food Safety Day in Nigeria, the researcher selected the above newspapers to ensure that all the main regions in the country were covered in the study. The population of the study is all the editions of the selected newspapers under study published within the timeframe of the study.

Inter-Coder Reliability

Inter-coder reliability was assessed using Holsti's inter-coder reliability formula. Holsti's inter-coder reliability test was calculated thus:

Reliability $R=\frac{2(M)}{N_1+N_2}$

Where:

M= the number of coding decisions which two coders agree.

N_1& N_2= the number of coding decisions by the first and second coder, respectively.

Therefore, Inter-coder reliability

$$R = \frac{2(20)}{25+20} = \frac{40}{45} = 0.88$$

Category 1: Frequency of coverage: This is the number of times coverage of World Food Safety Day in the selected newspapers. The units examined here are the number of stories on World Food Safety Day covered per newspaper. The rating included: one story, two stories, three stories and 4 stories. 1 is rated at very low frequency of coverage, 2 is low frequency of coverage and 3 at frequently covered whereas 4 stories mean very frequently covered

Category 2: Prominence coverage: here the researchers are interested in the placement of the stories on the world food safety day in the select newspapers' focal points. In this study, the researchers considered ***Front page, inside page, editorial page, inside page lead stories*** and ***back page*** publications**.** Any story found in the front and back pages of the newspapers is rated as very high prominence. Those inside the page with small headline and little column of coverage are rated as not prominent at all while those inside the pages of the newspaper with banner headline and two to three columns are rated as prominence. Meanwhile stories in the editorial page are seen as very prominence

Category 3: Purpose of coverage: This is targeted at finding out the reason for any media coverage given to the world food safety day in the select newspapers. The purposes outlined in this category include ***Warning purpose***- this means news contents designed to by the newspapers to give warning to food dealers and consumers of food on the danger of unsafe food consumption. ***The information purpose***: all stories that informs the people that there is a world food safety day or teaches them how to keep their food safe is regarded as information purpose. Entertainment purpose: The researchers considered a story as an ***entertainment*** one if the story makes use of entertainment in the dissemination of information on the world food safety day in select newspapers. ***Edutainment purpose***: A story about the world food safety day which educates the people on the world food safety day and at the same entertains them were classified as edutainment purpose story. Stories are classified into this category if such story makes use of entertainment approach in issuing positive attitude change communication towards the way people package and distribute food that others eat. ***Advisory purpose***: Stories are classified into this category if it presents an advice on the actions to take in order to ensure that the food people consume is safe before consuming it to remain healthy.

Category 4: Media genre: In this category, the researchers looked at the kind of media messages mainly used in the coverage of World Food Safety Day in the selected newspapers. The units examined here are whether the stories are ***straight news, feature stories, interviews, editorials, advertorials,*** and ***others.***

Data presentation and analysis

Table 1: Average distribution of stories in the selected newspapers' coverage of World Food Safety Day

Newspapers	Total average pages Per day	Average number of main/lead stories per page	Total average main stories per day	Total main stories in a month	Total main stories in 6 months	Number of World Food Safety Day stories	Total % covered in 6 months
Vanguard	54	5	270	8100	48600	18	0.034
Daily trust	60	5	300	9000	54000	23	0.042
This-Day	50	5	250	7500	45000	15	0.033
Total	**164**	**15**	**820**	**24,600**	**147,600**	**56**	**0.109**

Researchers' contents analysis, 2026

The interpretation of this table is that the media failed in their responsibility duty of updating of the masses on the important and dangers of unsafe food preservation, distribution and consumption using the abundant opportunity provided by the world food safety day. Publishing only 56 news items in a whole of 6 months on cancer even when the world specifically singled this day in the month as a day to create awareness against unsafe food consumption globally is far below public and professional expectation of the media and a gross disregard for the health implication of manufacturing, distribution, preservation and consumption of unsafe food on the lives and economic well-being of the people in this country.

Table 2: Yearly distribution of Media coverage of World food safety day

Years under study	*Vanguard*	*Daily trust*	*This-Day*	Frequency	Percentage
2019	2	6	3	11	19.6
2020	0	3	1	4	0.7
2021	4	2	2	8	14.2
2022	3	5	3	11	19.6
2023	5	5	2	12	21.4
2024	4	2	4	10	17.8
Total	**18**	**23**	**15**	**56**	**100**

Source: Researcher's content analysis 2026

The information from the table shows a haphazard movement of the reports on World Food Safety Day in Nigeria. Importantly, while *Daily Trust* newspaper dominated the majority of the reports, the year 2023 was the year with the highest number of stories published on World Food Safety Day. The low coverage found in 2020 cannot be divorced from the domination of the media space by the eruption and spread of COVID-19, which led to the global lockdown of all public institutions and places. The eruption of the pandemic refocused media attention from what is ordinary to the unusual COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 3: Frequency of coverage of events marking the World Food Safety Day in select newspapers

Frequency of coverage	*Vanguard*	*Daily trust*	*This-Day*	Frequency	Percentage
1 story per edition	12	15	9	36	64.2
2 stories per edition	6	8	6	20	35.7
3 stories per edition	0	0	0	0	0
4 stories per edition	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**18**	**23**	**15**	**56**	**100**

Source: Researchers' contents analysis 2026

The table on frequency of information when merged with the first table on total reports from the selected newspapers covered in the World Food Safety Day, revealed that the press did not adequately cover the World Food Safety Day. Of all the 56 items published in 6 months of the 6-year existence of this day, none of the newspapers reported on World Food Safety Day three times in an edition. This implies that several activities and events of the World Food Safety Day were not covered by the newspapers.

Table 4: Placement of stories on World Food Safety Day in the newspapers

Story placement	***Vanguard***	***Daily trust***	***This-Day***	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Front page stories	1	3	1	5	8.9
Inside page stories	12	13	10	35	62.5
Inside page lead stories	5	7	4	16	28.5
Back page stories	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**18**	**23**	**15**	**56**	**100**

Source: Researcher's content analysis 2026

Table three shows that stories on the coverage of World Food Safety Day as covered by the select newspapers did not get prominent coverage from the newspapers. Only 5 out of the 56 news stories covered in the period under study had the privilege of being placed on the front pages of the newspapers, with *Daily Trust* leading the placement with 3 items. The back pages of the three newspapers had no story on World Food Safety Day for the 6 months being examined. The implication of this is simple. The newspapers in Nigeria did not give prominence to the Nigerian media consumers about World Food Safety Day. Without creating robust attention on World Food Safety Day, the people in Nigeria wouldn't know about it and the importance of the themes adopted each year.

Table 5: What is the dominant purpose of coverage of World Food Safety Day among the select newspapers under study

Dominant purpose	***Vanguard***	***Daily trust***	***This-Day***	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Entertainment purpose	3	1	2	6	10.7
Information purpose	7	12	6	25	44.6
Education purpose	2	2	3	7	12.5
Advisory purpose	4	7	3	14	25
Edutainment purpose	2	1	1	4	7.1
Total	**18**	**23**	**15**	**56**	**100**

Source: Researcher's content analysis 2026

This table exposed the readers to the purpose of coverage of World Food Safety Day by the newspapers. From the data presented, the information and advisory function dominated the purpose of coverage, with little on the purpose. This data implies that beyond passing information on the day and activities that took place, the media did not take further steps to educate the people on the dangers of unsafe food production, distribution and consumption.

Table 6: The dominant media genre used in the coverage of the World Food Safety Day by the select newspapers

Media genre used	***Vanguard***	***Daily trust***	***This-Day***	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Straight news	11	14	13	38	67.8
Feature stories	2	4	0	6	10.7
Interviews	4	2	2	8	14.2
Editorials	0	0	0	0	0
Advertorials	0	1	0	1	1.7
Others	0	1	0	1	1.7
Total	18	23	15	56	100

Source: Researcher's content analysis 2026

The above table shows that the dominant media genre used in the coverage of World Food Safety Day is straight news reports. The table revealed that no single editorial was published by the three newspapers under investigation for a period of six years, which the study covered. The heavy use of straight news reports in the coverage of this important global day is not enough for the education that such a day requires from the media. The use of feature stories would have provided the details that could have supplied the people the information more deeply to the masses.

Discussion of findings

On the first research question that investigated the frequency of coverage of World Food Safety Day, it was found that the select newspapers' coverage of the issue does not reflect the important that food safety deserves to influence food cultural behaviours expected of the people. According to the data in table one which represented the total average number of main news items published by the select newspapers, it was discovered that of the total of 147,600 main stories published by the select newspapers during the period understudy, only 56 items accounting for 0.109% percent were on the events of the world food safety day . Further, on the number of stories on World Food Safety Day per newspaper edition, 64.2% of the stories published in the newspapers were 1 story per newspaper and the remaining inches in length, leaving 35.7% as two stories per newspaper edition. No newspaper covered up to three stories on World Food Safety Day from the three newspapers under study in the whole of six months in six years.

The implication of this is that the newspapers never gave adequate coverage to World Food Safety Day despite the enormous opportunity provided by the United Nations for such coverage on June 7th every year. This means that information on the danger of foodborne disease and unsafe food consumption is grossly in short supply to the people who need the information to safeguard themselves. Refusing to cover or playing down the events of World Food Safety Day under media coverage sustains ignorance among the people and exposes them to the danger that can claim lives and hurt the economies of nations. Not allowing the people to be part of the World Food Safety Day and its related activities is a gross violation of the social responsibility functions of the press under the provision of the social responsibility theory (Uzochukwu & Ikegbunam, 2022). The act of paying deaf attention to the events of World Food Safety Day is against the provision of the social responsibility theory, which, according to Ikegbunam and Agudosy (2020), places the onus on the media to engage in actions that can promote humanitarian need satisfaction by issuing reports that benefit the general interest and the greatest number of people. It is important at this point to state that with every slight mistake, contaminated food is eaten by consumers without knowing and careless food handling leads to several kinds of health risks that can claim the lives of people. Publishing only 56 stories in six months by these newspapers can be considered as negligence of the people's food safety and health needs by the media, which is the only source of information for the people on issues of this nature.

Considering the second research question, which was set to the prominence given to the coverage of World Food Safety Day, this study found that not only were the greater percentage of the publications buried inside the pages, but stories on World Food Safety Day were never reported in the back pages of any of the three newspapers. Only five items were published on the front pages of the select newspapers. Data from table two shows that front- and back-page stories were only 5 items, which were published on the front page out of the 56 items published within the period under study. This is never enough to show for the agenda-setting function of the press. Not publishing stories on the occasion of the word food safety day in the front page and other focal parts of the newspapers erodes the social responsibility and agenda-setting function of the press, which places the responsibility on the media to ensure that the people's health information needs and safety are at all times satisfied through timely and repeated coverage of events concerning human health and safety. The inability of the Nigerian press to use the World Food Safety Day as an ample opportunity to disseminate information and educate the masses on the need for safe food consumption does not

encourage the humanitarian angle of the journalism practice. This finding corroborates that of Uzochukwu and Ikegbunam (2022), where it was found that the media hardly pay attention to health-related global events in Nigeria. This finding also agrees with Raji (2019), where it was found that the Nigerian media did not prominently report the International Day of the Girl Child. Nwabueze (2011, p. 113) reiterated the importance of focal points of newspapers in the coverage of events. The scholar argued that the focal point is an important part of the newspapers where readership of content is mainly attracted to the news organisation. It is this public attraction that determines the publicity that an event enjoys and as well command the influence such content exerts on the public which in turn translates into public and policy agendas. In covering their reports on the World Safety Day events inside the pages, the media murdered the massive attention it could have given to this event to help in educating the masses on how to stay away from unsafe food consumption for their health. Moreover, the finding equally lends credence to the position of the proponents of the agenda-setting theory, which, according to Miller (2002), cited in Agudosy, Ikegbunam and Obiakor (2018) posits that the media lead the public in assigning relative importance to various public issues by positioning them in focal points for the public to see the level of importance it commands in the media. The weak use of focal points in the coverage of World Food Safety Day makes the date less a matter of public concern among Nigerians. This poses a danger to the people's safe food behaviours and can be considered a threat to lives.

The third research was set to find out the major purpose of coverage of World Food Safety Day by the selected newspapers. In this regard, the researchers categorised the contents into information, educational, advisory, edutainment and entertainment purposes (See Table 5). On this research question, it was found that the information purpose dominated the media purpose of coverage of World Food Safety Day in the selected newspapers. Supplying information without deep-felt education on the dangers of unsafe food consumption does not represent the expectation of the public from the media. As well, it is not in line with the social responsibility theory, which makes the media responsible for the humanitarian interest. It is in the interest of the greatest number of people in the country to have access to the required information and knowledge concerning food safety for their lives. Paying less attention to the education of the masses on the dangers of foodborne disease and the consumption of contaminated food is not right for the media as a profession.

The fourth research question sought to find out the dominant media genre used in the media for the coverage of World Food Safety Day, finding demonstrated that straight news reports dominated the media genre used by the three newspapers. This finding agrees with other scholars Ezegwu, *et al*, (2023); Agudosy *et al*, (2018), who have considered the media genre of coverage of different issues in the country. According to the above studies, newspaper coverage of issues has been dominated by straight news reports. Using straight news reports in the coverage of issues reduces the length of coverage as straight news hardly provides the news behind the news. The finding lends credence to Nwodu's (2007) study on the vulture reporting hypothesis, which sees the mass media as the vulture that rushes the dead body at the point of death without further attention to revisit for picking the bones afterwards. Picking the bones in coverage of World Food Safety Day will expose people to the right information and education that is needed for them to stay safe from unsafe food consumption. This can best be achieved using feature stories and interviews of expert sources who have the expert knowledge about the subject matter. According to the data in Table 6, feature stories and interviews were in short supply from the newspapers' coverage of World Food Safety Day.

Conclusion

Drawing from the data generated from the newspapers' coverage of World Food Safety Day, the researchers concluded that the newspapers failed in their social responsibility and agenda-setting roles for the people and the profession. They failed to give World Food Safety Day the attention and coverage that it deserved in respect to the health state of the nation and the citizens therein. The frequency of coverage, placement of the stories, purpose of coverage and genre used were not in

favour of the humanitarian function of the media. In this regard, the media failed in responding to public interest and humanity as required by the social responsibility theory of the press. This study concludes that much is required for food safety attitude change from the media. The report so far given to the world food safety day as presented in this study is very minimal to command public attention to the safety of food; such coverage is hereby frowned at.

Recommendations

Relying on the research findings from this study, the researchers recommended as follows:

1. That the media should intensify further efforts towards covering events and themes of World Food Safety Days. That way, the people will know more about the dangers of consuming unsafe food and possibly adopt a safe food consumption culture.
2. The Government of Nigeria, through the Federal Ministry of Health, should make this World Food Safety Day an important date by organising functions in memory of the date every year. Since the press, like politicians, this action will draw journalists into issuing reports on the events of this day each year.
3. Humanitarian organisations and NGOs should organise symposiums, seminars and trainings to educate the people on the need for safe food production, distribution and consumption. This will help in reawakening the consciousness of the people to this important life-threatening danger.
4. Implementation of food safety policies should be made a priority in Nigeria. This will help the food handlers in Nigeria to see the dangers of their careless attitude towards food. Again, arresting and charging unhygienic food handlers and dealers will draw media attention to educate the people on the need for food safety attitudes.
5. Future scholars should conduct a comparative study of newspapers in Nigeria and other countries to know whether there is a variation in coverage of World Food Safety Day in the different countries.

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