

Conceptual Functions in Framing Sociological Consequences of Ecological Disasters in Selected Media Stations

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Abstract: Ecological disasters are frequent occurrences that attract newsworthiness in many parts of the world. The way disasters affect communal life is at the centre of news framing, which serves as a call for intervention. This study examined the discourse strategies of the sociological effects of disasters in Four news reports purposively selected from four news reports from Cable News Network (CNN), Columbia Broadcasting system (CBS), Channels' Television (TVC) and Television Continental (TVC) because of the status and significant presence of these media outlets on YouTube where the news reports were downloaded. The news reports were transcribed to texts, and qualitatively analysed, using Lesley Jeffries' Critical Stylistics (CS) and Michael Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Media strategies for importuning government's response to disasters include communal plighting, using intensifiers and exaggerations; representing sociological setbacks and devastations; and signifying disaster contiguity or concomitance, showing the connection between disasters and other forms of consequences. Media blends the conceptual functions of naming, describing, enumerating, exemplifying, prioritising and representing action, with transitivity and mood to mediate the need to response to disasters in communal spaces to enable sustainable development.

Keywords: Disaster reporting, Sustainable development, News framing, Disaster management strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Flooding is a recurrent problem that is presently attracting global interest; first, because of its link to the effects of climate change, which, side by side with global politics, tops the list of concerns. Second, the interest it garners is traced to the fact that it ranks among the greatest causes of large scales disasters, especially in many Nigerian communities. Dated back to the year 2012, when the effects of flooding began to draw massive attention in Nigeria, every year, communities have continued to face massive indices of flooding and disasters, leading to loss of life, destruction of properties and wide-scale displacements, poverty and health concerns (Suffiyan, 2014; Brata, 2017). Between 2019 and 2024, at least 31 states consistently experienced flood disasters, with reported estimated consequences of 220 deaths and more than 7million displaced persons according to statistics presented by Flood List (2024). These consequences have dominated headlines of both mainstream and alternative media platforms who also, in the reports of disasters, give the communities different shades of representations. Significant questions draw attention to this research. First, how are disasters in communities framed by the media; what shades of representations about communities are evinced, particularly in the reports of mainstream media outlets?

Similarly, the continuous increase in the magnitude and consequences of disasters globally, and particularly in Nigeria has begun to trigger questions about communal and government's

responsibilities or adopted management strategies. However, media reportage of disasters are management strategies in their own rights. The argument reinforced is that the media occupies a critical place in societies, especially because of its influence in shaping communities' and people's perspectives and belief systems, using items it wants the people to consume from the news or what it thinks the people want to hear. In another perspective, news is important to everyday life in different ways, because of the connection it establishes between people and the society or world around them. In the generic sense, the broader functions of the media include, to inform, identify and consolidate on community issues, start public conversations, influence social and political reforms (Shudson, 2003), and in the case of disasters, mobilise response or reaction, which has not been vastly articulated in the literature. The question here is, 'what informs the framing of news about local communities in international and Nigerian media? To put it differently, to what end are the news reports of disasters in mainstream media?

There is a bifurcated relationship between disaster reportage and language, which is termed as framing. Haugen (1972) negotiates this in terms of the universal function of language, which transcends beyond both psychological and social orientations. Language reflects and engages the mind, which is indicative of the cognitive ways of interacting with nature and representing the biodiversity (including sociological spaces) of

language use. One of the most significant things about language is that it is socially and mutually shared. The question then arises, do the societies that constitutes as victims of disasters share the same mindset of the representations – framing of the media of their social spaces? By responding to this question, this study aims to interrogate communication strategies of the communal state(s) before, during and after flood disasters to serve as an urgent call for appropriate responses to disasters in communities. Studies on disaster responses (Schryen and Wex, 2014; Alexander, 2016) have dwelled on risk reduction, economic and biodiversity recovery, identifying the roles of local communities, government and agencies. Kniveton *et al.*, (2013) and Covaciu (2018) focused on sociological approach to disaster management comparatively engaged global models, while Studies such as Agbonkhese, *et al.*, (2014), Ojikpong *et al.*, (2016), Oruonye *et al.*, (2017) and Mfon, *et al.*, (2022) focused on the local context. Although in the local context, the studies dwelled on management of flooding but emphasis on news reports was significantly undermined. Thus, the above studies are yet to amplify the representation of the state of communal existence in disaster situations, which this study focuses on, with a view to underscoring the discourse and pragmatic ways sociological spaces in Nigeria are framed by its media during flood disasters.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Goffman (1974: 21) opines that framing is part of any ‘western society’ that appears in different forms. In other words, it is not only pervasive in every stratum of human relationships and discourses but also reflects in the way media shapes the perception of members of a sociocultural space reflect or represent events and action. Also, framing is the conditioning of people’s minds to reflect or influence how they feel or the notion/opinion they have of situations. In a more particular sense, framing constitutes the ‘frameworks or schemata of interpretation’ (Goffman, 1974:22). The concept of framing sparks different questions as to what kind of ‘interpretation exists; are they applicable to ‘primary levels of representation’, that is, the ‘original interpretations,’ or are they mediated, pointing to the fact that framing may involve distortion, especially in genres like news reports (Galtung and Ruge, 1965). Degani (2015) associates framing to be about social and political agents and events. In order words, what attracts framing or even newsworthiness for that matter is

attributed to either social-political class or agents and or the sociological spaces they operate. This implies that events are weighed and then framed, following several indices, including the ideological standpoints of the socio-political agents involved and what the media, which is responsible for framing, want the audience to hear and share, by way of reading the significations (framing).

Eisenstein (2011) opines that both social framing and the media have a strong influence on people and their socialisation process. According to Blanchot (1995) and Dagani (2015), in relation to disaster, which is the signification of natural/artificial phenomenon, framing may be undirected, unoriented, unanimated, unguided, or purely physical, paying more attention to consequences and agencies’ responsibilities. D’Angelo and Kuypers (2010) consider framing to be the interphase between politics and journalism, that is, the use of the latter by the former to communicate their preferred intentions to the audience. What they are saying here is that the media itself can be a manipulative source of information, which can serve political purposes (D’Angelo and Kuypers, 2010). Galtung and Ruge (1965) refers to this as ‘distortion’ and ‘replication,’ submitting that these processes greatly affect what mainstream media frame as news to the audience. In another perspective, media framing entails the representation of events or issues or topics in a way that enhances palatability, interest, and mostly, audience reception and credibility.

News framing is affected by sources, which the media cite to validate information or news reportage; they include epistemic claims, which may include their own superimposed frames (Kuypers, 2006), reinforced by special commentators, specialists and assessors. This is originally what is described as media framing (Carragee, and Roefs, 2004; Reese, 2001; Scheufele, 2004; 2000; Wicks, 2005) or news framing (D’Angelo, 2002; D’Angelo and Kuyper, 2010). D’Angelo and Kuyper (2010) valourise news to be the most prominent form of framing, because it is the most fertile communication site where framing dominantly works. Although news framing frequently functions within the ambits of political communication, there is no doubt that, in recent times and from recent events, it has extended to other elusive areas, including health campaigns, sports, religion, and, in relation to this study, disaster signification, which inform the adoption of news framing as a theory of media

effects (D'Angelo and Kuypers, 2010; Scheufele, 1999), a concept, an approach (Pan and Kosicki, 1993; McLeod and Detenber, 1999), a perspective (Kuypers, 2005), an analytical technique (Endres, 2004), a paradigm (Entman, 1993), and a multi-paradigmatic research programme (D'Angelo, 2002).

Theoretical framework

This study adopts two theories as framework, namely Lesley Jeffries' Critical Stylistics (CS) and principles of Michael Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). These theories determine how meanings around disaster representations are shaped. CS is linked to three broad approaches in applied linguistics. These are: linguistic stylistics, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which are also the basis for application of the CS framework (John, 2018; 2020; 2022). In fact, it was informed by the works of proponents of these fields, among which are Fowler et. al (1979), Simpson (1993), Fairclough (1989), Fowler (1991) and Halliday (1985). Alaghbary (2013:137) puts it that CS is primarily concerned with text and talk, that is, discourses in different forms, ranging from newspaper, corporate, political, and legal documents to instances of conventional dialogues. The CS framework annexes 'how texts may influence the ideological outlook of their recipients' (Jeffries, 2010: 6). This implies one way or the other, that issues of ideology, whether subtle, manipulative, radical, among others, are projected or threaded using linguistic resources and structures that are coopted from corpus, cognitive linguistics, pragmatics and SFL. The theory offers analytical tools to uncover every index of ideology in texts.

CS is a methodological approach grounded in critical linguistics. In this case, it shows the relationship between ideology and linguistic choices. Alaghbary (2013) says that it is a critical (an overwhelming) approach that begins with lexical alternatives; it elaborates, covering both structural and meaning-making resources (John, 2022); it culminates with the construction of the conceptual world (Jeffries, 2010; Olaoluwoye, 2015). The process of meaning is all-encompassing, and is composed of a hierarchical structure of lexical, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic resources. CS attributes special functions to the contextual and pragmatic forces that influence textual choices, and the implicit ideologies that they represent. Olaoluwoye (2015: 89) posits that CS shows the inherent power of

texts in constructing and representing the world around us, including ecological disaster situations. There are established links between and among words, phrases, clauses or discourses used in making meaning and subsequently, texturing the world. Wodak (2009: 3) links CS to CDA in three (3) conceptual dimensions, the concept of power, the concept of history and the concept of ideology'. Jeffries (2007, 2010) advances rhetorical strategies or conceptual tools that are used by speakers to project ideological meaning or even conceal them in texts. Jeffries (2007: 29) opines that these strategies are effectively utilised to persuade readers to have certain notions of the world.

John, Oyin-Adejobi and Olatunji (2022) argue that the stylistic or conceptual – rhetorical strategies formalised in CS are reoccurring conventions that foreground identity and ideology in diverse kinds of texts. These strategies are also the main functions that texts have in representing events or indices in social life. From the above, it is obvious that these principles apply to signs – the linguistic and non-linguistic resources of language and their uses. These are enshrined as conceptual-textual functions (CTFs) (Jeffries, 2007, 2010). These CTFs constitute the linguistic, situational, and cognitive contextual resources, which are at the heart of disaster significations. They interface with the principles in systemic functional linguistics. For instance, the conceptual-textual functions of naming, and prioritising are related to the mechanism of naming, framing and signifying ideology or identity, using features of indexicality, nominalisation processes, alternative nouns, reference pronouns, subordinators, transformation, transitivity processes and information structure, which are the domains of SFL. The process of representing time, space and actions draws dominantly from Dirven and Verspoor's (2004) indexicality and iconicity, among others. Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is grounded in how human beings use language in actual communicative situations 'to construe reality and enact social relationships' (Halliday, 2005: 3). According to Webster (2009: 2), SFL evolved from a simple 'laundry card grammar' to a theory of choice for studying the description of grammatical processes rather than mere theorising (Halliday, 2002, Thompson and Walsham, 2004, Bloor and Bloor, 2004, Eggins, 2004, Martin, Matthiessen and Painter, 2010). For instance, Halliday states that it is not about theorising, but about new descriptions (Halliday, 2005: 64); this

will enable language users and researchers to use language more effectively.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed qualitative design. Data entails eight (8) news reports, purposively selected from four (4) local and international stations, namely, Channels television (CHNLSTV), Television Continental (TVC), Cable News Network (CNN) and Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS). These were selected for their popularity and frequency of news broadcast of

disasters in communities. The news reports were downloaded from the YouTube pages of the selected mainstream media. They were transcribed into textual forms and subjected to qualitative – discourse analysis, using the top-down analytical approach. The conceptual textual functions of (CS) and the principles of transitivity and mood in the SFL framework were used to engage the data. The model employed for analysing the data is presented in figure 3.1.

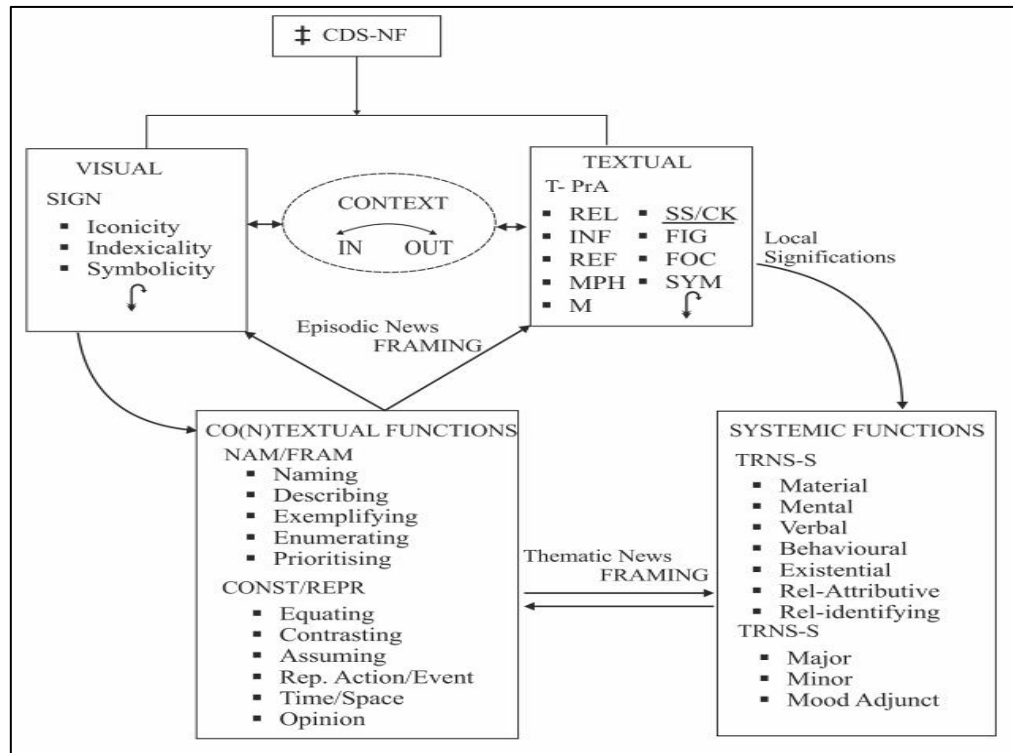


Fig. 3.1: Critical (discourse) Stylistics of news framing (John, 2023:105)

Representing socio-communal devastations

Disasters affect societies and regions, not just the people. Although there is a fundamental relationship between people and society because it is people that make up societies. However, society is treated in isolation from people, when referring to facilities that make up societies. The analysis focuses on the representations of the decrepit states of societies during and after, by the media, to serve as a cry for help, that is, the need to take urgent action to preserve sociological spaces from destruction or total obliteration.

Representing communal plights

In communal plighting, significations are focused on the impact of disasters on indigenous communities and, by extension, the individuals who are part of that biodiversity. This means that the community, especially in the local sense, exists

as a communal entity. This means, also, that the consequences of disaster are not only felt by individuals, though they are the only ones with voice to cry out, but also by the biodiversity of sociological milieus. Ecological disasters have communal effects; in other words, they do not discriminate between and among social spaces or neighbourhoods. When there is disasters, the whole community, and the communal existence of the entire people, in general, will be affected.

Excerpts

➤ People are living in shanties basically, they will need to be resettled somehow but within the interim we will first have to ensure that those of them who are here have a means of livelihood in terms of food, adequate water hopefully good medical attention (REP-FLD/CHNLSTV)

- The flooding has affected 64 communities so far... (REP-FLD/CHNLSTV)

St Augustine, Florida devastating flooding, you can see how strong the winds are and the rain, one water's actually coming over the storm wall there and we're not even on the beach... (REP-HUR/CBS)

The samples above show the plight of communities and communal existence. In excerpt 1, the report indicates first the composition of society, using the behavioural process in an active manner. The common noun 'people', names the fact that communities are made up of people; and they are, when put in the material process, the beneficiary of every consequence that emanates from disasters, directly and indirectly. The condition of communities is signified in the same clause as the goal, which is laced with the behavior, although this is in the figurative sense. 'Shanties' is literally onomatopoeic; and it describes a very horrible and pitiable condition, in which the community has been thrown into by disasters. The inference that the community's condition is plighted is represented with the inclusive – non jussive imperative clauses in the latter part of the excerpt. The need to provide 'means of livelihood' also gives the inference that there is poor livelihood, and in the same manner, the need to provide food and water gives the direct inference that these amenities are absent. This explicates the need to respond quickly to improve the situation of the people. Another reason to plight communal conditions is that interventions promised are temporary, as described by the lexis 'interim', in the adverbial, to create a timeline, that is a temporal way of reacting. There is the need to foster a more permanent solution to remedy people's livelihood. The implementation of a temporary solution means that the moment the solution stops, the community will find themselves in the same spot.

In excerpt 2, the conceptual-textual functions of enumerating and emphasising are used to reflect community plight. This sample particularly focuses on the communities, as the deictic centre. The mood adjunct 'so far', which is the representation of time, is a temporal index contrasting the present and the future the conditions. Since the present disaster is still lingering, the consequences on communal existence will continue to increase. In example 3, the conceptual-textual functions of naming and describing is used to profile or index the impact of

disaster on 'St Augustine', which is situated in Florida. The broader essence is to profile/foreground 'Florida' as a disaster-prone region. The impact of disaster is described, using the adjective 'devastating', and this is referenced to what the community people can physically 'see'. The essence of representing this action is to show credibility of the report, to mobilise for swift response. There is a tendency for people to consciously disbelieve media reports, on the one hand, and to alter the significations, on the other hand, which are descriptive of American indigenous communities.

Representing sociological setbacks

Disasters have sociological effects that, in most cases, cause severe constraints. Certain sociological amenities, which make life comfortable for the community or people, are affected. Largely, significations, in news reports, show how grossly the absence or fault in sociological amenities are felt by people in the community.

Excerpts

- But the word we have been hearing really across the region, from officials is that they are dealing with down... power lines, that's of course, problematic, trying to assess the damage to structures.
- There are a lot of people that will need to be located and reached... CNN have been trying to reach people on the North coast, which was the most battled area that the storm affected and it's impossible to reach the landlines there (PUB-HUR/CNN)
- Hundreds of thousands of people across Georgia, waking up to see the total devastation. You see this school right there, completely destroyed PUB HUR/CNN)

In excerpt 4, the sociological effect of hurricane disasters is portrayed. The milieu is marked, using the conceptual functions of naming and describing. The society here is named, using the inferential nominal 'region', to give it a vast and extensive scope. The inference is that the effect covers large sociological spaces. This is also referenced, using another naming device, in this case, the spatial location, North coast. The conceptual-textual function of emphasising is employed to foreground the impact of the sociological effects that are represented in the text, using semiotic icons. The adjective 'problematic' is used to foreground the conditions of life in the sociological space. This both anaphoric and cataphoric reference,

respectively, in the excerpt. One of the most familiar sociological effects of hurricane, which is propelled by turbulent wind, is vandilisation of 'powerline', and 'landlines', which are significant compositions of the biodiversity that inform existence. These two have concomitant relationships as regards the ability to connect with victims, that is, those who are in desperate need of rescue, as seen in the positive declarative clause, which is also in the mental process. The senser, 'need', has a strong modality of responsibility, rather than volition.

The textual – syntactic strategy of nominalisation is employed in excerpt 5 to reflect the plight of the sociological space. The numerical adjective 'hundreds of thousands,' is indexical to the number of victims that suffered from the reported disaster. The sociological consequence of disasters is signified, using the nominal 'total devastation', which is modified by an intensifier adjective. There is the conceptual-textual function of representing place to support the indexed location, which is named as 'across Georgia'. This also gives the inference that the location is quite populated, and with the poor state of facilities, caused by disaster, the sociological space has been reduced, in outlook and stature. Disasters are recipes for underdevelopment of locations. The unavailability of the conceptually enumerated and exemplified factors, powerlines, landlines and schools, in sociological spaces, is synonymous with underdevelopment. Even when they exist, it makes no sense that they cannot be maintained because of disasters, which is a significant call for action. The same effect is generated in any sociological or geographical space that experience disasters.

Representing disaster contiguity

Disasters, in some cases, are mutually connected to other forms of disasters or consequences, which makes it necessary to respond fast. In another sense, the effects of disaster are contiguous and contagious, that is, they transcend from one community to the other. In fact, some news reports profile some regions or communities with some kinds of disasters. In some other cases, it is easy to predict that similar or other forms of disasters may happen in communities near where they are already happening.

Representing, profiling and tagging communities

Regions or communities where disasters happen frequently are signified, tagged or conceptualised

within news framing analysis, as dark (disaster-prone) regions. A precise example is local – rural communities, who are framed to have contiguous disasters as poverty, frail facilities, among others that cause, attract, or even worsen the effect of natural disasters.

Excerpts

- It should be expected in Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta, Ondo and Lagos state. When the sea rise (Sic), what are we to expect and so that's why so much should be done by our people. The Niger, the Benue, the Sokoto River, Anambra, Imo, Cross River, Osun Southwest and several other sub basins of the country would be affected... (REP-FLD/CHNLSTV)
- some states in Nigeria with coastal nature, suffer losses when the rain come in torrents. Kastina State, in the North-west region in Nigeria... is not an exception (REP-FLD/CHNLSTV).

Disaster-prone arear tagging is indirectly done in the cause of predicting and warning against disasters. In most cases, this is done by disaster management agencies, and when experts are interviewed by news outlets, so that information about disasters can be referred, directly, to those who are acclaimed professionals. The media here serve as the channel for circulating such information, emphasising the urgent need to act. This is the case in excerpt 6 where the conceptual functions of naming, enumerating, and representing action are employed to represent the plights of states. Implicitly, this serves as the conceptual function of equating, because it is patterned to follow templates in international media. The figurative strategy of hyponym is used. This entails naming states in two categories or in two regions; the first is the South, enumerating 'Bayelsa', 'Rivers', 'Ondo' 'Anambra', 'Imo', 'Cross River' 'Osun' and 'Lagos'. The second is the North, enumerating 'Niger', 'Benue' and 'Sokoto'. What the agency has done here is generalising, rather than particularising, showing the concomitance of disasters in 11 out of 36 states of Nigeria, which calls for concern. The other states not listed are not exempted from flood-related disasters. The media here employed compositional profiling, looking at the topography and coaster nature of the listed states, in making their predictions. The subjunctive mood, in the mental process of expecting is utilized in the excerpt to indicate the need to respond because of

the expectation that disaster is imminent if nothing is done.

Another way to determine disaster-prone regions is by measuring the effect or consequences of precedent or imminent disasters. In some cases, media representations of disasters give the inference that, given that there is no accurate and reliable means to determine the vulnerability of regions, only the magnitude of occurrence and the effects on the people make authorities know about the communities, and be able to determine if such a community is disaster-prone. This accounts for why in most cases they government do not act until disasters occur, and it is already too late to mitigate the consequences. For instance, in excerpt 7, the conceptual function of representing action is employed to show that the management agency does not have a precise knowledge of the vulnerable states in the named places in 'Nigeria', until when there is flooding, which is represented by the figurative expression (personification), 'when the rain come in torrents.' The signification here is fossilised; the rain is an infinite and inanimate entity that cannot be enumerated in terms of figures. The significations of dark region in the excerpt include the adjectives 'coaster', and torrents. These are employed as naming and describing features. The word coaster is inherently signifying a locale that is always experiencing flooding. Knowledge of these areas should trigger urgent action to control the effect of flooding when it begins to rain.

Representing disaster concomitance

This section is centred on the concomitance of disaster and their intensity. Some forms of disasters are connected to other forms of disasters. Disasters are also indexed to various significations of consequences that are even more grievous than ecological disasters.

Excerpts

- The heaviest rain of course that storm surge and a tornado watch that includes Charleston and savanna keeping in mind that tornado is always a possibility with hurricane and it will be until midnight tonight... (REP-HUR/CBS)
- All the major rivers... through which water flows from the River Niger and Benue to the Atlantic pass Bayelsa State. 70% of our communities are under water ... all the water from Lokoja, from Niger will end up here. And so, many more people will be affected... (REP-FLD/TVC)

- the kinds of temperature we're seeing here and we're talking about temperatures well into 150 to 200 'right' (REP-VOL/CBS)

The connection between 'hurricane' and some after-effects is linguistically mapped, using the conceptual functions of enumerating, naming, and representing action and the behavioural process. The effects named include hydraulic activities such as, 'rain', which is described and prioritised, using the superlative adjective, 'heaviest', and the alliterative – figurative term, 'storm surge'. Rain is concomitant to wind disaster, indexed by naming, that is 'tornado', which then sequences to heavy flooding. The behavioural process, which has the epistemic modality of 'possibility' is used in the representation of a consistent pattern of action. The implication is that anytime there is hurricane, there is bound to be 'tornado', 'storm surge' and rainfall, which always account for massive flooding of communities. In excerpt 9, the connection between volcanic eruption and intense heat, that is, rising 'temperature' is signified referentially, using mental and verbal processes. The senser, which is the reporter, in this case, uses the inclusive first-person pronoun, 'we', as an index for all the people in the area, including the victims. 'Seeing' and 'talking', as represented in the excerpt, are fossilised as actions relating to human feeling in that context; temperature, which is the verbiage, cannot be seen, but felt or demonstrated by either the use of scientific instruments or by the heat it generates as the senser. The verbiage 'temperature' is presented using the conceptual function of enumerating and prioritising, using figures, '150 to 200 degrees', giving the inference that the situation is both terrible and unbearable, needing urgent intervention or response.

In excerpt 10, the focus is on how disasters, in some regions, can affect other regions, because of interconnectivity or proximity to each other. For instance, the report is about flooding in Bayelsa State, but it is blamed on Niger and Benue States respectively, which are conceptually named. This further entails that Bayelsa collects water from the two states. Implicitly, there is the conceptual function of describing and representing action; if there is flooding in Niger and Benue or if the rivers in 'Niger' and 'Lokoja' overflow their banks, there will be flooding and disasters in Bayelsa. These three states are bound to mutually suffer the same consequences, which points to why something must be done to prevent flooding that will lead to disasters in these places. The

conceptual function of equating is employed to index the three regions as contiguous disaster-prone regions. The intensity of disaster is enumerated; revealing, not only the plight of the communities involved, but also the fact that they are connected as dark regions, vulnerable to disasters any time one is affected,

Excerpts

- Bayelsa state has been experiencing heavy downpour leading to massive flooding of streets and homes. The flood is so severe that businesses have been suspended and schools are unable to open... (REP-FLD/CHNLSTV)
- We have stagnant water. So, we will have mosquitoes flourishing. And if mosquitoes flourish, what would happen? We'll have people, in the long-term having malaria, and other health challenges... (REP-FLD/CHNLSTV)
- In west-link, Louisiana, thick toxic smoke is still bellowing from a plant that makes pool chemicals. After the ferocious storm set up a chloric fire there. (REP-HUR/CBS)

The excerpts in 11-13 index the interconnection of disaster with economic, social and health related problems. In excerpt 11, the effect of flooding is one-to-one to the closure of economic activities such as 'businesses', and social activities, most especially 'schools.' The conceptual-textual functions of emphasising and prioritising are evident in the use of the adjective 'severe'. This signifies the intensity of the flood that has crippled every social and economic activity. Hyponymy is used as a figurative strategy to foreground the location of businesses and schools that are affected. The businesses and schools are exemplified to be located in 'streets' corners and 'homes.' There is iconicity of sequential distance, which is also used to emphasise the activities or processes involved in the disaster. It begins with 'massive' rainfall, that is 'downpour', then there is 'flooding', which is, of course, caused by the massive rain; then it becomes unbearable for the people, who are then forced to close all activities momentarily. This is signified by the action – verb, 'suspended'. The reporter evokes pity, inferentially, by referencing the children. The nominal 'school' symbolises the effect of the flood on posterity. The future of the state is the education of its children, which has been destabilised momentarily.

The consequence of disaster can be health related as seen in excerpt 12. This is also marked by the representation of opinion, using the iconicity of distance. The goal, in the material process, 'stagnant water', marked by inference, is caused by flood, which is also the resultant effect of torrential rainfall. The textual function of representing action is employed subsequently to connect 'stagnant water' to the existence of Mosquitoes. Thus, there is an indexical relation – relevance established in the text. The speaker indexes the presence of mosquitoes to its consequence, which is Malaria, using figurative strategies like rhetorical question, in hypotaxis relation. The inference, in the submission, is that flood disasters can cause malaria, which makes it worthy of the right, and quick attention. In excerpt 13, another level of health disaster is presented, in this case, indexed to hurricane, which is signified or directly entailed, using the temporal 'after'. This also marks sequential order, giving the inference that the explosion of 'chemical plant' is due to the 'ferocious 'storm', which is the conceptual function of prioritizing. In part, it is also describing the hurricane events. In terms of profiling, it brings a turbulent storm that destroys health installations, that could cause outbreaks of illness or epidemic. The conceptual-textual function of naming is used to signify the spatial location, that is 'Louisiana', while registers and jargons belonging to the scientific and health fields, such as 'toxic,' plant,' 'chemicals' and 'chloric fire' and used to frame the relative contiguous and concomitant effects of hurricanes and disasters with health challenges.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

This study has established that disasters affect biodiversity adversely, making it an indispensable factor that attracts newsworthiness. When disasters happen, they cause great destruction to society, so much so that it affects communal existence. The findings, to this effect, have advanced the notions of Schryen and Wex (2014), Alexander (2016), Oruonye et al (2017) and (Mfon et al (2022) that disasters have economic and humanitarian consequences. They transcend to social, infrastructural and communal consequences. Communities exist as communal entities, indicating that there is a bidirectional link between the people and their biodiversity. Whatever affects one affects the entire community, which makes the outcry for help, in times of disasters, significant. the plighting, significations are focused on the

impact of disasters on indigenous communities and, by extension, the individuals who are part of that biodiversity. For news agencies to attract the necessary attention, they channel the focus of the news about disasters to consequences on social and communal life of people. This is also a strategy used to get people engaged in the story, since it now concerns them.

First, the media employs 'plighting' strategies, which often involve naming, picking from the Jeffries' (2007, 2010) framework. Whenever the media names persons, disasters and the communities they occur, they use activation, fronting the names as agents. The material and behavioural transitivity processes (Halliday, 1985) are used to directly reflect the conditions of these agents, before, during and after the disasters. They employ jussive mood systems to project inferences that show the magnitude of disasters and the extent to which it has affected people's 'livelihood'. There is also the use of conceptual functions like enumerating, exemplifying and emphasizing, used to foreground the sequences of consequences of disasters on the community, which are reflected as the deictic centre each time there is devastation on the community. Without the community, there will not be any nation; in the same way, people cannot afford to lose their heritage and livelihood at the same time, which is why urgent actions are being importuned against disasters.

In representing the plights of communities, the media creates a disparity between the actual communal response and imagined communal. The actual communal responses, which have dominated the literature (Kniveton, *et al.*, 2013, Covaciu, 2018) are spasmodic, that is, temporary or momentary. This is what plays out in most disaster response situations. Actions taken do not have long-time benefit on the communities; thus, disasters keep reoccurring and more consequences are experienced. The media reports provide inferences to the need to deploy long-time response strategies, or even the need to act preemptively to communal issues before disasters occur. These actions imagined and mostly, hardly deployed in disaster situations, especially in the third-world context such as communal spaces Nigeria.

The news reports also deployed representations of sociological setbacks. The argument here is that disasters are sociologically consequential; they damage sociological amenities, which, on the one hand, make life comfortable for people in the

community, and on the other hand, take the communities and the government back to ground zero in the quest to ensure sustainable development. The findings accentuate further what was reported in Flood List (2024), that disasters destroy properties and social amenities such as powerlines, roads, phone lines, among others. These things put communal existence in jeopardy. The media also seize the opportunity to make social facility demands, laying emphasis on missing amenities that have bearing to disaster management. News reports about disasters or even ecological circumstances profile communities as dark or disaster-prone regions. This is done to draw attention to the need to respond fast either before disasters happen or their consequences degenerate. Nominalisation and numerical and intensifier (superlative) adjectives as well as epithets from Halliday's (1985) SFL framework are used to profile the magnitude of disasters such as 'total devastation', in sociological spaces.

The media also represents the connectedness of disasters between and among sociological spaces. The implications of this is that some communities are connected geographically, and because of territorial connection among places, the effect of disasters may be 'contagious' or 'contiguous'. Disasters have contagious effects when they spread to other sociological spaces, while disasters are contiguous, because they are connected to other forms of disasters. According to findings, news reports by the media often reflect, using hyponym and the conceptual functions of naming and describing, ways that disasters spread to locations if they are not timely and appropriately managed. The Nigerian situation – experience is dominantly reported by Nigerian media enumerating the link between and among sociological spaces in the North and South, which are connected by rivers. There are so many regions globally that are connected through the major oceans and rivers in the world. Thus, when disasters happen in some places, they serve as an outcry for response in other places. They are wake-up calls to preserve the disasters from spreading to other communities. The subjunctive mood and the mental process are used to draw attention to the fact that disasters are imminent in some places when they occur in other places. The topography of the world shows that disasters like flooding and hurricanes can spread quickly if they are not managed.

Disasters have concomitant or contiguous effects. One disaster can lead to magnitudes of other kinds

of disasters. The dominant ones in the news reports studied are epidemic outbreak, that is, sicknesses and poverty. These are also connected to human livelihood and sustainable development. Disasters affect nations' ability to develop, which is another form of contiguity of ecological disasters. The inability of communities to develop is a cry for the government to act in other to management disasters. Disaster affects schools, businesses, and communal activities that enable national development. From the foregoing, media reports serve as urgent cries for international and local communities to respond appropriately to disasters and put all necessary facilities and modalities in place for disaster management to enable the achievement of sustainable developments in disaster-prone regions and communities.

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