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O. P. Fawole and T. A. Olowu
Department of Agricultural Extension
University of Ibadan
Ibadan

Abstract

This study investigated the coverage and direction of women's agricultural activities in Nigerian daily newspapers between 1970 and 1990. In order to attain the research objectives, 6408 editions of 10 daily newspapers were randomly selected for the 21-year period. These newspaper editions were content analysed for types of women activities reported and prominence and direction of the reported activities. The results indicate that there has been a steady increase in the number of women's agricultural activities reported in Nigerian dailies. While the amount of space allocated to women's activities is small, the reports are favourable but not prominently located.

1.0 Introduction

Development efforts in recent times at national and international levels are focused on women because of their continued poverty and low status world-wide, particularly in developing countries including Nigeria. One of such efforts is the United Nations (UN) Declarations concerning women. The UN declared 1975 Women's Year and 1976-1985 Women's Decade. These years were dedicated by the UN to the advancement and improvement of women's status worldwide. Also, these years were considered very significant for women, as they marked the beginning of the re-awakening of women's roles and contribution in all aspects of national development such as agriculture, information science (mass media), politics, culture, medicine and education.

In Nigeria, the UN Women Declarations can be said to mark the re-thinking of women's contributions to national development particularly in the agricultural sector, which resulted in increased focus on women's agricultural activities. The focus on women's agricultural activities can be attributed to a number of factors, for example, Nigeria is basically an agrarian country - 70-80% of its population are gainfully engaged in agriculture as primary occupation and 50% of this population are women (UNECA/FAO, 1974).

Secondly, the general decline in agricultural production in Nigeria, particularly in the area of food, an area dominated by women, has been a source of concern to the government for a long time. The on-going focus on women's agricultural activities, may not be unconnected with the recognition of women's roles in food production, as a way of solving the food problem in Nigeria, as well as enhancing women's economic status.

Efforts to concretize women's participation in the agricultural sector in Nigeria, witnessed the establishment of various programmes, structural changes and policies. Notable among these changes are the establishment of Women-in-Agriculture (WIA) in the agricultural development projects (ADPs), Women-in-Development (WID), National Commission for Women (NCW), Better Life for Rural Women (BLRW) and Family Support Programme (FSP). Apart from government's efforts, other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local organizations initiated and funded women agricultural programmes and schemes. These activities may have provided women opportunities to play more roles in development.

The mass media also made significant contributions towards the increased recognition and prominence given to women's agricultural roles. Indeed, some of the established programmes became household names. Generally, the increased recognition of women's agricultural activities between the years 1970-1990 can be delineated into three phases. These phases are:

1. **Conscientization Phase:** The beginning of the recognition of women's agricultural roles (1970-1974)
2. **The Consolidation Phase:** This is the period that witnessed the establishment of programmes and schemes for women's activities (1975-1985) and
3. **The Effects of Consolidation Phase:** This phase saw the start of the consequences of the conscientization and consolidation phases (1986-1990).

The on-going focus on women's agricultural activities dates back to the early 70s, and has no doubt caught the attention of a cross-section of national and international communities given the structural and policy changes. An account of these changes and subsequent activities can be obtained from newspapers because of their enduring characteristics which has made them the most popular mass media system (Park, 1969, Wainwright, 1972 and Moeneka, 1990). For the Nigerian context, it is a contemporary and an empirical question.

It is against this background that this study has the following objectives:

1. To determine the coverage of women's agricultural news in Nigerian daily newspapers between 1970 and 1990.
2. To investigate the distribution of women agricultural news by programme development phases in Nigerian daily newspapers.
3. To ascertain the categories of women's agricultural activities in Nigerian daily newspapers.
4. To determine the categories of women's agricultural activities by programme development phases in Nigerian daily newspapers.
5. To determine the prominence of women's agricultural activities in Nigerian daily newspapers
6. To investigate the direction of women's agricultural activities in Nigerian daily newspapers
7. To determine the representativeness of photographs of women's agricultural activities in Nigerian daily newspapers.

2.0 Methodology

A 21-year period, 1970-1990, was chosen to meet the objectives of this study. The methodology used is as described by Olowu (1990) in a similar study. All daily newspapers published continuously, Monday through Sunday editions, within the timeframe of this study constituted the study's universe. The number of daily newspapers within this time frame according to NPAN (1993) is 23. From this number, 10 daily newspapers were randomly selected.

2.1 Sampling procedure

The 10 randomly selected daily newspapers constituted the effective sample of this study.

Newspaper editions were randomly selected using a multistage sampling technique. Six sample months were randomly selected for each year, while two weeks

were randomly selected for each sampled month and four days were randomly selected for each sampled week. Newspaper editions from the 10 daily newspapers in the sampled days constituted the sample.

This sampling procedure produced 8 random editions of every newspaper in the sample per month. A total of 6,408 editions emerged from the 10 selected daily newspapers.

2.2 Content analysis

The 6,408 daily newspaper editions were content analyzed into five women's agricultural news categories. The categories are:

2.2.1 General agricultural news:

These articles focused on women's agricultural routine activities (land preparation, cultural practices) and non-routine activities (pest and disease control).

2.2.2 Economic news:

These articles focused on women's marketing activities, co-operatives, access to credit and economic opportunities available to women.

2.2.3 Policy pronouncements:

These articles focused on policies, programmes and establishment of organizations to encourage and improve women's agricultural activities.

2.2.4 Instrumental news:

These articles focused on procurement of agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, extension services, vocational training, implements, conferences, seminars and training workshops.

2.2.5 Personality news:

These articles focused on government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) officials, wives of heads of states, governors, ministers, commissioners, local government chairmen and women farmers.

Women's agricultural news were content analyzed by 4 coders into any of the five categories based on prominence (page placement), frequency (number), direction (favourable, neutral or unfavourable) and pictures (number and column inches).

A reliability check between the 4 coders for 4 daily newspapers are 96%, 94%, 96% and 95% respectively (Fawole, 1996).

3.0 Results and Discussion

Objective 1: To determine the coverage of women's agricultural news in Nigerian daily newspapers between 1970-1990.

In the 21-year period, 1970-1990, there were 7023 agricultural news. While 209 (3%) of these agricultural news focused on women, 6813 (97%) were general non-gender agricultural news. However, women's agricultural news increased from 0.0% in 1970 to 3% in 1990 (see Table 1). Although the observed increase is marginal, it is an encouraging trend, for it indicates

acknowledgement of women's contribution to the agricultural sector of the Nigerian economy, and the on-going effort by the government to promote women's participation in agricultural production.

Table 1
Frequency distribution of agricultural news in Nigerian daily newspaper

Year	Total Agric News	Women's Agric News		Non-Women Agric News	
		No.	% of total agric news	No.	% of total agric news
1970	123	-	-	123	1.75
1971	191	-	-	191	2.71
1972	154	-	-	154	2.16
1973	245	2	0.03	243	3.46
1974	187	3	0.04	184	2.62
1975	202	3	0.04	199	2.83
1976	225	-	-	225	3.20
1977	224	-	-	224	3.18
1978	174	-	-	174	2.47
1979	173	-	-	173	2.46
1980	232	-	-	232	3.30
1981	224	2	0.03	222	3.16
1982	239	-	-	239	3.40
1983	258	1	0.01	257	3.66
1984	405	4	0.05	401	5.70
1985	460	6	0.08	454	6.46
1986	410	3	0.04	407	5.79
1987	617	18	0.25	599	8.52
1988	809	42	0.59	767	10.39
1989	780	50	0.71	730	10.39
1990	691	75	1.06	616	8.77
Grand Total	7023	209	2.88	6814	97.12

Objective 2: To investigate the distribution of women's agricultural news by programme development phases in Nigerian daily newspapers.

Table 2
Distribution of women's agricultural activities by phase

Phase	Total agric news	No. of women's agric. news		No. of non-women agric news	
		No.	% of total women's agric news	No.	% of total non-women agric news
1	900	5	2.40	895	13.13
2	2816	16	7.70	2800	41.09
3	3307	188	90.0	3119	45.77
Grand Total	7,023	209	2.88	6,814	97.02

Two hundred and nine agricultural news focusing on women were reported in the daily newspapers between 1970-1990. In Phase 1; 5 (2.4%) women's agricultural news were reported. This increased to 16 (7.70%) in Phase 2 and rose to 188 (90%) in Phase 3. However, these increases are low compared to non-women agricultural news in the 3 Phases (See Table 2).

None-the-less, the steady increases in women's agricultural news in the 3 phases are commendable and indicate, to some extent, the objectives of the Nigerian government and international communities to promote women's participation in national development.

Objective 3: To determine the categories of women's agricultural activities in Nigerian daily newspapers.

The distribution of the 209 women's agricultural news in the newspapers in 1970 through 1990 is in the following order: instrumental news, 74 (35.40%), general news, 62 (29.70%), economic news 59 (28.20%), policy news, 11 (5.30%) and personality news, 3 (1.40%) (See Table 3).

These results, show the recognition of the need for women to gain access to information relevant to their farming operations, which is in tune with government's on-going objective to enhance women's agricultural productive capacity.

This finding is particularly significant, because lack of access to agricultural inputs, is often identified as a major obstacle women encounter in performing their farming operations. Furthermore Felt (1972), Khan (1976) and Olowu (1990) reported that majority of agricultural news reported in Brazilian, Indian and Nigerian Newspapers respectively have little or no situation relevance to farmers' needs.

Table 3
Frequency of categories of women's agricultural activities in
Nigerian daily newspapers

Categories of women's agricultural activities	Number	Percentages
Instrumental	74	35.40
General	62	29.70
Economic	59	28.20
Policy	11	5.30
Personality	2	1.40
Total	209	100.0

Objective 4: To determine the categories of women's agricultural activities by programme development phase in Nigerian daily newspapers.

Frequency of categories of women's agricultural news by phase is shown in Table 4:

Table 4
Frequency of categories of women's agricultural activities in
Nigerian newspaper in the 3 phases

Categories of women's agricultural activities	Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Instrumental	4	80	2	12.50	68	36.17
General	-	-	10	62.50	52	27.65
Economic	1	20	3	18.75	55	29.25
Policy	-	-	1	6.25	10	5.32
Personality	-	-	-	-	3	1.59
Total	5	100%	16	100%	188	100%

The overall trend is a gradual increase in all categories of women's agricultural activities from Phase I through Phase 2 to Phase 3. This result indicates the diverse contemporary roles of women in agricultural production.

Objective 5: To determine the prominence of women's agricultural activities in Nigerian daily newspapers.

A total of 38 of the 209 reported women's agricultural news appeared on prominent pages of newspapers for the 21-year period.

Frequency of women's agricultural news palced in front, centre and back pages and space allocated to them are; front page: 15 (7.20%): 240.74 col. cm; centre pages: 13 (6.20%); 319.09 col. cm and back page: 10 (4.80%): 430.27 col. cm. (See Table 5).

Table 5
The prominence of women's agricultural activities in Nigerian daily newspapers

Prominent Pages	Frequency	Percentage (%) of total agric news	Average space in col. cm.
Front	15	7.20	240.74
Centre	13	6.20	319.09
Back	10	4.80	430.27

These findings show that placement of women's agricultural news on prominent pages in Nigerian dailies is low. Indeed, the total space allocated to women's agricultural news in two decades is 990.10col cm, which is barely over the total space of a standard newspaper page. This is at variance with the recognition of women's agricultural potentials and objectives of the Nigerian government to encourage women's participation in the national development process. On the other hand, it may be that women make news on prominent pages only when they are drug traffickers or are involved in more serious crimes like armed robbery (Okagbue, 1985).

Objective 6: To determine the direction of women's agricultural news in Nigerian daily newspaper.

The findings presented on Table 6 show that 93.30% of reported women's agricultural activities are favourable, 4.80% are unfavourable while 1.90% are neutral.

Table 6
Distribution of direction of women's agricultural activities in Nigerian daily newspapers

Direction	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Favourable	195	93.30
Unfavourable	10	4.80
Neutral	4	1.90
Total	209	100.00

The results show that there are more favourable reports of women's agricultural news than unfavourable ones in Nigerian daily newspapers. This finding indicates that women activities have a positive image in Nigerian daily newspapers.

Objective 7: To determine the representativeness of photographs of women's agricultural activities in Nigerian daily newspapers.

Eighty (80) of the 209 women's agricultural activities were accompanied by photographs. As shown on Table 7, 68.75% were representative while 31.25% were not representative.

Generally most photographs that accompany women's agricultural news do show the actual activities reported.

Table 7
Distribution of representativeness of photographs of women's agricultural activities in Nigerian daily newspapers

Representativeness	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Representative	55	68.75
Non-representative	25	31.25
Total	80	100.00

4.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

This study shows that Nigerian daily newspapers have increased their coverage of women's agricultural news across the 3 phases in the 21-year period studied.

Within the same period, the coverage of the five categories of women's agricultural news increased, however, the instrumental category was the most frequent. Although, majority of women's agricultural news were not prominently placed, few of the prominently placed ones appeared more on the front page, while the least were located at the back page.

Majority of women's agricultural news during the same period were favourably disposed towards women, but the amount of newshole allocated to women's agricultural activity is small. Most agricultural stories that focused on women were not accompanied by photographs. However, the few accompanied by photographs were largely representative and depict the reported stories.

Generally, the increase in the reportage of women's agricultural activities is commendable though still low. However, it could be said that the awareness of women's participation in agricultural production in the last two decades is unprecedented in the history of agricultural development in Nigeria. It is certain that women's agricultural roles are both widely recognized and visible and it is hoped that the reportage of women's agricultural news will increase even more with time.

5.0 Lesson for the Future

The general trend that emerged from the findings shows that newspapers' coverage has great potentials for development of women's agricultural production and programmes. The implications are that newspapers should

- 5.1 establish more contact with agricultural organizations, agencies and women farmers for appropriate information on what women's roles are, their aspirations, and problems in agricultural production;
- 5.2 allocate more newshole to women's agricultural news;
- 5.3 establish women's agricultural columns for in-depth information of women's work in agriculture and
- 5.4 report women's agricultural news on prominent pages as this indicates importance.

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