



# **Framing Deforestation Discourse in Tanzanian Media: An Analysis of Framing Strategies in Daily News and the Guardian Newspapers**

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## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

## **Article Information**

DOI: 10.9734/AJESS/2023/v49i31173

### **Open Peer Review History:**

This journal follows the Advanced Open Peer Review policy. Identity of the Reviewers, Editor(s) and additional Reviewers, peer review comments, different versions of the manuscript, comments of the editors, etc are available here: <https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/109658>

**Original Research Article**

**Received: 14/09/2023**

**Accepted: 18/11/2023**

**Published: 21/11/2023**

## **ABSTRACT**

This research delves into the framing of deforestation issues within Tanzania's Daily News and The Guardian newspapers, focusing on political framing, responsibility, environment, and human impact framing. The study centred on a content analysis of deforestation-related articles in these national newspapers, treating the Daily News and The Guardian in Tanzania as a case study. Findings reveal an average coverage of 1.7 deforestation stories per day across both newspapers. Notably, the articles exhibited a predominant political framing, constituting 57% of the content. Despite this

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emphasis on political perspectives, the study underscores the significance of framing deforestation issues within Tanzanian newspapers and suggests that future research should explore additional newspapers to enrich our understanding of this critical subject.

*Keywords: Newspaper; deforestation; environmental issues.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the early 20th century, global deforestation has posed a significant challenge, with people continuing to cut down trees for various purposes such as building houses, industries, infrastructure, and fuel. This practice, often without adequate replacement, contributes to environmental issues such as climate change, land degradation, droughts, and forest fires [1,2]. Deforestation remains a pressing issue worldwide, particularly in African developing countries like Tanzania, where a large segment of the population grapples with poverty. The environmental consequences, including droughts, floods, landslides, global warming, and climate change resulting from deforestation, significantly impact people's lives [3]. In rural areas, the production of charcoal for sale in urban centres is a common practice, emphasizing the urgent need for widespread awareness through media channels [4].

Various scholars, including Shaw (2015), Mohamed and Larouz (2020), and Zafri et al. [5], emphasize the crucial role of media as agents for change in addressing environmental issues within communities. Media outlets, such as newspapers, radio, and television, play a significant role in educating the public, monitoring government programs related to deforestation, and mobilizing communities to participate in tree-planting initiatives and respond to natural disasters. Despite their potential impact, newspapers are particularly highlighted for their effectiveness in educating the public about deforestation causes, effects, and prevention strategies. National newspapers like Daily News and The Guardian, with their extensive reach and well-trained journalists, possess the capability to report on deforestation issues effectively. Although there is room for improvement in their coverage, these newspapers, given their substantial investments in equipment, technology, and human resources, have the potential to influence government policy, monitor environmental projects, and engage the public in the fight against deforestation [6,7].

Over the course of more than five decades, Tanzania's media landscape, comprising newspapers, radio, television, and online platforms, has actively covered deforestation issues, serving as crucial channels for informing and educating the public about the impact of deforestation on their lives [8]. However, a persistent challenge in the reporting of deforestation issues is the prevalent political framing by the media, overshadowing other perspectives such as human impacts and environmental considerations [9]. This skewed framing may undermine the effectiveness of Tanzania's existing strategies to combat deforestation, including the National Forest Policy and Legislation, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+), Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM), Afforestation and Reforestation Programs, and efforts to strengthen law enforcement and governance. Consequently, the study aims to address this knowledge gap by examining the coverage of deforestation issues within Tanzania's Daily News and The Guardian newspapers, with the overarching goal of analysing the framing employed in reporting on deforestation. The study's specific objectives include analysing framing in both newspapers collectively, as well as conducting individual examinations within Daily News and The Guardian. The study was guided by three research questions: analysing the Framing of Deforestation Issues in Daily News and The Guardian Newspapers; examining the Framing of Deforestation Issues in Daily News and investigating the Framing of Deforestation Issues in The Guardian Newspapers.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study was guided by the framing theory of media. There is no single founder of the framing theory of media but it has been the work of different researchers in the fields of communication, sociology and psychology for a long time. Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972) communication scholars who introduced the concept of "Agenda-Setting Theory" the theory connected to framing theory as it deals with the influence of the media on the public

agenda; Erving Goffman (1974) a sociologist who introduced the concept of "Frame Analysis", and Todd Gitlin [10] a sociologist and communication scholar who explored the role of media in shaping public perception and social movements.

The key elements of the framing theory of media are *Frames*: which are mental structures or schemas that individuals use to interpret information. *Framing effects*: refers to the influence that different ways of presenting information can have on individual attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. *Frame building*: involves the deliberate construction or selection of specific frames by media, journalists, or communicators to shape how an issue is understood by the audience. *Frame analysis*: Frame analysis is the process of examining how different frames are used in media content and how these frames influence public understanding and opinions about various issues.

According to Gitlin [10], a news frame refers to the selection of certain content, organizing it, presenting it in a particular manner, interpreting it and emphasising it for the aim of making a specific meaning of an issue [10]. There are two types of news frames: first, issue-specific news frames; which deals with specific issues and occasions and the second is generic news frames; this do not based on specific topics but deals with different issue and in diverse social settings even intensely [11]. The current study used generic news frames which will help the researcher to understand the framing of deforestation issues within Daily News and The Guardian newspapers in Tanzania.

Frames in newspapers help the reader to understand the information through what he/she observing and perceiving. Framing is choosing "some aspects of a perceived reality" to enhance their salience "in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" [12].

According to Tewksbury and Scheufele [13], framing in news has three effects: information effects, persuasion effects and agenda-setting effects. Information effects believe that people can get information targeted through framing as the information in a news story can strengthen the link, but it relies on a frame to form the associations. In persuasion effects, the journalists' use of language, selection of content,

presentation style and use of persuasive words can attract an audience to be attracted. In agenda-setting effects, framing of news makes the people consider the issue that faces a certain community or nation; and always sit in groups to discuss and recall issues that have received attention in the news.

Frames have been also shown to shape public perceptions of deforestation issues. The opinion of Tanzanian people about environmental conservation through afforestation, reforestation and many environmental-related challenges can be simply persuaded in different forms depending on how the matter is framed in the news reported. People can make choices to act and behave likely to the framed message in the newspaper [9].

Different researchers have observed the significance and impacts of particular frames in the news by directing their concerns to the people's understanding of actions and matters [14,2,15,16,7,17,3]. Having these studies and even others, there are not enough indicators that can be used to measure the occurrence of common frames in the news, but "a reliable set of content analytic indicators is necessary for studying developments in the news over time and similarities and differences in the ways in which politics and other topics of national and international importance are framed in the news in different countries" [18].

There are two possible approaches to content analysis frames in the news: inductive and deductive. The inductive approach involves analysing a news story with an open view to attempt to reveal the array of possible frames, beginning with very loosely defined preconceptions of these frames [19]. This approach can detect the many possible ways in which an issue can be framed, but this method is labour-intensive, often based on small samples, and can be difficult to replicate.

A deductive approach involves predefining certain frames as content analytic variables to verify the extent to which these frames occur in the news [19]. This approach makes it necessary to have a clear idea of the kinds of frames likely to be in the news, because the frames that are not defined may be overlooked. This approach can be simply simulated, can be managed with huge samples, and can simply identify differences in framing between media; for example newspaper and radio and within media

government newspapers and private newspapers [18].

To date, scholars have found useful frames that appear mostly in the news when they are investigating a particular issue and they concentrate on the presence of a certain frame and its significance for people's attitudes. According to Semetko and Valkenburg [18], there are five news frames which will help a researcher to conduct a content analysis of the media and get the needed data: conflict frame, human interest frame, attribution of responsibility frame, morality frame and economic consequences frame.

*Responsibility frame*; the journalists use this frame on deforestation news to show the responsible persons on certain events. The newspaper reports on deforestation issues blame the responsibility of people in position or the particular society for the happenings of a certain event. The report points to who was accountable for the happenings, why the issue happened, how it happened and who is supposed to be blamed [2].

*Political frame*; the newspapers publish deforestation news which are political side emphasized or any issue involving politicians or the government. They use words and phrases to carry out political matters like formulating laws and discussions on deforestation issues [2]. The frame implies that while individuals are empowered to address the deforestation issues, greater power for dealing with these problems is often accredited to the government. During the election period, the majority of deforestation news coverage focuses on the politicians to serve their own political and ideological interests which will help them to secure the victory [7].

*Human impact frame or human-interest frame*; As the way of presenting particular information, the journalists use this frame to bring the face of the human in front of the public in order to attract them through sympathy that every human being has [2]. The newspapers present deforestation issues based on human impacts by showing how the impacts of deforestation like; climate change, land degradation, drought and air pollution affect the ordinary people in the country. Semetko and Valkenburg [18] conclude that such a frame refers to an effort to personalize the news, dramatize or "emotionalize" the news, in order to capture and retain audience interest.

*Environment frame*; the journalists use this frame to inform the public and environmental stakeholders about the impacts of deforestation on the environment. Through this frame, newspapers can create awareness among the people on the importance of forests to the environment. Also, newspapers bring an understanding of the environmental activities which cause deforestation like land pollution, water pollution, overgrazing and unplanned clearing of forests by people and the land to be used for agriculture or infrastructure [20].

The current study adopted four (4) frames from the above and those are; the responsibility frame, political frame, environment frame, and human impact frame in order to understand well the framing of deforestation issues within *Daily News* and *The Guardian* newspapers in Tanzania context.

## 2.1 Framing Deforestation Issues within Newspapers

According to Semetko and Valkenburg [18], there are five news frames which were helped a researcher to conduct content analysis of the media and get the needed data: conflict frame, human interest frame, attribution of responsibility frame, morality frame and economic consequences frame. Moreover, Agwu and Amu [2] highlight that newspapers frame deforestation issues in ten categories which are: responsibility frame, action frame, political frame, industry frame, scientific frame, environment frame, economic consequences frame, human impact frame, health risk frame and mixed frame. The current study adopted four (4) frames from the above and those are; the responsibility and action frame, political frame, environment frame, and human impact frame in order to understand well the coverage of deforestation issues within *Daily News* and *The Guardian* newspapers in Tanzania context.

Considering newspapers framing deforestation issues, Agwu and Amu [2] conducted a study examining the framing of climate change news in four national Daily Newspapers in southern Nigeria and came with different answers as the results showed that the majority of the articles used a negative tone in covering the headlines and that the two most common frames for climate change were blame and action. Journalists in newspapers use this frame to cover deforestation issues and events based on ways to be taken by a particular group of

responsible people in order to solve deforestation challenges. The newspaper's news on deforestation issues targets the duties to be performed by the government, NGO and individual citizens to overcome the happenings [2]. Reports show the actions that the nation can take to alleviate and to adapt deforestation issues effects. Parallel to that Tong [21] describes newspaper exposure of deforestation problems, especially stories about punishing those who are responsible for difficulties and sometimes they achieve this aim.

Langat [15] conducted the study to find out how issues of environmental sustainability are covered and framed by the print media in Kenya and findings show that the majority of frames had political themes. On the other side, Tong [21] studied on framing analysis of newspaper investigative reports on deforestation problems in China. The findings show that the reports have portrayed deforestation problems in a manner that opposes rather than supports the national priority for economic growth. It challenges rather than reinforces the current institutional discourse of development, and criticizes rather than contributes to the present structure of the capitalist mode of production in China.

The newspapers publish deforestation news which is political side or any issue involving politicians or the government. They use words and phrases to carry out political matters like formulating laws and discussions on deforestation issues [2]. The frame implies that while individuals are empowered to address the deforestation issues, greater power for dealing with these problems is often accredited to the government. During the election period, the majority of deforestation news coverage focuses on the politicians serving their own political and ideological interests which helped them to secure the victory [7].

According to Rija and Kideghesho [9] who conducted research on the coverage of biodiversity conservation issues in local newspapers and its role in enhancing conservation awareness in Tanzania, found that the deforestation practice inside the protected areas and wildlife poaching leads to drought which finally the wild animals are forced to search for food and water in the lands used by human and for that, the fighting arises.

As a way of presenting particular information, the journalists use this frame to bring the face of the

human in front of the public in order to attract them through sympathy that every human being has [2]. The newspapers present deforestation issues based on human impacts by showing how the impacts of deforestation like; climate change, land degradation, drought and air pollution affect the ordinary people in the country.

Lusagalika [22] conducted a study on the role that media has played in creating awareness of deforestation issues in the City of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and came up with the observation that the city of Dar es Salaam is still facing deforestation problems due to a limited sense of ownership of public spaces that means people disregard deforestation conservation initiatives.

The journalists use this frame to inform the public and environmental stakeholders about the impacts of deforestation on the environment. Through this frame, newspapers can create awareness among the people on the importance of forests to the environment. Also, newspapers bring an understanding of the environmental activities which cause deforestation like land pollution, water pollution, overgrazing and unplanned clearing of forests by people and the land to be used for agriculture or infrastructure [20].

Frames have been also shown to shape public perceptions of deforestation issues within newspapers. Different researchers have observed the significance and impacts of particular frames in the news by directing their concerns to the people's understanding of actions and matters [14,2,15,16,7,17,3]. Having these studies and even others, there are not enough indicators that can be used to measure the occurrence of common frames in the news, but "a reliable set of content analytic indicators is necessary for studying developments in the news over time and similarities and differences in the ways in which politics and other topics of national and international importance are framed in the news in different countries" [18].

With the press, the public can know quickly, precisely, and easily information about deforestation which is needed or news that is growing; in this case, the newspaper can also be a two-way communication media, namely from society to government and also from government to society [23]. The voice of Tanzanian people about environmental conservation through afforestation, reforestation and many

environmental-related challenges can be simply persuaded in different forms depending on how the matter is framed in the news covered. The people can choose to act and behave likely to the framed message in the newspaper [9].

From the experience of the above studies, you can find out that many newspapers cover deforestation issues news during the time of special events only. It seems that, many types of deforestation issues they covered centring World Environment Day. The research concluded that the local newspapers of Chattogram do cover deforestation issues, though the subject matter did not receive much analysis [7].

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This research, categorized as a library-based study, was conducted at the University of Iringa Library, utilizing national newspapers archived at the institution to access content from two prominent Tanzanian newspapers, namely, Daily News and The Guardian. The study focused on a two-month period, specifically from May 1, 2022, to June 30, 2022, employing a deductive approach for frame content analysis due to its suitability for large sample sizes and its effectiveness in discerning differences between the two newspapers [18]. Data collection involved systematically gathering quantitative samples of newspaper articles at predetermined intervals. The research design centred on the analysis of deforestation-related articles in Daily News and The Guardian in Tanzania. Each article was scrutinized using a code sheet encompassing categories such as the newspaper nameplate, headline, word count, publication date, overall tone, priority, themes, and frames employed. The sample size comprised 60 newspaper copies from the two newspapers over the specified two months, yielding 207 environmental issues articles related to deforestation framing. The Story Assignment Sheets technique determined the selection of deforestation articles. Employing a secondary data approach, the research utilized content analysis as the method to examine the framing of

deforestation issues within Daily News and The Guardian newspapers. The coding sheet facilitated the organization and analysis of the data, contributing to the overall success of the research.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Framing of Deforestation Issues by The Guardian Newspaper

In this study, there are four news frames that are used to determine how *The Guardian* and *Daily News* newspapers in Tanzania frame deforestation issues during its coverage for two months. These four frames are the responsibility and action frame, political frame, environment frame and human impact frame. Thus, the below table shows the framing of deforestation issues in articles covered by *The Guardian* newspaper from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2022 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022. The table shows the frequency of the four news frames and the percentage they got from the articles in the copies studied from *The Guardian* newspaper.

This study found that *The Guardian* newspaper covered deforestation issues and framed more political than other types of news frames. Political frames had 56% of the total 143 deforestation issues articles that were studied from this newspaper. The environment frame was 28%, the responsibility and action frame was 13%, and human impact with only 3%.

These findings prove that *The Guardian* newspaper frames deforestation issues more as a political frame. This kind of framing reduces the credibility of the deforestation issues contents as it attracts readers who have an interest in politics with less critical when you compare to those framing which touch the soul of the public through human impact framing and responsibility and action framing. This study aims to analyse the way *The Guardian* newspapers frame deforestation issues and the results make clear that *The Guardian* newspaper frames deforestation issues as political.

**Table 1. Framing deforestation issues by *The Guardian* newspaper**

Frames	Frequency	Per cent
Responsibility	18	12.6
Political	80	55.9
Environment	40	28
Human	5	3.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 4.2 Framing of Deforestation Issues by Daily News Newspaper

Table 2 shows the framing of deforestation issues on articles covered by *Daily News* newspaper for two months (May and June 2022). The table shows the frequency of the four news frames and its percentage respectively as discovered from the articles in the copies studied from *the Daily News* newspaper.

The result shows that *Daily News* newspaper frames deforestation issues for 58% more political than other frames. Responsibility and action came second close with 30% unlike the environment frame had 9% and far away human impact frame with only 3%.

Similar to *The Guardian* newspaper, the *Daily News* newspaper frames deforestation issues more politically than other frames for more than a half. But with a difference of 2%, this newspaper frames more politics and responsibility. This is evidence that the editorial policy of *Daily News* focuses more on branding politics than showing the readers how deforestation issues matter to the environment and judging critically on who is responsible and what actions to take in order to overcome the deforestation issues. As the study thought to analyse the way *Daily News* frames deforestation issues, according to the results it is true that *Daily News* frames deforestation issues more as political.

#### 4.3 Framing of Deforestation Issues by The Guardian and Daily News Newspapers

Table 3 shows the frequency and percentage of the four news frames that used by *Daily News* and *The Guardian* newspapers during the coverage of deforestation issues from 1<sup>st</sup> May to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022. The frames used by both two newspapers are the responsibility frame, political frame, environment frame and human impact frame.

The results from Table 3 indicate that political frames dominated the coverage of deforestation issues within *Daily News* and *The Guardian* newspapers in Tanzania by 57% with 117 frames from 207 total frames obtained. There is not much difference between the privately owned newspaper "The Guardian" and the government-owned newspaper "Daily News" on framing deforestation issues as each had more than half frames political. Environment frames become the second frame on coverage of deforestation issues within these two newspapers and had 22% with 46 frames; the third one is responsibility and action frame which took 18% with 37 frames, and human impact frame lasting with 7 frames out of 207 total frames and scored only 3%.

Both newspapers had less than five per cent on human impact frame, this result indicates that there are lower deforestation issues which had a direct impact on humans that is why these two newspapers had lower framing on it. On the other side sometimes the media house and editorial policy forces to have less framing due to the interest of their readers. The media market shapes the framing of deforestation issues.

### 5. DISCUSSION

The study analyses the way *Daily News* and *The Guardian* newspapers in Tanzania frame deforestation issues from May 2022 to June 2022. The findings depict that political frames dominated the coverage of deforestation issues within *Daily News* and *The Guardian* newspapers in Tanzania by 57%. Parallel to that, the study conducted by Langat [15] on two local newspapers, *Daily Nation* and *Standard* shows that the frame of politics in the coverage of environmental sustainability in this study was dominant accounting for a little more than half of the framing 60%. Dissimilar to that, in the study conducted by Agwu and Amu, [2] in four national daily newspapers in southern Nigeria namely: *Guardian*, *This Day*, *Vanguard* and *Daily Sun*, a majority (71 articles) of the newspaper articles

**Table 2. Framing deforestation issues by Daily News newspaper**

Frames	Frequency	Per cent
Responsibility	19	29.7
Political	37	57.8
Environment	6	9.4
Human	2	3.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3. Framing of deforestation issues by *The Guardian* and *Daily News* newspapers**

Frames	Daily News	The Guardian	Per cent
Responsibility	19	18	17.9
Political	37	80	57
Environment	6	40	21.7
Human	2	5	3.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>100</b>

framed climate change in terms of blame/responsibility. The researcher understands that the Tanzania newspapers frame deforestation issues as political news rather than other frames.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study, aimed at analysing how deforestation issues are framed in Tanzania’s Daily News and The Guardian newspapers, scrutinized a total of 207 articles, revealing that 187 of them predominantly framed deforestation as a political matter. The findings underscore that the political framing, constituting 57% of the analysed articles, may inadvertently downplay the severity of deforestation issues, as readers may perceive them as routine political matters rather than specific environmental concerns. The study recommends that Tanzanian newspapers while maintaining their focus on political framing, should allocate greater emphasis to depicting responsibilities, proposed actions, environmental conservation, and human impacts. Advocating for diversification of media policies, the study suggests that newspapers should broaden their framing strategies beyond political dimensions. This shift, it is argued, could catalysed awareness and prompt more proactive responses from the government, responsible individuals, and communities regarding deforestation issues. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of newspapers to elucidate the broader environmental and human impacts associated with deforestation.

## CONSENT

As per international standards or university standards, respondents’ written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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