

Demographic determinants of climate change coverage among journalists in Nigeria

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Abstract

It is generally believed that demographic factors such as sex, income, experience and others could drive societal development and professional practices. Some scholars even established links with journalists' professional practices and social status. But none, at least to our knowledge, has established a link between demographic determinants of journalists and climate change coverage in Nigeria. Climate change is a societal issue requiring media efforts to mitigate its impact. This study is aimed at ascertaining demographic determinants of climate change coverage among journalists in Nigeria. It is a survey study using a questionnaire administered through the Internet and purposive sampling procedure. The sample size was 390 determined using Glenn (1992) sample size table 2. The study objectives were; to identify the demographic determinants of climate change coverage among journalists in Nigeria; ascertain where demographic determinants influence journalists' most in coverage of climate change in Nigeria; and determine the extent demographic determinants influence climate change coverage among journalists in Nigeria. The findings showed that the demographic determinants of climate change coverage among the Nigerian journalists was training. It was also found that the demographic determinants influence journalists' mostly in generating climate change news ideas. The study hereby concludes that demographic determinants influence journalists' coverage of climate change in Nigeria to a great extent.

Keywords: Climate change communication; Demographic determinants; Journalists; Knowledge; Media coverage; Nigeria.

Introduction

The media are key players in the development of every society. They drive development by always watching the society carefully, including nosing for news, conducting investigations, covering events and fact-checking for timely and accurate dissemination of facts and figures capable of addressing myriads of needs. The media practitioners especially journalists, editors, and reporters also set an agenda for the society by paying adequate attention to neglected or

topical issues like climate change which has become a global headache (Kolawale and Ojebuyi, 2019).

Climate change is a global headache because there is no society without its impact (Ajaero, Nwachukwu, and Ajaero, 2024). From Asia to Africa, North America, South America, Antarctica, Europe, and Oceania continents, there had been reports of sea-level rise, earthquake, tsunami, pollution, landslide, fires or floods disasters, droughts, hotter or colder days affecting people and nations (Pona et al., 2021). Some have lost their shelter, food, families and other valuables (Akogwu et al., 2024). In 2022, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that 40% of the world population are vulnerable to climate change (Haines, 2022).

As of 2021, climate change claimed over 500,000 lives and displaced 14.1 million Africans, with records of over \$70 billion economic loss (Nullis, 2022; State of the climate in Africa, 2022). African Union had met in 2013 and formed Agenda 2063, a climate action that recognised climate change as a serious threat to development of the continent and proffered a solution towards its mitigation (Zuma, 2014). In the West Africa sub region, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), met in 2022 and developed a regional climate strategy which among other things, provided templates for member states to reduce carbon footprint, strengthening political dialogues on mitigating emissions, including climate mitigation and adaptation (Jeffang, 2022).

In Nigeria which is the largest country in Africa, flooding, erosion, drought and other climate issues are consuming lives and properties (Ajaero, Nwachukwu, and Ajaero, 2024; UN news, 2024). The government, individuals, corporate organisations and nongovernmental organisations appear to be investing in various programmes unsuccessfully to address the challenges. This includes periodic tree planting, conferring of climate change fellowship on journalists, enactment of climate friendly legislations and housing policies, convoking and

attending national and international conferences on climate action, and signing of bilateral agreements. The federal government has even signed Nigeria's climate Act 2021 into law (Babatunde, 2021).

But does the public know of these various efforts and actions taken to mitigate climate change impact? Are demographic factors influencing journalists' ability to publicise or broadcast these and other climate actions in Nigeria? This informed the need for this study to ascertain how the demographic factors (determinants) such as age, sex, location, marital status, education, religion, income level, culture, years of experience, leadership positions and professional training are influencing or contributing to journalists' coverage of climate change in Nigeria. The objectives of this study were to: identify the demographic determinants of climate change coverage among journalists in Nigeria; ascertain where demographic determinants influence journalists' most in covering climate change in Nigeria; and determine the extent demographic factors influences journalists' coverage of climate change in Nigeria. The study hypothesis H01 was 'Journalists' demographic determinants do not significantly influence their coverage of climate change in Nigeria.'

The study is necessary because Lin and Han (2022) argued that understanding the social status of journalists will contribute immensely towards understanding government policies, political and social landscape. Unfortunately, there are dearth of empirical works on the influence of demographic traits in coverage of climate change in Nigeria. This is a knowledge gap this study seeks to fill. Also, in Ajaero, Nwachukwu and Ajaero (2024) it was gathered that demographic factors like age, birth, education, knowledge, income level, race, occupation, sex and marital status could drive attitudinal change towards climate change. Onyishi (2024) also reported that economic factors like training, farming experience, age and others could influence commercial farming. Danaa (2018) and Gadzekpo, Tietaah and Segtub (2018)

believed that when journalists' have good knowledge, perception and attitudes towards climate change they can equally influence people's attitudes, thinking and behaviour towards it.

The World Bank (2023) and IPCC (2022) have shown that the impact of climate change differs among social stratification or groups of people, adding that those with better knowledge, resources, financial muscles and others are more positioned to contribute ideas, resources, programmes and actions towards mitigating its impact. Also, some scholars identified values, norms, culture, education and others as enablers to journalists' attitudes and practise (Firmstone, 2023; Hanitzsch, 2017; Quiñones, 2022). Mack et al. (2025) even blamed poor reportage of climate change issues in Africa on educators' lack of capacities and inadequate climate change education curriculum among schools in the continent.

Literature Review

Demographic determinants are traits or characteristics of a population which could influence socioeconomic activities, health and general wellbeing. These include ethnicity, gender, age, marital status, education, employment, geographical location, among others (Utah, 2025). Journalism, like other professions, is composed of males and females' practitioners of different age groups, tribes, health status, educational background, marital and social status.

The United Nations recognised them as important stakeholders in climate change with regards to climate mitigation and adaptation. In the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisations (UNESCO) strategy for action on climate change (2017), it insisted that the capacity of journalists should be built with knowledge and skills of reporting climate change, sustainable living, climate mitigation, adaptation and sundry issues. The journalists are expected to transfer this back to society through their in-depth and up-to-date reports, broadcasts or publications.

Hence, some scholars described journalists as a high-status social group, highly educated, cosmopolitan elites and urban dwellers (Gest, 2016; Kreiss, 2019). Education,

knowledge and experiences are some of the demographics statuses that could engender attitudinal change and professional practice among them (Hanitzsch, 2017; Hess and Gutsche, 2018). In other words, the journalists' background or demographic status ought to influence them to inform the world about the impact of climate change, opportunities and people's responses towards it in Nigeria and the rest of the world (Howarth, Parsons, Thew, 2020; Schafer, 2015; UNESCO, 2013).

A study by Azeez et al. (2024) found that demographic factors such as gender, education, age, occupation and place of residence could influence Africans consciousness as well as determine how the people respond to climate change. Lin and Han (2022) earlier reported that professional norms and the sense of achievement influenced and shaped the media practitioners' (journalist's) social status more than income and education in China.

Another study by Shameer and Reddy (2018) reveals that most journalists working in television stations in India have moderate socioeconomic status and the status is contributing to their professional practice. However, Boncu et al. (2022), found that conspiratorial beliefs could influence people not to support or engage in strategies geared towards climate adaptation and mitigation. Leiserowitz et al. (2022) also found that having knowledge of climate change could change people's attitudes towards responding to it. But in Jusheng et al. (2019), the media were identified as paramount stakeholders in mitigating the impact of climate change because their socioeconomic status empowered them to command respect from the public as well as make them become environmentally friendly.

Theoretical framework

This study also employed Social Identity Theory (SIT) which explains how people usually perceive themselves as members of a definite or particular social group (Ellemers, 2025). This individual's categorisation or social comparison influences their behaviours, relationships and attitudes towards certain issues, activities or people (McLeod, 2023). This

comprises the following categories namely, social categorisation, social identification, social comparison, in-group (us) and out-group (them) and positive distinctiveness.

The theory was originally formulated in the 1970s by Henri Tajfel, and later redefined by John Turner in the 1980s. SIT is very appropriate in measuring how journalists' identities, views and relationships as members of different social groups influence their coverage of climate change in Nigeria. This is because public perception of climate change could be influenced by personal experiences, cultural beliefs, social political context and media coverage (Khanya, 2024). Some experts argue that journalists could identify themselves with specific social groups such as ethnicity, religion, culture, gender, age, professional affiliations, among others (Gest, 2016; Kreiss, 2019). The identities or categorisation could influence how they perceive climate change issues, reason, dedicate time and other resources, including the narratives they choose to emphasise on while satisfying their audience or driving readership and viewership through reporting of the subject matter (Hanitzsch, 2017; Hess and Gutsche, 2018). Unfortunately, McLeod (2023) believes that these could lead to favouritism, stereotyping, intergroup conflicts and changing of groups (while reporting climate change or other beats).

Materials and Methods

This study adopted quantitative method using purposive sampling to gather data from 390 journalists using closed ended questionnaire. The study methodology was based on the research objectives and researchers sound knowledge of the respondents, including where and how best to locate and administer copies of questionnaire on them. The questionnaire was prepared on *Google form* and administered to the respondents through 37 WhatsApp groups operated by 37 Councils (chapters) of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) from November 1, 2024 to February 28, 2025. The study population was 15,000 journalists as gathered by the

NUJ secretariat. Unfortunately, only the 390 respondents who attempted the questionnaire became the study sample size as recommended by Glenn (1992) sample size table 2.

The research instrument was subjected to face-to-face and content validation by three experts; one from Mass Communication Department at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, and two others from Department of Geography and Statistics, University of Nigeria Nsukka. Test-retest was used to confirm the research instrument's ability to achieve the desired results. The data extracted via copies of the questionnaire using SPSS were presented in pie charts and tables after their frequencies and percentages were obtained.

Analysis

Table 1: Respondents' data set

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Respondents sex</i>		
<i>Male</i>	189	48%
<i>Female</i>	201	52%
<i>Respondents age brackets</i>		
<i>18-38 years</i>	153	39%
<i>39-58 years</i>	114	29%
<i>59 years and above</i>	123	32%
<i>Respondents' marital status</i>		
<i>Single</i>	82	21%
<i>Married</i>	275	71%
<i>Divorced</i>	6	1%
<i>Widowed</i>	27	7%
<i>What is your highest level of education?</i>		
<i>PhD</i>	37	9%
<i>Master's Degree</i>	63	16%
<i>Bachelor's Degree or Higher National Diploma</i>	290	74%
<i>In which category of media do you work?</i>		
<i>Mainstream media</i>	183	47%

<i>New media</i>	207	53%
<i>How many years have you practised as a journalist?</i>		
<i>0-10 years</i>	144	37%
<i>11-20 years</i>	169	43%
<i>21 years and above</i>	77	20%
<i>What is your current professional designation?</i>		
<i>Reporter/Correspondent</i>	215	55%
<i>Sub-Desk/Line Editor</i>	51	13%
<i>Editor/Managing Editor/Director News</i>	84	22%
<i>MD/CEO/Publisher</i>	40	10%
<i>What is your monthly income?</i>		
<i>N10,000-N50,000</i>	183	47%
<i>N60,000-N100,000</i>	128	33%
<i>N150, 000 and above</i>	79	20%
<i>Have you occupied any of the following leadership positions in society?</i>		
<i>Political leadership (appointments/electives)</i>	59	15%
<i>Community leadership (Igwe, Oba, Emir, Woman leader, Youth leader, etc.)</i>	101	26%
<i>Religious leadership (Imam, Priest, Pastor, etc.)</i>	97	25%
<i>Professional leadership (Chairperson, Secretary, Public Relations Officer, etc.)</i>	133	34%

Table 1 above reveals the respondents' biodata. According to the table, there are 189 (48%) male respondents and 201 (52%) female respondents. The table also shows that the respondents who are 18-38 years (153 or 39%), 39-58 years (114 or 29%), and 59 years and above (123 or 32%). The data also revealed the respondents' marital status as single (82 or 21%), married (275 or 71%), divorced (6 or 1%) and widows and widowers 27 (7%). Also, 290 (74%) of the respondents are bachelor (BSc.) degree or Higher National Diploma (HND) holders, 63 (16%) have acquired their second degrees (Masters), and 37 (9%) PhD holders. The respondents' media platforms were- Mainstream Media (183 or 47%) and New Media- 207 (53%). The respondents' journalism experiences ranged from 0-10 years (144 or 37%), 11-20 years (169 or 43%), and 21 years and above (77 or 20%). The respondents' professional designations are Reporters/correspondents (215 or 55%), Sub-Desk/Line Editor (51 or 13%), Editor/Managing Editor/News Directors (84 or 22%) and MD/CEO/Publisher (40 or 10%). The respondents' monthly salary structures range from: N10, 000-N50, 000 (47%); N60, 000-N100, 000 (33%)

and N150, 000 and above (20%). Also, all the respondents have held one position or another as 34% of them have held professional leadership posts, 26% (community leadership), 25% religious leadership and political leadership (15%).

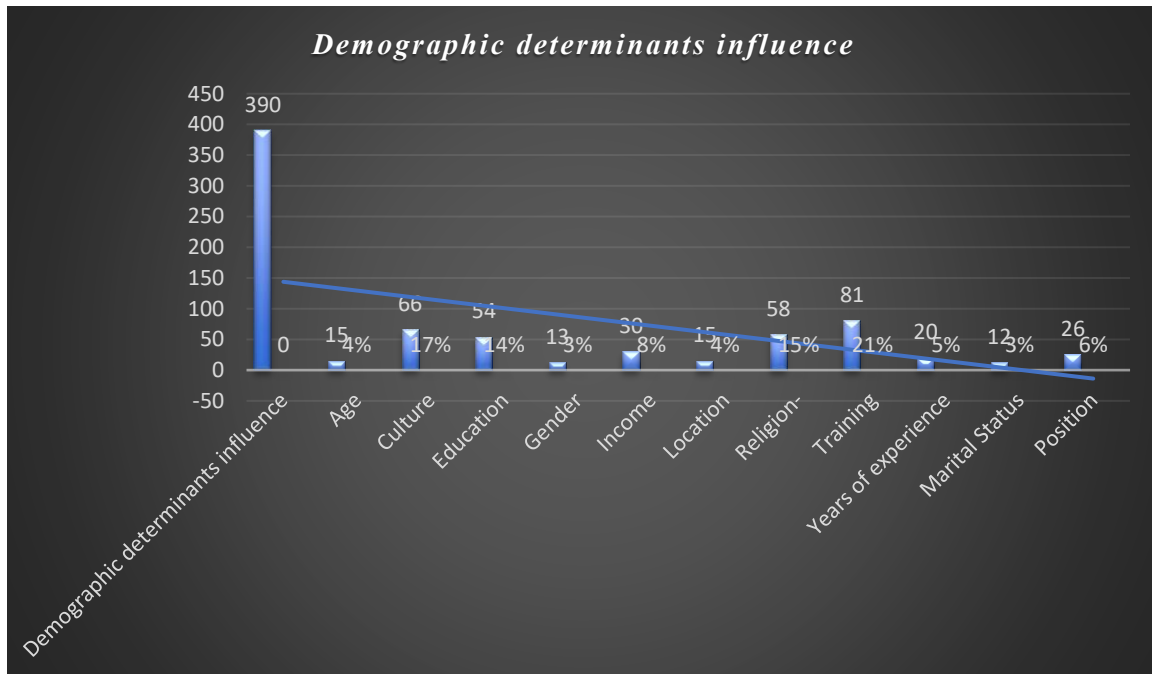


Figure 1: Source: Researchers field work

The data in figure 1 shows that all the respondents agree that demographic factors have influence in their climate change coverage as 390 (100%) agreed to that effect. Also, the respondents went further to identify the demographic factors or determinants influencing their climate change coverage as training (21%), culture (17%), religion (15%), and education (14%). Others were income (8%), leadership position (6%), years of experience (5%), age (4%), location (4%), gender (3%) and marital status (3%).

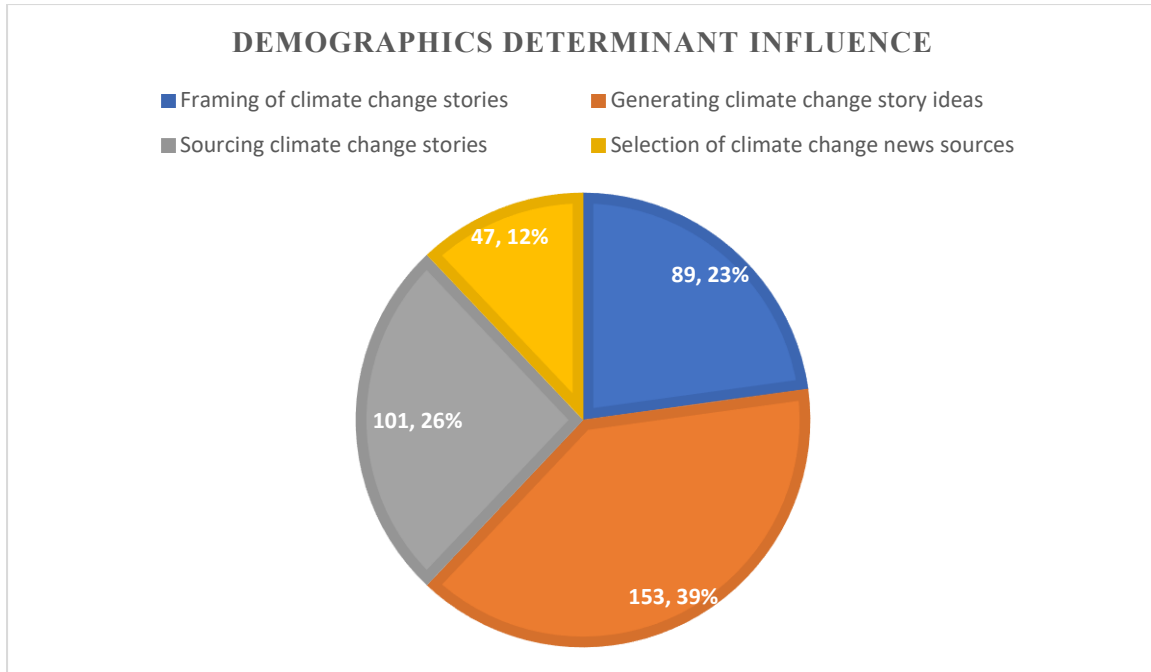


Figure 2: Source: Researchers field work

The figure 2 reveals the areas demographic factors influence the respondents' in covering climate change. The data shows that demographic determinants influence the respondents mostly in generating climate change news ideas (39%), followed by sourcing of climate change stories (26%), framing of climate change stories (23%) and selection of climate change news sources (23%).

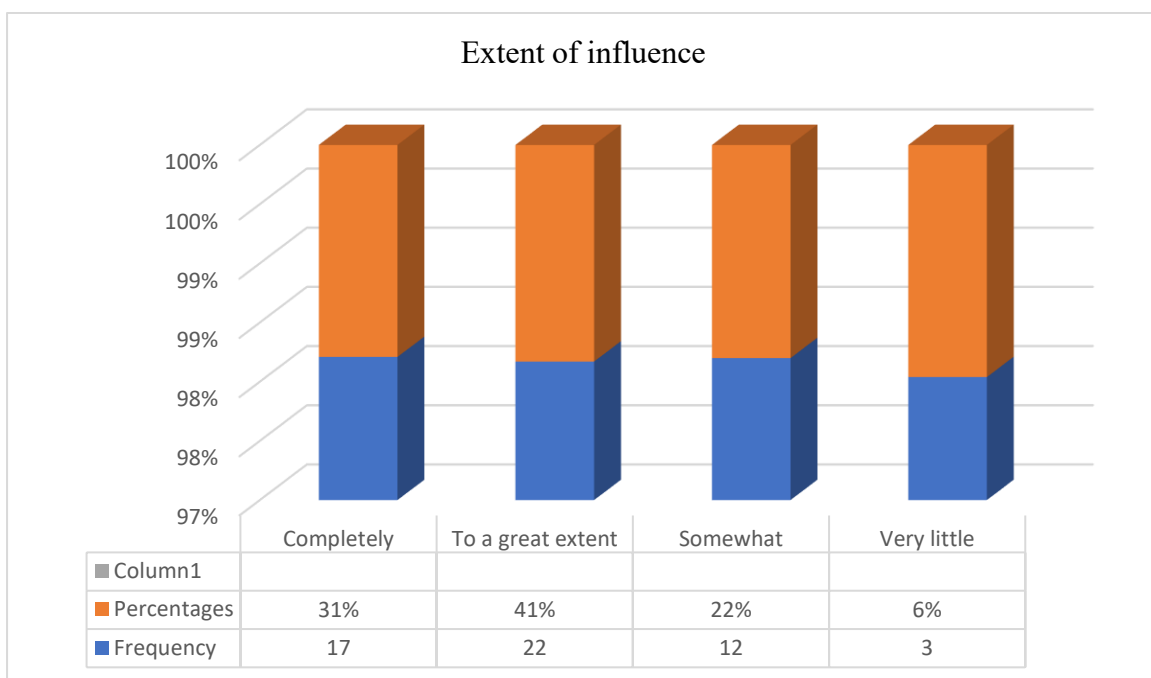


Figure 3: Source: Researchers field work

The figure 3 above indicates that the demographic determinants influence the respondents in coverage of climate change to a great extent (41%). Also, it influences them somewhat (22%), completely (31%) and very little (6%).

Hypothesis: Journalists demographic determinants do not significantly influence their coverage of climate change in Nigeria

Figure 4 Linear Regression Result for relationship between journalists’ demographic determinants does not significantly influence their coverage of climate change in Nigeria

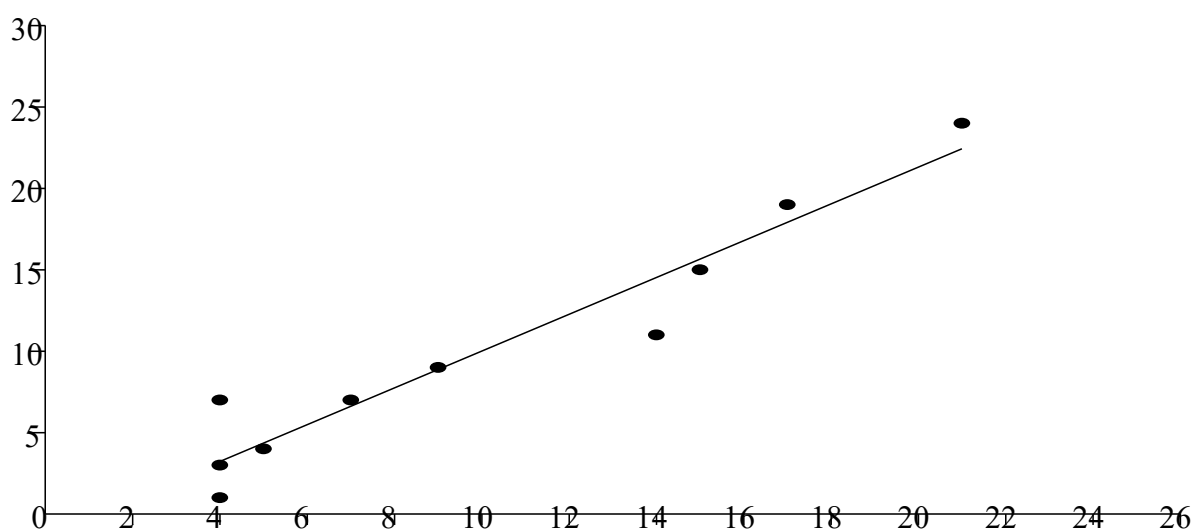


Figure 4: Source: Researchers field work

The data in figure 4 shows the Best-fit values with Slope (1.130 ± 0.1128), Y-intercept (-1.299 ± 1.312), X-intercept 1.150 1/Slope (0.8850). Also, the 95% Confidence Intervals recorded Slope (0.8699 to 1.390), Y-intercept (-4.326 to 1.727), X-intercept (-1.915 to 3.225), Goodness of Fit: R Square (0.9262), $S_{y.x}$ (2.122). Is slope significantly non-zero? $F(100.4)$ DF_n, DF_d 1,8 and P Value < 0.0001. Deviation from zero? The Significant Equation is $Y=1.130*X - 1.299$, and the Data indicates that the number of X values is 10, with Maximum number of Y replicates 1, Total number of values 10, Number of missing values 0.

From figure 4, it could be deduced that there is a strong relationship between the demographic factors (x) and climate change coverage (y) as slope (1.130) shows that every 1-unit increase in X, Y equally increases by 1.130 units on average. Also, it falls between 0.870 and 1.390—ruling out zero with 95% confidence thereby confirming a strong positive predictor (positive effect). Therefore, the null of zero slope (no significance influence) was rejected by the F-test (100.4, $p < 0.0001$). Therefore, the study rejected the null hypothesis

and concluded that journalists' demographic determinants are significantly influencing their coverage of climate change in Nigeria.

Discussion of findings

The study was aimed at finding the demographic determinants of climate change coverage among journalists in Nigeria. The objectives of the survey were to identify the demographic determinants of climate change coverage among journalists in Nigeria, to ascertain where demographic determinants influence journalists' most in covering climate change in Nigeria, and to determine the extent demographic factors influences journalists' coverage of climate change in Nigeria. The study population was 15,000 journalists across Nigeria but the sample size was 390 respondents which was determined using Glenn (1992) sample size table 2.

The data in table 1 indicates that most of the respondents were women (52%) just as the respondents within the ages of 18-38 were more in numbers (39%). Also, 71% of the respondents were not only adults but married, responsible and experienced to attend to the questionnaire. This was further confirmed by 74% of the respondents who indicated that they have acquired BSc. or HND, and 43% of the respondents that have practised for 11-20 years. But most of the respondents (49%) works with the New Media based platforms, while 55% of them were still reporters/correspondents and 47% of them earn between N10, 000-N50, 000 as monthly salary. In order words, journalists are poorly paid in Nigeria. This could be why Ogundeji, Olajide and Benjamin (2012) found that quackery have taken over the journalism profession. Nevertheless, all the respondents have held one position or another in society thereby showing that they are very acceptable to their communities be it religion or political. The 34% of them have held professional leadership posts, 26% (community leadership), 25% religious leadership and political leadership (15%). The findings are consistent with Kreiss' (2018) who posited that journalists are very educated, experienced and exposed.

The study, therefore, identified the demographic determinants of climate change coverage among journalists in Nigeria in figure 1. The data revealed that the demographic factors or determinants influencing their climate change coverage were training (21%), culture (17%), religion (15%), and education (14%). Others were income (8%), leadership position (6%), years of experience (5%), age (4%), location (4%), gender (3%) and marital status (3%). This confirmed the positions of the UNESCO (2017) that journalists' capacities should be

boosted for optimum reportage of climate change and finding of Shemeer and Reddy (2018) which showed that experiences, age and gender could drive good journalism practise.

It was further ascertained in figure 2 that the demographic determinants influence journalists' mostly in generating climate change news ideas (39%), followed by sourcing of climate change stories (26%), framing of climate change stories (23%) and selection of climate change news sources (23%). In order words, there is a direct relationship between demographic determinants and how the journalists perform their professional responsibilities. This was further confirmed by the results of hypothesis in figure 4 where slope (1.130) shows that every 1-unit increase in X, Y equally increases by 1.130 units on average, and falls between 0.870 and 1.390—ruling out zero with 95% confidence. This implied that when a journalist is experienced, educated or trained, matured, advanced or exposed there is every possibility that such a person could easily cover climate change issues with ease and frequently. The F-test (100.4, $p < 0.0001$) in the figure also confirmed this relationship as significant thereby proving that journalists' demographic determinants are significantly influencing their coverage of climate change in Nigeria. This finding confirmed Ajaero, Nwachukwu and Ajaero (2024) which revealed how journalists generated and framed stories, Gadzekpo, Tietah and Segtub (2018) that reported that knowledge of climate change could influence good practice among the journalists, and Kreiss (2018) who found that the journalists' social identity could empower them to hold the government accountable.

The study also determined the extent demographic factors influences journalists' coverage of climate change in Nigeria. In figure 3, the data revealed that the demographic determinants influence the respondents in coverage of climate change to a great extent (41%), followed by completely (31%), somewhat (22%) and very little (6%). This implied that the degree of effects or impact demographic determinants have on the respondents were more. The findings were not different from those of Danaa (2018) in Ghana, Elia (2021) in Tanzania and Amu & Agwu (2012) in Nigeria.

Conclusion and recommendations

The study was aimed at finding the demographic determinants of climate change coverage among journalists in Nigeria. The data gathered from 390 respondents through the Internet revealed the most dominant demographic factor influencing the journalists' coverage of climate change as training (21%). It was also found that the demographic determinants influence journalists' mostly in generating climate change news ideas (39%). The findings also showed that the demographic determinants influence the respondents in

coverage of climate change to a great extent (41%). The study, therefore, concludes that there are demographic determinants of climate change coverage among the journalists in Nigeria. It recommended training and reorientation of journalists to sharpen and broaden journalists' demographic factors, engage them into covering climate change to a greater extents and climate change scope.

The study limitation were the literature materials, methodology, financial and time constraints. Therefore, future studies could adopt content analysis, in-depth interview and focus group discussion or collaborations with scholars in the fields of psychology or medicine for improved interdisciplinary results.

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