INTERROGATING NIGERIAN MEDIA HANDLING OF INSURGENCY IN THE NORTHEAST OF NIGERIA BETWEEN 2009 AND 2018

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ABSTRACT

The ubiquity and utility of both traditional and new media have been celebrated in literature. Scholars have argued that media's globalising effects make users prone to an avalanche of messages that are both beneficial and counter-productive. The objective of this paper is to further intellectual engagement on the functional and dysfunctional media usage in building peace in conflict situations. Therefore, this paper examines the effect of the media on the escalation and de-escalation of insurgency in Nigeria from 1999 to date. Qualitative content analysis of print media messages on the Boko Haram insurgency was complemented with interviews with twenty media consumers to present a situation analysis of the nexus between media reports and security or/and insecurity as indexes of peace-building. Findings revealed that although the media have enhanced awareness of the conflicts and the strategies being employed by governments in the conflict hotspots, however, it was also revealed that the media are susceptible to manipulation by the non-state actors to create fear and whittle down governments' interventions thus triggering hopelessness and anger among the populace. The paper concludes that although the media are beneficial, problems still exist in the utilization of media for the communication of counter-insurgency efforts as their uses are sometimes counter-productive to peace-building. Knowledge-driven capacity building for the people is needed in order to develop the

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required skills to discern and scrutinize media messages as a conflict-sensitivity imperative.

Keywords: new media, insurgency, counter-insurgency, conflict-sensitivity, security, capacity building.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria as a nation-state is under severe internal socio-economic and security threats. At a more general level, the threats have social, economic, political and environmental implications. Nigerian insecurity is intricately linked to the activities of ethnic militia armies, religious bigots, insurgents, terrorists, armed bandits, armed robbers as well as kidnappers. There have been ethno-religious conflicts, militancy, Boko Haram insurgency and lately virulent herdsmen/farmers conflicts. There have also been threats emanating from un-abated attacks on Nigerian citizens, individual and governmental installations, kidnapping and destruction of properties by organized armed bandits. These unpalatable conflicts and insecurities have resulted in the loss of thousands of lives, displacement of persons, and destruction of both private and public properties worth billions of naira.

Triggers of conflicts in Nigeria can be traced to the proliferation of ethnic militia armies, poverty, fundamentalism and environmental degradation as well as feelings of marginalization and injustice (Ilufoye, 2009). These heinous crimes, no doubt, constitute a great challenge to the ground strategy for the national security architecture of Nigeria. It has, thus, become a "herculean task for the state to advance national interests and objectives which are pre-requisites to containing instability, control crime, enhance the quality of life of citizens and improve their welfare" (Dambazau, 2007, p. 51).

Insurgency has dire consequences on the socio-economic conditions of the affected area and is capable of worsening the milieu that initially triggered the conflict as lives and properties are destroyed. For example, apart from the alteration in the demographic composition of the troubled northeast of Nigeria, investors also run away from the

place. Akunyili (2013) submitted that foreign direct investment (FDI)has plummeted since the Boko Haram onslaught in the northeast citing World Investment Report (WIR) 2013 which revealed that FDI in-flow to Nigeria has reduced by 2per centcent in just a year. With the loss of investment in the area, new companies cannot locate there while old ones could not recapitalize, expand and create employment opportunities. Existing companies are also folding up due to concerns about insecurity. This scenario widens the gap between the centre and the periphery and leads to feelings of marginalization, frustration and further aggression.

Boko Haram has been classified as terrorism in view of its threat to the economic, political and social security of the nation and a major factor associated with underdevelopment; because it discourages both local and foreign investments, reduces the quality of life, destroys human and social capital, damages relationship between citizens and the states, thus undermining democracy, rule of law and the ability of the country to promote development (Adebayo, 2013).

The International Crisis Group (2016) also observed that since its emergence in 2009, Boko Haram insurgents have subjugated women in rhetoric and actions because of the intense vulnerability of women in the Northeast.

The role of the Nigerian mass media in creating awareness of conflicts of different sorts and providing platforms for the resolution of the conflicts cannot be over-emphasised. Both the government and the insurgents need the media to reach the public on their operations, recruitment, gains and propaganda exploits. The media have, as a matter of duty, followed Section 22 of the 1999 Constitution which states that "the press, radio, television and other agencies of mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people" (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2011, p. 30). Thus, as the fourth estate of the realm, the Nigerian press has the onerous task of keeping surveillance on the government as well as the superstructures and institutions of government. During the period of peace and conflict, the mass media are expected to keep surveillance of

the polity. This role the Nigerian media have played to a great extent with certain levels of successes and failures.

Conflict parties and terrorists seek to be noticed and the mass media are often unwittingly available for their use. For example, the terrorists get the publicity they covet from the media as they attack embassies, airliners, major commercial targets, churches, mosques and other public gatherings. The media often come-up with banner headlines of such conflict and terrorism incidences. In the light of their role in this respect, a lot of studies have been carried out on how Nigerian mass media have fared in their reportage of conflicts. Gever and Essien's (2017:1) study revealed that "the two newspapers' content analysed only covered the conflict as it happened but little attention was paid to victims of the conflict". Amenaghawon (2017) asserted that the selected newspapers in his study used more episodic frames (69%) than thematic frames (31%) and that they also preferred news formats to other editorial formats. Amenaghawon further submits that it was glaring that the newspapers used more episodic frames than thematic frames because the former focuses on immediate, direct and timely framing of events, while the latter gives more detail and background to reports. In another clime, O'regan's (2007) in his study found that the number of news items on conflicts topic was more prevalent in newspaper stories he examined than the news items covering peace, peace-building or international diplomatic issues.

The findings of the scholars articulated above uphold the dictum that bad news is good news among media practitioners. In the same light, glamourizing tragic issues to stimulate revengeful actions in the audience or to prove that some oppressors enjoy immunity or impunity while Glamorizing their dastardly actions breed social unrest (Adelakun, 2017, p. 230). Thus, sensational media themes in reaction to conflict episodes have the capacity to escalate conflicts rather than help to reduce tension. In a hurry to break the news, in many instances, the media fail to use their editorial to comment on conflict thus failing in their task of correlating and mediating issues for the public good. Hamdink (2008) cited in Amenaghawon (2017) posited that although there may be doubts about the media's peacemaking potentialials it can

be demonstrated that news media can make matters a lot worse and can certainly contribute to the escalation of group conflicts into mass killings. This is especially so when media workers become agents for the dissemination of the elimination of belief or prejudice or revenge mission and when the media are intentionally used as weapons to incite people to commit crimes against humanity.

The media are not angels. They are prone to make errors of omission or commission. In an editorial, The Punch (2019, p. 20) posited that "there is no denying the fact that the media covering fast-breaking news events on a 24-hour cycle, are prone to mistakes" The Punch Editorial further averred that errors of fact, bias and misguided news judgment are foibles of the media profession.

Specific research on how the media reported Boko Haram attacks include that of Okoro & Chukwuma (2012) which focused on the audience's opinions on media reportage of Boko Haram. Alao & Uwom (2012) embarked on a comparative analysis of how the newspapers handled the stories on Boko Haram, looking at ownership and location of the newspapers as parameters for the handling styles. In another light, Okoro &Odoemelam (2013) examined the dominant frame used by the newspapers.

Although scholars have written a lot on media reportage of insurgency, militancy and other armed conflicts in Nigeria, there is still a dearth of literature on the implications of the strategies employed by the print media in producing positive or negative narrative and effect on the psyche of the populace. Thus, the objective of this paper is to further intellectual engagement on the functional and dysfunctional media usage in peace-building as a management strategy in conflict situations. Therefore, this paper examined the effects of the print media handling of the conflicts on the psychology of the people as a means of escalating or de-escalating Boko Haram insurgency. Research questions investigated are: What are the framing techniques used by the selected media? What are the possible conflict de-escalators arising from the style of reportage? What are the possible conflict escalators arising from the style of reportage? What are the probable effects of the Media handling style of insurgency on peace-building? Meanwhile, it is

germane that some concepts are examined to clarify what they mean in this study.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Insurgency is perhaps the most controversial concept to define in the world today. This is made more problematic due to a blurred distinction between legitimate act of resistance and criminal act of insurgency. Despite these difficulties, however, insurgency could be conceptualized as the politically motivated acts of violence perpetrated against civilian targets with the aim of inflicting mass causalities, instilling fear and creating a sense of insecurity and affecting a change in the policies and action of the government (Nolan, 1998). Thus, any act by dissidents and non-state actors that involves the use of force is taken in this study as insurgency. Insurgency is a crime against the state, cultural values and power relations in any given society. In a strict legal definition, crime is a violation of the criminal law, which is subsequently followed by legal punishment (Dambazau, 2007).

Insurgency is an organized crime which takes different forms and dynamics in today's world. Hoffman (1999) analyzed the changing face of insurgency, pointing to the fact that it is often viewed as a means of communicating a message and using violence as a way to further solidify the triumph of the perpetrators' cause. Hoffman concluded that terrorism as a form of insurgency is a complex issue and does not occur in a vacuum but is instead a product of complex interactions between individuals, organizations and the environment.

It is sometimes said that insurgency is a weapon of the powerless. Insurgency is most often fueled by individuals and groups who are very dissatisfied with the status quo and have come to believe in the need to use violence because they see no other way to facilitate change. "Insurgency is also seen as a violent product of an unequal distribution of power on local, national, or global levels". (Forest, 2012:5). Though the cause of insurgency may be domestic however the fact remains that there are no insurgent activities without external orientation (Mudasiru, 2011). There are usually forces outside of the

political entity driving and supporting insurgents to sustain their campaign against the state.

Most insurgent groups have been accused of terrorism by the state. The term terrorism refers to the systematic use of threat of violence to communicate a political massage. Hoffman (1999) opined that terrorism is the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change and to create power where there is none or to consolidate power where there is very little. Terrorism is perpetrated through intimidation or instilling fear. Terrorism involves the deliberate use of violent and criminal acts (suicide bombing, sabotage, abduction, kidnapping etc.) to strike fear (terror) and produce other psychological effects by organized clandestine groups in pursuit of political, ideological, religious and other sectarian objectives that challenge and seek to overthrow the status quo within and across states (Osaghae, 2013). Thus, the targets of terrorism are symbolic and the victims of terrorism represent a wider audience. To achieve a maximum shock effect, terrorist violence is usually dramatic, episodic and provocative.

According to Abimbola & Adesote (2012), there are various forms of terrorism which include state-bound, non-state terrorism and terrorism across national boundaries. Whatever form or dimension it takes the bottom-line is that terrorism is a well-planned and well-executed inimical exploit by human beings to destroy fellow human beings and properties through the use of violence. Insurgency and terrorism are two sides of a coin as they both entail the use of violence. Violence is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the intentional use of physical force of power, threatened or actual against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injuries, death psychological harm. In most instances, achievements derivable from insurgency do not justify the wanton human and material resources wasted over the period of action.

Framing is presented in the context of this study as a concept although it was developed as a theory by Gregory Bateson in 1972. He defined psychological frame as a "spatial and temporary bounding of

set of interactive messages" (Bateson, 1972, p. 197). The concept has attracted different definitions thereafter. Many scholars who have espoused the concept in communication agreed that it is the way the media present a particular story through the use of media space and techniques in a manner that affects the way audiences perceive the event being reported. For instance, Chong and Druckman, (2007, p. 2) opined that "what is particularly vexing in public opinion research is a phenomenon known as "framing effects." which "occur when (often small) changes in the presentation of an issue or an event produce (sometimes large) changes of opinion" Framing may be defined as the way by which people conceptualize an issue or direct their thinking about an issue due to the way it is presented. Framing has now developed into a full theory in communication. It is posited that "the major premise of framing theory is that an issue can be viewed from a variety of perspectives and be construed as having implications for multiple values or considerations" (Chong and Druckman, 2007, p.3). Outcome of framing arising from the audiences' perception has also been tagged as dimension (Riker 1990), a consideration (Zaller 1992), a value (Sniderman 1993), or a belief (Ajzen& Fishbein 1980).

In essence "how something is presented to the audience (called "the frame") influences the choices people make about how to process that information (Arowolo, 2017). This suggests that there is no definite presentation model in the way individuals and the media present information to their audiences as they are at liberty to employ pre-defined and narrow conceptualisation to emphasise relative salience of attributes of issues. Presentations are as varied as much as the encoders of information for consumption are varied. Presentations are dependent on intended and unintended motives of communication. In explaining this phenomenon in media practice, Ette, (2012) cited in Adelakun (2017) noted that framing influences public behaviours by choosing from various attributes of news-story and make one salient in relation to what effect to be triggered in the audience.

Framing in communication helps to promote the definitions and interpretations the audiences give to political issues" (Shah, Watts, Domke & Fan 2002., p. 343). The presentation of such issues both in

graphic, priming, timing and emphasis draws the attention and cognitive processing of such issues to different heights in comparison to other issues that daily flood the media space. However, it is argued that framing distributions of public preferences are arbitrary, and that political elites can use the media to manipulate popular preferences to serve elite interests.

Studies in media framing (Amenaghawon, 2017; Obaje, 2017; Powell, 2011; O'regan, 2007; Bruken, 2006 and Auerbach, & Bloch-Elkon, 2005) gave credence to the postulation that the mass media attract the public attention to certain incident, event or people and decide what people perceive or think about the incident, event or people as a result of the manner of presentation. Auerbach & Bloch-Elkon (2005) averred that when media place stories in specific frames, they lend a different meaning to the news. Framing draws the public's eye to media stories and dictates how audience will comprehend messages embedded in the stories. The "alternative phrasings of the same basic issue significantly alter its meaning to respondents, even when the change in connotation is not immediately identifiable by the researcher" (Zaller 1992, p. 34). In the same vein, Auerbach & Bloch-Elkon (2005, p. 13) posited that "framing assumes that subtle changes in the wording of the description of a situation might affect how audience members think about the situation." Frames are determined by sources, reporters, journalists, editors and in some cases owners who are responsible for the publication of media stories. Frames may be intentionally captioned to achieve specific goals or may be accidentally designed and lead to unintended outcome. Frames may be classified to episodic, straight news or thematic categories for the purpose of research.

MEDIA DEPENDENCY THEORY

Media Dependency Theory was propounded by Ball-Rokeach and DeFluer (1976). It is grounded on the classical sociological assumption that media and their audiences should be studied in the context of larger social systems. a systematic approach to the study of the effects of mass media on audiences and of the interactions between media, audiences, and social systems (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019). The central idea of

the theory is that the audiences depend on media information to meet their needs and attain certain set goals. It is argued by the proponents that social and political institutions and media systems interact with audiences to create needs, interests, and motives in the person. The degree of dependence is said to be influenced by media entertainment, monitoring of government activities, education, and social cohesion functions. It is therefore apposite to propose the hypothesis that social stability is determined by how the media project social change and conflict which are inevitable ingredients of human interactions. It is thus proposed that when conflicts are high and there are challenges facing established institutions, beliefs, and practices people make new evaluations and choices through the information they garner from the media and act accordingly.

The fulfillment of the audiences' needs and goals especially those far removed from their domains is reliant on the resources provided by the media through her numerous platforms. In industrialized and information-based societies, individuals tend to develop a dependency on the media to satisfy a variety of their needs, which can range from a need for information on a political candidate's policy positions (to help make a voting decision) to a need for relaxation and entertainment (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019). Reliance on media increases especially when people are far removed from the theatre of conflict. In a nutshell, people depend on the media to form opinions and develop an attitude towards the actors in conflict and the conflict itself. In the same vein, in a conflict situation, the belligerents depend on the media for value inculcation and reinforcement, waging and winning conflicts, as well as recruitment of fighters and mobilization of supporters and sympathisers. Therefore, media framing and priming of conflict-related issues determine how people perceive and react to them. This is why media scholars have advocated conflict-sensitive journalism. It is posited that training institutions need to adopt and adapt the conflict-sensitive training manual proposed by UNESCO (Howard 2009). Jimoh (2114) submitted that a critical evaluation of how the various newspapers in Nigeria framed their stories revealed a near absence of conflict sensitivity on the Jos crisis and , therefore,re

proposed the media weigh the effects of their stories on the society before publishing as they also need a peaceful and secure environment to ply their trade.

Media Dependency theory is an offshoot of uses and gratification media theory as the media do not create needs rather people turn to media to achieve gratification and satisfy needs created by them or created by instincts or social milieu. The needs to be satisfied through the media may be personal, social, cultural, political or economic. Scholars have applied dependency theory to the study of traditional and new media effects on the media audiences. For example, Jung (2012) examined social media use and goals after the Great East Japan Earthquake using MySpace, Facebook and Twitter messages. Adam (2010) averred in his study that in the case of social media, the power of the media is dependent on the relationship between the information provider and information consumer which may not be determined by specific people or positions and submitted that his finding is consistent with what the theory suggests. The degree of dependence is directly proportional to the individual. As a media interface is able to satisfy an individual need, he/she will become more dependent on such medium satisfy more of his/her needs. During conflict media dependency dramatically increases because there is a strong need for information, support and advice by the populace. However, if alternative sources fill the audience needs for information about the conflict, then it will reciprocally decrease the media dependence hypothesis. Baran and Davis's (2008) criticisms of dependency theory has to do with the problem of variability in micro-level and macro-level, difficulty in empirically verifying intentions, unclear meaning and power of dependency and using it in explaining long-term effects. Media effects in most cases are short-lived. However, for the purpose of this study, the dependency theory is apposite in view of the fact that Nigerian audiences depend on the media for their safety needs during the periods of war and conflicts. Information garnered from the media enable them to develop feelings of security or fear, hate or love, hope or disillusionment. Dependency theory as regards effect

on media users is intricately linked to media framing of events as in this instance incidences of Boko Haram insurgency.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative content analysis of print media messages on the Boko Haram insurgency was carried out through inter-coder engagement. Content analysis of four newspapers out of a total of 362 newspaper titles said to be in print Nigeria's Fourth Republic (Nigerian Press Council, 2017) was carried out. Two hundred contents relating to insurgency and terrorism in each of Punch, Vanguard, Daily Trust and Guardian newspapers published between 2009 and 2018 were randomly selected. The period of the study falls within time Boko Haram activities became anti-establishment. The frames and possible effects of contents randomly selected were thematically codified by four independent coders including the researcher following the agreed coding template. In all, a total of 800 print media contents were content analysed. In the preliminary analysis using 5% of the sampled newspaper contents, Krippendorff's alpha (α), was used to test for the inter-coder reliability coefficient as well as percentage of inter-coder agreement for the variables involved. Deen Freelon's inter-coder reliability calculator (ReCal3) test on the variables (Freelon, 2013) gives satisfactory inter-coder reliability coefficients with (α> 0.7), as suggested by Lombard, Snyder-Duch, and Bracken (2002) and the percentage of inter-coder agreement of 97% (Freelon, 2013). Simple figures and tables were used to present reports of data obtained while media dependency theory was used to explain findings in the narrative.

INSURGENCY IN NIGERIA

Insurgency as a form of militancy actually started in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria and it has lingered for too long thus becoming protracted. Years of oil and gas exploration, degradation and neglect have created a restive environment in which militarized section of the communities are ready to adopt asymmetric forces in their confrontation with the state. The Niger Delta today is a region of intense violence and criminal activities as insurgency has become a regular

phenomenon through the activities of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni people (MOSOP), Niger Delta Avengers, Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) and a host of other militia groups who anchor their protests on environmental destruction and neglect of the oil-rich region.

The Boko Haram train joined insurgency in Nigeria in 2009. In the last one decade the territorial integrity of Nigeria has seriously been threatened by this insurgents' group that has been tagged terrorists group by the United State of America. Initially, Boko Haram was a way of thinking, politically driven philosophy, loosely organized grassroots insurrection against the Abuja government and the traditional Muslim establishment as well as those they felt marginalized them (Campbell, 2011). In a twist of approach, Boko Haram insurgents have unleashed terror in the Northeastern part of Nigeria in the last ten years leading to the death of over two thousand people and displacement of thousands of persons. After nearly a decade of extremists' violence perpetrated by Boko Haram, it seems Nigeria government still does not have an effective strategy for dismantling it.

Boko Haram insurgency has attracted attention among scholars. Examining the causes of Boko Haram, Fabunmi, Jonh, Ndagana, Bulama, Alimba and Sakiyo (2018) posited that structurally, insurgencies most often occur in poorly developed or inequitable political, social or economic conditions of which the northeast of Nigeria where Boko Haram is domiciled serves as an example of a society that suffers socio-economic depravity. The number of illiterates, unemployed youths and al-majiri population in the Northeast of Nigeria are indices of under-development, backwardness and inequality. Thus, it could be affirmed that the emergence of Boko Haram was attributable to the maturation of long festering extremist impulses that run deep in the social reality of northern Nigeria. Fabunmi et al (2018) therefore proposed vocational education as counterinsurgency strategy. In the same vein, Mohammed (2014) cited in Fabunmi et al (2018) blamed the development of Boko Haram worldwide resurgence of radical Islam, the general decline in the living conditions of many in Muslim-majority areas, urban destitution, and

rural decay. The population of beggars and other social miscreants in the six states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe, ravaged by the sect is a pointer to social fragmentation and state failure.

Boko Haram sect is pre-occupied with carrying out various attacks on civilians in order to undermine state security structure and their activities have recently been described as domestic terrorism. It is, however doubtful if the Boko Haram sect still remains a domestic terrorism given its seeming connection with other international sect such as Hamas, ISWAP and Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). This can also be argued from the activities of the Boko Haram insurgency which have been destabilizing socio-economic activities in the membership countries (Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad) of Lake Chad Basin Region. The activities of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Region, where the herdsmen and fishermen are domiciled, have also impeded grazing and other agricultural activities and have led to massive relocation of the herdsmen and other individuals to other parts of the countries around Lake Chad Region and the world for survival. This forced movement has increased refugee flow and unprecedented displacement of persons and has necessitated the formation of Multination Joint Task Force.

Mediatisation of Insurgency in Nigeria

Both the government, Boko Haram insurgents and the general public have used the print media in the prosecution of the conflict in the northeast. For example, Osaghae (2013) affirmed that terrorist groups have become ever more sophisticated in employing the benefits of modern technologies in warfare propaganda, information and communication in their struggles to win hearts and minds and defeat their perceived enemies. On daily basis the news media are awash with stories of insurgent activities in the Northeast. In most cases they carry banal headlines which readily call attention and draw agenda for public discourse. The insurgents use this pliability of the media to call attention of the populace to their power and ability to wreak havoc and discredit government for its inability to provide security for the people. The government is most times vilified by the citizens

forgetting that insurgency is not a conventional warfare whereby government can map out effective strategy to quell opposition.

The media have inadvertently provided warfronts in their newspaper pages whereby the insurgents threaten and intimidate the populace and enthrone their audacity to confront legitimate state power. For instance, Boko Haram link with international terrorists has been orchestrated in the media as a weapon to present a larger-than-life image of the group. The spokesperson of the group had boasted in the mass media that they had established links with the Algerian Salafist group, now known as Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which gave them training on combat and use of improvised Explosive Devices (IEDS). From training acquired in AQIM, it was gathered that members of Boko Haram were able to show dexterity in handling of weapons and manufacture of what is called "dirty bombs" through improvised explosive devices (Abimbola & Adesote, 2012). On 24 November, 2011 a purported spokesman for Boko Haram, Abul Qaqa stated: "it is true that we have links with Al-Qaeda. They assist us and we assist them". Publication of all these in both the traditional and new media has added to the prolongation of the war and has whittled than the impact of counter-terrorism campaign. It is apposite at this juncture to list some of the banal headlines used in media reportage that have emboldened Boko Haram insurgents and discredited government in the last four years:

> "Teenage suicide bomber kills at least 16 at Nigerian bus station". the Guardian.
>
> "Multiple blasts in Maiduguri — News — The Guardian Nigeria". Guardian.ng. 2016-11-19. "Boko Haram attacks to wn in Yobe". Nigerian Tribune. 7 February 2017.
>
> "Boko Haram terrorists kill 11 in Maiduguri - Tribune". Tribuneonlineng.com.
>
> Four killed in suicide attack in Cameroon's restive north". Vanguard News. 13 September 2017. "Boko Haram kills village chief imam, four others in Borno". Punch Newspapers. 18 September 2017.

"Boko Haram mine kills mom, two children". Punch Newspapers. 30 October 2017.
"Nigeria mosque attack: suicide bomber kills dozens". The Guardian. 21 November 2017.
"Boko Haram kills four loggers in NE Nigeria". The Guardian. 30 December 2017.
"Nigeria: death toll in Boko Haram attack on loggers rises to 25". The Guardian. 1 January 2018.
"Boko Haram kill 20 loggers in Borno". The Guardian. 12 January 2018.
"Four dead, 44 injured as suicide bomber blows self-up in Maiduguri IDP camp". Vanguard News. 1 February 2018.
"Boko Haram hits Chad, Cameroon, kills 7". Vanguard News. 23 February 2018.
"Five killed in separate [sic] attacks in Borno villages". Vanguard News. 6 March 2018.
"Boko Haram kills 10 in three separate attacks in Borno". Vanguard News. 7 March 2018.
Boko Haram bombers now attacking private residences — Army - Punch Newspapers
"VIDEO: Six killed, nine others wounded in Maiduguri attack – Police". Punch Newspapers. 27 April 2018.
"Four killed in multiple suicide blasts in Maiduguri". The Guardian. 4 May 2018.
"6 female suicide bombers kill 32, injure 84 in Damboa". Daily Trust. 17 June 2018.
"Suicide bombers target military market in Borno". The Guardian. 21 June 2018.
"Boko Haram attack leaves 15 soldiers dead". Vanguardngr.com. 11 October 2018.

A few of the reports of the gains made by government troops in the fight against Boko Haram insurgency are hereunder listed:

Troops kill 30 Boko Haram members in failed ambush — News — The Guardian Nigeria

"Troops clear more enclaves in Sambisa Forest". The Nation, Nigeria. 2 March 2018.

In furtherance of this study, a qualitative content analysis of these and others stories was carried out to determine their framing categories.

MEDIA FRAMING OF BOKO HARAM ATTACKS

The stories on Boko Haram in the four selected newspapers are categorized into different frames in the table below.

Table 1: Framing Techniques Used in the Reportage of Boko Haram Insurgency

Framing	Punch	Vanguard	Daily Trust	Guardian	Total
Straight news	37	54	53	42	186
Episodic	136	115	128	96	475
Thematic	27	31	19	62	139
Total	200	200	200	200	800

A total of 200 posts were sampled for each of the newspapers totalling 800 stories.

Table 1 revealed that the selected newspapers used more episodic frames in the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency with 475 of the 800 reports using episodic frames. Only 139 of the reports used thematic frames while 186 used straight news. The newspapers seem to use episodic frames to alert the public to the danger posed by Boko Haram. The episode frames used banal headlines which easily attract readership.

CONFLICT DE-ESCALATORS IN THE STYLE OF REPORTAGE

The way the media present a conflict story determines people reaction to it. In instance where the media are conflict sensitive in their reportage, they are more likely to receive intended responses from the public. Such intended responses may be to create awareness about the

conflict and warn people to be sensitive to their environment and allay fears. These intended responses may be achieved through media presentation of an issue, an event or an incident from a particular perspective at the exclusion of other available alternative perspectives. Media emphasis on an issue is determined by the use of language, headlines or prominence in placement of the story and amount of coverage.

Table 2: Positive Media Reportage of Boko Haram Insurgency

Indices	Punch	Vanguard	Daily Trust	Guardian	Total
Informative	45	43	48	48	184
Encouraging	39	66	46	44	195
Analytical	21	28	22	33	104
Mediating	49	45	46	33	173
Countering	46	18	38	42	144
Total	200	200	200	200	800

A total of 200 posts were sampled for each of the newspapers totalling 800 stories.

The table above shows that the creation of awareness the and relay of information is the central foci of media coverage and because of their sensational nature create negative perspectives. As earlier noted, sensationalism sometimes arises from unnecessary emphasis on certain issues in a bid to ensure that issues are promptly brought to public knowledge in order to arouse public sympathy (Ransohoff & Ransohoff, 2001). Analysis, mediating and countering all scored less than average of the contents analysed. These findings revealed that the print media are doing less in building peace in conflict situations. Their central concern is to roll out information that will sell their copies and attract readership. In an ideal situation, the media should provide features, viewpoints and editorial that will assist government in

providing counter narratives, options and arguments for peaceful co-existence.

CONFLICT ESCALATORS IN THE STYLE OF REPORTAGE

Media messages can also be of negative value to the audience. The packaging of such messages may be deliberately tilted towards achieving undesirable outcome if the source has some ulterior motives. The motives may include bias, parochial interests, economic consideration or political lining.

Table 3: Negative Media Reportage of Boko Haram Insurgency

Indices	Punch	Vanguard	Daily Trust	Guardian	Total
Sensational	47	46	54	34	181
Frightening	51	43	21	51	166
Judgemental	26	37	44	32	139
Parochial	34	28	36	47	145
Inciting	42	46	45	36	169
Total	200	200	200	200	800

A total of 200 posts were sampled for each of the newspapers totalling 800 stories

Sensational, misleading, judgemental, parochial as well as inciting contents were found in the newspapers. Most of the sensational contents were skewed along ownership of the newspapers. For example, Vanguard has more sensational news about Boko Haram than about IPOB. This aligns with the framing analysis that revealed that the media framed Boko Haram incidents around Islamic religion and the North. Religious references were always captioned in banner headlines and displayed in prominent positions in the pages of newspapers whose owners are of southern extraction. This finding is consistent with Park and Zhang (2012) findings using framing analysis in the investigation of news media coverage of the race of the

perpetrator in the 2007 Virginia Tech shootings which revealed that the media framed the VT incident around the perpetrator's ethnicity and generalized criminal culpability to his ethnic group and posited that racial and ethnic references were also sometimes displayed in prominent positions. This type of framing creates suspicion and distrust among the different ethnic or racial groups living together in a polity and tends to localise Boko Haram insurgency as the problem of Islamisation and the North.

Table 4: Probable Effects of Media Handling of Insurgency on Peacebuilding

Indices	Punch	Vanguard	Daily Trust	Guardian	Total
Fear	36	41	44	45	166
Apathy	26	27	26	26	105
Distrust	22	33	11	38	104
Hopelessness	36	28	36	22	122
Optimism	26	21	25	15	87
Confidence	15	16	16	14	61
De-radicalisation	26	22	25	21	94
National Integration	13	12	17	19	61
Total	200	200	200	200	800

A total of 200 posts were sampled for each of the newspapers totalling 800 stories

The table above showed that the media have created fear, apathy, distrust and hopelessness in many instances through the framing of their stories. On the other hand, optimism, confidence building, de-radicalisation and national integration occurred less in the

newspapers' contents analysed. The media practitioners need to work on these areas of neglect. Adelakun (2017) had earlier advised that the development attribute of sensational stories could be made salient to lessen the damage such effect of the story could cause in the development focus of the media as he opined that framing is in no belittled way a theoretical justification through which the social responsibility of the media towards development can be achieved.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effect of the media in the escalation and/or de-escalation of i insurgency and armed conflicts in Nigeria from 1999 to date. Qualitative content analysis of print media reports on the Boko Haram insurgency. A situation analysis of the nexus between media messages and security or/and insecurity as indexes of peace-building was arrived at. Findings revealed that although the media have enhanced awareness of the conflicts and the strategies being employed by governments in the conflict hot spots, however, it was also revealed that the media are susceptible to manipulation by the non-state actors to create fear and whittle down governments' interventions thus triggering hopelessness and anger among the populace. The paper concludes that although the media roles in handling conflicts are beneficial, problems still exist in the utilization of media for communication of peace efforts as their uses are sometimes counter-productive to peace-building. Knowledge-driven capacity building for the people is needed in order to develop the required skills to discern and scrutinize media messages as a conflict-sensitivity imperative. The media practitioners also need regular training in peace and conflict-sensitive journalism. The media as well as government need to embark on the aggressive promotion of counter-narratives to de-radicalize the populace who have been biased against the state actors

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