

FRAMING OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL CRISES IN JOS, PLATEAU STATE NIGERIA BY TWO SELECT NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract

The escalation of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigerian cities, particularly in the northern region, is alarming. These conflicts jeopardize the unity and peaceful coexistence among diverse ethnic, religious and political groups. However, the Nigerian press, as the society's watchdog, has covered these crises, exacerbating challenges faced by the federal government in addressing them. This paper explores how Nigerian newspapers frame and report conflicts based on ethnicity, politics and religion in Jos, Plateau State Nigeria. It utilizes the framing theory as a lens to examine how these newspapers report these conflicts. Employing a quantitative approach, content analysis, the study examines the content of the *Daily Trust* and *Leadership* newspapers, focusing on frequency, story types, frame dominance, prominence, and tone. A code sheet was developed to systematically categorize the articles according to these variables, ensuring consistency and reliability in the analysis process. The code sheet used in this study categorized and analyzed content from a total of 290 editions of both newspapers. The findings of the study indicate that *Daily Trust* and *Leadership* newspapers primarily frame their coverage of ethnic, political and religious conflicts in Jos, Plateau State through a religious lens, often emphasizing negative tones of violence. These stories are commonly placed on the front pages and mostly presented in a straight news format. The study emphasizes the importance of diversifying storytelling approaches, promoting peace-oriented narratives, and ensuring easy accessibility of conflict-related stories. Implementing these recommendations can facilitate constructive reporting and contribute to peacebuilding efforts in conflict-affected areas.

Keywords: Newspaper Coverage, Ethno-Religious, Political, Conflict, Framing

Introduction

Nigeria's socio-political and economic landscape has been blighted by the endemic twin, religious and ethnic violence. The widespread frustration and deep sense of insecurity to life and property, occasioned by this epidemic, has become a matter of grave concern to the government, security agencies, and the Nigerian citizenry at large (Nwosu, 2003). Neither the urban nor rural areas are immune to civil, ethnic, political, and religious violence which, in the last decade, have plagued Nigeria and currently threaten to tear communities and ethnic groups apart. The state of insecurity in Nigeria today is such that it is not an overstatement to conclude that the Nigerian nation is under heavy siege. In Kaduna, Kano, and Jos, Plateau State, for example, the spirit of oneness, peace, and unity among the various groups that have been living together for decades has vanished as the residential patterns now take the form of 'we' versus 'them'. The situation has become most critical, consequent upon the apparent helplessness of the security agencies to stem the tide of the crises. Falola (1998) asserts that when the country won its independence in 1960, the most destabilizing factor was ethnicity. Religion has also been identified as another factor. As Soola (2009) opines, the current spate of crime and violence in Nigeria dates back to the end of the Nigerian civil war in 1970 when arms began to filter through into unauthorized hands.

Nigeria has grappled with bitter experiences of violent conflicts, particularly in the form of ethno-religious crises since the early 1980s. The 19 states constituting Northern Nigeria have become recurrent theaters for conflicts, ranging from the Maitatsine crises in Kano (1980) to the Jos conflicts in 2004, 2008, and 2010, among others. Ikenga Metuh's identification of three broad types of religious conflicts— intra-religious, inter-religious with socio-ethnic dimensions, and inter-religious conflicts with socio-economic origins—underscores the complex nature of these clashes. However, such categorization according to him are not mutually exclusive, because issues that are at stake in any conflict may traverse several domains, culture, ethnicity, religion, economy, politics, race and gender. Nonetheless it is common in the literature to classify intra-group or inter-group antagonism and aggression as class, political, cultural, racial, ethnic and religious conflicts.

Considering the dichotomy of the media as both a potential instigator of violence and a tool for conflict resolution (Howard, cited in Ozohu-Suleiman, 2013), the critical question arises: Are Nigerian media outlets, in their coverage of ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, driven by commercial motives and vested interests that could exacerbate conflicts, or are they fulfilling their professional duty to promote conflict resolution and peacebuilding?

Baran (2004) posits that the media holds a selective mirror of society where images are not portrayed equally because some things may appear bigger than they truly are; some may appear smaller, while some may disappear altogether. By referring to the mirror as being selective, Baran actually meant the biases and irresponsibility in media reportage of various societal issues of which ethnicity and religion are part. However, no matter how selective the media's image could be, one way of keeping in touch with our contemporary world is still through the media. It constitutes a major pillar that shapes, nurtures, and builds the society. Its traditional roles to inform, educate, and entertain the public are so crucial that societies can hardly progress meaningfully without the media. This is why it is said that the media is the 'watchdog of society', meaning that the media exist as an organ of information sourcing and dissemination, educational promotion, surveillance, social enlightenment, and mobilization (Ekeanyanwu, 2007).

In Nigeria, the interplay of ethnicity, religion, culture, and politics creates a web so intricate that conflicts between groups often swiftly morph into ethno-religious tensions. Alemika (2003) aptly notes that conflicts often transcend singular categorizations such as religious, economic, ethnic, cultural, or political, emphasizing the interconnectedness of these issues. In the Northern region of Nigeria, this intertwining is particularly pronounced, leading to conflicts being conveniently labeled as "ethno-religious" or identity conflicts (Egwu, 2004). In grappling with these incessant conflicts, one cannot overlook the pivotal role played by the mass media. A double-edged sword, as Howard (cited in Ozohu-Suleiman, 2013) eloquently puts it, the media can serve as a frightful weapon of violence when propagating messages of intolerance or as an instrument of conflict resolution when presenting reliable information, respecting human rights, and representing diverse views. The question arises: In the coverage of ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, Plateau State, which edge of the sword does the Nigerian press choose? Does it align with its commercial drive and vested interests, potentially fanning the flames of conflicts, or does it discharge its professional duties in a manner that fosters conflict resolution and peace-building.

This study adopts the term "ethno-religious" to encompass various identity-based violent conflicts in Jos, Plateau state, acknowledging their manifestations as ethnic, political, religious, or economic. The recurrent nature of these conflicts poses a severe threat to the socio-economic and political development of Nigeria, potentially compromising the country's corporate existence. The pervasive occurrence of

ethno-religious conflicts emerges as a recurring challenge hindering the peaceful coexistence and pursuit of development by diverse identities in Nigeria. This study therefore, investigates the nuanced portrayal of the ethno-religious crisis in Jos, Plateau State, as covered by two prominent Nigerian newspapers, *Daily Trust* and *Leadership*. Against the backdrop of longstanding conflicts that have plagued the region, the media's role in shaping public perceptions and influencing discourse on these issues becomes a focal point of analysis.

In light of the persistent ethno-religious conflicts plaguing Plateau state, with their devastating impact on lives and property, a myriad of crucial questions emerges, necessitating a comprehensive examination. The overarching concern revolves around understanding the profound negative effects of ethno-religious conflicts on the economic, social, and political development of the state, and by extension, the entire nation. A critical exploration is warranted into the contributory factors that drive mass media reportage towards either exacerbating or mitigating ethno-religious conflicts. Factors such as media ownership, geographical location, and the ethnic-religious affiliations of proprietors or editors come under scrutiny to discern their impact on the framing and tone of coverage. This investigation aims to unravel the complexities surrounding the role of mass media in ethno-religious conflict reportage, seeking to comprehend the inherent challenges in a diverse and pluralistic society like Nigeria.

Against this backdrop, the research embarks on an exploration of the occurrences and prevalence of ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau state, unraveling their root causes and critically examining the nuanced role that mass media plays. The overarching goal is to illuminate the imminent threat that ethno-religious conflicts pose to the national development of the Nigerian state at large, fostering an in-depth comprehension of these complexities and related issues within the context of the study. This study centres on the analysis of ethno-religious conflicts coverage by two select newspapers – *Daily Trust* and *Leadership* – in Jos, Plateau State, during the years 2022 and 2023. The selection of this timeframe is deliberate, aiming to capture recent peak periods of ethno-religious conflicts within the state.

With newspapers as the primary sources of information, the study seeks to conduct a comprehensive analysis of how the media reported on and framed these conflicts during the specified years. By narrowing the temporal scope to 2022 and 2023, this research aims to capture the immediacy and relevance of media coverage during times marked by heightened ethno-religious tensions. This specific focus provides a snapshot of the state of media engagement with ethno-religious conflicts, offering insights into the challenges and opportunities presented by the press in reporting such sensitive issues. The study's geographic focus on Jos, Plateau State, ensures a localized analysis that takes into account the unique dynamics of ethno-religious conflicts in this region. Through systematic content analysis, the research aims to uncover the nuances of media representation, framing strategies, and language used in reporting on ethno-religious crises during the chosen time period.

The main objective of this study is to examine the role of Nigerian newspapers, particularly *Daily Trust* and *Leadership*, in framing and covering ethno-religious issues, with a focus on;

1. The patterns and trends in the coverage of ethno-religious crises in Jos, Plateau State by selected newspapers,
2. To explore how the select newspapers frame ethno-religious crises by categorizing articles based on framing elements such as religious, political, or economic perspectives.
3. To investigate the language and tone employed in news articles, assessing whether it tends to be sensationalized, neutral, or peace-oriented.

4. To assess the extent of prominence given by *Daily Trust* and *Leadership* newspapers to issues concerning ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau state.

Literature Review

This study embarks on a thorough exploration of the ethno-religious conflicts permeating Jos and other regions on the Plateau, offering a comprehensive examination of the historical, social, and political intricacies that have both ignited and perpetuated these conflicts. The conceptual framework intricate weaves together diverse perspectives, unraveling the complexities of ethno-religious tensions within this specific geographical context.

The consequences of these conflicts have been profound, impacting various aspects of Plateau State's social, economic, and political landscape. The once vibrant city of Jos has experienced economic downturns due to widespread destruction of property, including the ultra-modern market. The communal harmony and trust between Muslims and Christians have eroded, leading to segregated living patterns. Furthermore, the conflicts have had ripple effects on political, economic, social, religious, and psychological development in Jos and its environs.

In the Plateau South Senatorial Zone, the conflicts have left indelible scars, leading to the declaration of a State of Emergency in 2004. Major General (rtd) Chris Ali was appointed as the Administrator during this period, indicating the severity and complexity of the situation. The zone acquired a reputation for being a notorious, violence-prone area, drawing international attention and outcry. The impact on different segments of the population has been multifaceted. Women, children, youths, and the aged have all borne the brunt of the conflicts. Allegations of abuses, atrocities against women, loss of lives, internal displacement, and violation of human rights, health problems, and increased criminal activities have become prevalent. The conflicts have not only disrupted education but also instilled a culture of violence, with citizens adopting self-help methods due to a loss of faith in government intervention.

In his work, Okafor (2008) examines the ethno-religious and communal conflicts that have befallen Nigeria since the return to civil rule in 1999. Using a Marxist conflicts perspective, Okafor argues that these violent conflicts are inherent in the socio-economic and political management of post-colonial Nigeria. However, he asserts that with the renewed attempt at entrenching democracy, the struggle for political and economic spaces has intensified among the various ethno-religious and political groups, making these conflicts inevitable. The paper also identifies poverty in the country occasioned by social and economic dislocation, ethnic and religious manipulations by the elite as the brain behind this spate of ethno-religious conflicts. He further argues that pluralism and diversity in Nigeria, abundant human and natural resources have deepened suspicion, hatred, and distrust among the people.

Ukoha (2003), in his work, examines the explosion of violent ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria, contrary to the expectation that the inauguration of civil rule will usher in stability and peace. He argues that the nature of the politics of the transition program and the reluctance of the civilian regime to address the national question led to the resurgence of social groups making demands for incorporation and empowerment. According to him, the central argument is that competition for power and the inability of the government to deliver dividends of democracy have resulted in violent conflicts between ethnic and religious groups.

It is conventional for the press to be magnetically interested in events that have a significant impact on people's lives. As Pate and Kurfi (2022, p.10) observe, "crisis, conflict, insecurity, disorder, and crime are

very attractive sources of news for the media." Okunna further describes that due to the nature of conflict and the media's inclination toward negativity as newsworthy situations, the media is attracted to conflicts like ants to sugar or honey (Okunna, 2004 cited in Okunna, 2017). She also adds that by giving more attention to conflicts, the media is strategically positioned to play a role that can either promote peace or escalate conflicts (Okunna, 2017). On this note, the press is expected to play a crucial role not only in providing information but also in contributing dispassionately to the discussion on how to respond and guarantee citizens' access to life-saving information.

Unfortunately, the Nigerian press is variously and evidently found neck-deep in inflaming the fire of ethno-religious conflicts in their coverage of Jos crises. A cursory look at the headlines of some newspapers will, without an iota of doubt, affirm that. For instance, Punch newspaper's headlines of September 10, 2001, read: "Plateau is the only predominantly Christian state in the north, and they are not happy about this." Headlines of this structure may be designed deliberately to poison the minds of Christians in Plateau state and nurture deep-seated animosity against members of the Muslim community. Other instances cited in (Dunu, Ugbo, and Bebenimibo, 2018); "Whether they like it or not, we will not allow any Muslim to be president in Nigeria again. I am declaring this as president of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)" (Dr. Sunday Mbang, in *Thisday*, Monday, July 31, 2000). This kind of piece exacerbates the dichotomies along religious and ethnic divisions, thereby instigating hatred against Muslims and Christians in the north.

Another headline by the *Sunday Tribune* of September 2009 read "Ex-head of state and governor behind Jos mayhem." This headline was telling evidence that the Nigerian press at some point works to deepen the level of ethno-religious conflicts in Jos and surroundings through insensitive reportage of the conflicts, even though the report did not come out clearly with names of the head of state and the governor. But the reporter stated that a former military head of state from the north sneaked into Jos before the crisis and also stated that the governor of Bauchi state supported him. *Daily Trust* of Sunday, 15th August 2021, carried a story of travelers' attack in Bukuru Jos with the headline that read "Irigwe youths kill 25 Fulani travelers in Jos, over 50 missing." This headline recklessly incited reprisal attacks by Fulani Muslims on any innocent Christians they found around where they are dominant as revenge. And this was given the most prominence as the main story on the cover page of that day's edition. In an opinion column published in *Daily Trust* and *The Nation Newspaper* in July 2012, Haruna described how the Nigerian press turns media logic upside down when reporting the conflicts in Jos just to emphasize the hatred and glaring dichotomies between Muslims and Christians. Haruna wrote: A case in point was last Sunday's shocking attack on mourners, allegedly by Fulani herders, at a burial ground in Jos, which resulted in the death of Senator Gyan Datong and the majority leader of the Plateau House of Assembly, Mr. Gyan Fulani. Virtually all the newspapers accepted the state government house's more sensational version of the events at face value, namely that the two prominent legislators were shot to death, apparently because this version conformed to their stereotype of evil, Christian-hating Hausa/Fulani Muslim. But what happened actually was that the two deceased died as a result of shock from an unexpected attack, which led to a stampede, but unfortunately, this did not make the headlines. The accuracy was revealed when Jona Jang asked Mwadkon, an eyewitness and a lucky survivor, to narrate how the two legislators died. "Everybody," said Mwadkon, "was racing away, but the senator slumped, and there was a race to take him." This was blatantly downplayed or absurdly ignored by the press reporting the incidence. This piece clearly pointed out the obvious disregard for fundamental principles of journalism of accuracy, balance, fairness, and objectivity by Nigerian press coverage, which he stressed that it is in times of conflict that the media ought to strive harder to uphold them, and only adherence to these and other time-honored tenets of professionalism can protect the media from being used by either side in a conflict for propaganda (Haruna, 2012).

Also, on its front page, the news magazine of 8th August 2001 cast an inflammatory headline that read "the jihadist invasion - how foreign fundamentalists wreak havoc in the north." This goes to show how the Nigerian press is being abused for the inherent power it has in setting the agenda and framing the stories that may have a devastating effect on society on its coverage of ethno-religious conflicts; instead of stories frames that can douse tension and help in conflict resolution and peace-building processes.

Since the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates of Nigeria in 1914, one major conflict that has constantly and incessantly reared its head against the unity of the country is identity-based conflicts, with religion and ethnicity as dominant variables. These series of ethno-religious conflicts witnessed in many parts of Nigeria, especially in the northern axis of the country, have not only hampered the nation's socio-economic and political development but also put to question the moral tenets and peaceful co-existence of the two dominant world religions in Nigeria (Islam and Christianity).

The resultant massive loss in human and material resources has continued to register its multiplier effects on all facets of the nation's socio-political, economic, and infrastructural development. These conflicts have had enormous negative consequences on the economy, especially on the poor masses, which are yet to be measured with a view to finding appropriate policies that will ameliorate the situation. Scholars from various fields have at various times highlighted the adverse effects of these conflicts on the socio-political development of the various areas engulfed in protracted conflicts and Nigeria as a nation. Celestine Bassey argues that violent conflicts generate social division, reverse economic progress, impede sustainable development, human rights violations, and that large population movements triggered by conflicts threaten the security and livelihood of the people in conflict.

The consequences of protracted violent conflicts on development in Africa, as noted by Celestine Bassey, have been catastrophic, with a linkage between conflict and underdevelopment crisis being non-linear but dialectical. The negative consequences include the destruction of human and physical capital, disruption of economic transactions, increased cost of conducting such transactions, and distortion of resource allocation by the state.

Dogara Je'adayibe Gwamna, in his article, examines the grave danger of religious conflicts, stressing the need for tolerance. He argues that external forces are at work in the crises and contribute greatly to the growing religious intolerance in Nigeria over the years. The NIPSS Research Final Report on "Religious Disturbances in Kano and Kaduna States" gives an account of how incessant conflicts led to the destruction of lives and property, emphasizing the need for the government to give reality to religious freedoms as contained in the Nigerian Constitution.

Ethno-religious conflicts pose a serious threat to national development because, in the long run, no country survives religious war. The paper is a study on religious tolerance in Nigeria and a call for measures to guide against religious conflicts. Examining the effects of violent conflicts in central Nigeria from a historical perspective, Bala Usman states that since 1980, communal conflicts have become more frequent, more widespread, and more violent and destructive of life and property.

Rotgak Gofwen, in his book, employs a sociological approach in his explanation of the spate of ethno-religious crises in Nigeria. His work covers between 1980 and 2001 and identifies how ethno-religious conflicts can hinder nation building. He argues that the incessant ethno-religious conflicts witnessed in Nigeria hamper nation building. Ateru in his thesis on "Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria," stresses that it is dangerous and anti-developmental. Ateru believes that ethnicity and religion are being manipulated by the elite for selfish motives. According to him, Nigeria faces the threat of disintegration because of ethno-religious conflicts. The negative consequences of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria, according to

Etanibi Alemika, are catastrophic because these conflicts threaten democracy, development, and human rights. The nation's aspirations for development and democracy, he said, cannot be realized under conditions of conflict and violence.

The National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) Special Report on conflicts and integration in Nigeria states that religious conflicts in Nigeria predate the contemporary period. According to this report, religious conflicts are the most significant, widespread, complicated, and dangerous form of conflicts in Nigeria. These conflicts, the report observes, "if not handled with care and urgently, are capable of tearing the country apart." The Report traced the main causes of religious conflicts in Nigeria as emerging from the conditions, relation, and structures of non-equity. These the report argues, have created regional, ethnic, religious differential hierarchies and alienation, political domination and oppression, and economic underdevelopment.

Orhewere (2004) conducted a study on Nigerian Newspaper's Coverage of the 2001 Tiv-Jukun Ethnic Conflict in the Middle Belt. His findings suggested that newspapers played a role as causal agents in the conflict. Yahaya (2011) investigated Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Kaduna and Plateau States, revealing social, economic, and political implications, emphasizing the division along religious lines. The study called for further research focusing on conflict prevention and management of ethno-religious crises in Nigeria. The present study aligns with Yahaya's (2011) emphasis on multi-pronged efforts involving government, religious leaders, stakeholders, and the media in preventing and managing ethno-religious conflicts.

Basorun (2015) analyzed the Reportage of Jos Crisis and Boko Haram Insurgence by Selected Newspapers, emphasizing the framing of issues by newspapers and recommending that media practitioners promote peace, universal brotherhood, justice, and human rights. Also, Yau (2017) conducted research on War or Conflict Sensitive Journalism, analyzing Newspaper Reportage of Southern Kaduna Conflicts in Nigeria. The study called for socialization and orientation of journalists into conflict-sensitive reporting principles. The collective findings from Nkechi (2012), Ummi (2014), Basorun (2015), and Yau (2017) reinforce the call for media responsibility in avoiding reports that incite violence and instead adopting reporting styles that contribute to peace and unity. This underscores the relevance of the present study in promoting responsible media practices amidst ethno-religious tensions.

Theoretical Perspective

In this study, the theoretical framework revolves around Framing Theory, which offers a lens through which to analyze how newspapers cover ethno-religious crises in Plateau State. Framing Theory, pioneered by Erving Goffman in 1974, explores how media outlets, including newspapers, shape public perception and interpretation of events by selecting, emphasizing, and presenting information within a specific frame or narrative. In the context of this study, Framing Theory serves as a foundational concept to understand the role of newspapers in constructing the narrative surrounding ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau State. Instead of merely reporting events, newspapers act as gatekeepers, deciding which aspects of the conflicts to highlight and how to frame them for the audience. Framing Theory suggests that media outlets influence public perception through selective attention and constructing meaning. In Plateau State, newspapers selectively focus on certain dimensions of ethno-religious conflicts, emphasizing particular events, groups, or perspectives. This selective attention contributes to shaping the audience's understanding and interpretation of the conflicts.

Moreover, Framing Theory highlights the importance of repetition and salience in media coverage. Newspapers in Plateau State may reinforce certain narratives or themes through repeated coverage, influencing how the audience perceives the conflicts and the actors involved. By applying Framing Theory to the study of newspapers coverage of ethno-religious crises in Plateau State, this research aims to uncover the framing effects on conflict dynamics. Specifically, it seeks to understand whether media narratives contribute to the escalation or de-escalation of conflicts in the region. Overall, Framing Theory provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing how newspapers in Plateau State frame ethno-religious crises, shaping public perception and potentially impacting conflict dynamics. This theoretical approach allows for a nuanced exploration of the complex interplay between media framing, ethno-religious conflicts, and societal implications in Plateau State, Nigeria

Methodology

The research design used in this study is Content Analysis. Content analysis was used to sort out the study of coverage of Ethno-religious Conflicts in Jos, Plateau State in the selected newspapers reflecting the research focus of this study. The population of this study is all the newspapers editions of the two selected newspapers published within the duration of the study, which is 1st January 2022 to 31st December 2023, making it a total of 24 months. This period of study was chosen because the conflict was a topical issue and contents surrounding it were published regularly. The research population is a total of 1460 editions published within the duration of the study. The result was gotten from the multiplication of the two newspapers by the 730 days of the 24 months of study. That is $2 \times 730 = 1,460$.

In arriving at the sample size, the study used Nwanna (1981) sample formula which prescribes 20% expected frequency value of the population as the population value. The formula states:

$$n = \frac{NV(p)}{100}$$

100

Where:

n = sample size, **NV** = Population Value, **P** = Expected frequency value

The population value for the three newspapers is 1460 editions.

$$\text{Thus: } n = \frac{1460(20)}{100}$$

100

$$n = 292$$

The sample size is 292. However, in order to achieve uniformity in distribution, the sample size was reduced to 290. Reducing the sample size does not affect the sample representativeness.

This study used the multi-stage sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique was used in the first stage. The researcher deliberately chooses samples to study by using the keyword 'Plateau Crisis' on the websites of the selected newspapers. The editions that had story publications on the topic were then selected for study. Again, using the purposive sampling technique, *Daily Trust* and *Leadership*

Newspapers out of the 28 leading national dailies, due to the fact that it is impossible to cover all the 28 national dailies within the period of study.

The quota sampling technique was used to apportion 145 issues each to the two selected dailies. “In a quota sample, subjects are selected to meet a predetermined or known percentage” (Wimmer and Dominick 2011, p.94). The instrument used for collecting data for the purpose of this research is the code-sheet. Coding is the assignment of numbers to content categories. The researcher adopted quantitative method in presenting, analysing and interpreting the data that were collected from the sample newspapers. In analysing the data, the coded data were presented in raw figures on tables and pie charts with their frequencies and their percentages in order to ultimately produce an empirical result for the study

Table 1: Distribution of Sampled Newspaper Issues

Newspaper	No of Issues Apportioned
<i>Daily Trust</i>	145
<i>Leadership</i>	145
Total	290

Source: Field work, 2024

The details are as follows:

Category A: Media: 1 – *Daily Trust*, 2 – *Leadership*

Category B: Page Placement/Position: 1 - Front page, 2 - Back page, 3 – Inside back page, 4 – Inside page.

Group C: Story Tone or Dominant News Frame 1. Violence, 2. Peace and security, 3. Chaos, 4. Reformation.

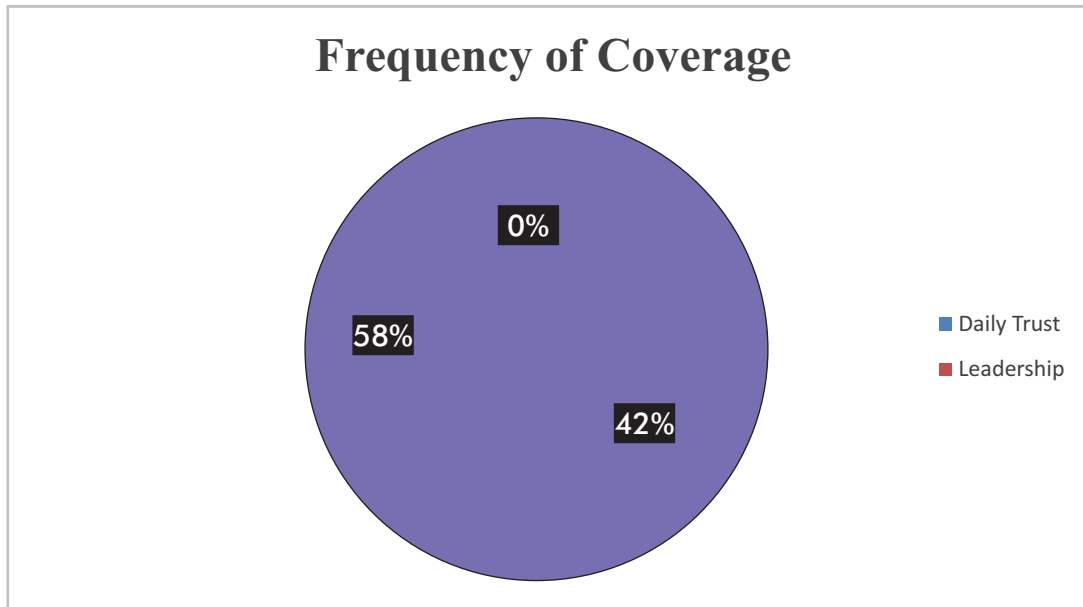
Category D: Story Type: 1- Straight News, 2 - Editorials, 3 - Features, 4 - Columns, 5- Opinion articles, 6 - Letters-to-the-editor, 7 - Picture story, 8 - Cartoon

Category E: Story Length 1. Less than quarter page, 2. Quarter page, 3. Half page, 4. Full page, 5. Above one page.

Findings

Table 2: Frequency of Coverage by the two selected Nigerian Newspapers

Newspapers	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Daily Trust</i>	167	58%
<i>Leadership</i>	123	42%
Total	290	100%



Source: Field work, 2024

Figure 4.1: showing Frequency of Coverage

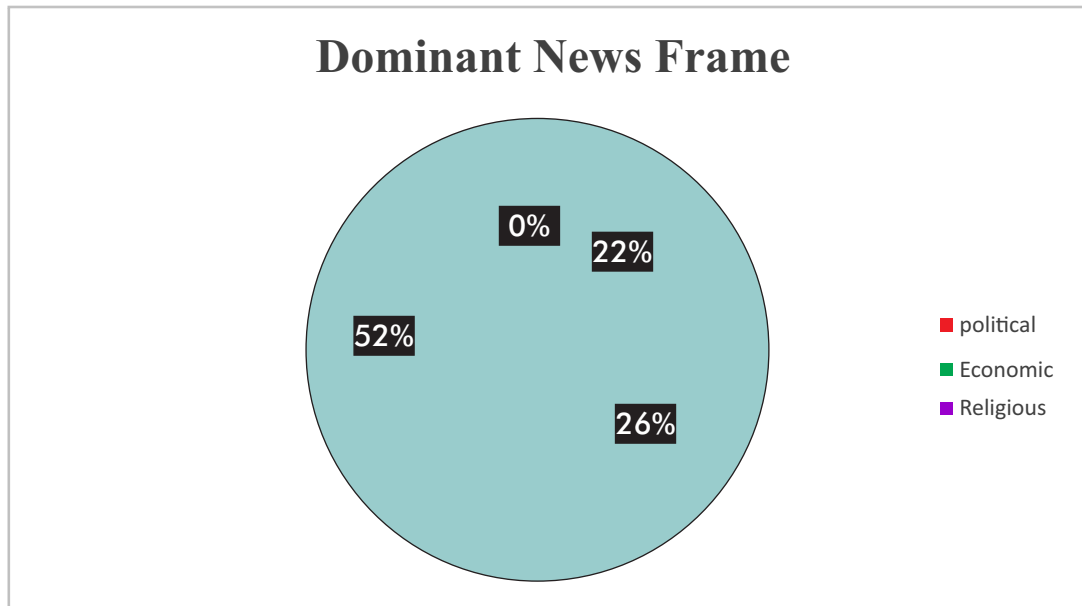
The results in Table 4.1 above shows the frequency of coverage of the Ethno religious Conflicts in Jos, Plateau State. It reveals that *Daily Trust* Newspaper had a higher coverage with 167 (58%) news stories, while *Leadership* had 13 (42%) news stories.

Table 3: Distribution of Stories According to Frame

Dominant Story Frame	Newspaper Frame		
	<i>Daily Trust</i>	<i>The Leadership</i>	Total
Political	37	26	63 (22%)
Economic	43	30	73 (25%)
Religious	87	67	154 (53%)
Total	167	123	290 (100%)

Source: Field work, 2024

Table 4.2 above reveals that the most dominant news frame or tone used by the two selected newspapers is that of religious tone. This means that most of the headlines were from the religious angle with 154 stories, representing 53%. The selected newspapers had an average of 73 (25%) of stories framed in the economic angle while only 63 (22%) of stories were written from the political perspective or frame.



Source: Field work, 2024

Figure 4.2: showing Dominant News Frames

Table 4: Total Distribution of Stories According to Placement

Placement of Stories	Newspaper		
	<i>Daily Trust</i>	<i>Leadership</i>	Total
Front Page	105	85	190 (66%)
Back Page	35	24	59 (20%)
Editorial page	7	2	9 (3%)
Inside page	20	12	32 (11%)
Total	167	123	290 (100%)

Source: Field Work, 2024.

Table 4.3 reveals the placement of stories in the selected newspapers. It shows that out of 167 story contents of The *Daily Trust* Newspaper, 105 story contents were placed in the front page, 35 cartoon content were placed in the back page, 7 were placed in editorial page while 20 cartoon content was placed on the inside page. Out of 123 cartoon content in The *Leadership* Newspaper, 85 were placed in the front page, 24 was placed back page, 2 at the editorial page and 12 story contents were placed in the inside page.

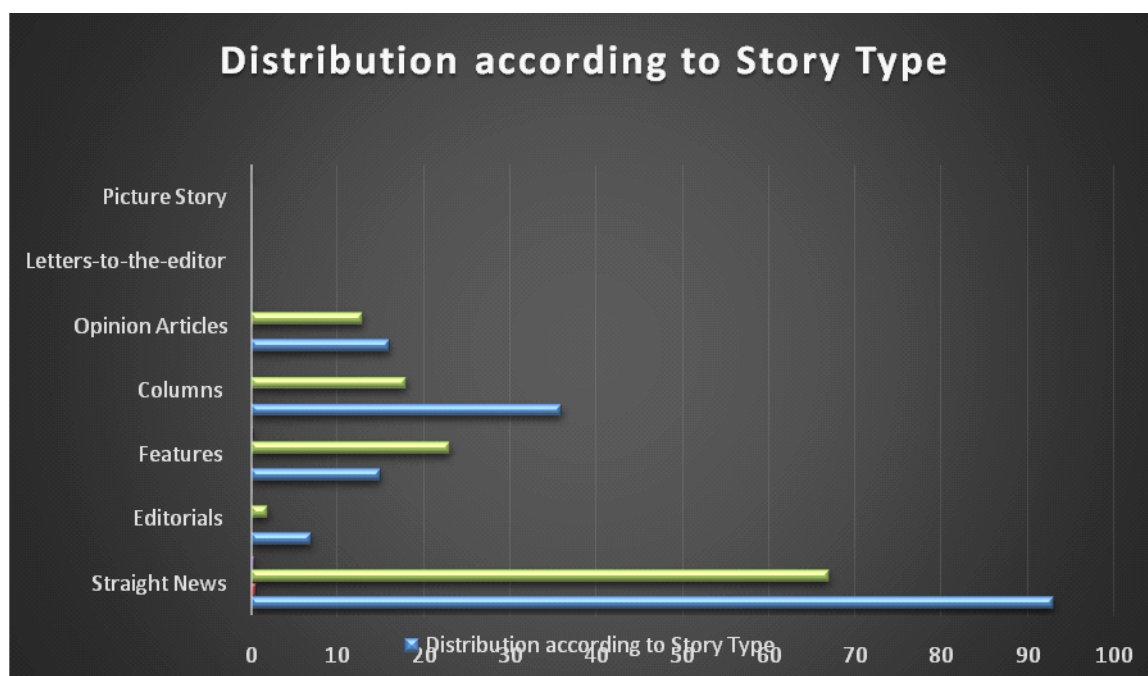
Table 5: Distribution on Story Tone

Dominant Story Frame	Newspaper Frame		
	<i>Daily Trust</i>	<i>The Leadership</i>	Total
Peaceful	30	15	45 (16%)
Chaos/Violent	87	67	154 (53%)
Neutral	50	41	91 (31%)
Total	167	123	290 (100%)

Table 4.4 above reveals that the most dominant story tone used by the two selected newspapers is that of violent tone. This means that most of the stories written instilled fear and displayed violence and chaos, with about 154 stories, representing 53%. The selected newspapers had an average of 91 (31%) of stories written in a neutral tone, that is, neither instigating chaos and violence or peace. 45 stories (16%) were written with the tone of peace.

Table 6: Distribution According to Story Type

Content Category	<i>Daily Trust</i>		<i>The Leadership</i>		Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Straight News	93	56%	67	38%	160 (55%)
Editorials	7	4%	2	2%	9 (3%)
Features	15	9%	23	24%	38 (13%)
Columns	36	22%	18	0%	54 (19%)
Opinion Articles	16	10%	13	10%	29 (10%)
Letters-to-the-editor	0	0%	0	0%	0
Picture Story	0	0%	0	0%	0
Cartoon	0	0%	0	0%	0
Total	167	100%	123	100%	290 (100%)



Source: Field work, 2024

Figure 4.3: showing Distribution according to Story Type

Discussion of Findings

Findings from the study reveal that newspapers gave much attention to the coverage of ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, Plateau State, given the frequency of coverage by the selected newspapers. From the frequency of coverage, it was seen that *Daily Trust* newspaper gave more reportage than *Leadership* Newspaper with a total of 167 (58%) as against 123 (42%) respectively. Also, in evaluating the prominence given to the issue of the Ethno-religious conflicts by the selected newspaper, the researcher found out that the stories reported were given much prominence as seen in the frequency of coverage by the selected newspapers.

In ascertaining the news frames used in the reportage of the conflicts, it was revealed that the most dominant frame used was that of religious frame than the political or economic news frame. The religious news frame had a total of 154 stories published in it. The economic frame had an average of 73 (25%) and the political frame was the least used with 63 (22%). The researcher also analysed the page placement of the stories. Findings show that the selected newspapers placed most of the stories on the front page to show prominence to the issue. The *Daily Trust* recorded the most number of stories placed on the front page with a total of 105, while *Leadership* has a total of 85 stories on the front page, thereby making it a total of 190 (60%) stories on the front page. The back page of *Daily Trust* had a number of 35 stories while *Leadership* had 24 stories on the back page. The Editorial page had a total of 9 (3%) stories by the both newspapers; 7 for *Daily Trust* and 2 for *Leadership*. The inside page has a total of 32 (11%) stories; 20 by *Daily Trust* and 12 by *Leadership*.

In determining the most dominant news tone used by the newspapers, the researcher discovered that the violent/chaos tone was most dominant in the reportage of the Ethno-religious conflicts in Jos. This means that most stories were published with a tone of violence or chaos. *Daily Trust* had a total of 87 stories published in a violent tone and *Leadership* had 67 stories with a violent tone, making it a total of 154 (53%) stories. A total average of 91 (31%) of stories published by the both newspapers had a neutral tone, with *Daily Trust* having about 50 and *Leadership* 41 stories. The peaceful tone was the least used in the reportage of the conflict by the selected newspapers. A total of 42 (16%) stories were written in a peaceful tone, *Daily Trust* has 30 stories and *Leadership* 15 news stories. Findings also revealed the major Story type used by the selected newspaper. It shows that the most frequent story type as used by the both newspapers is the Straight News format with a total average of 160 (55%) stories. Editorials had a total of 9 (3%) stories, Feature stories had 38 (13%) stories, Columns had a total of 54 (19%) stories and Opinion articles had 29 (10%) stories

Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions drawn from this study, this study recommends practical solutions and pathways for improvement.

1. There is a pressing need for newspapers to broaden their coverage spectrum, ensuring a nuanced portrayal of ethno-religious conflicts. This entails incorporating diverse viewpoints from all stakeholders involved, fostering a more holistic understanding of the issues at hand.
2. Embracing the principles of peace journalism is paramount. Media outlets should pivot towards solutions-oriented reporting, spotlighting initiatives geared towards conflict resolution, fostering dialogue, and showcasing stories of resilience amidst adversity. Investing in specialized training programs for journalists covering ethno-religious conflicts is imperative. These programs should focus on enhancing reporters' conflict-reporting skills, cultivating cultural sensitivity, and reinforcing ethical standards in their journalistic practice.
3. Active engagement with local communities affected by these conflicts is crucial. Media organizations should strive to amplify community voices, ensuring that their perspectives and concerns are accurately represented in news narratives. Establishing and upholding stringent ethical guidelines within newsrooms is essential. Such guidelines should underscore the principles of accuracy, impartiality, and respect for human dignity in reporting on ethno-religious conflicts.
4. Collaborative endeavors between media outlets, civil society entities, and governmental agencies are indispensable. Joint initiatives aimed at fostering peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and interfaith dialogue can yield impactful outcomes in conflict-prone regions. Continued research and monitoring efforts are indispensable. Ongoing scrutiny of media coverage of ethno-religious conflicts is vital for identifying trends, pinpointing biases and assessing the ripple effects of media narratives on conflict dynamics and community perceptions.

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