

**MEDIA COVERAGE OF RELIGION AND SECURITY:  
A NIGERIAN CASE STUDY**

**MARGARET DAMOLA JESUMINURE**

**Mass Communication Department,**

**Adeleke University, Ede,**

**Osun State/ Doctoral Candidate,**

**Covenant University, Ota,**

**Ogun State, Nigeria**

**Tel: +2348136903086**

**email: [mdayansola@gmail.com](mailto:mdayansola@gmail.com) / [margaret.jesuminure@adelekeuniversity.edu.ng](mailto:margaret.jesuminure@adelekeuniversity.edu.ng)**

**Abstract**

*The paper examines the role played by the print media in the coverage of the religious crisis that broke out in November 2002, over the Miss World Beauty Pageant in Nigeria. It examined how information resource is being harnessed for development. It investigates the precise role that the Nigerian media, in this instance, the print media, played in either fuelling or reducing the intensity of religious conflicts in Nigeria. Nigeria and much of Africa remain one of the world's hottest spots. Although, this is generally recognized, it remains unclear what role the media played in lessening or increasing the incidence and intensity of this conflict. The paper therefore, investigated the assumptions that the editorial postures of newspapers on religious conflicts will tend to coincide with the views that are dominant in the areas where these newspapers are located, as well as that Press coverage of religious crisis is an important factor in the prolongation and intensity of such conflicts. A detailed examination of the reportage of the crisis by two Nigerian Newspapers, New Nigerian located in the North and Nigerian Tribune located in the South, backed up by In-depth interviews with key editorial personnel was employed.*

**Key Words: Conflict, Media, Nigeria, Religion, Reportage, Security**

**Introduction**

This study explores and discusses the role of the media in the coverage of religion and security in Nigeria. Security is not the mere absence of conflict or war but connotes the extent to which citizens enjoy the features of human development as encapsulated for example in the United Nations Development Programs (UNDP) human development indices (UNPD, 2016).

However, in this paper we are concerned not so much with the latent aspect of insecurity but with the overt meaning of the word as illustrated by the outbreak of civil conflicts, in this case religious conflicts. Using the Miss World Beauty Pageant as a case study, this paper shows in details the ways in which the media, in this case print media located in different geographical regions tends to act as the vanguards or mouth pieces of opposed

religious interest, thereby, escalating the conflict. In doing this, the paper, thereby attempt to answer the question of whether media reportage of the crisis that erupted over the Miss World Beauty Pageant in November, 2002 fuelled the event or help to mediate it. Interestingly, the crisis had as its immediate trigger, an article published by the *This Day* newspaper, written by Miss Isioma Daniel considered blasphemous to the Prophet Mohammed.

The narrative focuses on a detailed examination of the reportage of the crisis by four Nigerian Newspapers, namely; *New Nigerian*, *Weekly Trust* (now *Daily Trust*), *Nigerian Tribune* and *This Day*. *New Nigerian* and *Daily Trust* are located in the predominantly Muslim northern part of the country while *This Day* and *Nigerian Tribune* are located in the mainly Christian, Southern part of the country. My reading of the events did not reveal overt biases in media reportage of the crisis for reasons that would be discussed later; nonetheless there were indications of subtle editorial biases especially in respect of the northern newspapers whose editorial contents to an extent conveyed the anger of those who felt that the *This Day's* article was blasphemous of the holy Prophet. For example, the tone and tenor of the report of the crisis by the *Weekly Trust* in the edition of November 22-28 appeared to have been a justification of the violence. Worthy of mentioning is the fact revealed by the editor of the *New Nigerian* at the time, Mr MamudJega that journalist working in the North had to be careful about what they say in order not to become a target of attack from radicalized protesting Muslims (Interview with MamudJega, 2016). As soon as the crisis broke out, the southern newspapers particularly *This Day* which published “the offending article” adopted the editorial posture of de-escalation, having become target of arson, intimidation and direct threats.

It is noteworthy that the destruction of property in northern Nigeria engulfed not just the *This Day* Newspaper, but all southern newspapers which were treated generically as representing “southern opinion”. As Mr Segun Olatunji, editor of *Nigerian Tribune* at the time revealed.

*Every Southern newspaper was taken to be This Day in the North. Our vehicles could not move freely and our staff were afraid for their lives, we lost millions of Naira. We were careful not to pour fuel on an already combustible situation... So that we could continue to do business in the north. (Interview with Segun Olatunji, January 12, 2016).*

Olatunji's remarks suggest that not only do the media shape crisis but crisis also shapes the media by determining the playing field in suggesting the boundaries of expression in troubled times. The four papers selected for the research were chosen not just because they are located in different geographical areas but also because they are prominent and have reasonably high circulation figures in a context of declining circulations of newspapers in general. The exception is *Daily Trust* which in 2002 was still a weekly Newspaper.

The next section of the paper articulates the problem, followed by historical context of religious conflicts in Nigeria especially after the adoption of Sharia by some states in the northern part of the country. Next are the theoretical perspectives and scholarly literature which informed the narrative; a further section indicates the methodology on which the paper is based, while a final section discusses the findings and makes recommendations.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Expressed concisely, did the Nigerian print media play an escalating role in the religious conflict that broke out in the year 2002 over the Miss World Beauty pageant that should have been held in Nigeria? What does this suggest to us about the role of the media in religiously divided and conflict-ridden societies? In other words, it is assumed that press coverage of religious crises is an important factor in the prolongation and intensity of conflicts and that the editorial postures of newspapers on religious conflicts will tend to coincide with the views that are dominant in the areas where these newspapers are located.

### **The Historical Context of Religious Conflicts in Nigeria**

The term conflict can be used to express arguments, tensions and violent struggle that occur both within and between states (Awoniyi, 2013). For Bakut (2006), it denotes a pursuit of incompatible goals or interests by different groups or individuals. Whichever definition of conflict one would like to adopt describes the typical incidences in Nigeria. Previous studies undertaken by other researchers have pointed to different kinds of conflicts prevalent in Nigeria. According to Omotosho (2003), religious conflicts in Nigeria could be categorised as intra-religious and inter-religious. The inter-religious conflict in Nigeria is usually between the two major religions in the country, which are: Christianity and Islam. Because of the nation's configuration however, the strand of religion is often intertwined with ethnicity (Salawu, 2009).

Religious intolerance has been recognized as the key source of religious conflict in all multi-faith societies existing as long as the history of mankind. According to Balogun, (1988) religious intolerance is defined as the hostility towards other religions as well as the inability of religious adherents to harmonise between the theories and the practical aspects of religion in areas like the diversity of interpretations of doctrine, acculturation process and indoctrination.

The history of religious crisis in Nigeria is a complex one and it has been viewed with different perspectives among various segments of the society. Researches have been carried out on the history of religious crises in Nigeria dating back to the pre-colonial era. Opeloye (2001), traced the history of religious crises in Nigeria to the 1979 controversy over the status of Sharia in the nation's legal system. The prevalence of religious crisis in Nigeria during the period preceding the case study is demonstrated in the table below:

**Table 1:** Incidences of religious conflicts in Nigeria (May 1980 – October, 2001)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Principal Actors</b>
May 1980	Zaria (Kaduna State)	Disturbances in Zaria during which properties belonging to mainly Christians were destroyed.
December, 18-29, 1980	Yan-Awaki Ward in Kano (Kano State)	Riots by Maitatsine sect, 4, 177 people died, extensive destruction of properties.
October 29-30, 1982	Bullumkutu, Maiduguri (Borno State)	Kala-Kala and Maitatsine sect... 118 people died, extensive damage to properties.
October 29-30, 1982	Kano (Kano State)	Muslim demonstrators burnt down churches.
February 27-March 5, 1984	Dobeli Ward, Jimeta-Yola (Gongola State)	Maitatsine sect, 586 died, wanton destruction of properties.
April 26-28, 1985	Pantami Ward, Gombe. (Bauchi State)	Maitatsine sect, 105 died, extensive destruction of properties.
March 1986	Ilorin (Kwara State)	Muslims and Christians clashed during a Christian procession at Easter.
May 1986	Ibadan, University of Ibadan (Oyo State)	Demonstrations by Muslims in which they burnt the figure of the Risen Christ in the Chapel of Resurrection University of Ibadan.
March 1987	(a) Kafanchan (Kaduna State)	Clashes between Muslims and Christians at the College of Education, Kafanchan... loss of some lives and the burning of some Mosques by Christians and native Kajes.
	(b) Katsina, Funtua, Zaria, Gusau and Kaduna (Kaduna State).	Wave of religious riots in which Muslims burnt down numerous Church buildings, and damaged properties belonging to Christians. Many lives were lost.
February 1988	Kaduna, Kaduna Polytechnic (Kaduna State)	Religious riots, ostensibly among students, destroyed the foundation walls of the Christian Chapel.
April 1991	(a) Katsina (Katsina State)	Religious violence spearheaded by Mallam Yahaya Yakubu, leader of the fundamentalist Shiite sect in Katsina. It was a protest over a blasphemous publication in Fun-Times. Several lives were lost and properties destroyed.
	(b) Tafawa Balewa (Bauchi State)	Started as a quarrel between a Fulani man and a Sayawa meat seller in Tafawa Balewa. Escalated into a full blown violence and later took the colouring of a religious war in Bauchi. Several lives were lost and properties valued over hundreds of millions of Naira were destroyed.
October 1991	Kano (Kano State)	A peaceful procession initiated by the Izala sect to halt Rev. Reinherd Bonnke from having a crusade in Kano, later degenerated

		into very bloody religious violence. Thousands of lives and properties were lost
May 1992	ZangonKataf, Zaria, Kaduna, Ikara. (Kaduna State)	A communal feud between the Katafs and the Hausas later took the dimension of inter-religious war between Muslims and Christians in other major cities of Kaduna State. Several lives and properties were destroyed.
January 1993	Funtua (Katsina State)	The Kalakato religious sect assaulted the village Head and burnt down a Police vehicle. Lives and properties were also lost.
February 2000	Kaduna	Conflict engulfed the city between Christians and Muslims over the implementation of Sharia law. Thousands of lives and properties worth millions were destroyed.
February-May 28, 2000	Abia State	Religious riots in Aba and minor disturbances in Umahia. Over 450 persons killed in Aba. Abia State, as a reprisal killing for the Kaduna crisis
September 8 2000	Gombe	The Kaltungo religious crisis. The crisis erupted over the implementation of <i>Sharia</i> in the State.
Oct 12 2001	Kano	Religious riot in Kano. In protest of US invasion of Afghanistan in search of Osama bin Laden: over 150 persons were killed.

Source: Gofwen, 2004[cited by Awoniyi, 2013: 130-132]

The table above demonstrates the widespread and pervasive nature of religious violence involving clashes between Christians and Muslims in the period between 1980 and 2001 which is the period that preceded the crises under review. As shown, most of them resulted in destruction of properties and the loss of many lives. Some of the most severe clashes occurred in the early years of the return to civilian rule which occurred in 1999. This shows therefore that the sequence of events that led to the Miss world beauty competition crisis in November 2002 were part of the familiar landscape of rising conflict attended by violence between Christians and Muslims. It is pertinent too to observe that the Miss World beauty contest crisis, whose immediate trigger was an article in This Day newspaper, resulted in the loss of at least 250 lives and the destruction of several churches in Kaduna (Olukotun&Jesuminure,2018). Vigilance by security personnel as well as de-escalation measure by the media in both North and South prevented the violence from spreading to other Northern cities such as Kano and Sokoto.

### **Theoretical Overview and Conceptual Focus of the Study**

In the scholarly literatures relating to identity conflict in Nigeria, we encounter general studies describing the nature and origins of identity conflicts. For example, Ejiogu (2001) describes the way and manner in which conflicts had their origins in the artificial nature of the nation state itself, the product of colonial arrangements. In the same light, Jega (2000) argues that identity conflicts appear to have intensified as a result of neoliberal economic

policies such as structural adjustment which had devastating consequences on the poor and middle classes.

It should be noted that the upsurge of identity politics whether in the form of ethnic or religious associations or expressions have led social scientists to increasingly hold conversations about the concept and narratives of identity. In broad terms, identity refers to a person's conception and expression of the associations and affiliations to which they belong. In other words, identity can be conceived as the distinctive features that belongs to an individual or that is shared by members of a group or social category.

In the particular context of this study, it is interesting to observe that the failure of the state as an economic or emancipatory actor has resulted in Nigeria having an increase in the politics of identity based on religion, ethnic affiliation among others with the common trait of a "we" versus "them" mental map.

Other general works that provide background for this paper include Falola and Oyeade (2010) "Hot Spot: Sub-Saharan Africa" which locates religious conflicts in Nigeria within the broader context of the intensification of identity conflicts and sometimes state collapse and state rebuilding in Africa. Obviously however, these studies do not deal with the role of the media in either reducing or increasing identity conflicts including religious ones. Specifically, as it pertains to the media, a number of studies have dealt with the way and manner in which conflicts, be it ethnic, racial or religious are escalated by media reportage. For example, press reportage of racial conflict in the United States often paint Blacks as violent and intimidating with respect to whites, this has fuelled conflicts between the two races (Entman, 1994).

A number of studies have dealt with the politics of religious identity in Nigeria in the context of media representation. For example, Kperogi, (2013) has analysed the ideological split in British newspaper commentaries on the 2002 Miss World riot in Nigeria. Although, this project encompasses the same case study as Kperogi's, it differs from his work by focussing on the differential coverage of the event in the national media rather than the international, which he focused on. Nonetheless, his research is interesting to the extent that he recognizes what he calls an Islamic perspective in the British media counter posed to a liberal perspective. In other words, he grasps the essential facts that media reportage of crisis is based on frames which they attempt to pass on to the reader.

Similarly, Okoro and Odoemelam, (2013:86) in their study of Print media framing of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria, address itself to "framing pattern in the reportage of Boko Haram Insurgency". The authors also recognize that "coverage which emphasis ethnic and religious frames are negative and are detrimental to peace initiative in a secular and multi-cultural state like Nigeria" (Okoro and Odoemelam, 2013:86). This paper, while addressing a similar concern locates the impact of media reportage of religious crisis in different geographical locations, namely; North and South of the Nigerian media which content are being analysed.

The study by Salawu (2009) entitled "Media narrative construction of ethno religious conflict in Nigeria" is equally pertinent to this paper to the extent that it deals with "how the media have served as the catalyst of ethno religious conflicts in Nigeria". This paper however employs content analysis as well as interviews with newspaper editors in order to

gain insight into the mental maps and frames that they bring to bear on their reportage of religious conflict. This study extends these analyses to the Nigerian context by investigating precisely what the role of the print media was, in reporting religious conflict in the particular instance of the 2002 Miss World Beauty Pageant crisis.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Framing theory was propounded by Goffman in his book *Frame Analysis* (1974) which argued that people “locate, perceive, identify and label” events and occurrences. Some of the attributes of Frame theory are that: Frame influences interpretation and forms a system; media encourages some stories and interpretations while discouraging the others; and it constructs a social reality.

Consequently, this paper is anchored on the theory of framing which as indicated earlier, refers to various ways in which Journalists structure or more accurately pre structure news and other media output by drawing attention or giving salience to certain aspects more than others. The theory is derived from the word frame which refers to the marking of boundaries in the same way as an image is demarcated by putting a border around it. According to the Oxford Dictionary of Media and Communication (Chandler and Munday, 2011) frames in media theory refers to “the ways in which representations function to re contextualize (and thus change the meaning of) that which they represent”. They go on to argue that Frames are “particular techniques and devices employed in representations as a means of constraining interpretation”

In other words, news and other media output are anchored by journalists on selection strategies which are used to lead the audience to view their reports in the light of the codes favoured. The point is that journalists carry along with them certain mental schemes or perceptual maps which not only influence their reportage but affect their encoding of news in order to favour some interpretations above others. As Entman (1993:52) makes clear “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described”. Frames in media theory share borders with two other theories of media effects namely, agenda setting and priming. Agenda setting in broad terms refers to the ability of the media to highlight issues in such a way that the issues that they emphasis are also the issues that the audience pay the most attention to (Severin and Tankard, 1992). Similarly, priming draws our attention to the ways in which journalists employ media content to get audience to employ specific issues as bench marks for evaluating performance of leaders and government (Iyenga and Kinder, 1987).

Framing is the third theory of media effect which is regarded by some scholars as an extension of both Agenda Setting and Priming, deriving partly from insight in psychology and sociology. Framing theory can be located in the relationship between the techniques and devices used by journalists to draw attention to certain issues and how audiences decode or make meaning out of the framing or agenda building. According to Scheufele (1999), frames are better understood by asking such questions as: what specific types of media frames impact on the audiences’ perception of particular issues and in what manner does the process work to influence audiences.

From the point of view of the media theory of framing which refers to the power of the media to promote particular perspectives by amplifying or promoting them, it is possible to see through this paper, how the media framed reports and opinions in their different narratives of religious crises in Nigeria. In other words, probing whether the media (different Newspapers located in different geographical areas of the country) escalated or reduced the conflict. In this way, this paper provides a Nigerian case study to particular ways in which different media frame narratives of event and with what consequences. For example, Entman, (1993:52) maintains that “to frame is to select some aspect of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described”.

The relevance of the theory to a study of representation is relevant in that to give an example describing the Sharia which is a form of Islamic jurisprudence as a monster may seem alright to secular journalists or those operating from Christian perspectives. Such a description may however offend or incense Muslims who believe that the Sharia is a just and God ordained political and legal arrangement. Uncovering the frames that journalists located in different regions employ, may yield clues as to the build-ups or intensities of religious and ethnic conflicts.

### **Findings**

In the period leading to the riot and mayhem that broke out in November, 2002 over the Miss World Beauty Pageant, no newspaper either in the north or in the south played an inciting role with respect to the crisis. As mentioned in the introductory section, the crisis was inadvertently provoked by an article written by Miss Isioma Daniel containing a sentence considered to have been blasphemous of Prophet Mohammed. The “offending article” published in the *This Day* edition of November 16, 2002 (pg. 50) had Daniel say “The Muslim thought it was immoral to bring ninety two women to Nigeria and ask them to revel in vanity. What would Mohammed think? In all honesty, he would probably have chosen a wife from one of them.” There is no evidence that the statement tucked deep in the inside pages of *This Day* were calculated to cause disaffection much more to spark off riot. It remains unclear as the various editors interviewed in the course of writing this paper stated, whether the wave of destruction was a direct consequence of the publication which would have been read by only a few educated readerships or whether other factors including northern sensitivities to a “Christian” southern presidency were at stake. The outbreak of the conflict suggest however, just how tender the fabric of social and political life can be in a society polarised by religion and ethnicity. MamudJega who edited the *New Nigerian* advanced six underline causes of the crisis

*Possible cause number one is genuine Muslim anger at a blasphemous statement directed at the Holy Prophet of Islam. Second, is the pent-up frustration of unemployed young men, failed WAECists, NECOists and JAMBites, as well as successful holders of these certificates who could not secure neither jobs nor high school admission. Third, there were thieves who were looking out for opportunity to loot. Fourth, there were plain anarchists who were looking for the chance to burn, to maim and to kill. Fifth, there were local city thugs who had one or two old scores to settle with landlords, assorted creditors, former*



employers, and people 'who do not assist other people', a common allegation among the city's marginalized. And the sixth, there were political activists looking for an opportunity to reduce the incumbent governor's roller-coaster edge in the race and prevent his cruising to victory, as it looks. (Interview with MamudJega, January 09, 2016)

A similar opinion to the effect that the publication for which *This Day* carries several profuse apologies was only partly perhaps even tangentially responsible for the crisis was expressed by Mr Lasisi Olagunju, editor of the Tribune on Saturday who said,

*I remember my initial reaction to reports of the crisis was disbelief until our correspondent filed in report confirming it. I believe the violence was an obvious over reaction by those who turned whatever they found disagreeable in the report to an opportunity to kill, maim and raze property of innocent people. The crisis, as I said before was just an excuse to commit unimaginable crimes by some people. Again, it was easy to get foot soldiers for the mayhem because of the Almajiri system in the north which was/is also fallout of the acute illiteracy among youths in that part of Nigeria.*

In keeping with that trend, the newspapers in the north and the south adopted a positive tone to the reportage of the impending beauty contest. For example, the *Nigerian Tribune* in its edition of November 9, 2002 published a featured piece entitled "we are ready to host the world". The article quoted one of the organizers of the beauty pageant Mr Ben Bruce, who informed the readers about the preparedness of the hosting company and the provision of adequate security for visitors. *This Day* adopted a similar reassuring tone notwithstanding the Isioma's article which as mentioned before could not had been calculated to offend. It is broadly the same thing for the *New Nigerian* except that close reading of its coverage in the days leading up to the crisis suggested a subtle undercurrent of opposition. This "opposition" was however confined to letters to the editor rather than to the paper's opinion and news pages. For example, reflecting the tendency to criticise the event on religious stand, *New Nigerian* in its edition of November 13, page 8 published a letter with the title "Mrs Obasanjo, stop this Beauty Contest" addressed to the president's wife, the letter read in part "exposing nakedness in the name of parading women for beauty pageant is ungodly. Look at it this way, would you in fairness to your conscience model in such an event?" The point being made here is that there was no overt opposition or indication of looming crisis in the papers in the prelude to the crisis, save for the subtle hints of the *New Nigeria*. In this respect, it should be recalled that newspapers are businesses which therefore, have a stake in the preservation of the social order, and consequently suffer severe destructions in times of conflicts.

On the reporting of the crisis itself, all the papers, the ones located in the south especially maintained a stabilizing tenor. This pacifying posture was predictably led by *This Day* which almost daily published apologies and sorrowful regrets on its first pages, for example, in its edition of November 25, 2002 it published what it called a further letter of apology from *This Day* chairman, it read in part "The last one week has been a nightmare for all of us at *This Day* as we try to find answers to how all these have happened ... When we founded *This Day* in 1995, it was to promote peace, order and good governance; it was to seek a better life for all the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Our ethos was not to be offensive to any religion or to denigrate the cultural and religious values of our

people”. *This Day*’s posture should be contextualized by reference to the fact that its offices in Kaduna were burnt while a report in one of the papers had it that by the 24<sup>th</sup> of November, 200 people were reported dead and 4500 were displaced. As the riot escalated, state security arrested the editor of *This Day*, Mr Simon Kolawole.

In general, the *New Nigerian* located in the north, the area covered by the riot maintained a stabilizing tenor as evidenced by a front page story of Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2002 entitled “Kaduna now calm after anti *This Day* protest”. However, it continued not only to blame *This day* but also convey the resentment and reactions of its northern readers. This pattern can be illustrated by its front page story of November 26, 2002 entitled “Zamfara declare Fatua on Isioma Daniel.

The story quoted the Zamfara state deputy governor, Mamud Chinkafi as saying that “like Salman Rushdie, the blood of the *This Day* writer can be sheered. It is binding on all Muslims wherever they are to consider the killing of the writer an important religious duty”. Considering that editors use front page positioning to set agenda, the prominence of the story and its wording may not have been accidental.

Similarly, its editorial opinion of November 28, 2002 entitled “A Case of many wrongs” went so far as to say that Isioma Daniel who studied in Britain should have heard of the author Salman Rushdie and the worldwide furore generated by his blaspheming the holy prophet in his infamous book *Satanic Verses*” such words were certainly not calculated to de-escalate, especially as there were fears that the crisis may spread to other northern cities such as Kano, having already spread to Abuja. Similarly, *Weekly Trust* in its edition of November 22-28 reported the crisis in the following words:

*Ever since the idea of hosting the Miss World pageant in the country was made public by its promoters, there have been indications that the controversial beauty show may turn out to be an ill wind that would blow the nation no good.*

*Even before the staging of its grand finale, which has now been shifted to December 7, a seemingly sponsored publication on the licentious beauty parade has sparked off a violent protest in the country.*

The tenor of the report was one which appeared to justify the unleashing of violence rather than regret it. Another example from the *Weekly Trust* is that it lent its front and back pages of November 22-28 edition to news reportage, which instead of de-escalating would appear to be fuelling the crisis. The front page story was entitled “Kaduna on the Brink”, thus, more or less spreading the message that further violence may be expected.

## **Conclusion**

In sum, while there is no clear evidence of direct incitement by the northern based *New Nigerian*, the tenor and prominence given to the crisis after the riot broke out suggested a difference of editorial coverage between the northern and southern newspapers. This would seem to validate the assumption of variation in editorial coverage based on identity and location of editors and newspapers.

This research has demonstrated that even though biases in coverage were not obvious except in the case of *Weekly Trust*, the over-all pattern is that the southern newspapers whose personnel were victims of the terror and mayhem exercised far more restraints than

the two northern newspapers. Part of the reason for this is that, as the editor of *New Nigerian*, MamudJega revealed, “editors had to be careful about the way and manner they report the crisis in order not to become victims of an aroused populace”.

In general, although no direct evidence of conflict stoking is indicated by editorial coverage, the tone and tenor adopted by the northern newspapers are different from those located in the south. The sensitivity and vulnerability of Nigeria to religious violence, which assumed dramatic proportions in the Boko Haram insurgency, suggest that media personnel should be extremely careful in their report and choice of words so as not to precipitate religious crisis. The editors of *This Day* and the *Nation* paid a high price for the failure to remove the offending part from the story turned in by Isioma Daniel, who was an inexperienced journalist.

### **Recommendation**

As a policy recommendation, it is suggested that proprietors of media and other stakeholders should invest more in conflict sensitive reporting taking care to educate their work force on the social responsibility of the journalist in conflict prone societies.

Furthermore, there is the need to observe diversity factors in the recruitment of journalists to media houses. Diversity does not itself guarantee the absence of conflict but it makes it easier to build bridges of accommodation across divided societies.

### **References**

- Awoniyi, S. “A Discourse on Religious Conflict and Tolerance In Multi-Faith Nigeria.” *European Scientific Journal* 9, no. 20 (2013): 124-147.
- Bakut, B.T. “The Environment, Peace and Conflict in Africa.” In: Best, S. O. (ed). *Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd, 2006.
- Balogun, K. Religious Intolerance as a Source of National Disintegration. In Mala and Sam B Ed. *Religion and National Unity*. Ibadan, University Press.
- Chandler, D and Munday, R. *Oxford Dictionary of Media and Communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Ejiogu, E. “The Roots of Political Instability in an Artificial ‘Nation-State’: The Case of Nigeria.” *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 62, no. 3, (2001): 323.
- Entman, R. “Framing Towards Clarification of a fractured paradigm.” *Journal of Communication*, 43:4. (1993).
- Entman, R. “African Americans According to TV News.” *Media Studies Journal*. Summer, 1994.
- Falola, T. and Oyebade, A. *Hot Spot: Sub-Saharan Africa Santa Barbara*. California: Greenwood publishers, 2010.
- Goffman, Erving. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. New York, NY et al.: Harper & Row, 1974. Accessed March, 2017. <http://is.muni.cz/el/1423/podzim2013/SOC571E/um/E.Goffman-FrameAnalysis.pdf>

- Iyengar, S. and Kinder, D. *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Jega, A. (Ed.). *Identity Transformation and Identity Politics under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria*. Uppsala: Nordic Institute of African Studies, 2000.
- JegaMamud, Interview by Femi Babatunde, January 9, 2016.
- Kperogi, F. "Clash of Civilisation or Clash of Newspaper Ideologies? An Analysis of the Ideological Split in British Newspaper Commentaries on the 2002 Miss World Riots in Nigeria" *Asia Pacific Media Educator* 23: 121. 2013.
- Okoro, N. &Odoemelam, C. *Print Media Framing of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: A Content Analytical Study of the Guardian, Daily Sun, Vanguard and Thisday Newspapers*. Research on Humanities and Social Sciences, 3:11. 2013.
- Olukotun, A & Jesuminure M (2018) Media Reportage : A perspective
- Opeloye, M. *Building bridges of understanding between Islam and Christianity in Nigeria*. Ikeja: Fee Enterprise Publishers Ltd, 2001.
- Omotosho A.O. "Religious Violence in Nigeria-the causes and solutions: an Islamic perspective." *Swedish Missiological Theme*. (2003). 15-31.
- Olatunji Segun, Interview January 12, 2016
- Salawu, A. "Media Narrative Construction of Ethno-religious Conflicts in Nigeria." *EstudosemComunicação* no 5: (2009). 75-93.
- Scheufele, D. "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects." *Journal of Communication*, Winter (1999).
- Severin, W. & Tankard Jr., J. W. *Communication Theories: Origins, Methods and Uses in the Mass Media*. New York and London: Longman, 1992.
- UNDP. *National Human Development Report*. Accessed February 28, 2017. <http://www.ng.undp.org/content/nigeria/en/home/library/poverty/national-human-development-report-2016.html>, 2016.