

# **Newspapers Framing of Herdsmen-Farmers' Conflicts in Nigeria and Its Implication on Peace-Oriented Journalism**

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## **Abstract**

*This study examined selected newspapers' (The Punch, Vanguard, Daily Trust and Leadership Newspapers) framing of herdsmen-farmers conflicts in Nigeria and its implication on peace-oriented journalism. The media has become a veritable arbiter in the process of knowledge formation, especially, as relates to daily societal happenings across climes; thus, necessitating the need to examine media presentation and representation of reality. Some studies have blamed the media for war-oriented framing of conflicts while others have continued to advance for peace-oriented journalism in conflict reportage. Within literatures, few studies have been done to examine empirically the implication of newspapers frames on peace-oriented journalism in respect to persistence herdsmen-farmers' conflicts in Nigeria. In this line, the study content-analysed N=100 samples of news stories on herdsmen-farmers conflicts in selected newspapers, while focusing attention on the dominant frames used in the conflicts and its implications on peace-oriented journalism. The study reveals that solution oriented frames are most featured. Reports on Herdsmen-farmers conflicts are more violent, specific and narrowed featuring words like 'killers' herdsmen', 'gun-carrying herdsmen', 'Jihadist herdsmen', 'greedy farmers', 'intolerable farmers' and so on. These words are more typical of war oriented journalism than peace oriented journalism that favours non-violent approach to conflict, broad, all-encompassing and multi-dimensional reportage. It therefore, recommends that the media*

*operators should be more conscious in their choice of words in reporting herdsmen-farmer's conflicts rather than employing words that can be more divisive, stereotypic and conflict inciting. It also recommends that Policy makers and government, at all tiers, promote mass-newspaper literacy among herdsmen to keep them abreast of societal happenings.*

**Keywords:** Newspapers, Framing, Farmers-Herdsmen, Conflicts

### **Introduction**

Although there is recent attraction in framing analysis across multi-disciplines yet theoretical and empirical fractures still abound especially in ascertaining the presence of news frames in conflicts (Scheufele, 1999; Iyengar, 1991; Vladislavjevic, 2015).

The nature of mass media operation makes conflict a major stake in the affairs of the profession. Adisa and Abdulraheem, (2017), aptly capture this essence in their assertion that: 'conflict is the bread and butter of journalism' (p. 11). Oddity, bizarre and queer occurrences sell newspapers, hence, the scramble to be the first to tell. Prospective investors in Nigeria receive stern warnings against physical presence in the country out of fear of kidnappers, terrorists, armed bandits, etc. The media have been regarded to be the veritable purveyor of our collective experiences, amongst which is its framing of conflicts; Boko Haram, Militancy in the Niger Delta region, kidnapping, resurgence of Biafra protest, inter-ethnic conflicts and Herdsmen-farmers conflicts (Eyekpimi, 2016, Adisa, Mohammed and Ahmad, 2015). Most times, the way a news story is framed suggest the expected behaviour or reactions from the recipient. Hence, the incessant unrest in the country arising from reprisal killings in response to frames in reportage of events and editorial comments in the media (Adisa & Abdulraheem, 2017)

Efforts of the government to tackle all these conflicts and challenges seem to yield limited positive impact because of the credibility

enjoyed by the media from their strength of reach to a diverse and heterogeneous audience (Abdulbaqi, 2012). Consequently, the herdsmen-farmer conflicts seem to have continued unabated leading to loss of both lives and properties. Once the news breaks in the media, others anticipate similar attack and tend to fortify themselves in readiness. From, Kwara state to Kogi state, Benue, Enugu, Nassarawa, Kaduna, Taraba, Kebbi, Kaduna, Delta, Ekiti, Oyo and Niger states among others have their pockets of ordeals to tell on Herdsmen-farmers conflicts in Nigeria.

The Agatu killings in Benue state, Nimbo in Enugu state and Southern Kaduna where many were killed and properties worth millions destroyed are part of the complexities of Herdsmen-farmers conflicts in Nigeria. Little wonder that Global terrorism index ranked Herdsmen as the fourth deadliest militant group in the world with a record killing of 1229 people in 2014 (Eyekpimi, 2016). Surprisingly, some scholars argue that the media usually resort to allocate blame and once a perpetrator is identified the process of building an enemy image begins (Howard, 2003; Popoola, 2015; Ozuhu-Sulaiman, 2013) Thus, questioning the supposed umpire role of the media in conflict reporting. This becomes the bane of the ongoing debate which states that the media through its framing of conflicts, such as the Herdsmen-farmers conflict has either resulted into escalation or de-escalation (Howard, 2004; Moge kwu, 2011; Popoola, 2015; Adisa, 2012). Thus, the process of peace building entails the media being used, responsibly, as interventionist. In a peace negotiation, media should enforce the agreement as its agenda.

Citing Geelen, Adelabu (2015) list twelve things media should do in conflict management which include: channeling communication between parties, educating, confidence building, countering misperceptions, analyzing conflict, de-objectifying the protagonists

for each other, identifying the interest underlying the issues, providing emotional outlet, encouraging the balance of power, framing and defining the conflict, face saving and consensus building and solution building.

The management of conflict by the media is important for the development of the society to occur. Thus, policy makers need to focus on the media's role in establishing the public sphere of society – how that can be fostered and nurtured in such a way as to allow non-violent resolution of conflict and management of peace fragile entity communities (Puddephatt, cited in Howard, 2010).

News framing have be praised and blamed in peace-oriented journalism especially in developing countries ( Adisa, 2012). In this perspective it becomes cardinal to first identify, second rank news frames and also examine the differences in news frames on Herdsmen-farmers conflicts across selected newspapers in Nigeria. The conflicts between herdsmen and farmers have been on for decades in Nigeria (Olayoku, 2014). But what is pathetic is the recent upsurge and protracted nature of the conflict across the country (John, 2014). The media have become pervasive influencing attitude, culture and behavior through framing, presentation and representation of our common experiences.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The Genocide in Rwanda in 1994 and 'war on terror' in Iraq that resulted into loss of millions of lives and properties have been attributed to a lack of peace-oriented journalism and responsible news frames (Adisa, 2012; Nnaemeka, 1976; Ibrahim, Pawanteh, Peng Kee, Basri, Hassan and Mahmud 2011). Despite the huge loss, news framing of conflicts globally is still, observably, tilted more towards war- oriented than peace-oriented journalism. For instance, Nigeria faces the consequences created by the Boko Haram insurgency and the reoccurrence of herdsmen-farmers conflict that

have affected the socio-economic development of the country in no mean measure (Eyekpimi, 2016). These incidences have attracted the interest of communication and humanity scholars to investigate the contributory roles of the press in escalating or deescalating conflict in the society. This curiosity has led to a myriad of studies, on 'war journalism', 'peace-oriented journalism', 'conflict sensitive reporting', 'attachment journalism', 'justice journalism' among others (Lynch, 2013; Aslam, 2014). These conceptual extrapolations are conceptualized with the intention to lay a clear foundation on media role in Conflict situations through news framing.

In between this dialectics, there is little clear-cut empirical analysis of the frames in Nigerian newspaper reportage of herdsmen-farmers conflict. In other words, there are little newspapers framing studies focused on Herdsmen-farmers' conflicts in Nigeria. Hence, this study unveils the existence of frames in news articles with the goal of assessing the implication of selected Newspapers framing of herdsmen-farmers conflicts in Nigeria on peace-oriented journalism and towards expanding the theoretical applicability of framing theory.

The issue of press and conflicts in Nigeria has attracted the research interest of many scholars (Adisa, 2012; Adisa, Mohammed, & Ahmad, 2015; Yakubu-Ozuhu, 2013; Ummi, 2015; Popoola, 2015; Azeez & Popoola, 2015) bordering on the role of the media in a variety of conflict situations both globally and locally. However, there are limited content analytic studies in the Nigeria's press framing of Herdsmen-farmers conflicts in Nigeria. Specifically, there is an obvious fracture in media-conflict studies in cross-fertilization of perceived differences in the news frames of herdsmen-farmers conflicts, thus, necessitating an empirical assessment of News framing of Herdsmen-Farmers conflicts among selected Newspapers. Consequently, this study, in a bid to provide

insight to selected newspapers' frames of Herdsmen-farmers conflict, is set to assess selected Nigeria Newspapers framing of Herdsmen-farmers conflicts and its implication on peace-oriented journalism. To achieve this, the study will be guided by the following research questions:

RQ 1:- What is the dominant frame used by selected Nigerian Newspapers in the reportage of Herdsmen-farmer conflicts?

RQ 2:- What is the direction of Newspapers framing of Herdsmen-farmers conflicts?

RQ 3:- What is the implication of Nigeria Newspapers framing of Herdsmen-farmers' conflicts on peace-oriented journalism?

### **Study Hypothesis**

H<sub>0</sub>: Nigerian Newspapers will not differ in framing herdsmen vs. Farmers conflicts from their framing of ethnicity-religious than resource control.

### **Literature Review. Conflict**

Conflict constitutes one of the greatest challenges to social, political and economic development of any society. Currently, issues of governance, resources allocation and power, sometimes coupled with the personality question, are ravaging countries in the West African sub-region. All these seem to have conspired to cause staggering loss of lives, destruction of properties and environmental degradation. Galtung (2000) observes that factors such as ethnic identities and hatred are causes of violent conflict. He further argues that conflict is the incompatibility of goals between two or more parties due to different perception or ideals, resulting into tension, crisis and sometimes violence among the parties, states or communities. Instructively, the underlying issues can erupt into chaos and anarchy in a state when not resolved or managed in good time. In addition, Dunmoye posit that "we should not be allergic to conflicts that we become paranoid, because conflicts are an

inevitable fact of social existence. In any social formation, conflict is as inevitable as cooperation”. (p.20).

Some factors different from diversity of interests have been identified as been part of the sole causes of conflict in societies especially in Africa and other third world countries.

Bassey and Oshita, (2007) in the light of the above, it is worthy to note that, “Conflicts may be associated with numerous aspects of human endeavors. These include economic, social, religious, political, ethnic, communal, gender, racial, sectarian or professional parameters, every interaction among human beings and groups can generate conflict” (p.20).

### **Background to Herdsmen-farmer's Conflicts in Nigeria**

The conflicts between herdsmen and farmers have been on for years. According to Olayoku (2014), the Nigeria Watch database has recorded 615 violent deaths related to cattle grazing, out of a total of 61,314 violent fatalities in Nigeria. In an explorative study of 111 relevant cases, which were reported by the press across the 36 states of Nigeria from June 2006 to May 2014 he was able to establish the frequency, the intensity, the patterns, and the geography of such conflicts across Nigeria.

In the wake of 2016 the conflicts between herdsmen and farmers still continue across the country. For instance the following are selected stories indicating recent occurrences of Herdsmen and Farmers clashes in Agatu and across the country:

**‘Many Killed as suspected Fulani Herdsmen raid Agatu Community’**- by Ali Adoyi **Daily Post news**- February 23, 2016: Suspected Fulani militias have continued to bombard Akwu village in Agatu Local Government Area, popular Benue Journalist, Yemi Itodo Daily Post. His Told DAILY POST that over 200 persons have reportedly killed and many houses razed to marauders.

As evidence in the words and phrases used in describing the conflicts the story is structured along the responsibility and human interest frames.

In another instance **‘Hundreds Feared Killed as Herdsmen attack Benue’**: **Guardian Nigeria Newspaper** online version of 25 February, 2016:

APC condemns raids, seeks intervention- Shock, disbelief and anger yesterday trailed the alleged killing of hundreds of persons in four Communities in Benue State.

The News frame of the story portrays the polemic nature of news with which can be viewed and interpreted in multi-variant dimensions.

**‘Farmers/Fulani Herdsmen’s Clashes in Benue: 40 killed, scores injured, 2,000 displaced’**- By Peter Duru Makurdi Vanguard Newspaper online version of 28 February, 2016:

Despite the efforts by successive governments in Benue State to find solution to the clashes between Farmers and suspected Fulani Herdsmen, the bloody crisis have continued unabated. In fact, less than a week to the exit of the last government, over 100 persons, mostly women, children and the elderly, were slaughtered in villages and refugee camps located at Ukura, Gafa, Per and Tse-Gusa at Ukemgbiraghia Twarev Ward, in Logo local government Area of the State, in one of the bloodiest attacks on Benue communities by the suspected herdsmen.

In furtherance of the spiral of reports on Herdsmen vs. Farmers conflict Premium wrote an exclusive report about the conflict in Agatu Benue state Nigeria with the headline:

**‘Exclusive: Why we struck in Agatu- Fulani Herdsmen’:**

**Premium Times** of 19 March, 2016:

Saleh Bayeri the interim National Secretary of Gan Allah Fulani Association, rose in defense of his kinsmen, saying the February bloody conflict in Benue was a reprisal attack by his people against the Agatu who he accused of killing, in 2013, a prominent Fulani Man.

**‘Fulani Herdsmen: Attacks threaten Nigeria’s existence’- NASS- Vanguard** of 27 April, 2016:

Six bodies were yesterday recovered from bushes in the attack spear-headed by over 500 Fulani Herdsmen in Nimbo, Enugu State. This came as the leadership of the national Assembly, NASS, expressed concern over frequent herdsmen/ farmer’s clashes across the country, saying the development was capable of threatening the corporate existence of the country.

**‘Investigation: Herdsmen attacks claim 1269 lives in Benue’:** **Premium Times** of 10 August, 2016:

Attacks by Fulani Herdsmen in the North-Central state of Benue has led to the killing of at least escalated 1,269 persons, investigation by Premium Times have shown. Out of the 23 local government areas in the state, the rampaging herdsmen have invaded and occupied 14 and may invade the remaining nine unless urgent measures are taken to curb the menace, authorities said.

Virtually no part of Nigeria is spared of Herdsmen vs. farmer’s conflicts. These crisis situations are new in their patterns, implications and management. For example, the Boko Haram insurgency which was initially seen in security circles as a minor

irritation in the North East region of Nigeria has escalated into a regional full blown terrorism that no one ever envisaged.

Intermittent clashes between herdsmen and farmers have assumed a new level of deadlines, spread, sophistication and regularity to the extent that Nigeria loses an estimated \$14billion in three years (Eyekpimi, 2016).

**Table 1 Some Cases of Herdsmen- Farmers Conflicts in Nigeria**

<b>Report Date</b>	<b>Place of Attack(s)</b>
February 18 <sup>th</sup> , 2016	Agatu, Benue State
May 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2016	Agatu Benue state
April, 12 <sup>th</sup> 2016	Taraba State
April 19 <sup>th</sup> , 2016	Delta State
April 21 <sup>st</sup> , 2016	Lagelu LGA of Ibadan, Oyo state
April 25 <sup>th</sup> , 2016	Nimbo, in UzoUwani LGA, Enugu
June 16 <sup>th</sup> , 2016	Ussissia, Community, Ndokwa East LGA, Delta State
June 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2016	Logo LGA, Benue state

Table2.1 (Eyekpimi, 2016).

**Media Direction to Conflict Reporting**

Development communication has long been argued that effective information and communication processes are prerequisites for successful development. Proponents argue that communication and information flows are the lifeblood of development projects; an integral part of empowering and enabling a healthy, vibrant civil society; essential for the creation of efficient and effective economies; and a critical component of social security. Thus, the role of media in conflict ravaged community is to provide a platform for peace and conflict management, without which development is a mirage to such community.

Bamidele (2012) noted that duty of media during conflict or conflicting situation is to provide independent and truth worthy information which can contribute to the process of reconstruction and reconciliation. This is akin to the observation of Nwankpa (2015) that the role of the media during conflict is to embrace objectivity and ethical reporting. Consequently, Omotoso and Rasaan (2015) identify the following five ethical conflicts reporting guidelines for the media to adopt in conflict management:

- I. The media should see it as a duty to promote conflict sensitive reporting;
- II. The media should pre-consider the effect of their reportage of certain conflict stories to avert escalation;
- III. The media should reflect on what other objective is expected to be achieved in the reporting of a conflict and whether the answer is not to avoid harm triumphing over good as is unethical;
- IV. The media should consider if their conflict reporting approach could stand the test of time and become a rule of thumb
- V. The media should remember that its sustenance cannot and should not be built on conflict sustenance.

On his part, Adelabu (2015) enumerates five major points for media to consider in conflict reporting and management which include: always treating the victim(s) of the conflicts with dignity and respect; respecting the views of their sources; self-identify while reporting conflict; respect for all the parties involved in the conflict; fairness without taking position or side in any conflict while reporting it. In their own submissions, Chukwuma, Diri and Oginibo (2015) enumerated the importance of media in conflict management. They emphasized that, in resolving conflict, the media

should provide a platform for all the interest groups or aggrieved parties to sit and express their minds on issues in contention. They further assert that media have the power to promote awareness of the culture, the social habits, traditions, attitudes and hopes to the diverse people that make up the community. They should feel a sense of belong in the societal affairs. Through this, arbitration and compromise will be achieved. In other words, the process of peace building entails the media being used in the earliest stage as interventionist. In a peace negotiation, media should enforce the agreement as it agenda.

Citing Geelen, Adelabu (2015) list twelve things that the media should do in conflict management thus: channelling communication between parties, educating, confidence building, countering misperceptions, analyzing conflict, de-objectifying the protagonists for each other, identifying the interest underlying the issues, providing emotional outlet, encouraging the balance of power, framing and defining the conflict, face saving, consensus building and solution building.

The management of conflict by the media is important for the society to develop. Thus, policy makers need to focus on the media's role in establishing and sustaining the public sphere of society in order to allow non-violent resolution of conflict and management of peace (Puddephatt cited in Howard, 2010). By public sphere, Puddephatt (cited in Popoola, 2015) meant that a range of communication outlets and media that enable a society to view the representations of itself in reality. Significantly, the media in Nigeria should see it as a cardinal objective to uphold principle of professionalism in handling conflicting situation. They should see it as a creed in embracing peace and management of conflict strategies in reporting conflict as they unfold.

### **Peace-oriented Journalism and War-oriented Journalism**

Peace journalism is a concept that was introduced by Johan Galtung in the 1960s as a result of the devastating effect of the media as noticed during war. He coined the term to bring about new paradigm for media practitioners in reporting conflicts. As Aslam (2014) put it, Galtung's argument was that, war journalism has a bias tendency towards violent conflict. Hence, the focus of the media during conflict is usually on the number of casualties, weaponry used, etc. They do not analyze the processes that lead to conflict; causes, outcome and its impact on human lives. Here, the journalist focuses on who are the winners and losers in the conflict, thus justifying the crisis. Obviously, such kind of reportage is akin to propaganda and does not encourage peace building.

Aslam (2014) quoting Tehranian (2002) defines peace journalism as the kind of journalism and media ethics that attempt to transform conflict from their violent channels in constructive form by conceptualizing news, empowering the voiceless and seeking common ground that unify rather than divide human societies. Ozuhu-Sulaiman (2013) noted researchers and experienced journalists have been spending quality time and effort on how the media can shift from war journalism to peace journalism in their correspondents.

It is obvious that there are wide ranges of differences between war journalism and peace journalism. War journalism is elitist form of propaganda; reporting that the journalist indulges in to maximize media revenue by exploiting conflict to its advantage. Peace journalism does not think of exploiting conflict for profit, rather, it engages the media platform to establish peaceful conditions among aggrieved parties. Similarly, in contributing to the debate, El-Nawawy and Power (2008) provide a typology on peace oriented journalism reporting. The typology looks at peace journalism from the need for reconciliation, negotiation, diplomacy and arbitration

to be the center stage in any conflict or conflict situation. Here, media practitioners, most especially, editors, reporters or correspondents have an important role to play in determining how conflict story is framed to depict peace journalism and not the other way round. Thus, peace journalism tries to uncover the causes behind a conflict and ascertain the true goals of all participants while making sure to humanize all victims of the conflict so that the process of finding solution to it can be swift.

In this wise, Lynch (2012) understands peace journalism as a scenario where editors and reporters make choices that promote the prospects for peace. These choices, including how to frame stories and exercise of caution in the choice of words, create an atmosphere that would be conducive to peace and supportive of peace initiatives without compromising the basic principles of good journalism. Adisa (2012) has blamed the Nigerian media of not observing peace oriented journalism in their reportage of conflict. He notes that “over a long period of times, conventional coverage of conflicts in Nigeria and across the world is constantly and consistently stained with sensational stories that escalate conflicts and promote war”. In a complimentary voice, Malakwen (2014) observes that Africa media, in ensuring social development, need to recognize that they should advocate for peace, act as watchdogs, and contribute to general communication mechanisms of their environments. Possible solutions and prevention from further escalation of the conflict are at the center of peace journalism in 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Kuusik (2010) suggests some framework used by peace-building media as comprising: conflict-sensitive and peace journalism; peace-promoting media; media regulation to prevent incitement of violence, and peace-promoting citizen media. Interestingly, the conflict sensitive reporting approach to peace and conflict management is gaining currency globally. This is media

interventionist approach to give peace a chance in an aggrieved environment so that social, economic and political development can be ascertained.

### **Research Method**

Since the research objective is aimed at assessing Newspapers framing of Herdsmen-farmers conflicts, quantitative content analysis was employed in conducting this study. The choice of this method is justified by Kerlinger's (cited in Wimmer& Dominick, 2014: 163) description of content analysis as "a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables".

The contents of *the Nigerian Punch Newspaper*, *the Nigerian Vanguard*, *Daily Trust Newspaper* and the *Leadership Newspapers* were subjected to objective, systematic and quantitative analysis to achieve the research objectives.

### **Universe**

The universe of this study is Nigeria newspapers reportage of herdsmen-farmers conflicts in Nigeria. Specifically, all issued daily publications of Herdsmen-farmers in the *Punch Newspaper*, *Nigeria Vanguard Newspaper*, *Daily Trust Newspaper* and *Leadership Newspaper* from January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2016 become the universe of this study.

### **Sample Selection**

Neuman (2007) notes that when the universe is large, a sample technique is needed in order to limit size to a sample that the researcher can scientifically managed. In this study systematic probability sample was used to derive a sample. Systematic sampling was used according to circulation size, regional popularity and audience. It is on this basis the *Nigeria Punch Newspaper*, *Vanguard Newspaper* representing the Lagos-Ibadan stratum and the *Daily Trust Newspaper* and *Leadership Newspaper* located in

the Abuja-Kaduna axis become the study’s selected sample. This way, each day, week and month were represented. Scholars have observed that, a systematic sample is likely to be more representative, with the inclusion of every *n*th subject or unit of the population of study after a random start, on a number of variables than simple random sampling (Babbie, 1997, Wimmer& Dominick, 2014).

For the purpose of this study, all editions of the newspapers selected for this research in the periods of study constituted the sampling frames from which the sample was drawn. In other words, all editions in the period of study for the farmers-herdsmen conflicts situations will constitute a sampling frame. Therefore, if the researcher is to employ probability sampling technique, specifically systematic random sampling, scholars recommend that 20% or above of the content population should be drawn. Thus, from the 1460 populations of newspapers editions analyzed, 33% was derived through the initial serial numbering of items in the content population ( $488/1460 \times 100 = 33\%$ ).

This was followed by determination of the sample size to be drawn, that is, 33% of *n*. This was then followed by determination of interval scale, presented as ‘*k*’. The ‘*k*’ will be determined by dividing the result of 33% of *n* by the content population, that is,  $k = n/33\%$  of *n*. This is then followed by systematic picking with the interval of ‘*k*’ which is the sampling rate ( $k = 1460/488 = 3$ ) as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Sample Selection Determination.**

SN	Variable of Study	Period of Study	Total Population of the Study	Sampling rate	Sampling size (for each Selected
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## Newspapers Framing of Herdsmen-Farmers' Conflicts in Nigeria

				Newspaper
4	Farmers	January	365X4 = 3.0	122 x 4
Selected	-	1, 2016	1460	(488)
Newspapers	Herdsmen	to December	Editions	
	Conflicts	er 31		
		2016		

Summary of Sample size determination shows that 488 editions constituted the study's selected sample size for each of the four newspapers (*The Daily Trust, Leadership, Punch and Vanguard Newspapers*) whose reports were selected for the study from January 1, 2016 and December 31, 2016 bringing the total number of study's sample size for the four newspapers to 488. The researcher employed systematic random sampling technique to pick 122 editions of each newspaper at an interval rate of 3.0 making a total of 488 editions as the sample for the period of the issue being investigated. Since the conflict is neither daily nor regular events, 100 news stories on herdsmen vs. farmers' conflicts were found in the four selected Newspapers.

### **Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis of the study is news articles of Herdsmen-Farmers conflicts in the *Punch, Vanguard, Dail Trust and Leadership Newspapers*. These include features news, news columns, and news editorials of Herdsmen-farmers conflicts in Nigeria.

### **Content Categories**

The heart of any content analysis is the content categories which must be mutually exclusive, exhaustive and reliable (Wimmer& Dominick, 2014). Accordingly, this study adopted deductive coding which involved pre-determination of certain frame

as content analytic variables to verify the extent to which they occur in the news, as provided in the studies of Iyanger (1991); Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). Therefore the following contents categories are developed after an extensive exploration of literatures as contained in Table 3:

**Table 3: Summary of Study’s categories determination showing the research questions, corresponding content categories and unit of analysis.**

Variable	Categories	Unit of analysis
Most spread Frame	Consequence Frame, Solution Frame, Conspiracy frame, Human Interest Frame, Responsibility frame	Paragraph in Article
Perspective/Implication of Selected Newspapers framing on Peace-oriented journalism	Peace-oriented/War oriented	News Article

To ensure the reliability of the coding sheet used for this study, inter-coder reliability test was conducted using Cohen Kappa coefficient to achieve consistency. Inter-coders reliability of above 0.70 was reached therefore, the coding met the required agreement level of Cohen’s Kappa coefficient  $\geq 0.50$  considered to be appropriate (Mustapha, 2014). The inter-coder reliability for the five coding units revealed high reliability coefficient with Cohen Kappa statistics.

### **Data Analysis**

## Newspapers Framing of Herdsmen-Farmers' Conflicts in Nigeria

SPSS 21 was used in analyzing the data that were generated for this study. Frequencies and percentages were used to create a rank-order of consequence frame, responsibility frame, human interest, Solution problem, and conspiracy frames. The result shows that *Vanguard Newspaper*, unlike other newspapers selected for this study, reported the highest frequency of news stories on herdsmen vs. farmers conflicts (N=30 and percentage =30%). In Furtherance, *Punch Newspaper* recorded second highest in the selected stories (Number of N= 26 and Percentage= 26%). While Daily trust reported lesser number of the conflicts stories than Vanguard Newspaper and Punch newspaper respectively (N=25 and Percentage= 25%). Lastly, Leadership Newspaper reported the least number of herdsmen vs. Farmers conflicts stories.

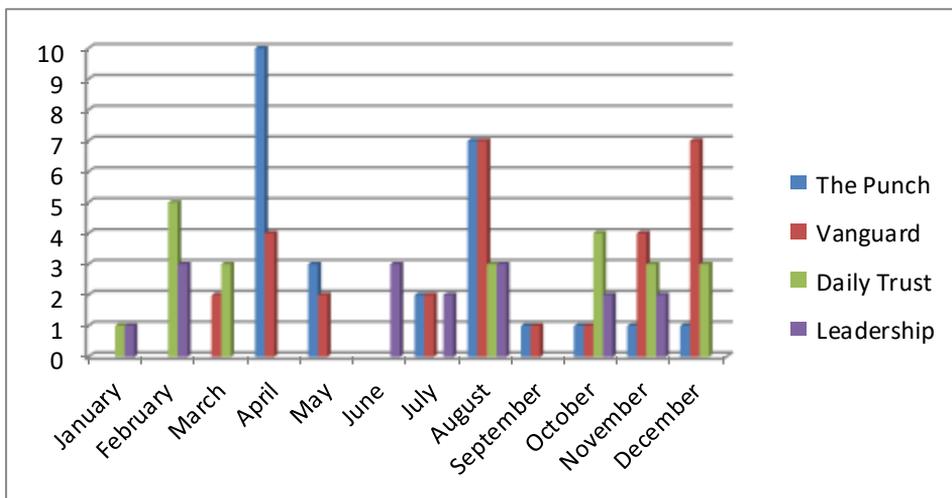


Figure 1 Monthly Herdsmen/Farmers Conflict

As indicated in Figure 1, the data shows that of the period studied, the Month of April reported the highest numbers of stories on Herdsmen and farmers conflicts( N=17), followed by August( N=7) and December( N=7).

### **Story Pattern**

The result of the gathered data shows that news on Herdsmen vs. Farmers conflicts were mostly reported in the inside page of the selected newspapers (N= 27; 90.0%). Indicating further that inside page stories on herdsmen vs. Farmers conflicts out-numbered that of front and back pages respectively( N=14(53.8%); for *Punch*, N=27 (90.0%) for *Vanguard*; N=19 (76.0%) for *Daily Trust* and N=12 (63.2%) for *Leadership newspapers*). Details of this are presented in Table 4:

**Table 4: Story Pattern**

<b>Pattern</b>	<b>The Punch</b>		<b>The Vanguard</b>		<b>The Dailytrust</b>		<b>The Leadership</b>	
	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Front Page</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>30.8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6.7</b>			<b>4</b>	<b>30.8</b>
<b>Inside Page</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>53.8</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>90.0</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>63.2</b>
<b>Back Page</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15.8</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Researcher’s fieldwork, 2017. *Note: F is Frequency, % is Percentage.*

### **Story Frame**

## Newspapers Framing of Herdsmen-Farmers' Conflicts in Nigeria

Solution frame recorded the highest number of news frame used in the report of Herdsmen vs. farmers' conflicts among selected newspapers; N=13 (43.3%) for Daily trust, N=11 (42.3%) for The Punch. Followed by responsibility frame, which recorded N= 11 (40.7%) for *Vanguard*, N=8 (42.1%) for *Leadership*, N=7 (26.9%) for The *Punch* and N=6 (20.0%) for *Daily trust Newspaper*. While human Interest has N=5 for the *Punch*, N=8 for *Vanguard*, N=9 for *Daily trust* and N=2 for *leadership newspapers on Herdsmen vs. Farmers conflicts in Nigeria*. Details of these are presented in Table 5

Table 5 Story Frame

Category	The Punch		The Vanguard		The Daily Trust		The Leadership	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Consequence	3	11.5			1	3.3	2	10.52
Solution	11	42.3	5	18.5	13	43.3	6	31.6
Human Interest	5	19.2	8	29.5	9	30.3	2	10.52
Conspiracy			3	11.1	1	3.3	1	3.3
Responsibility	7	26.9	11	40.7	6	20.0	8	42.1
Total	26	100	30	100	26	100	19	100

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2017. *Note: F is Frequency, % is Percentage.*

### Frame Perspective/Implication

The data gathered shows that war-oriented frame was more prevalent in the selected newspapers under study, as against peace-oriented frame. The overall frequency with war-oriented frame for *Punch* is N=18, *Vanguard*, N =19, *Daily trust*, N=11 and *Leadership newspapers*, N=14; totaling 62. Whereas, hand peace-oriented frame distribution of each newspapers recorded that for *Punch*, N=8, *Vanguard*, N=11, *Daily Trust*, N=14 and *Leadership newspapers*, N=38. Details of this are presented in Table 6:

Table 6: Distribution of war vs peace oriented stories in selected newspapers

Category	The Punch		The Vanguard		The Dailytrust		The Leadership	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
War-oriented	18	68.2	19	63.3	11	44.0	14	73.7
Peace-oriented	8	30.8	11	36.7	14	56.0	5	26.3
Total	26	100	30	100	26	100	19	100

Source: Researcher’s fieldwork, 2017. *Note: F is Frequency, % is Percentage.*

### **Hypothesis Testing**

Test of hypothesis was based on calculation of Chi-square inferential statistics to either reject or accept the study’s hypothesis that states: Nigerian Newspapers will not differ in framing herdsmen vs. Farmers conflicts as ethno-religious than they did resource control. Chi-square was used to test the difference in Nigerian newspapers framing of herdsmen vs. farmers conflicts as ethno-religious than religious. Table 7 indicates that  $X^2 (9, N= 100) = 12.084, P .007$ , since the calculated value is lesser than the table

value (0.05) the null hypothesis is accepted. Details of this are presented in Table 7:

**Table 7: Chi-square**

	Value	Degree of Freedom	Sig
Pearson Chi-Square	12.084	2	.007
No	100		

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$P \leq 0.05$

### **Discussion**

The study punctuates the claim that selected Newspapers allotted average portion of reportage to reporting herdsmen vs. farmers' spate of conflicts across Nigeria. The study also established that the media (particularly the press) patterns its reportage of herdsmen vs. farmers' conflict as a specific event and occurrence rather than historically. In this regard, the study portends that selected newspapers framing of herdsmen-farmers conflicts in Nigeria aligned more towards war-oriented journalism than peace-oriented journalism.

Notwithstanding the research discovered that solution frame is most used among selected newspaper reportage of Herdsmen and Farmers' conflict in Nigeria, a divergence from the positions of some studies (Adisa, 2012; Ozuhu-Sulaiman, 2013).

After statistical testing of study's Null-hypothesis, relying on the statistical foundation of Chi-square, the study tested and arrived at some basic assumptions:

- Studied selected Nigerian Newspapers do use responsibility, solution problem; human interest frames more than consequences, economic and conspiracy frames in Herdsmen vs. Farmers conflicts.
- That some Nigerian Newspapers will not differ in framing herdsmen vs. Farmers conflicts as ethno-religious than resource control.
- That Selected Nigerian Newspapers will likely frame herdsmen-Farmers conflicts episodically than thematically.

### **Conclusion**

As human become more dependent on the media for daily briefing of close and distant happenings, so would be the increasing dependence on media frames and interpretations. This study has consolidated the claim that conflict news, like any other news articles, presents dominant frames that shape our collective perspective about events and happenings. Within the prism of this study, Herdsmen vs. Farmers conflict is more reported in a problem-solving frame by selected Newspapers than conflict-insensitive frame. Hinged on the study, as the media environment attract increasing competition; framing and framing functions would not outlived its relevance in the comity of scholarship. This cements the reason why different studies with their environmental peculiarities, have continued to use framing theory to punctuate the media, media content and media effects. From the foregrounding, this study has been able to examine Newspaper framing of Herdsmen vs. Farmer being a peculiar conflict event in this part of the Sub-Sahara and revealed ultimately that selected newspapers frames on the conflicts are more episodic than thematic.

### **Recommendations**

This study anchored its recommendations in threefold; practical, theoretical and societal recommendations.

Practically, Media practitioners, owners and policy makers should be more responsible with their usage of language in the reportage of herdsmen-farmers conflicts, words such as Killers' herdsmen, Gun-carrying herdsmen, Jihadist Herdsmen, Greedy farmers, intolerable farmers which are more divisive, stereotypic and can escalate the conflict rather than provide lasting peace to the already conflict situation. Also, Policy makers and government at all tiers, should encourage mass-newspaper literacy among herdsmen to keep them abreast on societal happenings. School of journalism and other mass communication training institutions should design a curriculum that will formally avail practitioners and trainees better opportunities to understand the science of framing communication.

Using the theoretical imperatives of framing and framing effects, further studies should be carried out on media use of conflict-sensitive frames in the reportage of conflict related issues.

The study recommends that there is a necessity for future studies on News framing of conflicts, particularly Herdsmen vs. farmers to transcend the border of the media to the media audience, so that organized empirical assumptions can be incorporated to explaining framing theory and framing effects.

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