

CJID
Center for Journalism and Investigative Reporting

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UNDERSTANDING NIGERIA'S INTRACTABLE CONFLICT AND HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

— VOLUME 2 —

**A STUDY OF THE COVERAGE PATTERN OF CONFLICT AND
HUMANITARIAN ISSUES BY THE NIGERIAN MEDIA**



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Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID) is a non governmental organisation, founded in 2014, to promote a truly independent media landscape that advances fundamental human rights, good governance accountability in West Africa through investigative journalism, open data and civic technology.

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Contents

3

Section One

Context
Research Methodology
Method
Data Collection Process
Research Limitations

11

Findings

Media Count
Topics
Central Focus of Stories
Sources
Occupation of Sources
Sex of Sources
Sources' Religion
Types of Stories
Quality of Stories
Visual Analysis
Authors
Sex of Authors
Adherence to Ethical Principles
Tilt of Stories
Further Analysis

31

Conclusion

Key Words in Media Reports

34

Between Patriotic and Ethical Journalism: *The Nigerian media and Civic-Democratic Vigilance*

By Adeshina Afolayan

45

Conflict Causes, Roots, and Triggers

By Prof. Isaac Olawale Albert

59

Media in Times of Crises: Resolving Conflict, Achieving Consensus

By Dapo Olorunyomi

71

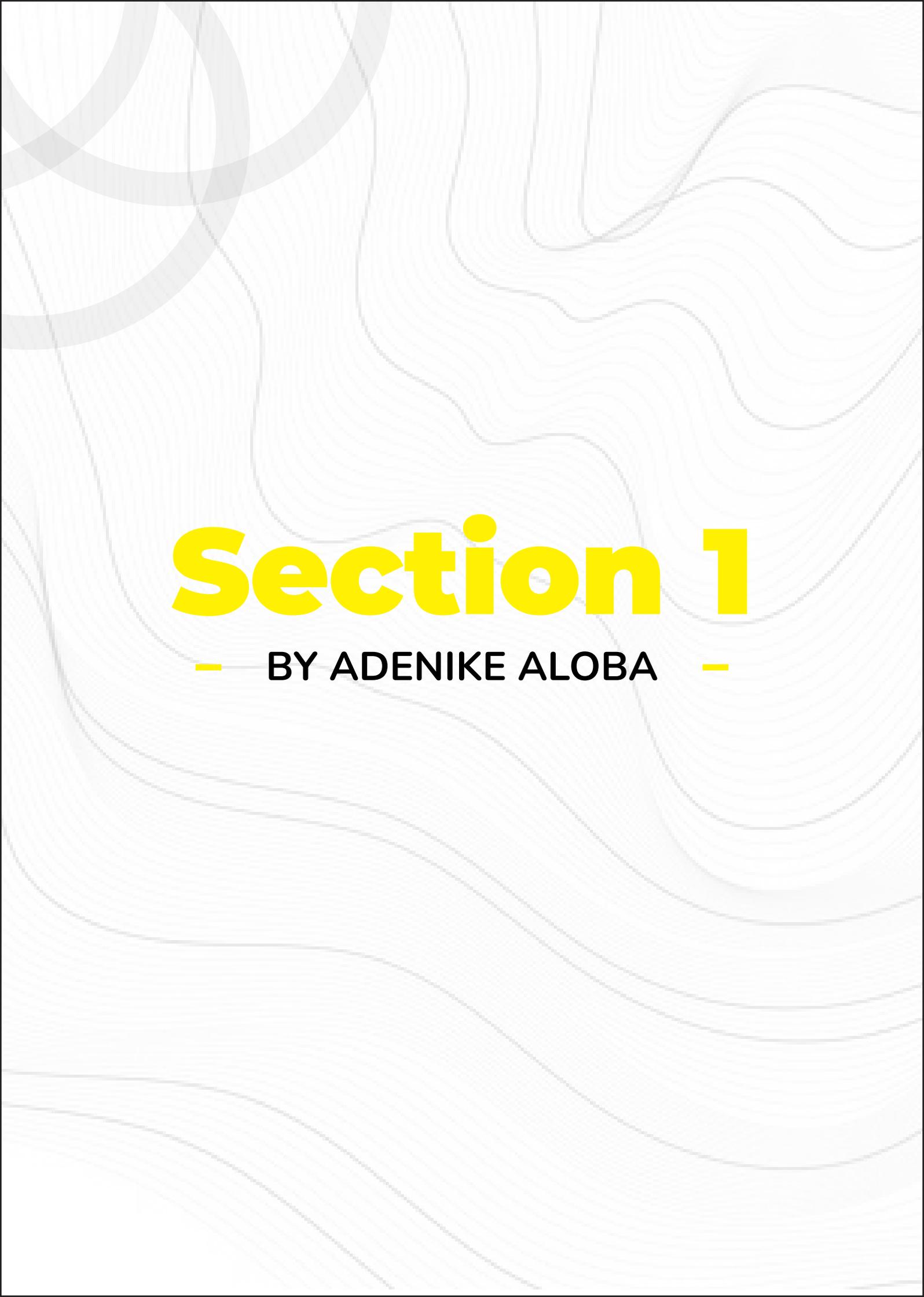
Towards a More Gender-Responsive Media and Journalism

By Busola Ajibola

78

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The background features a light gray, wavy, topographic-like pattern. In the upper left corner, there are several overlapping, semi-transparent circles of varying shades of gray.

Section 1

— BY ADENIKE ALOBA —

Context

In the over 30 months (Jan-March, 2019) since the baseline monitoring, insecurity in Nigeria has skyrocketed. All 6 geo-political zones are facing conflict situations and rather than abate existing conflict situations have become more aggravated. The government of the day's loud protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, many-sided conflicts persist in the country.

The farmer-herder crises continue to claim lives and displacing even more. Deaths from farmer-herder clashes have been on the upward trend. Since 2015 Nigeria has recorded no fewer than 8,343 deaths and thousands more have been displaced¹. The ten-year National Livestock Transformation Plan though hailed as a possible solution to the crisis has not yielded many results; lack of political will, absence of funding are some of the challenges facing the implementation of the plan. Now in its third year, the first ranch is yet to be built². 17 southern states in 2021 resolved to ban open grazing and the farmer herder clashes may be part of the increased agitations for state policing³.

Beyond the growing humanitarian burden, the violence between farmers and herders puts Nigeria's food security in a precarious state⁴. Farmers abandon their farms in search of safety and protection for their lives. As a result, farm produce are scarce and expensive when they are available in markets. Giving that over 70% of the country's population is engaged in farming at the grassroots communities now upturned by the crisis, it is no surprise that the impact on food security is so direct.

The boko haram crises is in its 12th year and the Northeast is still embroiled in violence. A UN reports puts total deaths from the 12-year violence at 350,000 people as of June 2021⁵. Another report says as at the end of January 2022, the number of Nigerian refugees that have fled to Chad, Cameroon and Niger was 328,005 representing a 642.46% increase from January 2015⁶.

1. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1198292/civilians-killed-in-boko-haram-s-attacks-in-nigeria/>

2. <https://humanglemedia.com/data-more-nigerians-kidnapped-in-first-6-months-of-2021-than-all-of-2020/>

3. <https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/security/chartoftheday-cost-of-nigerias-insecurity-915-killed-and-571-kidnapped-in-january-2022/>

4. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/370544-kidnapped-and-released-nigerian-journalist-narrates-shocking-experience.html>

5. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/511294-gunmen-kill-four-policemen-in-enugu.html>

6. <https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/special-report/of-sit-ins-and-biafra-sentiments-the-peoples-point-of-view-of-the-conflict-in-nigerias-south-east/>

Between February 2020 and November 2021, 854 civilian deaths resulting from Boko Haram attacks have been recorded⁷.

Although Nigeria ranked sixth in the 2022 global terrorism index (GTI) dropping two places from its 2021 ranking, and total casualties from terrorism reduced compared to 2020 figures, the country maintains its position within the top 10.

The newest threats to Nigeria's security are banditry and kidnapping. Kidnappers abducted over 1,386 Nigerians from January to December 2019, this number increased to 2,860 persons in 2020, with over ₦13.5 million ransom payments between January and May. By mid-year 2021, 2,944 people had been kidnapped in 315 incidents of kidnapping⁸. In just January 2022, 571 people⁹ had been kidnapped. School children appear to be a particularly appealing target for these bandits and from the Northwest to the North central.

Asides from attacks on schools, highway abductions are rampant. A Premium Times journalist was abducted in November 2019 but was later released after ransom was paid¹⁰. Increase in banditry and kidnappings have been blamed on the economic situation of the country, herdsmen and splinter groups of Boko Haram. Insecurity appears to birth even more insecurity in the country. Again, the activities of bandits have chased people from farms, made transportation of goods from farm to market difficult further compounding the food security problem of the country.

Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) agitations and secessionist sentiments in the southeast led to unrest and deaths in that region of the country. When Nnamdi Kanu, the IPOB leader was rearrested in 2021, protests erupted in the Southeast leading to the targeting and killing of police, burning of police stations and a new phenomenon called Unknown Gunmen¹¹, another dreaded word added to the country's growing lexicon of woes, Boko Haram, killer herdsmen and bandits. IPOB declared a sit-at-home on Mondays as part of their protests and this order holds till today across all southeastern states¹².

7. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1198292/civilians-killed-in-boko-haram-s-attacks-in-nigeria/>

8. <https://humanglemedia.com/data-more-nigerians-kidnapped-in-first-6-months-of-2021-than-all-of-2020/>

9. <https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/security/chartoftheday-cost-of-nigerias-insecurity-915-killed-and-571-kidnapped-in-january-2022/>

10. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/370544-kidnapped-and-released-nigerian-journalist-narrates-shocking-experience.html>

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Asides from the COVID lockdowns, the #EndSARS protests in 2020 and its ripple effects is one of the significant happenings in the country and bears mentioning in the setting of context. Young people in Nigeria come out to protest police brutality as well as bad governance. The protests culminated in disaster when armed military opened fire on protesters in Lagos on 20th October 2020, which brought an end to the protests but led to chaos in many states in the country. After almost two years of deliberations, finger-pointing, denials, and counter denials, the Lagos Judicial panel released its findings which indicted the Nigerian army and police for opening fire on unarmed protesters¹³.

Economic Challenges

All of these have happened as the country's economic outlook worsened and the Covid 19 pandemic ravaged the fortunes of many countries including Nigeria. While the country and indeed the rest of Africa did not see as much casualty from the pandemic as predicted by the West, its economy suffered.

The Naira has been in free fall¹⁴ and currently official rates are 415.9 to a dollar, black market figures are much worse. Inflation continues to do a seesaw but never leaving the double-digit mark. And although the country records decline in inflation rates, they are often marginal and never quite matches up with the realities of everyday Nigerians forced to buy less for more¹⁵.

The country's 2022 budget is 38% in deficit and will be financed by loans, the country's domestic and foreign loan burden as at December 2021 stands at N39.5 trillion and set to hit N44 trillion in 2022¹⁶.

The 6th largest producer of crude oil in the world suffers incessant scarcity as refineries fail to work and it continues to import petroleum. The subsidy regime is punishing on the government's expenditure and despite several attempts to remove it, it persists¹⁷. Since the start of 2022, the country has suffered scarcity of petroleum which was initially blamed on the importation of bad fuel into the country. The scarcity has however persisted forcing Nigerians to buy black market at N500/litre. Diesel prices have gone up more than 100% between January and February costing as high as N700/litre.

¹³. <https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/endsars/endsars-october-20-was-no-figment-of-fevered-imaginations-lekki-massacre-adjudged-true-by-judicial-panel/>

¹⁴. <https://guardian.ng/opinion/why-the-naira-is-on-free-fall/>

¹⁵. <https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/economy/inflation-rate-does-the-decline-reflect-actual-economic-realities/>

¹⁶. <https://www.dmo.gov.ng/debt-profile/total-public-debt>

¹⁷. <https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/extractive/much-ado-about-subsidy-what-it-means-and-why-nigerians-should-care/>

Nigeria is set to go to the polls again in 2023 to elect new leaders and the usual intrigues around elections have begun. The Independent National Electoral Commission had set a target of about 30 million more registered voters in its Continuous Voter Registration program. But few more months to the general elections INEC is struggling to accomplish this goal¹⁸.

Nigerians are wearied by the heavy burdens of insecurity and conflict compounded by the harsh economic realities within which they must survive. 7 out of 10 Nigerians are willing to leave the country¹⁹ and the clarion call especially for Nigeria youth today appears to be “japa” a slang that describes leaving or more accurately escaping the country. Between 2015 and 2019, the number of Nigerians who relocated to Canada has more than tripled.

Acting often as first responders and at the forefront of every event, incidence, and every new crisis is the media. Struggling to survive the harsh economic realities from which it is neither spared nor protected while still holding its position as first estate of the realm amidst stiff opposition. From new repressive legislations introduced by the legislature like the hate speech bill and proposed amendment of the Nigerian Broadcasting Code (NBC) among others, physical, digital, and psychological attacks against journalists as well as negative narratives and increasingly shrinking civic spaces²⁰; the state of the Nigerian media is precarious and bears mentioning. It is no surprise to anyone least of all journalists that Nigeria ranked poorly again on the 2021 Press Freedom Index, ranking 120²¹.

Despite the many challenges faced by the media, its role in society especially to the sustenance of democracy is such that it must constantly strive to rise above and deliver on its mandate. An important part of that delivery is the ability to self-regulate, to review its own practice and outputs, innovate and reinvent itself so that it remains positioned to deliver on the mandate conferred on it by the constitution, international instruments and conferred also by its fulcrum role in the survival of a just society.

Media monitoring is one such tool that can help the media perform a diagnosis of sorts, as a self-regulatory mechanism that then defines its reinventions and innovations

18. https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/elections/2023-elections-is-inec-close-to-the-120-million-voters-goal/?amp_markup=1

19. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-60393076#:~:text=Seven%20out%20of%2010%20Nigerians,of%20Nigerians%20wanted%20to%20leave.>

20 <https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/how-abuse-of-security-infrastructure-is-shrinking-civic-spaces-in-nigeria/>

21. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/nigerian-press-freedom-grave-danger>

Research Methodology

As with the baseline report the research sought to answer the question of

- How the media covers conflict and the extent to which it covers it
- Understudy media disposition to conflict and humanitarian crisis as well as its understanding of these issues.
- This report also compares the outcomes of the endline with that of the baseline to examine if there have been changes in the media's reportage of conflict and humanitarian issues, what/where these changes have occurred.
- Attempt to understand why these changes have happened.

After the baseline monitoring and based on the report, the Premium Times Centre for Investigative Journalism now Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development, trained 20 journalists drawn from the media houses monitored. The training was also taken to campus journalists in 10 universities across the country. The focus of the training was Conflict Reporting with modules on reporting gender, ethics and international and local laws, treaties, and instrument for contextualizing conflict. This endline monitoring also examines the impact of this training on conflict reporting in Nigeria.

Method

This research uses content analysis of media materials within a three-month period **(November 2021-January 2022)** and across the same 10 media organizations monitored for the baseline. This content analysis is done through the instrumentality of media monitoring, where news items are examined, and specific types of data extracted from these news items.

The 10 media houses monitored include:

Print	Online	Broadcast
Daily Trust	Premium Times	Radio Nigeria
Nigerian Tribune	ICIR	Channels Television
Punch	Cable	
Guardian	Sahara Reports	

These media have national coverage and are representative of both private and government owned media organizations.

Data Collection Process

All news reports relating to conflict and/or humanitarian issues in the selected media houses were manually collected and examined by monitors trained to extract pre-set data from these news items. These monitors were trained on the methodology of the project and used the same codebook as was used in the baseline and had been designed for that purpose to extract the necessary data sets. These data were then imputed into a specially designed database.

The data collected on each news item include:

1. **Total Count:** This is the total number of stories in a newspaper or a news bulletin. This total count is important for the comparison of what percentage of news coverage conflict and humanitarian issues receive in comparison to other issues covered in the news.
2. **Summary:** A summary of the news item being monitored.
3. **Type of story:** Refers to the different types of news products used in covering conflict and humanitarian issues e.g., news story, opinion, feature etc. This sometimes reflect the dedication of a medium to coverage of the issue as some instruments will automatically mean depth and more time in exploring the issues.
4. **Author:** The journalist or person who wrote the news item and where it is from a publication, an agency report etc. this is also recorded.
5. **Sex of Author:** Where the sex of the author of the piece can be identified this is also captured. This has implications for gender perspectives especially because it is important in conflict and humanitarian issues.
6. **Topic:** A cluster of possible topics that are consistent in conflict and humanitarian issues are identified and each news item is captured according to the topic that best represents its content.
7. **Origin:** This captures the location from where stories are originating.
8. **Sources:** Who is speaking in news reports and who journalists are speaking to is captured along the lines of sex, function, occupation, ethnicity, access, role, and religion. This is important for how narratives are shaped and the voices that shape these narratives. It also has implication for representation in news coverage.
9. **Ethical principles:** The principles of conflict reporting are listed and each news item is captured as either supporting, violating or as neutral to these principles.
10. **Quality of Information:** This is captured along the depth of coverage, objectivity of the report, as well as gender perspectives.
11. **Visual Analysis:** This captures the visual content of news reports and examines how images or videos are presented.
12. **Central Focus:** This identifies news reports that are largely or predominantly focused on; conflict and/or humanitarian issues as the central subject of the story as opposed to stories that mention conflict but focus on other issues

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13. Further Analysis: This identified or highlighted stories that were exceptionally badly reported or well reported in order to provide examples of both good and bad practice in the interest of learning and advocating for good journalistic practices.

Research Limitations

This report echoes some of the same limitations to the baseline report, a longer monitoring period will likely yield more insights that could potentially aid the identification of influences that determine each medium's focus on different issues.

The transient nature of broadcast news reports and the requirements for capturing, monitoring, and keeping broadcast materials make it a challenge for the monitoring process. Tech tools and Artificial Intelligence that are available for the scraping and storing of text-based materials as is found on online media as it exists today are yet to incorporate broadcast into these tools. The sheer heaviness of video in terms of space and upload and download speed, and what that will mean for storage as well as the challenge of regional accents are perhaps some of the reasons why this challenge remains.

The deep digital divide between the global north and global south especially Africa, is also a factor so that AI that exists is built in and built for the North. Existing AI are still pricey and out of reach for organizations doing media monitoring for research purposes, also most of the AI that exists is built for the kind of media monitoring used for public relations and social media management purposes which is not suited to the nature of research as is done with the monitoring of conflict and humanitarian issues.

That Media Monitoring is still better known as a tool for PR professionals, as a quick google search will show, means that most tech organisations building these tools will also focus on the existing market for their products.

Today, only two tools exist that has the capacity for the kind of research-focused media monitoring as has been done in this report, Media Monitoring Africa's Dexter, and Media Cloud. Of the two, Dexter is the one designed as a tool for media development through monitoring.

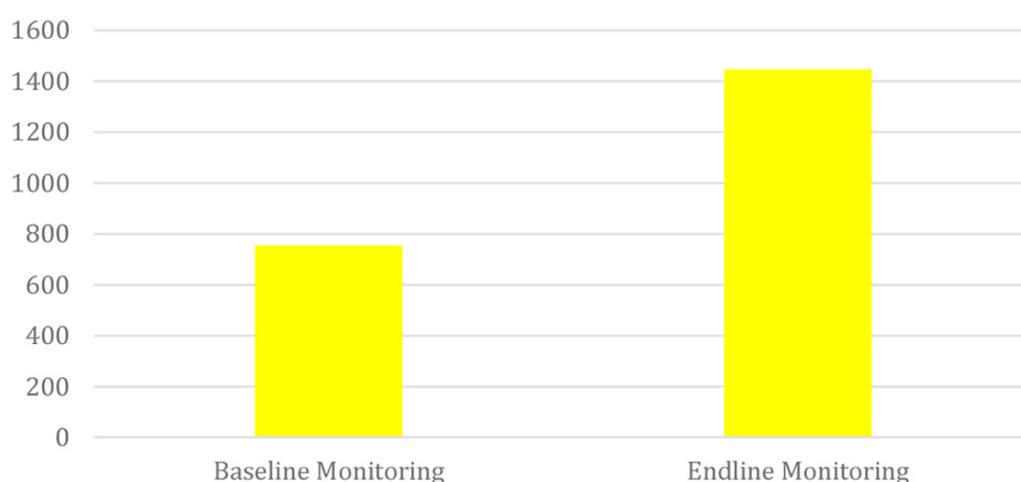
Media organisations and media development institutions will benefit greatly from investing in the tech infrastructure to do made-to-fit media monitoring. The lowest hanging fruit? The ability of media to watch itself, to use data to review its actions and how it is performing the roles of agenda setting and gate keeping among others. It provides a tool that can yield results that will advance the long-standing conversation of media self-regulation mechanisms.

Findings

Media Count:

A total of 1447 stories were monitored in the three-month period covering November 2021 to February 2022. A clear indication of an increase in conflict and humanitarian occurrences in the country. In the baseline report over the same three-month period, 754 news items were monitored, compared to the 1447 news items monitored in the endline monitoring that's a 92% increase in news item monitored.

Graph 1.1: News Items Monitored
Baseline vs Endline

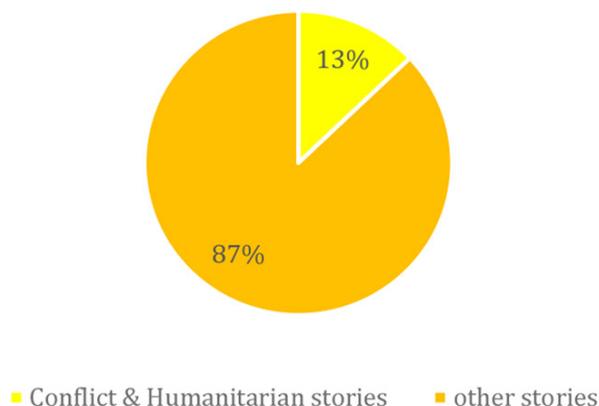


Total News Count Compared to Conflict Reports

When compared with other issues that made news, conflict and humanitarian reports make up just 13% of total news coverage. Compared to the 8% of total news coverage of the baseline monitoring, 13% is an improvement.

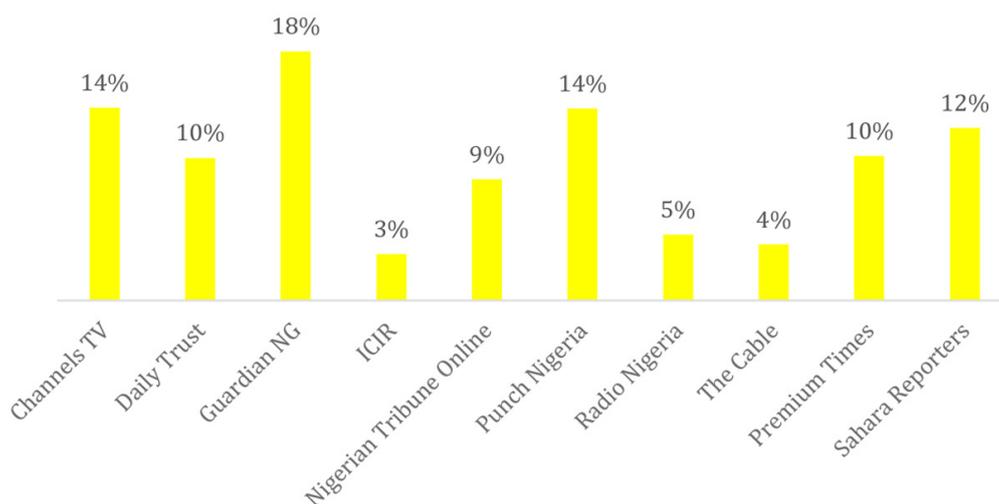
While the baseline report highlighted challenges with the media's ability to connect important issues like conflict to the biggest news of the time which was the 2019 election, such clear-cut comparison could not be made with the endline monitoring because several issues took the limelight at several points during the monitoring period some of which included the economy, Covid etc. However, it can be inferred that the 13%, while it is an improvement, reveals a possible disconnect of conflict issues from any other subject matter. That a troubled economy would have an impact on conflict and humanitarian challenges is not farfetched but is the media able to draw correlations and connections to craft a holistic narrative on issues that will be a step above incidence reporting?

Graph 1.2 Conflict and Humanitarian stories vs Other stories



How did Media Organisations Perform in the Coverage of Conflict Stories?

Chart 1.2: Conflict Stories per Media



Across all the media organizations monitored, coverage of conflict and humanitarian issues is still small. Although for online news platforms the total count number is an estimate based on average number of stories published in a day according to managing editors, the coverage of conflict issues appears disproportionate with no media organization averaging 20% coverage on the subject matter. That many conflict scenarios are playing out simultaneously across all six geopolitical zones and the humanitarian impact of these conflicts continue to grow, there might be an expectation of greater coverage by the media. It is fair to note though that the country is plagued by many issues and all of them require attention. But again the correlation and interconnectivity of the many issues is a factor that cannot be ignored, least of all by the media.

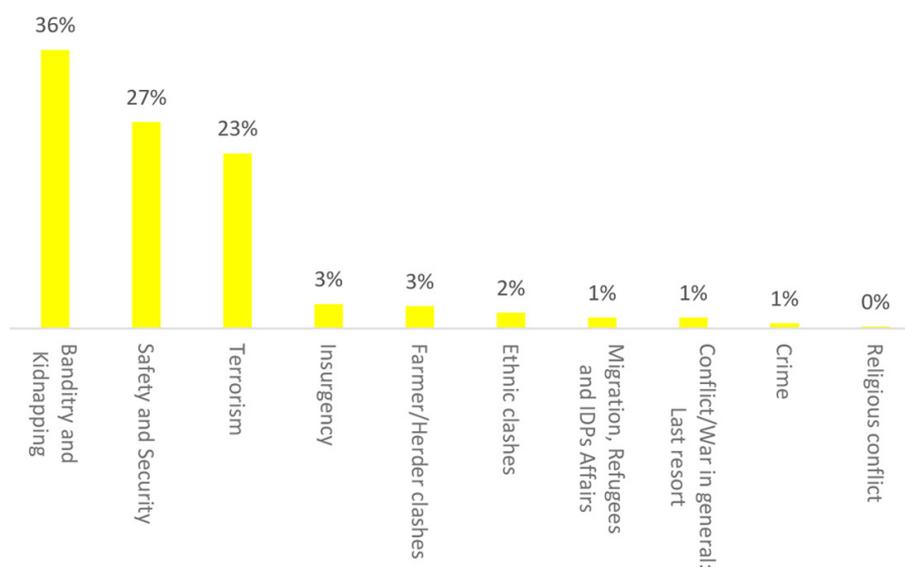
Topics

The topics cluster in this research was categorized into three, conflict related topics, humanitarian topics and human rights topics. Banditry and kidnapping which was not originally captured in the initial monitoring were included under the conflict related topics categorization. This made sense considering present realities at the time of the endline monitoring. The top 10 topics covered by the media monitored are:

Table1.1 : Top 10 Topics Covered

Topics	Occurrence	%
Banditry and Kidnapping	524	36%
Safety and Security	388	27%
Terrorism	329	23%
Insurgency	46	3%
Farmer/Herder clashes	42	3%
Ethnic clashes	30	2%
Migration, Refugees and IDPs Affairs	21	1%
Conflict/War in general: Last resort	21	1%
Crime	10	1%
Religious conflict	4	0%

Graph 2.1: Top 10 Topics



The top 10 topics account for 98% of all the news items monitored, and the top 3 account for 86% of all news coverage of conflict and humanitarian issues to the figure in the baseline monitoring was 92%. Banditry and kidnapping took the number one spot, taking up 38% of all news items monitored, followed by safety and security with 27% and terrorism with 23%. Terrorism and insurgency accounted for 25% and 22% respectively of top 10 stories in the baseline report but the issues have now been overtaken by banditry and kidnapping and insurgency took a distant fourth position.

Insurgency might have taken a back seat because almost all incidences of conflict are occasioned by groups now designated as terrorists. Interrogating the process for designating a group as a terrorist group is a subject that may bear interrogation by stakeholders like the media and civil society organisations. It is also unsurprising that banditry and kidnapping take the number one spot in the coverage of conflict and humanitarian issues as cases of bandit activities and kidnapping have been on a rapid rise in the country.

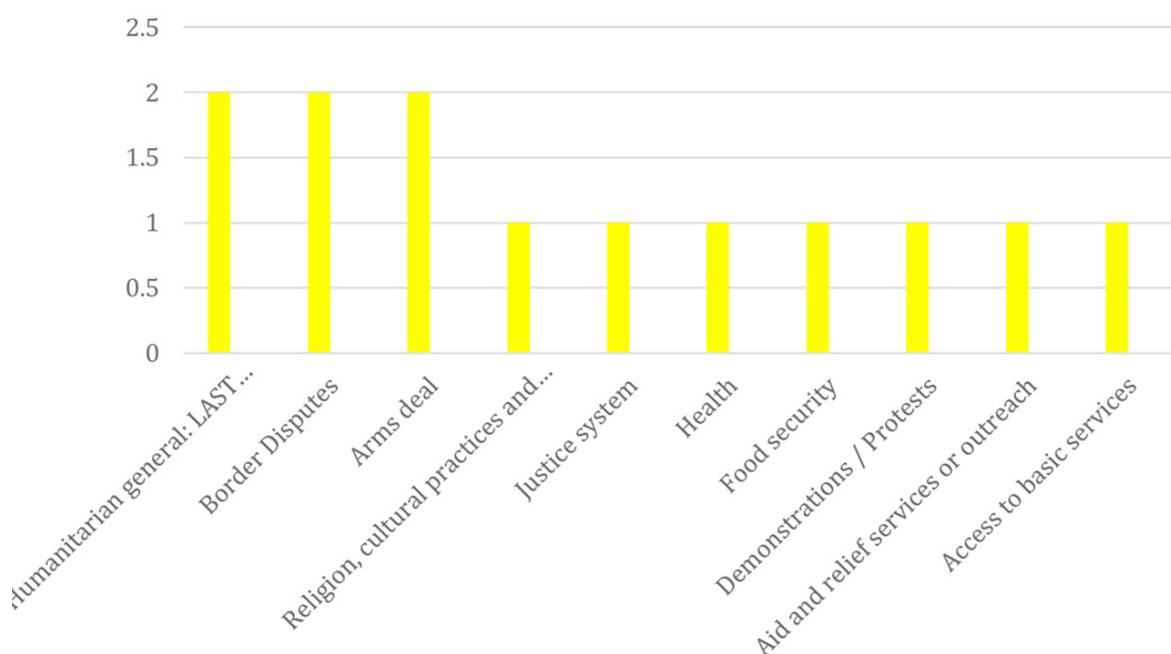
However, the prominent position of the top five topics could indicate incidence reporting by the media. Alternatively, the coverage of safety and security, which is defined in the methodology as “stories that talk about maintaining peace and order or putting measures to prevent violence from erupting”, at 27% could mean some of the reports covered measures or actions to maintain peace and tackle insecurity. As we will however see under sources, media narratives on conflict are dominated by official sources which are loudest when an incidence of conflict or violence has occurred. Implicitly, 27% coverage on safety and security likely derives from conversation with official sources whose statements on efforts to minimize conflict are mostly reactionary views shared after incidents of conflict, insecurity or humanitarian crisis.

Incidence reporting often an indicator that in-depth analysis or reportage of issues beyond reporting its occurrence is missing. It is likely that the lack of diversity of topics is indicative of little coverage of the drivers of these events and even the implications of the events. Again, as in the baseline monitoring, the media might not be proactively seeking out and exposing deeper issues as to why conflict exists or the reasons for increase in occurrences. Known drivers of conflict especially in Nigeria like climate change, resource control, religion, ethnicity, and a host of other issues were not sufficiently addressed.

Table 1.2: Poorly Covered Topics

Topics	Occurrence	%
Humanitarian general: LAST RESORT	2	0%
Border Disputes	2	0%
Arms deal	2	0%
Religion, cultural practices and beliefs	1	0%
Justice system	1	0%
Health	1	0%
Food security	1	0%
Demonstrations / Protests	1	0%
Aid and relief services or outreach	1	0%
Access to basic services	1	0%

Graph 2.2: Poorly Covered Topics

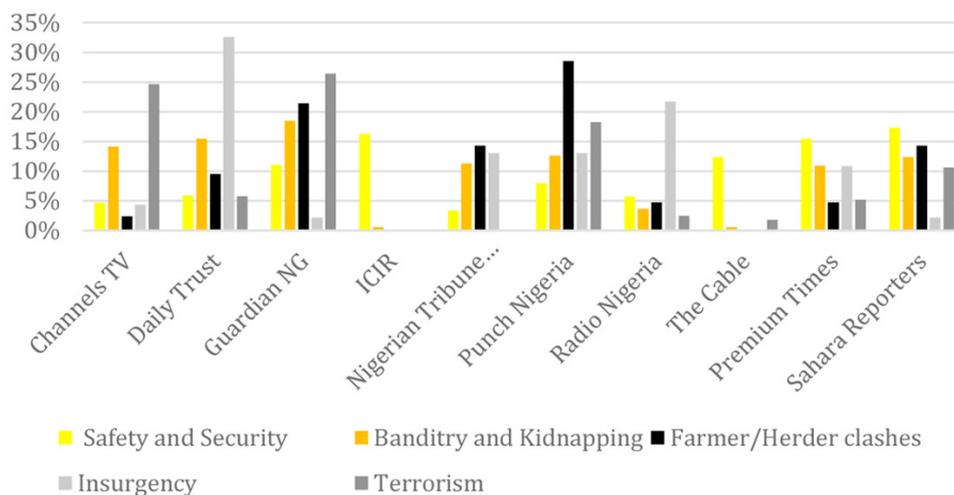


The least reported topics support the assertion that the drivers and effects of conflict are not effectively captured in media reporting. Perhaps the biggest casualty of the media's incidence reporting is humanitarian issues. The humanitarian impact of all the challenges with conflict and insecurity does not appear to be captured by the media and this is the clearest indication and indictment of incidence-focused reporting. One of the widely acknowledged fallouts of conflict is displacement and media reports failed to focus attention on the effects of the many conflicts plaguing the country such as displacements. The least reported topics account for a mere 2% of all news items monitored.

Again, the media's challenge with connecting the dots and reflecting relativity between or among issues to provide enlightenment for the listening or reading public just as was observed in the baseline monitoring.

How did each medium cover the top 5 topics?

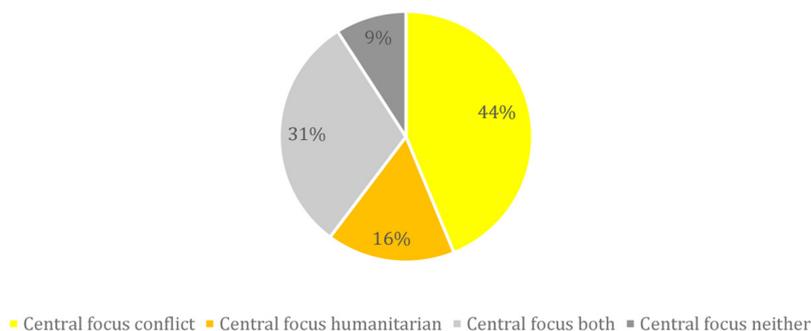
Chart 2.3: Top 5 Topics by Media



Central Focus of Stories

What did the news items across all media platforms focus on?

Chart 3: Central focus of the stories



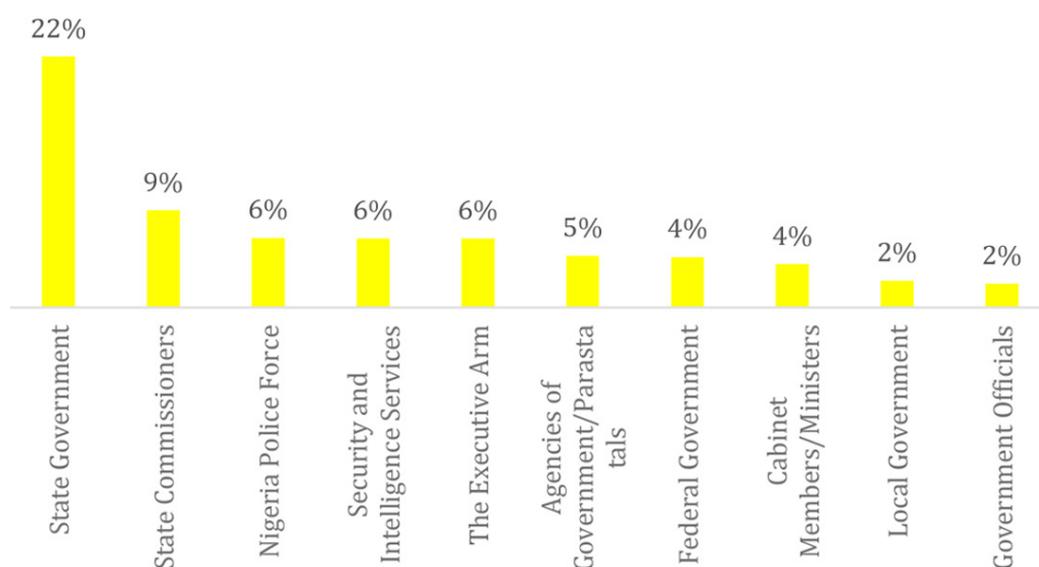
44% percent of news stories focused on conflict while 31% focused on both which means that in at least 31% of cases conflict and humanitarian stories intersect. When compared with the fact that humanitarian featured in the list of topics poorly covered, it suggests that news reports touched on humanitarian issues, but it never received attention as a standalone subject except when it is connected to incidences of conflict. This is an improvement over the baseline monitoring results where 73% of stories focused on conflict and only 4% explored the intersection of conflict and humanitarian reports. Humanitarian issues by itself received 16% of story focus compared to the 10% it received in the baseline results. It is possible that the increased numbers compared to the baseline monitoring are only a reflection of an increase in the total number of conflict and humanitarian issues rather than an improvement in coverage patterns. The fact that humanitarian as a topic received far less attention although it is the focus of reporting 16% of the time might reflect a challenge with framing and tagging in news reports.

Sources

The question of who journalists are talking to is important both for assessment and reflection. Answering the question of whose voices resonate the loudest in reports and by extension who is shaping or dominating the narratives on conflict provides a vehicle to critically examine the media’s performance of its gatekeeping role and the impact it has on representation.

Occupation of Sources

Chart 4: Top 10 sources by occupation



Traditional Rulers and Community Leaders were represented 2% of the time, local Civil Society Organisations 2%, Citizens 1%, Academics / Experts / Researchers 1%; and none of these made it into the top 10 sources by occupation. Again, there are not many voices in the source list to challenge official narratives or even provide a different perspective to issues.

This is a backward dance as official voices made up only 40% of top occupation of official voices in the baseline report.

Sources by Media

Which voices are predominant in each of the media organisations monitored? Table 2 reflects the percentages of voice representation of the top 5 sources for each media.

Table 2

	Federal Government	Nigeria Police Force	Security and Intelligence Services	State Commissioners	State Government
Channels TV	10%	9%	9%	12%	15%
Daily Trust	9%	9%	5%	10%	15%
Guardian NG	6%	21%	18%	19%	14%
ICIR	9%	7%	5%	12%	6%
Nigerian Tribune Online	13%	12%	6%	10%	9%
Punch Nigeria	6%	11%	18%	12%	13%
Radio Nigeria	4%	2%	17%	1%	5%
The Cable	1%	2%	6%	1%	6%
Premium Times	23%	12%	8%	17%	8%
Sahara Reporters	20%	12%	7%	7%	9%

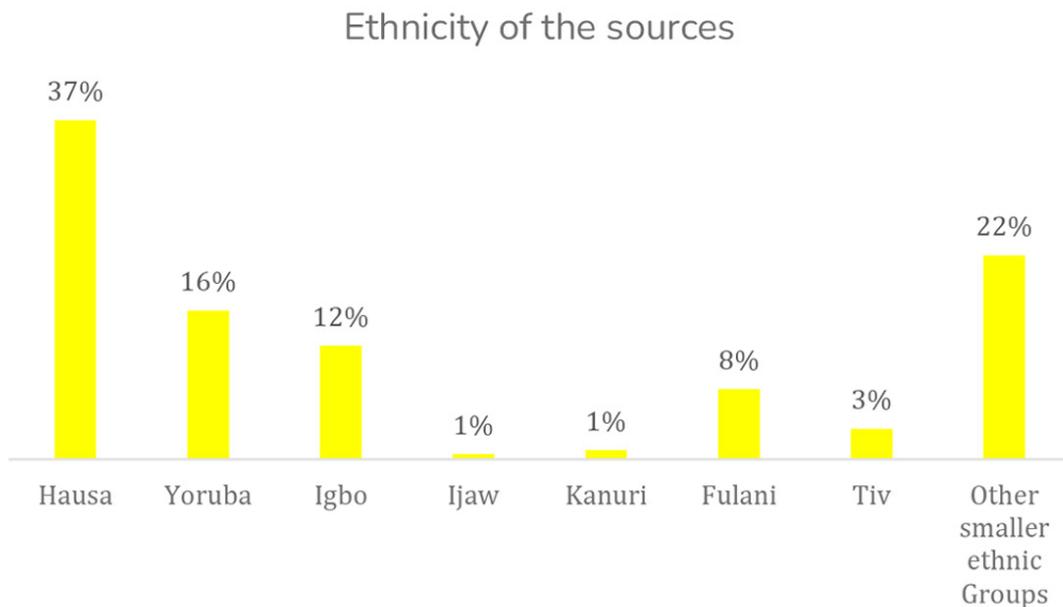
What are these sources talking about in news reports?

Table 3 shows what topics the top 5 sources spoke about and to what degree did they speak about these topics which are represented as percentages.

Table 3

Sources	Safety Security and	Banditry and Kidnapping	Farmer/Herder clashes	Insurgency	Terrorism
Nigeria Police Force	11%	18%	19%	1%	8%
Security and Intelligence Services	14%	11%	32%	7%	13%
State Commissioners	15%	22%	20%	7%	15%
State Government	44%	41%	28%	61%	51%
The Executive Arm	16%	8%	0%	25%	14%

Source Ethnicity

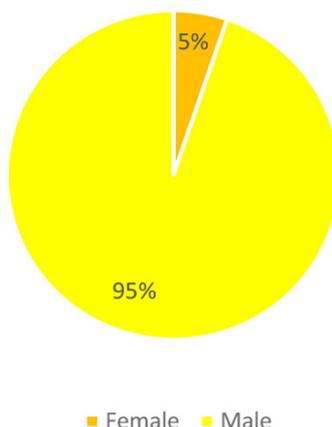


There is relatively more diversity in the ethnicity of sources especially from the major ethnic groups. This makes sense as conflict has spread across all regions of the country and can no longer be defined by one group. 22% representation of other smaller ethnic groups is also a good outlook. The only challenge, as pointed out before, is most of these sources are official sources and so the conflict is defined by state-actors across all regions.

Sex of Sources

How balanced is source representation along gender lines?

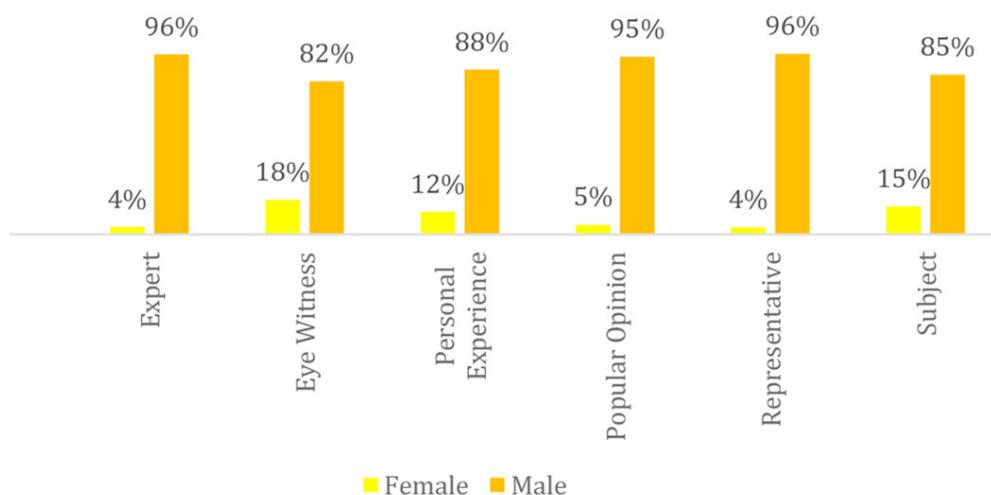
Graph 5.1: Source by Sex



95% of the time the sources are male, the media performs even worse in terms of gender representation of sources than it did with the baseline monitoring where gender representation was 91% male and 9% female. It is important to note that women and children are often most affected by conflict and IDP camps in Nigeria are filled with women and children now forced to be breadwinners after their husbands have either been killed or abducted. It appears that even in the narration of incidences, women’s voices are not sought out and so their peculiar experiences are not captured.

The function of sources in reports by sex further deepens the problem of representation because even when female voices do feature in news reports their function is often as eyewitnesses and even then, it appears the media, across all functions, favor male over female sources.

Sources sex by function

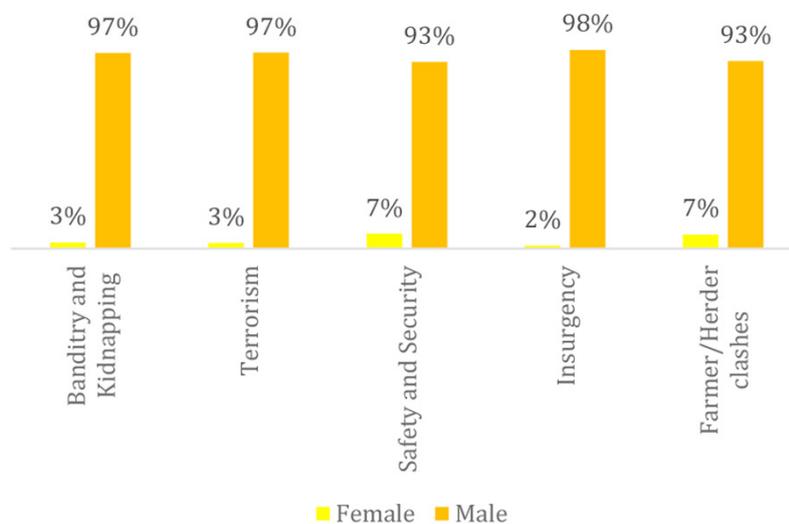


On the Global Media Monitoring Project 2021, while advancements were made in the representation of women in media with the needle moving from 24 to 25% representation, only Africa media has stagnated failing to make advancements in gender representation in media reports. In Nigeria, females featured only 19% of the time as subjects and sources of news²².

If there are any doubts as to the challenge of gender representation in news media as either subjects or sources, the result of this endline monitoring establishes the fact. This poor performance cuts across all media that was monitored in this research.

Topic by Sex

Chart 5.3: Top 5 Topics by Sex



Only in the topic designation “farmer-herder clashes” and “Safety and Security” were women’s voices captured above 3%. Considering that most of the sources are official, it can be inferred that official voices are synonymous with male voices. The implications of this are wide reaching one of which is that interventions or peace-building measures are likely to be gender blind without consideration for how the conflict peculiarly affects women despite well documented evidence²³ that women are directly impacted by conflict and insecurity²⁴.

22 https://whomakesthenews.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/GMMP2020.ENG_FINAL20210713.pdf

23. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2022/01/10/banditry-impacts-on-women-children-in-nigeria-needs-policy-response-kidnappings-ssi-education/#:~:text=Amid%20these%20attacks%2C%20women%20and,exchange%20their%20daughters%20for%20protection.>

24. <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/nigeria-must-rethink-responses-women-displaced-boko-haram>

Journalists often adduce low representation of female sources to non-availability of female expert or news makers across all subjects and that the few available are often not easily accessible. While there is no way to prove the second sentiment except through some form of empirical research, that there are fewer female experts across all areas is true. Even if this premise were to hold for argument sake, the explanation that there are few female experts and officials only justifies low representation of women in official roles. It does not explain the poor representation of women as citizens whose perspectives and realities are omitted in media documentations of conflict and its aftermath. It is inexcusable that media is not doing enough with ensuring that female sources are interviewed as witnesses, especially for the purpose of capturing their personal opinions or experiences

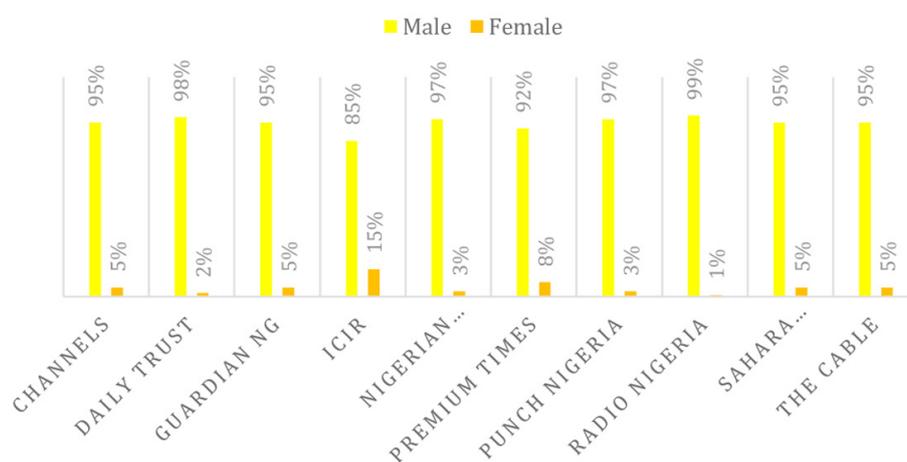
Only 23.66% of the Academic Staff in Nigerian Universities are female, of the 440 seats in the 9th Assembly, only 29 are occupied by women. Only 9.75% of police officers are female, women hold only 20% of executive positions in Nigerian organisations. The data, coupled with limiting cultural and religious beliefs mean that before a reporter finds one female source, he or she would likely have found many men who are willing to talk. The nature of news reporting, often synonymous with speed, means that journalists are trying to get the story out as quick as possible which could mean talking to the first person they find, and this person will likely be male.

It is still unconscionable however, that female voices are not sought as ordinary citizens and not even as eyewitnesses to events that clearly concern and affect them. If sourcing will become more gender-balanced, media organisations cannot leave it to happenstance. There must be deliberate actions to seek out and include female voices in reports either by policy, practice, or both.

How did Individual Media Houses do in Terms of Gender-Balanced Sourcing?

Poorly is the appropriate response to the question.

Graph 5.4: Sources Gender By Media



ICIR is the only media house that has 15% female representation in the sourcing and although that is far below average, they are champions when compared to media organisations like Radio Nigeria and Daily Trust with 1% respectively. Premium Times comes a distant second with 8% while all other media houses trailed with 5% female source representation except for Punch and Nigerian Tribune with just 3% female representation.

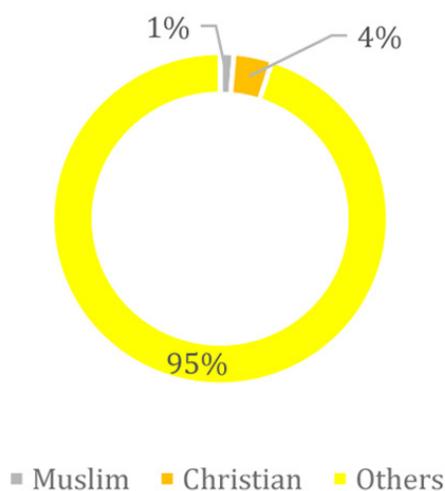
Again, this is a poor showing by media houses and disaggregation of the data by media houses paints a stark picture, indicates a state of emergency in terms of balanced source representation and is a call to order.

Sources' Religion

Religion does not appear to be reflected a lot in the narratives of conflict and humanitarian issues in this endline study “religious conflict “as a topic only had a count of 4 stories. Given that religion is one of the often discussed drivers of conflict, one possibility is that this is a reflection of shifting narratives, from religion to other issues. Another possibility is that since most media sources are state actors, religion is often not a part of official representation. Spokespersons for example, will speak for their organization which would often not include their religious arch except the organization is a religious one. This other possibility rules out the assumption that the narrative of conflict and its drivers is shifting away from religion. Predominantly official sources are problematic in more ways than one.

The religion of sources is unknown 95% of the time, whereas in the baseline monitoring the figure was 57%.

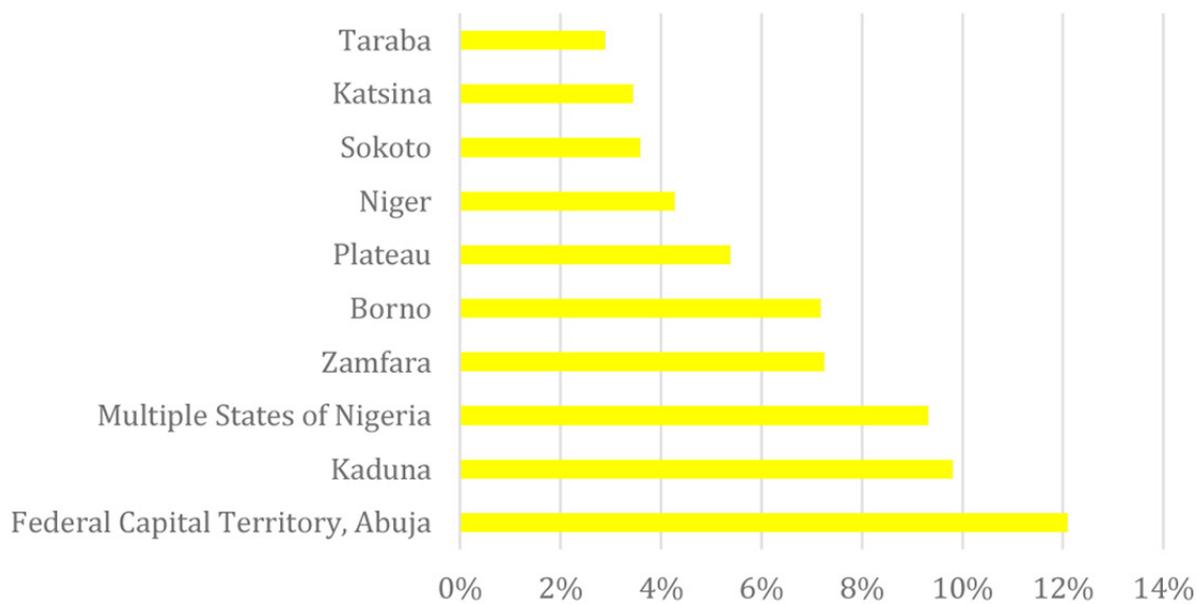
Chart 6: Religion of Sources



Origin of Stories

What region do news reports originate from?

Chart 7: Top 10 Origins



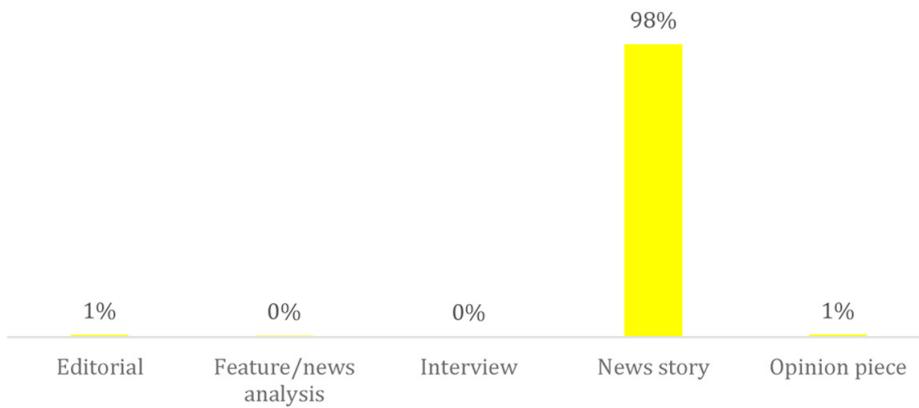
Origins	Percentage of Stories
Federal Capital Territory, Abuja	12%
Kaduna	10%
Multiple States of Nigeria	9%
Zamfara	7%
Borno	7%
Plateau	5%
Niger	4%
Sokoto	4%
Katsina	3%
Taraba	3%
National	2%
Imo	2%
Ogun	2%
Ondo	2%
Lagos	2%
Adamawa	1%
Anambra	1%
Delta	1%
Kano	1%
Kwara	1%
Osun	1%
Regional	1%
Edo	1%
Ebonyi	1%
Bayelsa	1%
Benue	1%
Ekiti	1%
Nasarawa	1%
Kogi	1%
Rivers	1%
International (1)	1%
Oyo	1%
Enugu	1%
Yobe	1%
Jigawa	1%
Kebbi	1%
Cross River	0%
Gombe	0%
Africa (2)	0%
Abia	0%
Bauchi	0%
Akwa Ibom	0%

Several stories originate from the Federal Capital Territory which could indicate that reporters are not particularly going to the field to cover conflict stories. However, there is a wider spread of origins compared to the baseline report which could be because conflict in the country is widespread and cuts across several regions. The number one topic covered by media reports, banditry, and kidnapping, affect almost all regions of the country.

Types of Stories

What types of stories did the media write?

Chart 9.1: Types of Stories Monitored

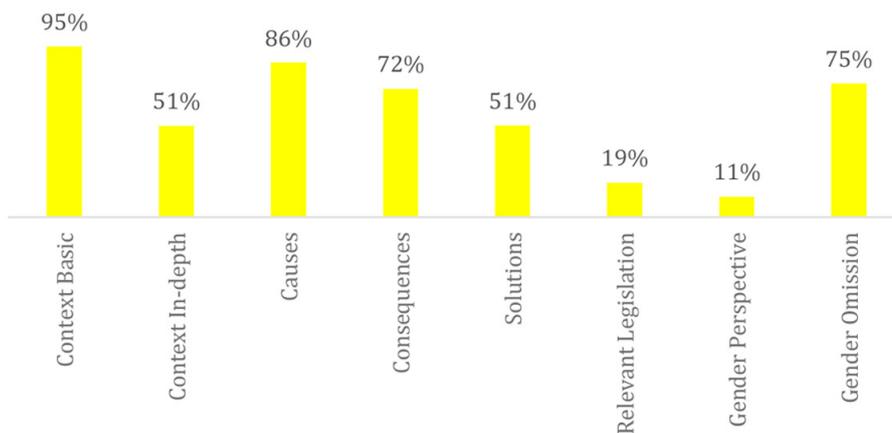


98% percent of the time the stories on conflict and humanitarian issues were news stories which corroborates that the media overwhelmingly do incidence reporting. This is a worse off position than the baseline monitoring where news stories made up 79% of stories.

Quality of Stories

How good are these news reports? How much context and in-depth reporting is done on stories?

Chart 9.2: Quality of information

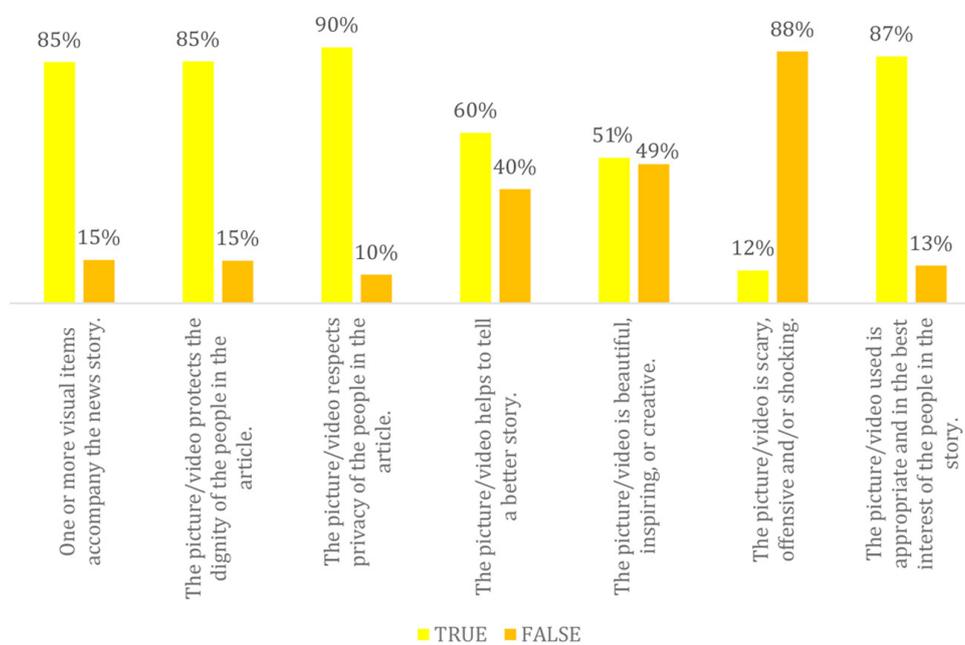


A large number of news reports monitored still offer only basic context, a mere description of events or occurrences without in-depth coverage of the issues and without examining issues from every angle. This is not surprising because the sources quoted are official voices, a more in-depth coverage of issues will necessitate talking to more than just official voices. A lot more reports reflect causes and consequences than they did in the baseline report, the question that remains is that these causes and consequences are defined largely by official voices. Gender perspectives are poorly reflected, only 11% of the time, and gender omission is high at 75%. Again, this is not surprising considering that 95% of the sources in news reports are male.

Visual Analysis

What is the quality of the visuals used in stories?

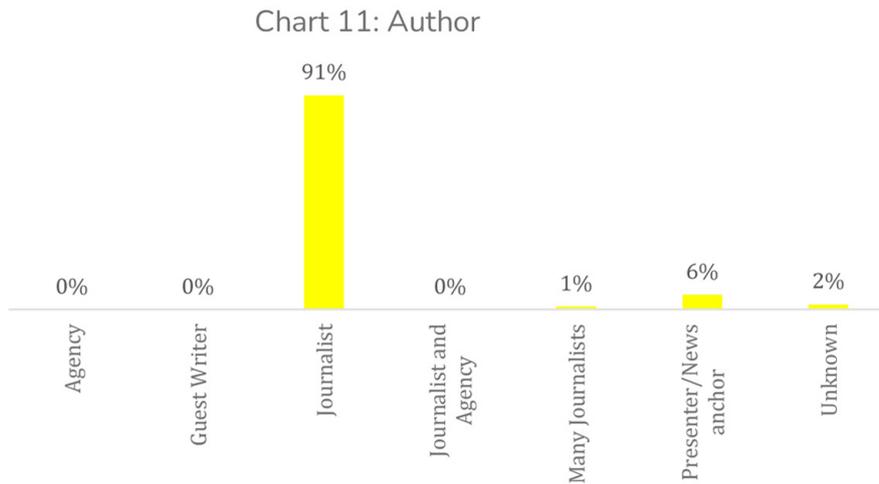
Chart 10: Visual analysis Statements



The media appears to have done well on visual analysis however if value 4 and 5 is considered, where the visual helps to tell a better story only 60% of the time and is inspiring or creative 51% of the time, it may be that rather than a conscious attempt to stay true to these principles, the media plays it safe by using images that are unconnected to the stories. A further analysis will likely reflect that image of officials are often used in news reports which when considered against most of the criteria would pass.

Author

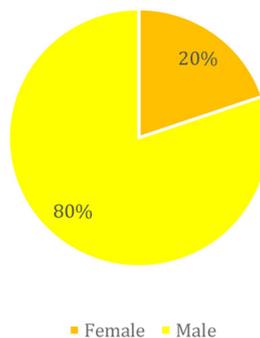
Who wrote the stories? 91% of the time stories are written by journalists. Agency reports, which made up 23% of news reports in the baseline report, is non-existent in the endline monitoring. Across all other author classifications as well there is significant reduction compared to the baseline report. Multiple journalists make up only 1% compared to the baseline report that had 8%, which could mean that journalists are not collaborating to produce conflict and humanitarian stories. Presenter/Anchor also represents just 6% whereas it was 11% in the baseline report, this could also mean that the broadcast media monitored are not doing a lot of conflict and humanitarian stories.



Sex of Authors

Who were the writers of the news stories monitored?
Unsurprisingly, authors are predominantly male at 80%.

Chart 8.1: Author sex



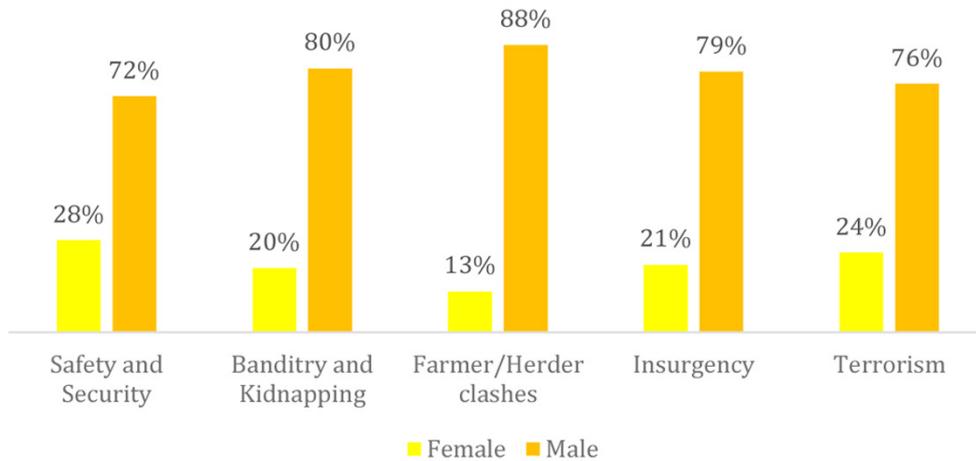
Existing research has not found a direct correlation between the gender of the reporter and their source selection although the research did find that reporters tend to use sources they are familiar with and that are easy to reach²⁵. Considering that the sources in the media organisations monitored are mostly male, it is likely that the sources journalists

25. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254120614_The_Influence_of_Reporter_Gender_on_Source_Selection_in_Newspaper_Stories

are familiar with and can easily access, are male.

What Topics did Female and Male Authors Write About?

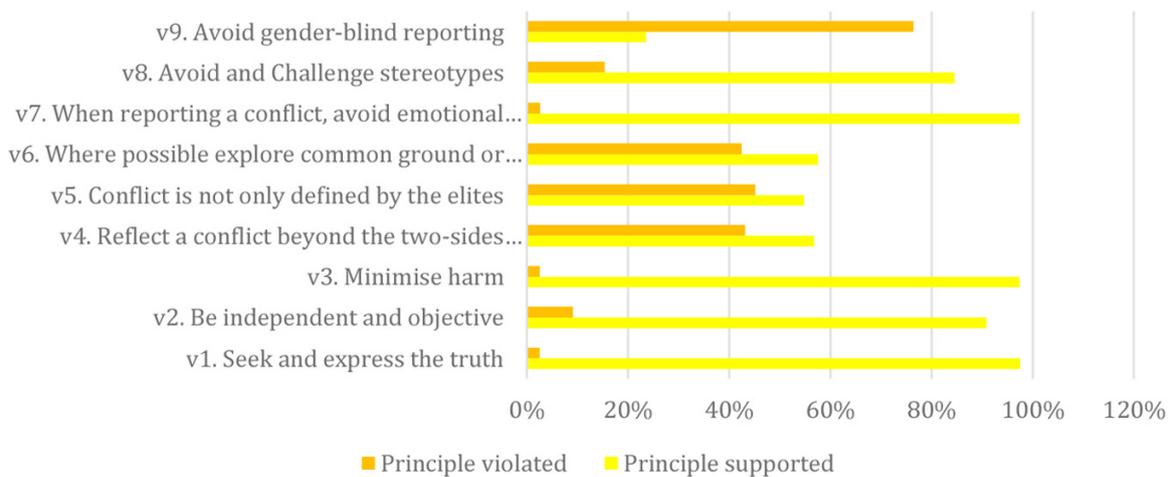
Chart 8.2: Topics by author sex



Adherence to Ethical Principles

How well did the stories adhere to ethical principles of journalism and conflict reporting?

Adherence to Ethical Principles

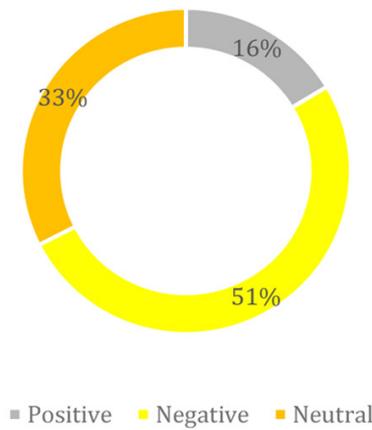


Most of the reports adhered by principles one to three (v1 -v3), it was however ebb and flow on the principles of reflecting the conflict beyond two sides, conflicts defined by elites, exploring common grounds and gender-blind reporting. The media has a task of tipping the scales to ensure that conflicts are not defined by elites, reflect wider narratives which have implication for representation and avoid gender omissions and gender-blind reporting.

Tilt of Stories

Were the stories positive or negative?

Chart 12: News Value

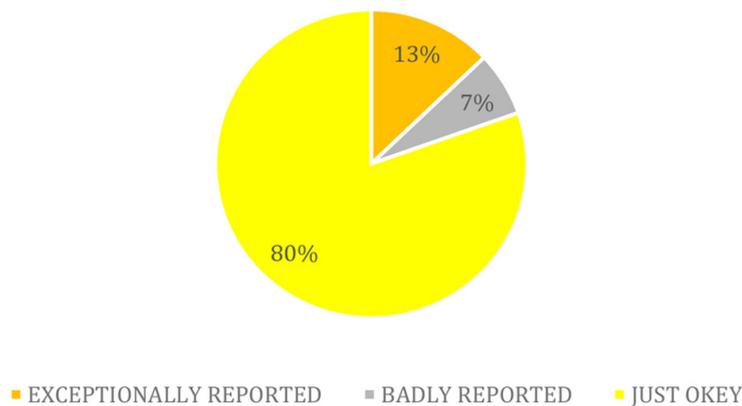


A little over half of the stories were negative, likely reports of incidents of conflict while 33% were neutral. Only 16% of the reports were positive. It is likely that more in-depth stories that reflect the conflict beyond one side and takes the narrative out of the mouths of official sources might yield more positive reports than are currently being captured by the media.

Further Analysis

This section measures the overall review of news items monitored.

Further Analysis



While only 7% of reports are captured as badly reported, 80% of reports being just okay is not a pass mark either with only 13% defined as exceptionally reported. Considering that most reports are news stories this is not surprising. However, niche reporting on conflict and humanitarian issues that goes beyond just okay are required if the media will play its role well as agenda setters.

Conclusion

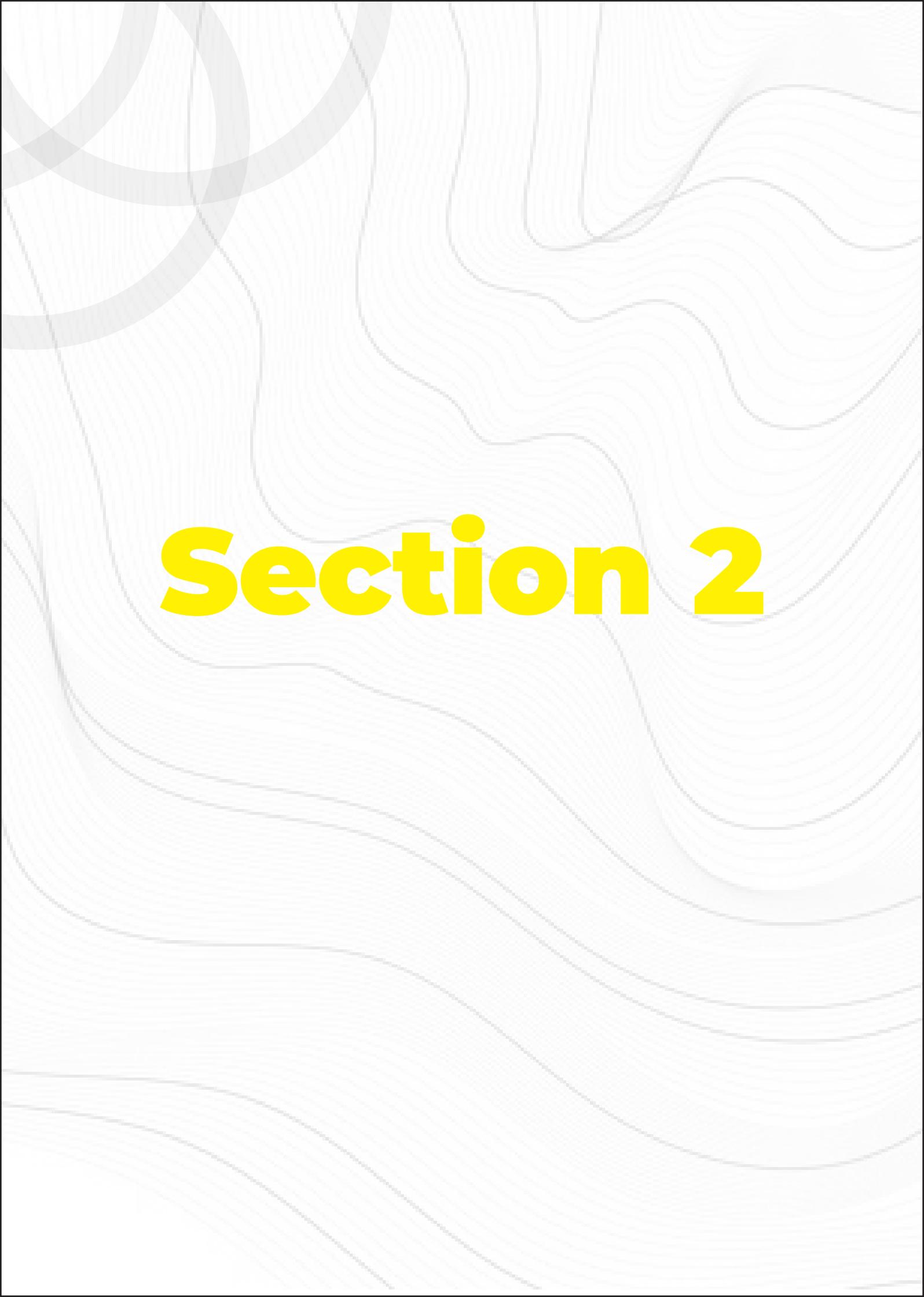
One clear theme that runs through every research parameter against which the media has been measured is that in many ways the media has lots of ground to cover in the reportage of conflict and humanitarian stories. In fact, in too many instances, the media scored poorly in the endline monitoring than they did in the baseline. Some of these instances include the predominant voices in the media which indicates that official voices are shaping conflict narratives even more than ever before, gender representation is worse, and topics covered are not diverse. Conflict and humanitarian reporting are still not prioritized by the media and these reports are consistently gender blind, does not sufficiently reflect the issues beyond two sides neither does it consistently attempt to explore common grounds and the conflict is shaped entirely by elites and worse off, state actors.

Training and retraining as well as consistent appraisal such as is achievable by media monitoring could bridge the knowledge and practice gaps highlighted by this report. These interventions should not be solely focused on conflict and humanitarian issues but across all subjects especially issues like gender and climate change which are gaining in significance.

Media interventions such as training disproportionately focus on reporters. This does not mean there are enough training for journalists but only seeks to emphasize that newsroom managers and editors require just as much training. The culture and practice of a newsroom is shaped by the managers and editors, they are the ultimate gatekeepers and agenda setters and so they require even more training than reporters. In fact, it is entirely feasible that as editors benefit from training interventions, they can in turn train reporters, an instance where “trickle down” can be beneficial especially if the faucet is not faulty. These trainings must be holistic in nature, issue specific but without ignoring critical ancillaries like resource management, policy formation and administration etc.

The review will be remiss without spotlighting one of the biggest challenges facing the media worldwide and especially in Nigeria today, media sustainability. Media is unable to evolve or innovate without resources. Even the subject of training and retraining as well as projects such as media monitoring require the kind of financing that is unavailable to a lot of media organisations. Long form reporting like investigations, exploring with other formats such as multimedia all require resources.

So, if the media must innovate and carry on as the first estate of the realm, shaping narratives and setting agenda; the question of media sustainability cannot remain a question. Answers must be found, and these answers must be suited to present and future needs without violating the core principles and ethics that set the media apart. This is especially critical in a world where the ubiquity of information is forcing on the media a higher standard of practice, a burden it must willingly and willfully bear.

The background features a light gray, wavy, topographic-like pattern. In the upper left corner, there are several overlapping, semi-transparent circles of varying shades of gray.

Section 2

A photograph of a person reading a newspaper, with a large yellow graphic overlay consisting of overlapping circles. The newspaper text is partially visible, including the word 'PRO' and a headline about 'DITCHING MANK' and 'DROPPING DOWN COSTS' and 'GROWING WITHOUT GROWING'.

BETWEEN PATRIOTIC AND ETHICAL JOURNALISM

The Nigerian Media and Civic-Democratic Vigilance

Adeshina Afolayan -



36

Democracy and Eternal Vigilance:
The Media and Civic Engagement

38

**Journalists and civic
engagement in a post colony**

40

Between Patriotism and Ethics:
The Idea of Civic Journalism in Nigeria

44

**Conclusion in Nigerian Press
Council**

44

References

Adeshina Afolayan

The media everywhere across the globe represents what has been called the fourth estate of the realm. The meaning of this is that within the context of governmentality and political power in any state, the media in all its forms represents the framework that wields the power to safeguard the political health of democracy through its capacity to frame issues of political significance in ways that influence the fundamental constituents of the state. Indeed, the media, both old and new, wield the power of life and death over a state. They can bring down one government and legitimise another. With the coming of the new media and their digitally-enabled technologies, the significance of the fourth estate becomes all the more accentuated in its ability to mould political and social events and incidences in ways that determine the difference between political order and disorder. The Arab Spring is still too fresh in the global consciousness to underscore this point.

The Arab Spring, however, provides the framework for my next argument. And this is that the role and capacity of the media must be defined and understood within the unique context within which they operate and seek to influence. The postcolonial context of Nigeria constitutes a huge test of the competence and capacity of the Nigerian media to adjudicate matters that do not mean the same to other media across the globe, even though the issues raised have universal significance. In this short piece, I will be highlighting the significance of the Nigerian media as an agent of democratic vigilance, and the challenge that creates a tension between patriotism and journalistic ethics.

Democracy and Eternal Vigilance: The Media and Civic Engagement

Thomas Jefferson was alleged to have said that “eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.” This is an apt epigraph for a democratic order because it is supposed that a democratic government guarantees the individual rights and freedoms of all its citizens. And by implications, it is the responsibility of all these citizens to facilitate the safeguarding of these freedoms through their collective watchdog activities coalescing around civil society institutions, from the media to the religious associations and other nongovernmental bodies and institutions. In simple terms, “Civil society refers to the arena of un-coerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values” (Center for Civil Society, 2006).

There are two significant functions that civil societies organisations and networks are expected to perform within a democratic system. The first has to do with the responsibility of the civil society to build up the civic virtues or social capital that a democratic society requires to flourish and make progress. Civil society in this sense contributes significantly to the building of a collective culture of trust. According to Robert Putnam,

participation in civic organisations inculcates skills of cooperation as well as a sense of shared responsibility for collective endeavours... when individuals belong to “cross-cutting” groups with diverse goals and members, their attitudes will tend to moderate as a result of group interaction and cross-pressures. (1993: 90)

In other words, civil society organisations and networks serve as the foundation for social partnership through their articulation of the collective interests of the citizens. The second function of civil society is the dedication to anti-authoritarianism. For Abadir Ibrahim, civil society

to resist authoritarianism, check and monitor state power, challenge abuse of authority, control corruption, stimulate political participation, increase citizens’ stake in the social order, monitor human rights, strengthen the rule of law, monitor elections and the democratic process in general, foster tolerance, conduct human rights education, incorporate marginal groups into the political process, deter nationalism and ethnic conflict, improve economic prosperity, and create economic and social alternatives outside of the state apparatus (2015: 51).

Within this responsibility template, civil society is expected to foster the increasing opening up of the state to democratisation and political participation.

However, it bears urgent noting that the mere presence of the civil society is not sufficient to transform a democratic society in terms of socialization, increasing representation and the capacity to undermine authoritarianism. On the contrary, civil society requires much more in terms of its density, autonomy, self-regulation and vibrancy. It is in this context that the literature speaks about a “vibrant and robust civil society.” Larry Diamond insists that such a vibrant civil society must necessarily possess four qualities:

First, in order to contribute to the consolidation of democracy, civil society must itself respect and practice democratic tenets such as “constitutionalism, transparency, accountability, participation, deliberation, representation, and rotation of leaders in the way it makes decisions and allocates its own power and resources.” Second, the goals and methods of groups in civil society should not contain “maximalist, uncompromising interest groups, or groups with undemocratic goals and methods” Third, civil society must exhibit a higher level of institutionalization with the attributes of autonomy from forces outside organisations, coherence of purpose, and complexity of organisations. Fourth, pluralism must exist within organisations and in civil society in general (cited in Ibrahim, *ibid*: 52-53).

In this context, the media and the public sphere they mediate and modulate provide significant space for an alternative conversation about the political culture and structure. The media, especially the traditional press, is grounded on a set of empiricist worldviews. And this set of beliefs motivates the practices of journalism and how it relates to the political system. The journalist holds the belief that

- News exists ‘out there’ in the ‘real world’;
- This news exists independently of media organisations and journalists;
- The journalist’s job is to find this news;
- Having found the news the journalist must record it objectively – i.e. ensure there is correspondence between what is described in the story and the world ‘out there’;
- Journalists are expected to eliminate their own subjectivity by applying routinized journalistic formulas (Louw, 2005: 3)

Within this worldview, journalists perceive themselves as a mirror that is held up to reflect reality the way it is. In other words, the responsibility of journalists is to provide an accurate reflection of society and its political structures and processes as it is. Unfortunately, however, the reality that constrained the practice of journalism, even in liberal societies, says something else that undermines the “mirror” metaphor. For constructivists, while the view that journalists seek to report news that reflects the way society is, there is a significant sense in which they also construct this news themselves. In this sense, therefore, the objectivity that journalists hold very dear as being central to their responsibility is critically revealed to be rather a subjective relationship with what journalists perceive and how they interpret what is perceived in particular contexts.

Journalists and Civic Engagement in a Postcolony

The whittling away of the notion of objectivity that is supposedly central to the practice of journalism becomes even more critical when that practice of reflecting reality as it is, is outlined within the complex context of a postcolony like Nigeria. In postcolonial terms, the civic-democratic engagement that distinguishes civil society, and specifically the media, no longer sounds as rosy as the theoretical rendering presents. On the contrary, serious issues have been raised about actually existing civil society and their real-life chances in furthering democratic struggles in, say, Africa. This is a genuine concern given that the African continent is still a hotbed for authoritarian governments and regimes that have little or no respect for democratic agitations. According to Tar,

In Africa, there are concerns that the state has remained strong, domineering and authoritarian, in spite of liberal democratisation. 'Democratic reversals' (return to a de facto one-party system) continue to threaten nascent hopes of democratic transformation: in states where democracy has been achieved, the state has sought to reinvent its authoritarian character by seeking to repress democratic demands from society, in particular, civil society (2009: 3).

The state of actually existing civil society is conditioned by the relationship between the state and civil society within the contested space of engagement. This engagement throws up two possible means by which the relevance of civil society, and of the media, could be constrained within the postcolony. The first has to do with the strategy of co-optation that the state and authoritarian regimes deploy in caging the activities and significance of the civil society. For instance,

civil society groups were often infiltrated and subdued by state intervention which adversely affected their ability to present a united front or represent the interests of the people. This was not unusual because elements in civil society were not all from the same background, and some even shared an interest in common with state officials and members of the political class. In the case of urban-based civic organisations and NGOs, I noticed that most of them were heavily influenced by 'struggles for survival'. Most of them were busy chasing donor funds while some did not have organisational structures such as a constitution, office space, and membership arrangements. Indeed, some such groups are described as 'briefcase organisations' because they are not visible and exist only as a means of scouting for donor funds. Again, this is not surprising because civic associations tend to serve the material interests of those behind them: urban-based, Western-educated young professionals. Even in urban centres, groups initiated by the organised working class and professionals were often detached from the urban poor and the unemployed – whilst the majority of the people (about 75 per cent of the total population) are based in rural areas (Tar, 2009: 13-14).

When civil society organisations are sandwiched between state officials and their strategy of co-optation and foreign donor organisations, then little can be expected to happen in terms of their commitment to revitalizing democratisation. The second constrain to the relevance of civil society, and the media, in a postcolony like Nigeria, comes from a genuine commitment to getting the work of reflecting the reality of such a political system, and how such a good intention is circumscribed by the reality that not only undermined the supposed objectivity of the media but also brought it in confrontation with another segment of the state that is also saddled with similar fundamental responsibility.

Between Patriotism and Ethics: The Idea of Civic Journalism in Nigeria

How is a conflict between two fundamental segments of the state with similar mandates but different operational dynamics to be resolved? The Nigerian state is currently embroiled in a security crisis of immense dimensions. There are non-state actors like bandits and the Boko Haram insurgents, the herdsmen/farmers crises, agitations and attacks carried out by ‘unknown gunmen’ in the south-east and all of these threatening the internal sovereignty of the country, the Nigerian state finds itself struggling to maintain its commitment to the most minimal and fundamental of a state’s responsibility to its citizens—law and order.

Either in the conflict zone of the northeast with Boko Haram insurgents or with the bandits - now designated terrorists, or addressing herdsmen attacks across Nigeria, the Nigeria armed forces and law enforcement agents are involved in a titanic strategic battle to win back the soul of Nigeria. It, therefore, takes little reflection to understand the anxiety of the security agents about the role of the media in escalating the crisis with what is often considered by security agents to be the false commitment to objectivity by journalists. But then, the journalist themselves are incensed by the hostility with which security personnel, especially when armed forces are perceived as threatening the legitimate and constitutionally approved roles of the media as the fourth estate of the realm.

As it were, there is a clash of patriotic intents between the media and the security forces. And the issue is simple:

- How ought a conflict be reported in ways that will not jeopardise strategic considerations?
- How is the media’s responsibility for news dissemination and information sharing to the citizens be mediated in ways that will not compromise objectivity?

The media is insisting on its constitutional right to reflect reality as it is. However, the military demands that such reportage would not be realistic given the complexity of conflict management. One way to a resolution for this conflict of interest is to find a mutual means of collaboration. After all, both sectors are not only critical to the rehabilitation of the democratic order in Nigeria. Both are equally and patriotically committed to it. Such a model of collaboration, beyond the scope of this piece, must however bridge the gap created by silence, hostility, rigidity and arrogance that has attended the attempted relationship between the two sectors.

This piece addresses the media’s contribution to such a model of collaboration. This is crucial because as the fourth estate of the realm, the media ought to have the capacity—which is often very difficult to achieve—to stay out of the fray for the sake of being able to better hold those involved in the management of the political processes to accountability and transparency. I begin with a note on professionalism and professionalisation that speaks to the ethical imperative involved in how journalists report the news. Professionalism speaks to the value and process framework that guides the proper

professional conduct of the journalist. I will pose two questions that go to the heart of such professionalism for a journalist:

- Q1: What type of reporting approximates the realisation of democratic ideals that the media is concerned about?
- Q2: In carrying out the constitutionally sanctioned roles of the media, should the journalist be concerned with doing the right thing or doing the good thing?

The realisation of the necessity of democratic ideals and democratisation stands as the highest responsibility of the media. And given the constitutional recognition of that role, the media has the patriotic onus to ensure that the mandate is realised to the best of its ability. However, the realisation of this patriotic mandate brings the journalist short between the two understanding of how the mandate is to be realised. In other words: should the journalists mirror the reality of the political process objectively the way it is?

Or should the journalist construct that reality according to their own subjective inclinations? In what senses does an objective or subjective rendering of the news hinder the patriotic rehabilitation of a state whose democratic credentials the media is trying so hard to attend to? Can we always tell the truth in news reportage? Or better still: can truth-telling be divorced from the consequences of truth-telling? What happens when the compulsion to report the news as it is further undermines or aggravates the conflict situation in a state eager to get the conflict off the table? Ultimately, is the watchdog press a private enterprise that supervises public affairs or essentially a public enterprise essentially?

This last question goes to the very heart of how we need to see the press in a democratic order. Civic journalism, rather than being trapped within the “mirror” responsibility, seeks a balance between mirroring reality and improving the quality of civic life through fostering public participation and discourse. In other words, civic journalism attempts to find the right balance between doing right and doing good. This brings in some significant and critical level of journalistic discretion with regard to the type of news to report and how to report it. To be specific, civic journalism has a huge task of moderating the public sphere in ways that broaden the conversation about democracy and democratic order. Civic journalism attempts a shift away from what has been called a “journalism of information” to “a journalism of conversation” that seeks to actively and robustly engage the public in conversation rather than just informing it about facts concerning the state. This paradigmatic shift from what we can call traditional journalism demands that the press cannot detach itself from any effort to improve public discourse in the public sphere because of its attachment to objectivity, and that requires a very broad understanding of what politics means through “understanding democracy as a way of life and not merely as a form of government” (Glasser and Craft, 1998: 207). While “doing journalism” is not exclusively synonymous with “doing politics,” the journalist still has a stake in the political community as a fundamental and responsible member. Thus,

Public journalism's concern for the quality of public discourse widens and to some extent clarifies journalism's view of politics by recognizing citizens as a source of political wisdom. This optimistic view of the electorate invites the press to expand the scope of political coverage beyond politicians and the issues that they regard as salient. More than that, it encourages journalists to appreciate the press as an agency not only of but also for communication, a medium through which citizens can inform themselves and through which they can discover their common values and shared interests. Public journalism, therefore, invites the community at large, reporters and readers alike, to consider...that "what we mean by democracy depends on the forms of communication by which we conduct politics" ... (ibid: 207).

To make civic journalism good, therefore, there is a need for an ethical framework that enables journalists to become relevant to the democratic order as a catalyst for a dialogue between the government and the governed that solidifies the social contract. Once ethics makes an entry into the re-appropriation of the media's constitutional framework, then the discussion shifts fundamentally away from the insistence on doing right to a consideration of what is the moral or ethical thing to do when reporting any piece of news.

An act can be moral but unethical, or conversely, be immoral but ethical. Robin Hood was robbing the rich to feed the poor. That was a moral act that was still unethical. When a business enterprise inflates the prices of its products, that could be an ethical thing to do which can be immoral. Morality in this sense denotes the accepted mores that condition the social relations of humans in any community that are accepted unquestioningly. Ethics on the other hand speaks to a more critical reflection on the rules that guide the dynamics of a system or profession. Thus, why it could be ethical for a business venture to increase its price, such a practice becomes immoral within the conventional understanding of what makes life good and comfortable.

Should a journalist report on the bare evidence surrounding a plane crash at Kafanchan while the military is still investigating the nature of the crash? Does the constitutional responsibility of the media include exposing the blueprint of a security strategy that has not been executed? And more ethically tasking still: How should the press report on a massacre at, say, Yola or Ijebu Ode, perpetrated by herdsmen of a particular ethnic descent? Answering these thorny questions demands differentiating between what is constitutional, patriotic and what is ethical. A constitutional guarantee can protect against an immature lapse of judgment, but only a good ethical sense of responsibility can refrain a journalist from publishing sensitive information that could send a state into a spiral of conflict. This means that the right to publish a story, which is not always clear, does not translate into an obligation to do so (Perebinossoff, 2008: 167). To facilitate a

a means by which a journalist could significantly manoeuvre the ethical dilemma that often dodges the desire to be patriotic while being ethical, an ethical framework, E.T.H.I.C.S, provides a programmatic context that could be internalised by a journalist in the pursuit of their responsibilities.

E stands for **E**valuate. Just as journalists need to get both sides of a story, they need to examine all sides of an ethical issue. They have to consider the issue and analyse it from the perspective of the reader and those involved with the story. Just because a journalist has the right to print or broadcast information doesn't mean the journalist has the obligation to do so. For example, it is unethical to reveal troop movements that may get soldiers killed.

T stands for **T**ruth. The underlying principle of journalism is to find the truth. Sometimes a journalist can print information that is factually correct but wrong.

H stands for **H**arm. Journalists have the power to ruin lives. They must take into account the tremendous power of the press and its ability to inflict harm. Few people read the corrections that are buried on page 2. The damage that is done by publishing incorrect information often lives on because of the initial exposure on page 1. Journalists should also avoid harming a person's reputation without a compelling reason.

I stands for **I**nvestigating. All good reporting is investigative. Journalists must probe for the truth and confirm information from more than one source.... Some reporters are too cosy with sources.... Reporters must be on guard to keep from being manipulated by public officials and public relations executives whose goal is to spin a story and steer journalists away from the truth.

C stands for **C**odes of ethics. These codes are a good starting point for understanding journalistic ethics. Professionals can refer to them in the field. They make great training guides for students and beginning reporters.

S stands for **S**ituational ethics. It is important to approach ethical issues on a case-by-case basis. Conflicts often occur when one ethical standard conflicts with another. A news organisation may have a policy against using unnamed sources, but a situation may arise when it is necessary not to print the name of a source. The same holds true with printing the names of accused persons in sexual offence cases (ibid: 168-169).

Conclusion: Nigerian Press Council

One immediate action point for journalism in Nigeria demands a focus on the rehabilitation of the Nigerian Press Council (NPC) as the locus of reform activities on the capacity to gatekeep journalism in Nigeria. To have vibrant civic journalism demands the need for a strict gatekeeping framework that regulates who comes in and what is done in the name of journalism. For instance, the Code of Conduct of the NPC reveals a document written in broad abstract terms that has no means of mediating contextual ethical and constitutional dilemmas confronting the media in postcolonial Nigeria.

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CONFLICT CAUSES, ROOTS, AND TRIGGERS

By Prof. Isaac Olawale Albert -



47 Introduction

48 Media and conflict

49 Causes of conflict

53 Conflict Roots

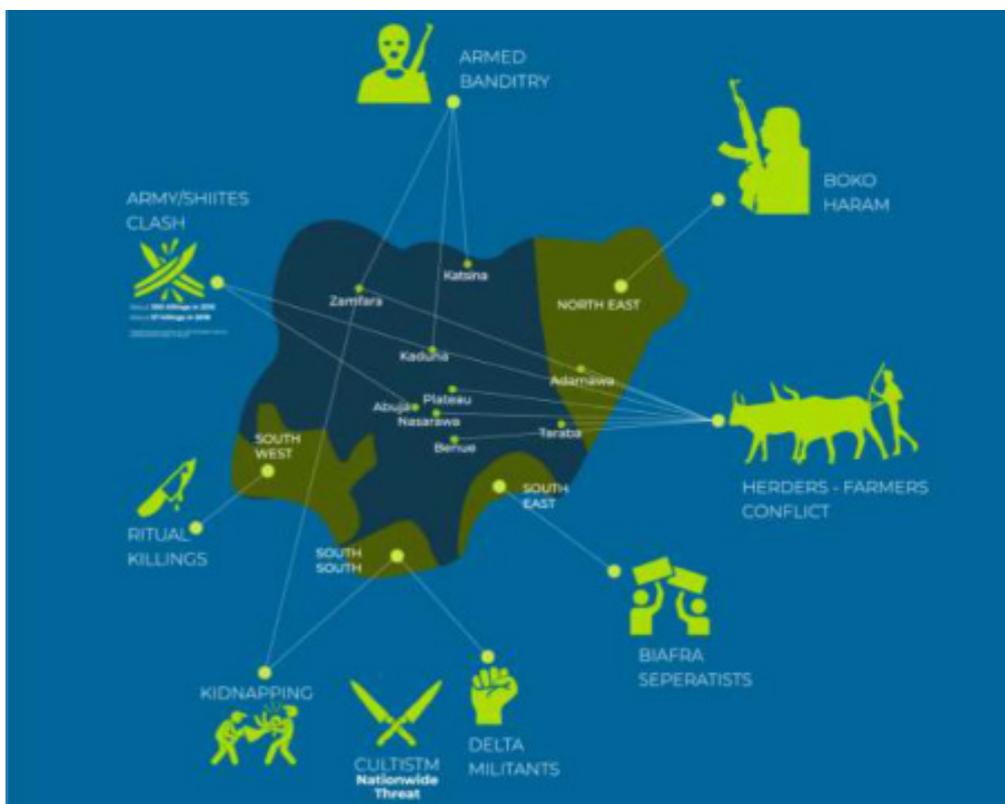
55 Triggers

56 Causes, Roots and Triggers of what?

Introduction

What do the terms “conflict causes”, conflict roots”, and “conflict triggers” mean and have in common? Without having a clear understanding of these terms, how they relate to one another and differ in context and meaning it is difficult for those using them in conflict reporting to get their messages properly packaged and delivered to the right mass audiences. The purpose of this paper is to shed light on the terms most especially in the context of the escalating peace and security challenges in Nigeria. The country has never had it so bad. No part of the country is spared from the seemingly intractable security breaches across the land as evident in the following map:

Figure 1: Map of Violent Conflicts in Nigeria (December 2018)



Source: Idayat Hassan, “From Boko to Biafra: How insecurity will affect Nigeria’s elections”, African Arguments, December 18, 2018, <https://africanarguments.org/2018/12/boko-biafra-nigeria-insecurity-2019-elections/>

The above 2018 map depicts the security threats in Nigeria towards the 2019 elections. It shows that all the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria were bedevilled by one form of violent extremism or the other as the country approached the elections: Boko Haram crisis in the North East, cattle rustling and banditry in the North West, herder crisis in the North Central, secessionism in the South East, youth militancy in the South-South,

ritual killings in the South West, kidnapping and hostage-taking everywhere. All of these problems have today escalated further and nowhere is safe in the land and there is no assurance that things would be back to normal soon. There is hardly a day in the country when one serious security breach or the other is not reported in the media. The Boko Haram crisis has now spread to Nassarawa and Niger States.

Mass student abductions have now spread from Chibok and Dapchi in Borno State to Jangebe (Zamfara State), Kankara (Katsina state), Kagara and Teginia (Niger State), and several places in Kaduna State. Some of the students were executed or died on the account of the delay in paying the ransoms for getting them released. The kidnapping of other innocent Nigerians is now a daily affair across the country. A new phase of the insecurity is the escalating attacks on security agents in the Southeastern part of the country. The media is daily challenged to report these problems. The first competency requirement for such a task is for the print and electronic media practitioners to have a good understanding of the causative factors of such problems and be able to reflect this in the written reports. Attention is called to some of these basic issues in the discussions that follow.

Media and Conflict

Truth is said to be the first causality of the kind of crisis situations noted above. This means that the conflicting parties are bound to tell the conflict stories in the way that best suits their desires and machinations. Journalists stand between these tendencies. It is their primary responsibility to tell the stories as they should and make the public understand the different aspects of the problem. When hidden, it is the role of the journalist to help dig out the truth through different forms of investigative and analytical methods. Where journalists are unable to personally unearth the truth they pose some strategic questions they expect the public to join them in answering. It could be a curious headline, the conclusion to a feature article or even a closing remark to a television interview or debate.

A journalist driving too hard at the truth could get into trouble doing so given the way people are sentimentally positioned around conflict issues. Everyone wants their side of the story to be the only one in the public domain. Hence, it may not be in the interest of some people for the truth to be told as it should. On the other hand, some people's salvation in the conflict environment lies basically in the public knowing the truth. What this suggests is that a journalist reporting conflict is ever walking on landmines; different forms of harm (including death) could result from the enterprise.

Is this to say that journalists should maintain a safe distance from conflict zones or not report conflict? The answer is No; the public depends on the media to be informed about conflict issues. Even policymakers depend on the independent reports of journalists for

enriching the field reports provided by security agencies. Hence, the media must operate accordingly. The best a journalist could do is to be absolutely committed to the ethical standards of the journalistic profession and then leave the rest to sanity prevailing in the society on how the reports are received. Part of these professional imperatives is the ability of the journalist to exhibit a good understanding of the conflict issues and the capacity to share them with a mass audience in the best professional manner. This paper focuses on some of the issues: having a professional understanding of “conflict causes, roots, and triggers” and being able to demonstrate this in conflict reporting. This subject matter enables a journalist to be able to write about conflict from a more professional point of view: a manner that could guide those responsible for managing the problems.

Causes of Conflict

Causes of conflict have to do with why the parties are quarrelling. Five main causes of conflict are known to students of peace and conflict studies: (i) resources (ii) values (iii) psychological needs of individuals and groups, (iv) exchange of information, and (v) perception. Each of them is treated in the discussions that follow.

“Resources” as a cause of conflict refers to a stock of natural and material possessions that can be used by individuals or groups to create further wealth. They include money, land, water, rights, social equality, positions, and other critical assets. Conflicts are generated when people compete for them. There are two competing arguments on how “resources” cause conflict. The first revolves around the quantum of the resources available: the fact that resources are always in limited supply; there is hardly enough for any society or everybody. Though it is well known that only one person would become the President of a country many people come out showing interest in the position. The land available in a community may not be enough for those using it for farming purposes but herders too want to graze their animals on it. Hence, people fight over the little that is available and where the conflict is poorly managed it could become a full-scale war. In other words, the less the resources available to society the higher its chances of having conflicts. In this regard, it is often argued that the poorer a society the higher the chances of the people fighting over life-sustaining resources.

The second argument has to do with the fairness in allocating the available limited resources. Who gets what and based on what principles? Are equals treated equally or unequally? There are also two legs to this dimension of the problem. There is a higher governance crisis when the elite holds too much of the available resources in the society leaving the non-elite with too little. In this case, the richer are too rich and the poor are too poor. This is technically called “relative deprivation”. The second leg of this particular thesis, which indeed is much more worrisome, is where the relative deprivation in the society can be linked to political and cultural differences. In this case, those belonging to some political, cultural, ethnic, religious or gender groups have better access to

life-sustaining resources and opportunities than the others. This structural problem, according to the Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity of the University of Oxford, is technically called “horizontal inequality” (HI). Many countries of the world slide into wars for it. The author of the concept, Prof. Frances Stewart, called attention to a number of dimensions of the problem of HI to include the following:

- economic dimensions, where it is not just income, but land ownership and employment, among other aspects, that are relevant to people’s wellbeing and grievances;
- social dimensions, such as access to health and education;
- political dimensions, encompassing participation and control in central and local government, the bureaucracy and the army, as well as other sources of power; and
- cultural dimensions, including societal respect for a group’s religious practices, language, or dress (<https://gsdrc.org/professional-dev/horizontal-inequalities/>).

No society with this kind of discriminatory practices or exclusionary methods knows sustainable peace. Those discriminated against or that consider themselves discriminated against would always complain and may not have the kind of patriotic quotient needed for building a stable nation.

The second cause of conflict is “values”. This refers to the basic or fundamental beliefs or ideologies that help to shape a human’s understanding of life and how to live one’s life most especially in relation to some others. It shapes how people perceive their racial, ethnic, or religious group. In most cases, people rate their beliefs higher than that of some other people. However, differences in value systems do not lead to conflict on their own. Values produce conflicts when a group tries to force their own values on others. In other words, it is not differences in religious beliefs that generate religious conflict or violence but when adherents of one religion try to force their own faith on others.

The third general cause of conflict is the psychological needs of individuals and groups. This means how poorly people are able to manage their relationships with others. Is the individual rude, arrogant, selfish, or lacking in emotional intelligence? Is the group discriminatory or contemptuous of others? The argument here is that if a person with psychological problems is inserted into any society whether as a follower or leader he/she is most likely to generate conflict for others and the problems could be given some wrong meanings by those not familiar with the roles of “psychological needs” in conflict.

Communication is the fourth major cause of conflict. This has to do with how information is exchanged in society. In this respect, there are three forms of conflict-generation communication methods. These are (i) benevolent communication (ii) malevolent communication and (iii) ambivalent communication. Benevolent communication has to do with saying something good but it does not necessarily mean that the receiver of the information would be happy that the person speaking is saying something positive. In a conflict environment, some people might not be happy with the positive things

that are reported; they prefer negative reports against their adversaries. Malevolent communication has to do with saying something negative or offensive. Some people may be happy with it; it all depends on the conflict context. The emerging scenario in Nigeria is that where some people expect the media to report something negative and this is not possible they create their own “fake news” to create the atmosphere they like. Ambivalent communication which is the third has to do with making statements that could be given more than one meaning. The meaning given to the speech, report or news depends on the disposition of the receiver.

Communication also becomes a cause of conflict when “too less” or “too much” information is fed into society. “Too less information” occurs when the society is denied access to information or when their “right to know” is denied most especially by the state. This could range from the government denying the media access to information or restricting the rights of journalists to disseminate the information at their disposal. It could also occur when journalists fail in their duty to inform and educate the public through investigative journalism. The ignorance resultant from this could create “baseless” or data conflict. In this respect, data conflicts happen when individuals, groups or corporate bodies are denied needed information for making wise decisions or when they are misinformed, find it difficult to identify which data is relevant for them and even lack the capacity for more properly interpreting the available information.

Some of the conflicts in Nigeria have this hidden element. When the Boko Haram crisis started, for example, Muhammed Yusuf committed a great deal of his time teaching his followers how bad it is for anybody to sing the national anthem or cite the national pledge. Not many people were around to teach how good it is to recite the two. Not many politicians were also around with the right kind of public conduct and altruism to show that Yusuf was wrong. In other words, it is not enough to sing the national anthem and recite the national pledge. The political leaders promoting it are expected to have a moral quotient that shows that they truly believe in them. Muhammed massively won hearts and minds in the process of filling the information gaps.

However, “too much information” could also be a problem. For journalists, this could be a matter of telling the public what should be held in confidentiality because of its security implications or providing too many details on something that was not necessary. There are legal provisions for what journalists can share with the public and what cannot be shared. An overzealous government could also come up with its own short term regulations on what could be shared or not. All of these are subjects of public debates. But a good example can be provided here to illustrate the need to be circumspect in some cases on what to report in situations of terrorism and counter-terrorism. The following statements provide the framework for such decision making by journalists:

'(...) the central aim of terrorism is not so much the act of violence or the killing of a target, but rather the dissemination of terror and uncertainty among a population as well as the spread of the group's message through the newsworthiness of the violent act'. (Source: Spencer, A. (2012). *Lessons Learnt: Terrorism and the Media* (Ser. 4). Swindon, Wiltshire: Arts & Humanities Research Council, p.8)

"publicity is the oxygen of terrorism". According to her, "[t]he hijacker and the terrorist thrive on publicity: without it, their activities and their influence are sharply curtailed". (Source: Margaret Thatcher, "Speech to American Bar Association", Margaret Thatcher Foundation, London, July 15 1985, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106096>)

The Al Qaida leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, observed in 2005 that "[m]ore than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media. We are in a media battle, a race for the hearts and minds of our Ummah." (Source: Whitlock, Craig (2006). *Keeping al-Qaeda in His Grip Al-Zawahiri Presses Ideology, Deepens Rifts among Islamic Radicals*. Washington Post Foreign Service. Sunday, April 16, 2006. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/15/AR2006041501130_pf.html)

The three statements above are carefully chosen: the first from a scholar, the second from a political leader of note and the third from one of the most globally known terrorist leaders. The three statements call attention to the fact of "publicity" being the oxygen of terrorism. In other words, terrorists are empowered when their cases of extreme violence are regularly reported by the media. Terrorists seek to be reported by journalists for:

- i Capturing attention,
- ii disseminating the terrorist group's message in order to attract the public's sympathy for their cause, and
- iii spreading fear and terror among the population.

This intimidation of the public is expected to result in increasing public pressure on decision-makers to affect policy in ways that favour the terrorist organization's interests. Journalists should not be an accessory for attaining such goals.

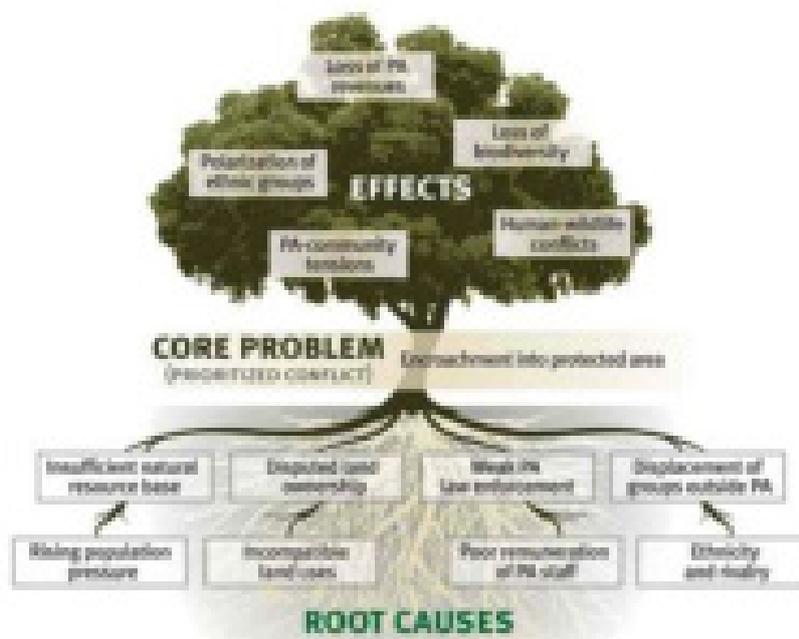
The foregoing is a cursory alert: that those reporting cases of terrorism should be more cautious than the others. They should not report all they see or know. It is not a matter of not reporting but that the focus of the reports should not be empowering terrorism. Journalists need better training for working around the issues; the matter cannot be

fully discussed here. One way by which journalists inadvertently strengthen terrorism is when they report or even provide pictures of terrorists' gory acts such as the execution of their captives.

The last cause of conflict, though not often mentioned by students of peace and conflict studies, is perception. This means a process by which individuals and even groups see and feel the world around them. This could be positive or negative. A rich person could feel he is poor; a loved person could feel he is hated, and a safe person could feel insecure. In this respect, the term perception could be said to be closely related to assumption: assuming that certain things exist. The things may not exist but are a figment of the person's imagination. All of these shape how the person relates with the rest of society and could become a cause or trigger of conflict. Wrong perceptions can create any of the causes of conflicts earlier mentioned: resources, values, psychological needs and communication. In this case, the person or group creating the crisis believes a problem exists whereas nothing is wrong anywhere. Journalists have the responsibility for letting the public know that such problems do not exist or if they exist at all it is not in the dimensions leading to the crisis

Conflict Roots

“Conflict roots” provide a deeper understanding of “conflict causes”. It presents a conflict as a tree with four key parts: (i) roots (ii) stem (iii) branches and (iv) leaves as shown below:



Example of a Conflict Tree

Beyond Peace
Image Courtesy: IISD

Source: <https://beyond-peace.com/tools-of-conflict-analysis-in-theory-and-practice-the-conflict-tree-model/>

In conflict situations, people talk more about the stem, branches and leaves than the roots. This is because the roots are always hidden and can only be fathomed through a deeper investigation method. Those always challenging journalists to engage in investigative journalism are merely challenging them to take their reports beyond the surface by digging deeper into what is hidden.

Why the conflict tree analytical tool is important is that it enables interveners to have a better understanding of what to do to a conflict. The primary functions of roots include anchoring the plant, storing reserved food for the plant, absorbing water and dissolved minerals and conducting these to the stem. It sustains the tree. The tree dies once the roots are destroyed. Ditto conflicts. The moment the roots of the problems are unearthed and destroyed the conflict loses its energy.

What should therefore matter most in conflict management? Trimming the leaves of a conflict through short term interventions, cutting off the stem by killing, locking up or pampering a few people, or removing the roots that provide the tree nutrients? The best approach is to kill the conflict roots. Some trees get stronger or are regenerated when their leaves are trimmed and when their branches and trunks are cut off. Yet, this is what many political leaders do to conflict. They deny the existence of the conflict roots; they avoid unheartening and removing them and the conflict does not only fester but in some cases escalate beyond limits. On the other hand, it is the work of investigative journalists to unearth the root causes of the problems and make society talk about them. Journalists may be failing in their duties if all they do is to be reporting conflict stems and leaves.

Reporting the roots of conflict is not just a matter of saying why the problem is happening. It requires that the contexts of the conflict are also provided so that those seeking to understand them deeply are not easily misled. Hence, a good journalist must also be knowledgeable of what conflict experts call “context analysis”. This has to do with understanding the environment of the conflict in order to develop a strategic plan of action for dealing with the situation. For example, if killing is taking place in a community on regular basis and not elsewhere, a conflict analysis would ask “Why this particular community and not elsewhere”. If the problem happens at a specific period in the year, the question is “Why this specific period?”; “why this specific person”?

These questions are calling attention to the fact that it is not just enough for the reporter to say what everybody is saying, There is a need to do some environmental scanning. Why is the tree growing well in one location and not in others? Why is it that certain trees would never grow in some environment no matter the care given to them? It is often said that the youth are the cannon fodders of conflict. Why do some youth allow themselves to be exploited by their older generation in fomenting troubles and a few others refused to be used though having similar socio-economic characteristics to the pliable ones? They come from poor homes; they are educated and jobless but do not

get involved in any criminal venture? Answering these kinds of questions helps problem solvers. The media need to beam searchlight on them. It helps to identify the taproot or the combination of root types to be removed in killing an evil tree.

A conflict can be reported from different contexts: the social, cultural, economic, political, environmental and security contexts. In this regard, it is not enough to say the conflict is between farmers and herders. Under what contexts? It may not be true that the Fulani do not like the Tiv people of Benue State. What seems to be true is that Tivland has the best kind of grasses that the Fulani need for grazing their animals and there seem to be no reliable state mechanisms for the two peoples to cohabit peacefully. Those studying the problem must therefore be versed in environmental, political and security context analysis. Why do the farmers and herders clash all the time?

The answer could be: “the farmers get frustrated by the fact that past cases of herders destroying their crops were not dealt with by those responsible for doing so”. It may not necessarily be because those who destroy their crops are Fulani. The herders could also say “Nobody is addressing where to graze our animals. We pay taxes”. What these are saying is that the two are not ordinarily fighting and the fight may not necessarily be ethnic or religious as often characterized. The two sides are frustrated by certain governance circumstances that must be factored into the analysis. Once those causes of frustrations are attended to, what was initially perceived as an intractable conflict eventually melts out. An investigative journalist must be able to take the public to that level of understanding rather than focusing exclusively on the number of people killed and wounded on both sides.

Triggers

A conflict trigger is a single event or number of events or incidents that help to activate existing grievances or stresses in the society into a massive uprising. The factors giving rise to it include the following:

- Persistent injustice arising from no attention to root causes of conflict
- Media boosts
- Political leaders’ entrapment in the use of force when dialogue is needed for dousing tension in the society
- Political leaders’ inability to inspire hope for the future
- Distorted perception of realities and allures of messianic non-state leadership
- Conspiracy theory

A good example of illustrating this is how the so-called Arab Spring or Arab Revolution was sparked off on December 17, 2010, by a young Tunisian, Mohamed Bouazizi, who set himself afire to protest against police harassment. This was his one-man reaction to

the destruction of the vegetables he was selling from a barrow by urban law enforcers. He died on January 4, 2011, as a result of the burns suffered and this sparked protests against the cost of living and the country's authoritarian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. So massive was the uprising that Ben Ali's 23-year-rule was ended with his fleeing to Saudi Arabia ten days later. Thus, he became the first leader of an Arab nation to be pushed out by popular protests. Several other Arab leaders were forced out of power as the protests spread to their countries.

Historians refer to triggers as “the last straw that breaks the camel's back”. It is the stage in conflict escalation where the victims say “enough is enough” and then resort to self-help in addressing a problem they have been encountering over a long period of time. In most cases, the steps taken by such people are often higher and bigger than expected. All they simply do at that stage is to punish the perceived perpetrators of the injustice they suffer for all past and present grievances. It is shocking for example to observe that lives are still being lost in Syria today as a result of the street protest that started in Tunis in 2010. Yemen is still struggling to find peace. As powerful as he was Muammar Gaddafi died on October 20, 2011, when the protests came to Libya.

Causes, Roots and Triggers of What?

Those writing or commenting about the conflicts in Nigeria use different euphemisms that seem to hide the significance of the problems. The clichés in the society include “banditry”, “farmer/herder crisis”, “killer herdsmen”, “unknown gunmen”, “hoodlums”, and the like. These euphemisms are not helpful to professionals seeking to truly understand what is going on in Nigeria or interested in helping to solve the problems. The terminologies hardly call attention to the real issues as medical doctors would love to be educated when diagnosing an ailment. This makes it necessary for the present paper to be concluded by asking the question: causes, roots and triggers of what scientific conflict issue? In answering this question, the paper goes beyond the generic usage of the term “conflict” by calling more cursory attention to appropriate terms for characterizing the kind of problems Nigeria faces today. What the country contends with are cases of (i) insurgency, (ii) terrorism, and (iii) violent extremism. It is necessary for the journalists reporting them to gain a better understanding of these terms.

The term “violent extremism” (VE) is generic and is hardly found in any law beyond certain criminal activities identified with it. To this extent, there is no universal definition of it. Every group or government defines it the way it wants. For example, the following definitions of the term are instructive:

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1. To the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, it is the act of “encouraging, condoning, justifying, or supporting the commission of a violent act to achieve political, ideological, religious, social, or economic goals.” Source: U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, “What Is Violent Extremism?” <https://cve.fbi.gov/whatis>.
 2. The U.S. Agency for International Development considers it to be “advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic, or political objectives.”
 3. Public Safety Canada defines it as “the process of taking radical views and putting them into violent action.... [When persons] promote or engage in violence as a means of furthering their radical political, ideological, or religious views.” Source: Public Safety Canada, “Violent Extremism,” web page, accessed October 7, 2016, <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scr/cntr-trrrsm/cntrng-vlnt-xtrmsm/vlnt-xtrmnsn-eng.aspx>.

It generally refers to the use of excessive force by a group. There is no universal definition of the term because there is no society where there is an agreement on the kind of force that a non-state actor can exercise on others.

It should be observed however that an extremist group may not necessarily be violent. Many simply exhibit the social characteristics that separate them from the general public. Such groups are often religious; they relate with the rest of the society in “we”/“they” terms. “They” represents the supposed best of the society and the rest of the society is demonised. A group that is violent today may have started as one of such non-violent groups but gradually gravitated towards violence as a result of how the rest of the society resisted it, most especially through the use of state forces. Such a group may eventually become an (i) insurgent or (ii) terrorist movement. The two terms do not refer to the same thing and cannot be used interchangeably as seen in some reports.

Insurgency occurs when a non-state armed group takes up arms against a government and critical state infrastructure seeking to discredit or overthrow it. On the other hand, terrorism is when such a non-state armed group directs its attacks on a civilian population (most especially non-combatants). It is possible for an insurgent group to become a terrorist group and vice versa. An insurgent movement fighting a government could direct its attacks on a civilian population when it finds the latter to be supporting the government or not cooperating with it against the government. Some insurgent groups attack civilian populations to raise funds for their struggle or capture food for feeding their fighters. On the other hand, a group terrorizing a community could turn its attacks on state forces defending the helpless civilian population.

Journalists reporting conflict must therefore know when and when not to use each of the terms. For example, Boko Haram started as an insurgent group but is today involved in several cases of terrorism: most especially when kidnapping schoolgirls, killing farmers, and raiding communities for food. While attacking state forces, it is largely an insurgent group. The so-called “bandits” in the North West on the other focus largely on terrorizing the communities. They kidnap the people and ask for ransom; they ask the people to pay protection fees. But once in a while, they fight the state forces sent after them as if their focus is on fighting the government. Well, those who fight citizens are indirectly fighting the government and are bound to be countered by the Nigerian state.

For illustrating the difference between insurgency and terrorism the reader should observe that there exists the term “state terrorism” but there is nothing called “state insurgency”. State terrorism is when a government uses state powers to subject citizens (usually those opposed to it) to different forms of violence.



MEDIA IN TIMES OF CRISES:

Resolving Conflict, Achieving Consensus

By Dapo Olorunyomi -



- 61** Introduction
- 62** Journalism In a Humanitarian Context
- 68** The Conflict - Journalism Interface
- 64** Why is the Nigerian News Media Handicapped to Play This Role?
- 65** Journalism On the Cusp of a Historical Shift
- 66** Conflict, Democracy and an Information Disorder Ecosystem
- 67** Regulating the Media
- 67** Australian Government to the Rescue
- 67** Should the Government Fund the Media?
- 68** State Subsidy for Media
- 68** Fixing a Broken Business Model

Introduction

In the past decade, humanitarian agencies are telling us that in the Nigerian northeast, in the campaign against Boko Haram alone, no fewer than 10,000 of our compatriots have been killed while about 1.8 million are in internal displacement. A week after our just concluded Independence anniversary, Governor Aminu Tambuwal of Sokoto State was visiting Dan Daji Makau and Garin Kaka, all in the Maradi region of Niger Republic, where according to news accounts, no fewer than 50,000 Nigerians are seeking safety as refugees from Sokoto, Zamfara and Katsina states. In the inner bowel of the country, Benue, Plateau, Taraba and the Southeastern states, we have daily reports of social convulsion such that the Chairman of the committee of the army in the National Assembly, Mr AbdulRazaq Namdas, was recently forced to bemoan that Nigerian military personnel are on active deployment in about 34 states of the federation, tackling internal security threats that ordinarily should have been left to the police and paramilitary agencies to contain.

The implications of this for national security, the welfare of citizens, political integrity, economic development, and the sovereign status of the country are incalculable, and whatever claims the government may be making, the truth remains that the country is going through a major social crisis; some have characterised it as existential, for which all institutions in the country cannot pretend to be dispassionate. For the press, the profoundly logical question that follows is, what role have we played from both the problem and solutions ends of the matter?

It is a fair question. When we gather in settings like this, we owe it a responsibility to ourselves and our community to always clarify what it means to be a journalist. It is the basis of a lot of confusion and when people try to hold us to standards that are unrelated to our calling, it is partly our fault that this point has not been keenly discussed as it should. The first confusion is of course that of taxonomy. We are media actors in a broad sense but narrowly and specifically only journalists in an ontological sense. All journalists are media actors, but the reverse is not the case. Not all media actors are journalists. When politicians, therefore, see every person with a smartphone and a grudge, they call them media people. Interestingly they are right but since media people also assume they are journalists, that is why they are wrong.

Journalism is strictly an enterprise in verification, its DNA is accuracy, and its normative goal is truth. Any other thing from this is impossible in an ontological sense of being journalistic. Journalism can exist on diverse platforms – broadcast, podcast, film, print, online, newsletters, blogs, songs etc. It is the broad, iterative, content of those mutative forms that we call media. Whereas therefore, journalism can exist as content on diverse platforms stretching from a documentary, graphic, broadcast, from print to online, it is not the platforms that make them journalistic.

This is not a pedantic exploration. As with every area of knowledge, we always need to understand the endogenous boundaries that separate the variables that give meaning and materiality to the subject under discussion. In other words, we need to understand the limits of the pure and applied expression of our subject so that we can draw up distinct geometries of identity and applications. So that we can confidently pronounce what journalism can mean in itself as against what it can mean in relation to other things. Conventionally, we use the terms media and journalism interchangeably, and if we understand the boundaries philosophically, that should not be a problem. Indeed, my assumption is that this is the sense in which the NGE has asked us to interrogate the intersections of journalism and conflict this morning.

Journalism In a Humanitarian Context

Journalism, as both information and communication practice, presents unique challenges that compel a conversation on the philosophical foundation of representation, narratives, emotions of empathy, compassion and values of inclusion that are articulated within the broad framework of security, community, human rights, and patterns of freedom.

As Sharon Anyango Odhiambo of the Southern Voices Network for Peacebuilding Scholars asserted in a 2017 study of the role of the media, “Kenya witnessed post-election violence in both 1992 and 1997, but in the 2007 elections [it] saw unprecedented violence that left 1,100 people dead for which the Kenyan media was faulted for helping fuel the violence by offering a platform for tribal extremists to broadcast their agenda. She also remarked that “some journalists were polarised along ethnic lines, while others increased tensions by failing to report accurately, professionally, and neutrally.” Accepting the same thesis that media represents a powerful mechanism in the context of conflict, Valentina Bau, a UN field office communication officer, explained the tragic consequences of the eleven-year Sierra Leonean war between 1991 to 2002 in the 70,000 people were killed and 2.6 million displaced. However, nowhere has the narrative interface between conflict and the media acquired an elaborative response than in the 100-day Rwandan genocide [April to July 1994] where around 800,000 Tutsi minority ethnic group, as well as some moderate Hutu and Twa people were slaughtered by armed militias orchestrated by what has been characterised as hate radio.

We gain nothing to deny the clear evidence and insight that contemporary behavioural sciences are offering us that news significantly impacts us, and channel how we think, how we feel and how we view the world. In essence, the news does affect our choices and actions. For that reason alone, it is appropriate to give attention to the complaints of conflict experts that reporting conflict can and does make matters worse. That, if nothing, news people should eschew tunnel vision and binary mindsets in the mental frames they bring to reporting. In that regard, decision making in reporting and writing about the conflict should incorporate the consequences of conflict by understanding the dynamics, adaptability, impact, and transformative conditions in conflict.

What this means, therefore, is that for journalism to be helpful and enable positive outcomes from realities of conflict, news people must acquire the skills to keenly discern the realms of conflict triggers and their effects in a conflict situation. Triggers are the root causes of conflicts, and if we focus on them as against the effects, we can do a better job at it. Unfortunately, addressing core triggers of conflict is not what policymakers and politicians are trained to do, or are patient to embrace as pathways to solutions in moments of crisis. Indeed, any granular analysis of the main conflicts in Nigeria today will invariably locate the triggers in issues of poverty, politics, land, economic shocks, climate change, religion, and social justice issues. The question then is why these are not the goals and preferences of policymakers when it comes to solutions. The news media is partly culpable for this but allow me to come back to why this is the case shortly.

The Conflict - Journalism Interface

Accepting to resolve conflicts must first admit, however, that conflicts are enduring components of every human community where the fault lines of interest[s] and the need to build institutional hedges around those interests invariably lead to tension. This tension manifests in either muted or explosive outbursts. The scholarship is growing around the belief that strategies to prevent, manage or resolve violent conflicts are ingrained in the best reporting and writing we do in journalism, and that they are anchored on capturing a clear analysis of the causes and potential trajectory of such conflicts. A lot of this is what the expanding specializations of conflict reporting in journalism have been dedicated to. While psychology and literature help us to understand the possibility of conflicts within the self, within a persona, by their very nature, conflicts primarily assume the availability of independent and externalized actors. Persons against persons, communities against communities, class against class, gendered differences, disability schisms, religious and political parties, ethnic groups, or intergenerational divides. The list is endless. Why journalism and news media are called into the debate is on account of their form and their content, a duality that presents in one capsule, the tools and transmission valves for the potential articulation and determination of the claims, and ratios of contention, in a conflict terrain.

Professor Robert Manoff of Boston University's journalism programme in the United States is one of the most attentive advocates for such a robust role for the news media in conflict areas, resting his more than four decades of work in this area on six grounds, that, inherently, journalism can potentially counter misconceptions and rumours; help build consensus; facilitate communication between conflicting parties; analyse the conflict and educate on the process of resolution, and propose options and solutions to the conflict.

Manoff's model privileges enabling communication in contrast to simply providing information as the role of the news media in conflict situations. The information does not necessarily lead to improved knowledge and can be just stark erroneous. This reliance on the promises of the news media to promote genuine communication introduces the

exogenous factors, implicit within the structure of journalism, that news media brings to the table in resolving conflict and enabling consensus.

This education quotient that the news media introduces, through communicative processes, to challenge the dynamics in conflict situations is a framework that recommends a centralising normative role that places ethics at the heart of all editorial engagement. In this way, the professional ethical demand for initiating reporting roles around the community and limiting harm as underlying editorial considerations incentivizes the acquisition of knowledge and the use of such knowledge wisely. In addition, this demand returns us to the primary ethical paradigms of truthful and accurate reporting that can serve as an early warning mechanism, help table the contents of dispute and invariably help ease a path to reconciliation.

This knowledge of the triggers of conflict, of their dynamics, and indeed of their transformative potentials, is what facilitates the news media to play purposive roles in resolving conflict and helping to achieve consensus around agreeable issues. This is, in a narrow sense, how to understand the claims of media and communication theorists who advance the agenda-setting role of news media – that they can play constructive social and political roles without becoming vulgar mouthpieces of ideological and cliquish causes.

Why is the Nigerian News Media Handicapped to Play This Role?

There is a noticeable frustration when policymakers and news media actors dialogue about the power of the media and the apparent unwillingness to put that power to the purpose of helping resolve the multiple points of conflict in the country or in helping to convene platforms of consensus around agreements that advance a peaceful and harmonious community. Anyone in doubt about this can book a meeting with our affable minister of information, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, or any good number of government spokesmen and women to hear how they rate the news media community.

I have myself exchanged endless debates with many state officials on what they consider to be the unhelpful attitude of the country's news media in the important task of building or rebuilding the country to strength and purpose. Why is this such an impossible dialogue to execute? In part, it is because policymakers have not come to understand the legal basis, the statutory demands on the media, the challenges the industry faces, and the shifting context of ecology.

One can argue that, like the country, the Nigerian news media industry is going through its worst experience in the 16 decades since its founding in 1859. This year, Nigeria transitioned into its second decade of democratic consolidation after over three decades of a ruinous military dictatorship. Still, the country wavers between a more hopeful democratic future and a devastating decline into wholesale violence. The impending

fault lines of conflict – ethnic, religious, regional – profit from the country’s recurrent history of abysmal governance, corruption, and the now billowing influence of theocratic forces hindering a national identity formation process.

If it contemplates history, the Nigerian news media has earned a chest full of badges on account of its vigorous case for independence and democracy, its redoubtable stance against three decades of ruinous military dictatorship, its consensus for national unity after the civil war, its historical anti-corruption posture particularly through the fourth Republic, its strong public health campaigns through the Ebola, HIV, to the current COVID pandemic are all report cards of excellence for the media. So, what then is the problem?

Journalism On the Cusp of a Historical Shift

I believe that if we are seeking a profound insight and enduring resolution to the current crisis of our industry, such a crisis that makes it seem that we are unable to respond effectively to the structure of conflict engulfing the country, we must pay attention to three critical factors: the devastating legacy of military dictatorship; the impending revolution of a digital economy; and the dated state of journalism education in the country.

I will not delve much into the legacy of the military. We are all living through that experience today, through its totalitarian but hollow logic in the management of the polity. Besides, literature is rich on this topic, and suffice it to say that the history of military-news media interlock in Nigeria introduced the most crippling conditions of practice, the most obnoxious legislation, an entrenched culture of fear in the industry, the massive exile of talents to less hazardous professions, as well as the destruction of the best market brands of the industry – look no further than the old Daily Times, to mention just one example.

The transition to a digital economy introduced, by far, the most systemic change in the geometry of our business since the mid-nineties. Whereas this development affected the way products and services would henceforth be produced, that awareness did not catch on quickly in the local media industry, leading to a sudden but total disruption of the received business model of the news business. This total overturning of the economics of news media introduced seismic outcomes in the way we eventually produced journalism, the way we distribute our products and above all, the way we would finance the enterprise of journalism. This was an absolute revolutionary development, a development that turned news consumers of yesteryears into producers. Where the level of decentralisation of access created major democratisation of content and of platforms that offered the new practitioners no obligation of ethical demands but allowed everyone to be now called a “journalist.” The impact of this development which many are still grappling with, and which has sent even many more to total oblivion, is the most devastating change in communication practice in the post-industrial society.

Just as the industry was slow to perceive and adjust to this shift, the educational segment of the profession was even slower to transition to the new digital ecology. It is not to speak ill of our media educational institutions, but the truth is that a major restructuring of the curriculum to place the digital precepts at the heart of all the learning outcomes of journalism training today. It is this absence that has made it difficult to respond adequately to the critical challenges that are currently bedeviling the industry.

This is where the NGE can play a major and transformative role in renewing the industry, repositioning it for value, playing its democratic roles, and becoming a welcoming destination for talents who are currently snatched off by rival institutions that can offer decent wages and conditions of service that the economic conditions of our industry do not prepare us to offer today.

Conflict, Democracy and an Information Disorder Ecosystem

I spoke earlier of the digital revolution and how it has devastated the economic fortunes of the news industry – the pay cuts, the job losses, the absence of adequate operational bottom line, the abysmal collapse of editorial standards and, painfully, of ethical integrity. Yet this collapse of the media's business model, and the surfacing of what is now generally dubbed as a challenge of sustainability in the industry, is just one arm of the crisis. The digital revolution also triggered an information crisis of a massive proportion leading to what is represented as misinformation and disinformation today. To be sure, misinformation has always existed prior to the digital revolution, but at no time in the history of the world have we encountered the phenomenon on the scale, the speed and the virality that we are dealing with today.

The information crisis also heightened the professional anxiety in the industry. Since everyone who had the time, the means, and the indulgence to set up a blog, a newsletter, or a website was now a journalist, the already rough image of the journalist simply got a further thrashing. Besides distorting the identity of the journalist, misinformation created a promotional industry of falsehood and distortion around the nature of political engagement, public health predicament and the climate crisis. It is in this context that conflicts secured fuel and propellant simply got out of hand. The news media needs to move quickly to join the ongoing effort to stem the tide of misinformation through newsroom investment in fact-checking and dutiful media/visual literacy. Thankfully, the technical knowledge to implement this process is available and growing day by day. I am also happy to announce that Dubawa.org a Premium Times platform for this purpose, is ready and willing to partner with the NGE in such an important endeavour. It is helpful to stress the point at this stage that the problem of disinformation and misinformation is not a problem of the news media much as public officials erroneously believe so. Misinformation is a public crisis fuelled by technological companies. It follows that while public education and media literacy can help, ultimately it is how we bring technological platforms to regulation that matters.

Regulating the Media

Regulating the Nigerian media became a new currency in the environment with the June Twitter ban. What was interesting this time around however was the full-throated push back from the Nigerian Press organisation, with many NPAN members flooding the reading canvas with an impressive campaign against the move. Two things deserve comment about the whole debate which could also serve as a lesson for the NGE as it envisions its institutional response to threats against freedom of expression in the future.

If we conduct a snap poll today among our policy leaders on their perception of the role of the press in the governance process, it is a good guess that many will put down our profession in the red zone. Sticking strictly to the corridors of the current administration, look no further for evidence than the number of intending laws and the administrative directives churned out from 2019, the benchmark year when the political behaviour of the current APC government came to the definition.

In his National Day address that year, President Muhammadu Buhari hinted to citizens of this country that: “Our attention is increasingly being focused on cyber-crimes and the abuse of technology through hate speech and other divisive materials being propagated on social media. Whilst we uphold the constitutional rights of our people to freedom of expression and association, where the purported exercise of these rights infringes on the rights of other citizens or threatens to undermine our National Security, we will take firm and decisive action.”

Not surprising, therefore, the country became host to the re-emergence of a censoring Nigeria Press Council Amendment Act of 2019, and the National Assembly became the epicentre of the administration’s constraining vision towards the press. Three additional bills [the social media Bill; and two Hate Speech Bills] joined more than a dozen obnoxious laws already in existence all targeted at stemming effective freedom of expression regime in the country.

That was just 2019. For those that then found the whole fuse around a 2021 Twitter ban and the subsequent regulatory overreach at the NBC puzzling, this simple geometry of elongating lines of sight should provide better insight. What became clear was that the four 2019 bills aligned perfectly in the construction of a “democratic ecology” that annuls the autonomy of the professional journalism in the context of already existing laws such as the Anti-Terrorism Act, the Cyber Crimes Act; the National Broadcasting Commission [NBC] Act; and remnants of criminal defamation clauses in the Criminal Code Act and the Penal Code Act; the Official Secrets Act; as well as the Obscene Publications Act.

Here then is a point of opportunity to discuss the problematic regulation issues in the media which are not new. They have ranged from outright bans to curtailing freedom through draconian legislation and statutes. Then states have set up agencies like the Nigerian Press Council to which the independent media organisations have robustly

pushed back, saying peer regulation is a better option. The government and its agents have suggested that the absence of enforcement mechanisms makes peer regulation sound like a do-nothing option.

However, as many countries today are seeing, media organisations can draft their own regulatory instrument and seek the backing of parliament to make them statutory. Such statutory regulation can help remove the scare on both sides. So that brings us to the essential argument why we need regulation today?

Invariably it boils down to how we plan to bail the media out of its current economic crisis so that it can serve its important constitutional role. For if the media is currently underperforming, what is necessary is to understand the reasons for this and try to address them.

Australian Government to the Rescue

The Australian government has taken a sensible step with the initiative on News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code and my wise counsel to Mr Lai Mohammed is to borrow a leaf here.

This official initiative announced its case this way: “The News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code will address concerns identified by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) in its July 2019 report on digital platforms. This report found that a substantial loss of advertising revenue over the past 15 years has left many Australian news businesses struggling to survive. Spending on print advertising fell from \$7.9 billion in 2005 to just under \$1.9 billion in 2018 according to the ACCC. At the same time, digital platforms are thriving. Expenditure on online advertising in Australia rose from around \$1 billion in 2005 to \$8.8 billion in 2018 according to the ACCC.”

President Mustapha Isah, PTCIJ (now CJID) will be happy and willing to work with you on this initiative and related mechanism on how we address the sustainability challenge of the media in the country.

Should the Government Fund the Media?

Journalism has expanded beyond the received notions of the pre-digital age. We have bloggers and citizens practising journalism today. Some do far better work than established institutions because they stay faithful to the ethical imperatives of journalism. They are defined by principles of truth and accuracy in their reporting, and they subject all claims in their reporting to the most withering verification. They understand the public good goals of the media and assert the independence of their platforms. What else do we demand from them?

If the footprints of journalism have spread so wide, responding to the reality of the new

times, to be sure, the ethical contexts demand an expanded meaning and implication. The central principle in ethics theory has always been a concern to make whole again, that which has been blemished. The next port of call, therefore, is a simple, easy walk to freedom! We ask the question: why is the media behaving poorly? And ask again how we can fix the problem so that we can mitigate the possible harm.

The problem can be anticipated, and a strategy of containment put in place to address it before things get worse. The point to constantly have in mind is that good journalism makes the whole ramification of society and unquestionably democracy do well. The French and the Scandinavians have a system of obligatory subsidy to the media annually and that does not make their media a grovelling institution. Last year France handed over €1 billion in direct and indirect financial assistance from the State to national and local newspapers and publications.

State Subsidy for Media

According to the government figures, some 326 newspapers and publications were given direct financial support in 2015 totalling €77 million. Does anyone think this has muted the French Press? But it comes as a model that deserves attention and scrutiny.

The Australian model is yet another and it certainly appears well reasoned. Yet other models contend. Economics professor Julia Cagé writes in her book “Saving the Media: Capitalism, Crowdfunding, and Democracy that “There have never been as many information producers as there are today. Paradoxically, the media have never been in worse shape,” she then proposes a new business model for news organizations, inspired by a central idea: that news, like education, is a public good. Her model is inspired in part by major universities that combine commercial and non-profit activities.

Professor Cagé’s proposal is yet different from the non-profit newsroom model because it is rooted in advocacy for a change in tax rules and the stable provision of capital through long-term investments to give news organizations more flexibility while also decentralizing control.

Fixing a Broken Business Model

The simple argument I have made here is that media is central to democracy and that for the fructification of the values of democracy that can enhance good governance, promote freedom and democracy, we need to focus more attention on what is broken in our journalism that makes it inoperable to deliver the best values for democratic development. My contention is that it is a business model that has gone atrophy. I also argue that it can be fixed and that the government insofar as it believes in democracy and development, has a major role to play as indeed the Australian government has shown by blazing a trail.

Seen from this perspective, therefore, the rash of laws poured into the National Assembly in 2019 to “regulate” the poor behaviour of the press will be needless if there is an honest purpose that what is wrong in our journalism is what they intend to fix. We know

that this is not the case but if you engage public officials, particularly those who are genuine about the matter, you see a genuine ignorance and probably a true desire to help with things.

To be sure, no one will see the exponential information crisis of our age and not feel a sense of bother with the mindlessly raging incidents of misinformation as indeed disinformation. The preference for policy unnourished by knowledge is one key blemish of the current government's view that draconian legislation is the best cure for misinformation. Regulation is not necessarily a call to punitive legislation. A keen study using the resources of our best communication minds in the universities can lead to solid outcomes in ideas and policy directions that can help rebuild our media and make them serve the purpose of national progress, national security, and national development.

Dapo Olorunyomi is the Publisher of Premium Times.

This is the text of the Keynote Remarks delivered at the 17th Annual Nigerian Guild of Editors Conference, Abuja, on October 21.



**TOWARDS A MORE
GENDER-RESPONSIVE
MEDIA AND JOURNALISM**

By Busola Ajibola -



73 Introduction

73 Journalism and The Option of Diversity

74 Where are the Voices of Women in Conflict

75 Achieveing the Desired Inclusive Newsroom and Media Content

76 Conclusion

77 Reference

Introduction

Gender issues are human issues. This is bearing in mind that gender encompasses women, men, girls, boys, and those who identify as sexes in-between. Understanding gender from this perspective involves acknowledging the dynamics that inform human experiences and identities as they cut across locations, physical attributes, social-economic status, or age.

Gender, as a result of these dynamics, is variable and can evolve as opposed to sex, which is strictly biological and a function of body anatomy. Gender is a notion rooted in social constructions used to define the worth conferred on men and women, the expectations and roles assigned to them, and the privileges they enjoy. The concept of gender underscores the diversity that characterizes human nature and aids the understanding of differentiated experiences informed by such diversities. This difference, to be clear, does not suggest inequality.

In this article, I shall be focusing in parts on the concerns of gender imbalance in media coverage of violent conflicts. I argue that women's experiences are different from men's and that women, PWDs and children suffer disproportionate consequences of conflict and security, and also that the media needs improve its coverage pattern to reveal this. I then proceed to suggest recommendations on how the media can broadly improve its arts of storytelling to become more gender-responsive.

Journalism and The Option of Diversity

Journalists and the media play a significant role in determining the pace at which societies smash stereotypes informed by the perception of gender as unequal. As Dwight and Lisa argue, "much of what comes to pass as important is based often on the stories produced and disseminated by media institutions[i]." It is for this reason that journalism must be gender-responsive, and reflect diversity by telling stories in a more inclusive way. Anyone in doubt of diversity is the key to journalism's future has in fact been advised to reflect on how diverse characters and storylines are powering the entertainment industry. "Journalism should follow suit — or risk irrelevance" [ii].

Stories are about people. The way media tells people's stories should therefore reflect the diversity in human communities. And these narratives must be conveyed in ways that do not instigate or reproduce inequities, social exclusion, and injustice. In deploying all of its approaches and arts of storytelling, journalism must aim to close existing inequality gaps in all spheres of life including— political participation, financial and economic empowerment, education, and access to health. If journalism, in all of its forms does not aspire to achieve this, its claim of being fundamentally dedicated to the public good remains an absurdity.

Gender issues are human issues and are, no doubt, universal. But the specificity of culture

means that each society deals with specific prevailing gender issues. As a result of these varying gender constructs, people suffer differing degrees of injustice and inequality because of their gender. The severity of inequality gaps should therefore dictate the intensity of the journalistic response it gets.

Where are The Voices of Women in Conflict?

In conflict and humanitarian situations, women and girls are more susceptible to sexual violations which increases their risk of contracting sexually transmittable diseases and HIV. They are targeted as bargaining tools[iii], forced to become sex slaves, raped (by state and non-state actors), and bear unwanted pregnancies. They are exploited for food through what is known as transactional sex[iv]. During the periods of insurgency in the northeast, hundreds of women and girls - including the Chibok girls, Dapchi girls[v], and Rann women[vi] were abducted and some were forced into marriages with insurgents/terrorists. Conflict situations are also known to limit women's access to essential medical and reproductive rights services.

Women lose their spouses to become breadwinners. They become caregivers to children and the elderly left behind by members of their communities affected by the conflict. In the same vein, they contribute immensely to peacebuilding and conflict solution efforts.

Yet, the media continues to fail to adequately capture the experiences of women and girls in conflict situations, especially as observed through the monitoring of media patterns of conflict reportage. Findings published by the Centre for Investigative Journalism and Development in Thoughts on Managing Nigeria's Intractable Humanitarian Crisis show that not only are women underrepresented in the news value chain, they are also poorly portrayed as victims and other stereotypes. The voices captured in the media reportage of conflict, insecurity and humanitarian crisis are predominantly male as journalists spoke to 74% men and 8% women. The pattern is now worse as shown in the endline monitoring where media captured 95% of men's voices and 5% of women's voices. This is skewed when we know that men and women suffer the effect of conflict in varying measures with data showing that the number of women and children in IDP centres outweighs the number of men.

If the media is only capturing 5% or even 7% of women's voices as sources they have spoken to, it means that the personal experiences of women in conflict, as uniquely characterised by their gender, are being omitted in media narratives. The implication is that women and girls miss out on solutions that ordinarily should be women-tailored - including psychosocial support, and economic and educational empowerment - all of which ought to be designed based on the uniqueness of gender-differentiated experiences. Opportunities are also missed to build up a judicial framework and medical interventions that can adequately respond to the violations they are exposed to. The same applies to persons with disabilities who are at higher risks of injuries and

death because, in violent situations, evacuation routes and emergency information are inaccessible to this group.

The findings from the baseline and endline monitoring of media narratives of conflict reflect a broad and imperative need for media to improve its coverage of social issues to become inclusive, and gender thoughtful. In 1995, The voices of women heard, read or seen in global news media according to the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) was 17%. A decade later, the number increased slightly to 24%, and only 19% of expert sources portrayed by journalists are women.

Luba Kassova[vii] likened this under-representation of women's voices and stories in the news value chain to a world where the volume of male voices is turned up to ten while that of women is tuned down to two. This is apt and is an insensitivity that must be addressed.

Granted that the omission of gender sensitivity is a global challenge, it is worse in Nigeria as argued by Kassova. The research [1]states that men are quoted five times more recurrently than women, and on economic issues, journalists consulted less than 1% of women as sources.

Achieving the Desired Inclusive Newsroom and Media Content

So how can we improve the coverage of social issues in the media to become more gender-responsive and inclusive?

The media must significantly improve the quantity and quality of stories that focus on issues that exclusively affect women and girls such as SGBV, domestic violence, maternal rights, period poverty, financial exclusion, political empowerment, educational attainment– especially in STEM, right of inheritance, harmful widowhood practices, child marriage, the peculiar challenge they confront in conflict spaces and others challenges that they confront within the particularity of their cultural and religious dictates.

To achieve balanced gender representation in news output, newsrooms can create a multi-sector database of female experts that reporters can easily access. Media houses with no gender desks can create one as this allows them to intentionally cover issues of women. Media gatekeepers must prioritise reports on gender and not treat them as addendums to be buried behind other news items perceived as more important. The increase in women-focused stories must be accompanied by a proportionate increase in the voices and representation of women; as citizens and eye-witnesses, other news sources – including as authors of research publications and subject-matter experts.

Male-dominant newsrooms are another reason that has been put forward for the poor mainstreaming of gender issues in news reportage. Newsroom bylines and leadership compositions – of editors, publishers, and editorial boards of media organisations do not reflect gender parity. They are overwhelmingly male. Lack of gender diversity in newsrooms can entrench male bias even when unintended. If the stories of women, girls and PWDs are to be properly reflected, we need more people from these underrepresented groups to actively participate in the storytelling - not just as field reporters but also as gatekeepers and decision-makers.

This can be tackled if we address the gaps in the necessary inclusive employment framework that can elevate a more diverse media content generation as well as an inclusive structure. So also will an investment in capacity building on journalistic and managerial skillsets for marginalised groups in newsroom structure - women and PWDs, support for paid parental leave, and generally flexible work schedules that can help with achieving work-life management at different stages of work life.

Conclusion

In response to frustrations often voiced by journalists over the non-accessibility of female experts or even the lack of responses, journalists must become aware of the dynamics of gender inequality in private spaces (homes) where women bear the burden of child-care, care for the elderly and house chores[i]. Social expectations from women to ceaselessly merge these duties with their professional work are some of the barriers that hinder women from reaping the benefits of accessibility and visibility.

Source mapping for people occupying leadership positions is also one spot we need to be deliberate about women's voices because after all, women in these positions across all levels are few. So when we generally seek to speak with community leaders, government officials/spoke persons, heads of organisations/agencies, the people we are likely to find are men! Hopefully, this frustration forces the media to add its voice to the call for gender equality in public and private domains and to create more sensitization aimed at debunking the myth that women should naturally be silent, unheard or content with being followers.

The time for media to assert the equality of gender is now, and the essence of doing this is clear – the anchor for addressing injustices against women, including all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination, economic empowerment, and equal access to opportunities is gender equality. The media will be guilty of abdicating its ethical obligation of erecting reporting around the community if it fails in this regard.

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MMA is an innovative organisation which implements successful media strategies for change using technology, social media, and data tools to make their work more efficient and effective. MMA is based in Johannesburg South Africa and acts as a watchdog, taking on a role to promote ethical and fair journalism which supports human rights.

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