

Journal of Peace, Security & Development

ISSN: 2360-9435

Volume 2, No. 1, 2016



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Journal of Peace, Security and Development

————— Volume 2, No. 1, 2016 —————



Centre for Peace & Strategic Studies
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

Published by:
Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

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ISSN: 2360-9435

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Journal of Peace, Security and Development

The *Journal of Peace, Security and Development* (JPSD) is published by the Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies (CPSS), University of Ilorin, Ilorin Nigeria. It is dedicated to advancing knowledge, deepening understanding and disseminating research findings in all aspects of peace studies, conflict studies, security studies, strategic studies and development studies.

The journal places no restriction on the scope or dimensions that studies can cover but strongly expects prospective authors to show that their papers have academic and policy implications for peace, security and development in the world, in its microcosm or macrocosm. In essence, the articles of the Journal put issues, directly or indirectly connected with peace, security and development in perspectives in both theoretical and empirical models.

Though efforts will be made by the Editorial Board to ensure that no inaccurate or misleading data, opinion or statement appears in this journal, the data and opinions presented in the articles are the sole responsibility of the contributors concerned. Authors are thus strongly encouraged to duly verify the authenticity of their claims and adequately acknowledge the sources of their information.

Editorial Policy

Contributors should note that only original works are published after a multi-staged blind peer review process. Also, contributors have the responsibility to ensure that all copyrights are secured before submissions and any act of plagiarism discovered leads to the immediate stoppage of the publication process of the article concerned.

Submission of Manuscripts

Manuscripts should be submitted in English. They should be typewritten and double-spaced, with wide margins, using one side of the page only. Authors may submit papers for consideration in two possible ways. They may send the paper to any of the editors. Alternatively, authors should submit two hard copies of their papers, directly to the Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of Peace, Security and Development*, Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. Email: cpssjournal@gmail.com and cpss@unilorin.edu.ng.

Authors may also submit their manuscripts via e-mail, in MS Word. A cover sheet should be provided with the following details: an abstract of not more than 250 words, with a sequence of not more than six key words suitable for indexing and abstracting services; a brief biographical note about each author and each author's areas of specialisation.

Articles are expected to be between 6,000 and 8,000 words. All submissions are treated anonymously and material identifying the author(s) should only appear on the cover page.

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Manuscripts should conform as much as possible to the referencing guidelines of the recent edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) publication manual of instructions for authors. This involves published works being cited in the text according to the author/date system and listed alphabetically in the reference section at the end of the manuscript. Examples of appropriate format for chapters, articles and books appear below:

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Okosi-Simbine, A. (2003) "African Conflicts as an albatross to development: A governance perspective, *Nigerian Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 29, Number 1 and 2.

Turshen, M. and Twagiramariya (1998) *What women do in wartime*, London: Zed Books.

Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies

The Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies was established through the approval of the Senate at its 193rd meeting of 20th June, 2008. The Centre, domiciled in the Faculty of Arts for the purpose of certification was established to contribute to the Postgraduate training of the much needed manpower in the areas of Peace, Development, Security and Strategy. It has since been working assiduously to fulfil its mandate. The Centre operates from its permanent building along the Dam Site. It has as tenants, the Centre for International Education (CIE) and Unilorin Archives and Documentation Centre. The Centre, since its inception has had five (5) Directors. These are:

1. Professor Isaac Olawale Albert from the University of Ibadan.
2. Professor Felicia Olabisi A. Olasehinde-Williams from the Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin.
3. Dr. Joseph Odekunle Fayeye (Reader) from Department of Sociology and later from the Department of Social Work,
4. Dr. Mahfouz Adebola Adedimeji (Reader) from the Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, and,
5. Prof. Noah Yusuf from the Department of Sociology

The Centre is indebted to Professor Is-haq O. Oloyede (OFR) during whose tenure as Vice-Chancellor the programme took off. His commitment to an intellectually led approach to the pursuit of Peace in a troubled country and world led to the smooth take-off of the programme and its first public convention of a stakeholders forum to pledge to a non-adversarial pursuit of peace and reconciliation from warring communities in Kwara State in 2012, among other laudable Peace initiatives. Also, worthy of note is the unflinching support of Professor Sulyman Age Abdulkareem, the current Vice-Chancellor, who has consistently provided invaluable support to the Centre

The specific objectives of the Centre are to:

- (1) make the University of Ilorin a global Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security Studies;
- (2) make the University of Ilorin a Centre of Excellence in peace research and documentation;
- (3) train manpower in the field of Peace, Conflict, Security and Strategic Studies;
- (4) provide students with theoretical and practical skills in peace-making, peacebuilding, preventive diplomacy, strategic planning and management; and
- (5) contribute to security strategy and environmental sector management.

Academic Programmes

At inception, the Centre commenced with the M. A. and Doctor of Philosophy in Peace and Development Studies. Currently the Centre runs three (3) Academic Programmes at the Master level, viz:

- a) M. A. Peace and Development Studies which is offered for regular students;
- b) MPhil./PhD in Peace and Development Studies;
- c) PhD in Peace and Development Studies;
- d) M. A. Peace and Security Studies (under a MoU with the Institute of Security Studies in Abuja and organised solely for Fellows of the Institute (Fsi) who meet the admission requirements for the Postgraduate studies of the University of Ilorin. Admitted candidates spend a semester at the Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies, University of Ilorin.
- e) M. A. Peace and Strategic Studies is under a MoU with the Nigerian Army (Nigerian Army School of Education, NASE). Candidates for the programme are senior army officers who have completed the Executive Intelligence Management Course (EIMC) in NASE and who meet the admission requirements for the Postgraduate studies of the University of Ilorin. Admitted candidates spend a semester at the Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies, University of Ilorin.

Other Activities

To further boost and enrich its academic programmes, the Centre is involved as part of the students curricula, in the following:

- a. Annual Peace and Conflict Field Experience and Training (PCFEAT). This was formerly known as Conflict Field Experience and Training (CFEAT);
- b. Biennial International Conference;
- c. International Peace Day celebrated on 21st September annually; and
- d. Conflict Management Capacity Building Retreat (CMCB) formerly known as ADR Retreat;
- e. Annual Roundtable on Peace, Security and National Development;
- f. Annual CPSS Alumni lecture.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEWS FRAMING OF FARMERS-HERDSMEN CONFLICT ON CITIZENS'REACTIONS

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Abstract

This study explores how the Nigerian news media frame the Fulani herdsmen and farmers conflicts, which have become a major source of communal violence, looking at the way the media presents its causes and solutions. It undertakes a descriptive comparative content analysis of media coverage of the conflicts, as reported by two prominent national newspapers - Daily Trust and Vanguard, both of which, are influential, and they enjoy wide readership among the populace in the Northern and Southern geopolitical regions of Nigeria respectively. Findings indicated that the communal conflicts were framed most frequently in terms of 'Responsibility frame'. In this regard, the dominant theme pushed by the Vanguard newspaper mostly suggested that, the Fulani herdsmen were responsible for the problem, and the reportage tended to portray that, some level of government was culpable for the issue. On the part of the Daily Trust newspaper, the dominant theme pushed by the medium, was that of confidence in the ability of the Government to alleviate the herdsmen-farmers/host communities' conflicts, while simultaneously proffering solutions to the issue. Furthermore, the findings from this study have important implications for understanding current and future trends of polarization in Nigeria. It recommends that, though, the challenge of communal violence is not the making of the media, it must, at all times, be a bastion of independent and balanced positions on national issues in order to promote peace and good governance.

Keywords: Herdsmen, Farmers, News frames, Communal conflicts, Media

Introduction

The nomadic Fulani herdsmen have recently attracted a great national prominence in the Nigerian media due to the frequent clashes between them and farmers/indigenes of some communities where their cattle graze.

Over the years, the destruction of agricultural farms by the cattle of the Fulani nomads has resulted into clashes recorded in different parts of the country, with the attendant loss of human lives and property (Abugu and Onuba, 2015: 44). Media reportage about the Fulani herdsmen was

especially intense from late February 2016, following the Agatu communal violence in Benue State, North-Central Nigeria, after it was alleged that assailants, suspected to be Fulani herdsmen, attacked nine communities of Aila, Akwu, Adagbo, Okokolo, Ugboju, Odugbeho, Ogbanlu, Egba and Obagaji, shooting and killing people including women and children.

According to a special report published by an online newspaper, Premium Times, "Agatu is not the first homeland in Benue State to receive what is now referred to as baptism of fire from herdsmen" (Maya, 2016). The report further stated that: "between 2011 and 2014, suspected herdsmen attacked dozens of communities in the four local government areas of Guma, Gwer-East, Buruku and Gwer-West, some more than once." Notwithstanding, on April 26, 2016, Nigerians woke up to the news that about 40 persons have been murdered by Fulani herdsmen at Nimbo, Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State, South-East Nigeria. These killings have attracted widespread condemnations and sharp criticisms of both the law enforcement agencies and the Federal Government that have been repeatedly blamed for their failure to act decisively on the matter. A 2012 project report on conflict mapping into the crisis between Fulani herdsmen and farmers which was carried out by the Women Environmental Programme (WEP) and supported by the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP) and the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), stated that, the origin of the conflicts between herdsmen and farmers was essentially a "conflict over material needed for existence. The struggle between the two groups is because, each is struggling to survive or exist and each group depends on the same material called the green of the land" (WEP 2012).

The wealth of a Fulani herder is measured by the size of the cattle herd he possesses. Ecological and climatic change conditions however play a significant role in determining the mobility of the Fulani herdsmen and their livestock at any particular point in time. Hence, they migrate from the arid Sahel and dry savanna regions of the North to the rain forests of the South, locating areas with abundant grasses and water source for their animals. Not only do they migrate due to the vagaries of climatic conditions, but also as a result of the activities of cattle rustlers and rural banditry (Egwu, 2016). By providing Nigerians with information that is required for informed citizenship, the indisputable role of the mass media towards shaping and sustaining the shared experiences of members of the society is not negligible and as Galston (2011) puts it, "a democracy can't be strong if its citizenship is weak." Thus, the socio-political disposition of a society is closely related to and interwoven with the quality and variety of media

content provided by the mass media and to which members of the society are exposed. Hence, in times of conflicts, people tend to rely on media coverage because of its perceived credibility rather than direct communication (Bond and Kirshenbaum, 1998). Bratic and Schirch (2007 : 8) also submitted that,

“several studies confirm that the impact of the media on conflict is greater than the impact of the media on conflict prevention and peace building.” In essence, what is perceived and understood about a particular conflict is shaped by the media. The issue of the Fulani herdsmen-farmers conflicts has been heavily covered by the news media in Nigeria and the perceptions of people about Fulani herdsmen will be affected by the media they consume.

One major predictor of news coverage, whether print or electronic, is conflict; and a popular maxim in journalism states: “If it bleeds, it leads.” This is meant to denote media’s attraction and attention to events that are characterized by fatalities (Miller and Albert, 2015) of which, the Fulani herdsmen-farmers perennial clashes are not an exception. In drawing attention to these conflicts, Schudson (1995:19) writes that, the media in its

reportage, does not only confer public legitimacy on the discussion of the event, but it also “amplify it.” Zoch (2001) notes that, the latter, reflects the inherent power and ability of the media to frame issues and events in a particular manner. Karniel, Lavie-Dinur and Azran (2016:3) deduced that:

When it comes to political conflict or crises, the media have the ability to structure stories to emphasize conflict or dramatic narrative and use certain words and images to stimulate support of or opposition to the sides in a political conflict. The type of framing employed can lead the public to feel a closer ‘proximity’, and identify (and empathize) with one side or group in a conflict. On the other hand, coverage which focuses on the complexity of a conflict leads the audience to feel detached from events taking place far from them, creating a feeling of ‘distance’ between the audience and the victims.

It is in this light that the study attempts to answer the questions of how the Nigerian media reported the Fulani herdsmen-farmers/host communities’ conflicts in the country. Whom did they hold responsible for the problem? Did they proffer own

solutions towards resolving the conflicts or worsen the issues at stake? How did the framing of news reportage suggest ways to which newspaper readers in Nigeria make sense of the perennial Fulani herdsman-farmers' conflicts? These are some of the questions to be addressed by this study using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of media content analysis. Only newspapers however, were analysed for the present study because of the influential role played by the nation's Press in confronting British colonial rule, championing the ideals of nationalism culminating in the attainment of Nigeria's independence, opposing military dictatorship and enthroning democracy. Focusing on two prominent national newspapers - *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust*, the study examines news framing about the Fulani herdsman-farmers conflicts in the country over a three-month period from 1st March to 31st May, 2016. Against the backdrop of the 2015 Nigerian presidential election which saw a coalition of opposition parties (All Progressives' Congress) dislodging the former ruling party (Peoples' Democratic Party) position at the centre, the three-month duration of this study came at a period when renewed public attention was being centred on the Fulani herdsman-farmers issue in the media, generating an increasing amount of public and private discussions among the citizenry, especially, in the light of a

relatively new administration under the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari. The *Daily Trust* is an authoritative newspaper in the Northern geopolitical zone while the *Vanguard* is influential in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The *Daily Trust* has its headquarters at Abuja, Nigeria's capital while the *Vanguard* is based in Lagos, South-West Nigeria.

The study will enable media scholars to assess how the Nigerian media framed the recurrent Fulani herdsman-farmers conflicts. It also advocates that the media should be socially responsible and professional in the discharge of their roles in order to preserve Nigeria's unity in spite of ethnic and religious differences especially in times of conflicts and not to fan embers of discord among members of the society.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the framing theory. It emphasizes the important role played by the news media in defining a social issue. Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007:11) averred that, 'the sociological foundations of framing were laid by Goffman (1974) and others who assumed that individuals cannot understand the world fully and constantly struggle to interpret their life experiences and to make sense of the world around them.' In the words of Goffman (1974: 24), "we tend to

perceive events in terms of primary frameworks, and the types of framework we employ provides' a way of describing the event to which it is applied." Gamson and Modigliani (1987:143) describe frames as "a central organising idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them."

Contrary to the claims of media objectivity, research suggests that, in the coverage of political conflicts, the media are often influenced to a great extent by the political context of the country (Oliver and Maney, 2000). In particular, studies by scholars such as Entman (1993; 2004, 2007); Semetko and Valkenburg (2000); Reese, Gandy and Grant (2001); D' Angelo & Kuypers (2010), have demonstrated that, the news media can frame issues in certain ways, "leading the audience to determine the causes of and solutions for social problems" (Kim, Carvalho and Davis, 2010: 563). Snow and Benford (1988) advanced three core elements for classifying media framing of conflicts. These are: diagnostic framing, which seeks to identify the problem and attribution; prognostic framing which is concerned with articulating solutions to the identified problem and motivational framing that deals with the mobilization of collective action on the issue. Their submission also lends credence to Entman's definition of the concept of framing as selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among

them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution (Entman, 2004: 5).

Scheufele (2000:307) however observed that there were factors which may potentially influence how journalists frame an issue. These factors are: "social norms and values, organizational pressures and constraints, pressures of interest groups, journalistic routines and ideological or political orientations of journalists." Imtihani and Mariko (2013: 944) asserted that, "through the news production process, reporters and editors can choose the facts and hide other facts. To convey their messages, reporters can also frame the news from their point of view." 'By prompting the activation of certain constructs at the expense of others, news frames can directly influence what enters the minds of audience members' (Nijkraake, Gosselt & Gutteling 2015: 82).

The current study investigates how the Nigerian news media frame the Fulani herdsmen-farmers communal conflicts based on Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) generic frames classification. The frames are: the Conflict frame which emphasizes conflicts among individuals, groups and institutions; the Human Interest frame which is concerned with evoking emotions or having a "human face" to the presentation of the issue; Responsibility frame is concerned with presenting the 'issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility

for its cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group'. Other frames are the Economic consequences frame which is concerned with the reportage of an 'issue in terms of the consequence it will have on an individual, group, institution, region or country' and the Morality frame which, 'puts the event, issue or problem in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions; emphasizes collaboration and fellowship' (Neuman et al, 1992; Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000:95; Sofian and Hussein, 2013: 467).

On the basis of the foregoing, this study adopts the following research questions to shape its examination of the framing of news reportage on the Fulani herdsmen-farmers communal conflicts.

- Which frame(s) are most used in the reporting of the Fulani herdsmen-farmers communal conflicts by *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers?
- How does the framing of the news reportage in the chosen newspapers suggest ways to which readers make sense of the Fulani herdsmen-farmers conflict?

Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative content analysis and a qualitative textual analysis. The content analysis consisted of a census

of the coverage of the Fulani herdsmen-farmers communal conflicts in the *Vanguard* and the *Daily Trust* beginning from 1st March, 2016 to 31st May, 2016. A census rather than a sample was conducted for this study in order to ensure that critical aspects of the communal conflict coverage were retained. According to Riffe, Lacy, Fico and Net Library (1998: 51) when examining a particular issue, the "probability sampling might miss key parts of the coverage." A physical examination of the published copies of the two newspapers within the period under study yielded 319 entries on the Fulani herdsmen-farmers conflict (*Vanguard*-202; *Daily Trust*-117). A descriptive analysis of the extent of the news coverage about the conflicts was also obtained for the period. The unit of analysis of the study was the article which comprised: straight news; Features; Editorial and Opinion Articles. Furthermore, the study adopted and modified the analysis of news frames as advanced by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) and these frames are: Conflict, Human Interest, Responsibility, Economic consequence as well as Morality.

In order to ensure validity and reliability of this study, two graduates of Mass Communication from the University of Ilorin assisted in the coding process. The presence of frames were analysed by answering three or more statements on the theme which characterizes a particular news frame, with (yes or no), because multiple

frames could show within one article reliability was 0.87 using Holsti's (Entman 1993: 52). The inter-coder inter-coder reliability test.

Results of findings from the study

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of extent of coverage (n = 319)

Type of Articles	Vanguard	Daily Trust
Straight News	155	91
Features	19	9
Opinion Articles	21	13
Editorial	7	4
Total	202	117

Source: Researcher's computation of data from content analysis of *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust*, 2016

Table 1 shows that there were 202 entries in the *Vanguard* newspaper on reportage of the Fulani herdsmen-farmers communal conflicts and 117 entries in the *Daily Trust* newspaper on the reportage of the same conflict. The *Vanguard* recorded more straight news, features, editorials and opinion articles on the conflicts than the *Daily Trust*.

Table 2: News sources for articles

Type of Sources	Vanguard (%)	Daily Trust (%)
Federal Government/State representative	9.3	8.7
Ruling Party	1.3	0.7
Opposition Leaders	8.9	2.7
Anonymous Sources (s)	5.1	1.3
Law Enforcement Agencies	11.0	24.2
Pressure Groups/Ethnic Organisations	22.0	20.8
Religious Leaders/Organisations	9.3	4.0
Community Leaders	18.2	17.4
Press Conferences/releases	4.7	5.4
Civilians/Survivors/Victims	6.8	5.4
Disaster Management Agencies	1.7	2.0
Others	1.7	7.4

Source: Researcher's computation of data from content analysis of *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust*, 2016

News coverage about the Fulani herdsmen-farmers conflicts are transmitted from sources to journalists who, themselves are employed by

capitalistic organizations. Thus, journalists endeavour to gather news on the conflict that will interest a large number of readers and audiences. Matthews (2013: 299) notes that, "studying news sources is important for understanding social power since sources given news access have an opportunity to set the news agenda, define the parameters of debate and shape ideology."

Table 2 shows that there was a wide range of sources for the news represented in the study. For the *Daily Trust*, the most cited voices of authority came essentially from law enforcement agencies (primarily the

police) as sources for the news reportage concerning the Fulani herdsmen-farmers communal conflicts than any other source. In fact, it used law enforcement agencies as sources, twice as much than the *Vanguard*. On the part of the *Vanguard* newspaper, pressure groups / ethnic organizations were mostly cited as sources for the reportage of the issue. The *Vanguard* also more than the *Daily Trust*, heavily cited opposition leaders, anonymous sources and religious leaders/organizations in its reportage of the communal conflicts, thereby establishing the trend and direction of the discussion on the conflict.

Table 3: Slant of articles

Slant	Vanguard (%)	Daily Trust (%)
Supportive of Fulani herdsmen	7.2	36.6
Unsupportive of Fulani herdsmen	70.0	18.8
Neutral	22.8	44.6

Source: Researcher's computation of data from content analysis of *Vanguard and Daily Trust*, 2016

Table 3 shows that the *Vanguard* newspaper was highly unsupportive of the Fulani herdsmen in its reportage of the conflict (70.0%) than the *Daily Trust* newspaper (18.8%). On the other hand, the *Daily Trust* newspaper was less critical of the Fulani herdsmen in the reporting of the same conflict in the period under study; 44.6% was recorded for neutral entries that showed reasonable balance in its presentation of the Fulani herdsmen-farmers communal conflict. The *Vanguard* was mostly hostile, stereotypical and negative in its reportage about the Fulani herdsmen. On the other hand, the *Daily Trust* appeared to show a fair balance in its reportage on the communal conflict but seem to show an understanding for the challenges confronting the Fulani herdsmen in particular, the menace of cattle rustling.

Table 4: Use of News Frames in *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust*

Frames	Vanguard	Daily Trust
Human Interest	23.1	15.0
Story provides a human face on the issue	14.2	15.6
Story employs adjectives or personal vignettes that generate feelings of outrage	22.4	18.2
Story emphasizes how individuals and groups are affected by the issue	30.5	29.9
The story goes into the private or personal lives of actors	12.2	15.6
The story refers to non-direct victim of the issue	20.7	20.8
Conflict	21.9	18.4
Story reflects disagreements between parties-individuals-groups	29.6	30.5
One party-individual-group does reproach another		27.5
The story refers to winners and losers	3.9	3.2
The story refers to two or more sides of the problem	24.0	26.3
The story refers to parties which defend themselves against criticism	15.0	20.0
Responsibility	33.3	33.0
Story suggests that some level of government has the ability to alleviate problem	18.4	27.6
Story suggests that some level of government is responsible for the problem	12.4	2.4
Story suggests solution(s) to the problem or issue	15.3	27.6
Story suggests that an individual (or group of people in society) is responsible for problem	21.2	12.9
Story suggests the problem requires urgent action	18.6	16.5
The story refers to potential problems	14.1	12.9

Economic Consequences

There is a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future	8.5	13.6
There is a mention of costs/degree of expenses involved	33.3	35.7
There is a reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action	48.9	40.0
	17.8	24.3

Morality

The story contains a moral message	13.2	20.0
The story makes reference to morality, God and other religious tenets	7.1	12.6
The story offers specific social prescriptions about how to behave	2.9	1.0
The story refers to intentional bad behaviour	38.6	39.8
	51.4	46.6

Source: Researcher's computation of data from content analysis of *Vanguard and Daily Trust*, 2016

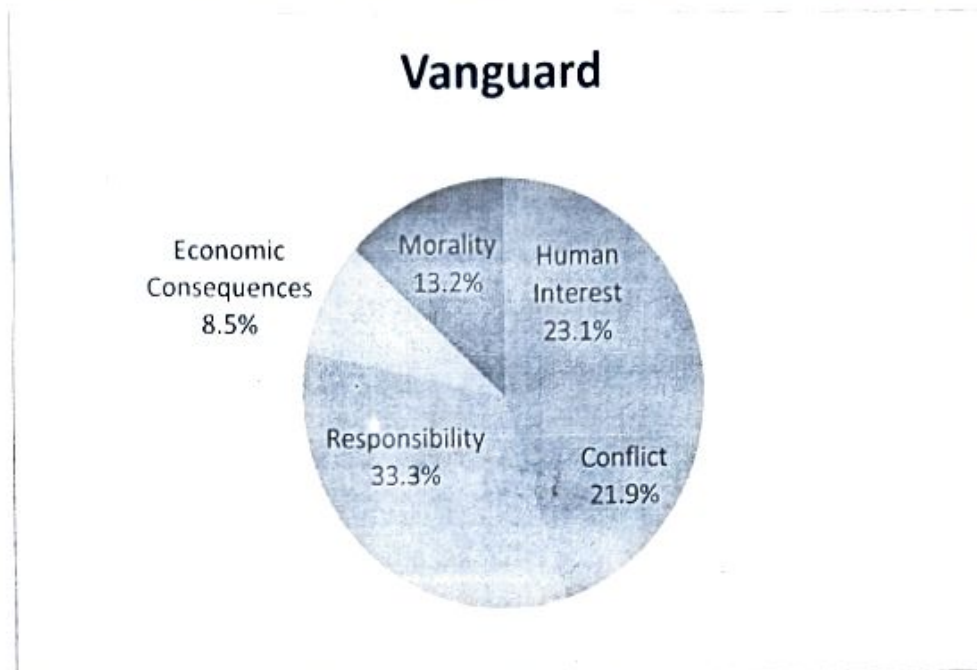


Chart 1: News Frames of Fulani herdsmen-Farmers Communal Conflicts in *Vanguard*

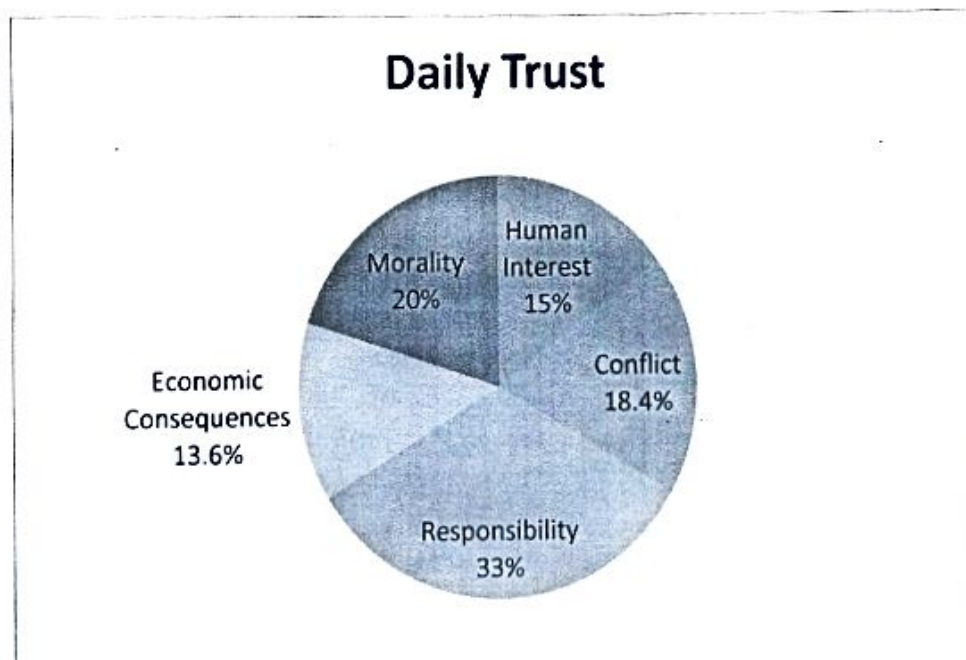


Chart II: News Frames of Fulani herdsmen-Farmers Communal Conflicts in *Daily Trust*

Micro-analysis of word usage in the headlines of Vanguard Newspaper

Takahashi, Hartman, Amann and Meisner (2017:119) submits that, newspaper headlines are “designed to incite interest and catch readers’

attention with the goal of having them read the text of the article, they serve as relevance optimizers. Because the headline is typically the first element read, it also frames the topic and influences readers' perceptions of the news article." On the assumption that potential readers will see at least the headline of an article which will invite them to read the story, the researcher undertook a micro-analysis of the words used in the headlines of news reports about the Fulani herdsmen-farmers conflict in Nigeria. The most common terms in the headlines from the *Vanguard* newspaper were:

Killings, killing, killed, kill (38)
 Fulani, Fulani herdsmen (47)
 Attacks, attacking (23)
 Invasion, invade (12)
 Massacre (8), Clashes (6)
 Terrorist, terrorizing (4) Insurgency (3)
 Kidnap, Kidnapping (6)
 Reprisal, retaliation (3)
 Catholic, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) (12)
 Grazing reserve, grazing bill (20)
 MASSOB, IPOB, Biafra, Ndigbo, Bakassi Boys, Ijaw, Afenifere, OPC (20)
 Numerical count of bodies- 2, 3, 4, 8, 12, 15, 40, 46, 710, 1000,
 The headlines in the *Vanguard* newspaper also included less frequent but graphic terms such as:
 Carnage, Genocide, Murder, War, Bloodbath

Micro-analysis of word usage in the headlines of Daily Trust Newspaper

The most common terms from the *Daily Trust* newspaper news items were smaller. The most common terms in the headlines of *Daily Trust* were:

Killings, killing, killed, kill (17)
 Fulani, Fulani herdsmen (5)
 Farmer/herders, herders, herdsmen (30)
 rustlers, rustling (10)
 Attacks, attacking (5), Clash (9)
 Grazing reserve (9)
 Miyetti Allah, MACBAN (14)
 Afenifere, OPC, IPOB (3)
 Stolen or recovered cows- 9, 40,000, 185, 142, 5, 10, 83

Discussion of Findings

The news frames used by the *Vanguard* and the *Daily Trust* newspaper between March 1st and May 31st, 2016 are shown in Table 4 and are illustrated by Charts I and II, respectively. Overall, the news coverage of the Fulani herdsmen-farmers communal conflicts by both newspapers was framed most frequently in terms of 'Responsibility' (*Vanguard* 33.3%; *Daily Trust* 33.0%). This provides the answer to the first research question on the most used frame in the news reportage of the Fulani herdsmen-farmers communal conflict by both papers.

The *Vanguard* newspaper employed the Responsibility frame (33.3%) and the Human Interest frame (23.1%) in most of its reportage on the

Fulani herdsmen-farmers communal conflicts. While 21.9% was recorded for the Conflict frame, the Morality and Economic-Consequences Frames recorded 13.2% and 8.5% respectively. The *Daily Trust* newspaper on its part, used the Responsibility frame (33.0%) and the Morality frame (20.0%) mostly in the news framing of the Fulani herdsmen-farmers communal conflicts. 18.4% was recorded under the Conflict frame; Human Interest frame (15.0%) and Economic-Consequences frame (13.6%) by the newspaper.

Responsibility Frame

Under the Responsibility frame in the *Vanguard*, the dominant theme pushed by the paper mostly suggests that the Fulani herdsmen were responsible for the problem, which encompassed 21.2% of the Responsibility frame. This is further buttressed by a micro-analysis of word usage by the *Vanguard* newspaper in its headlines as it showed that, the paper ascribed more causal responsibility to the phrase: "Fulani" or "Fulani herdsmen" more than the *Daily Trust* newspaper. An example of this can be found in the *Vanguard* of March 18, 2016, page 10, with the headline: "15 killed, as Fulani herdsmen invade another community".

Also, under the Responsibility frame used by the *Vanguard* newspaper, 18.6% tend to suggest that the Fulani herdsmen-farmers communal conflicts require urgent action and intervention from the

authorities; 18.4% also suggests that some level of Government has the ability to alleviate the Fulani herdsmen communal conflicts. In proffering possible solutions to the problem (15.3%), news themes also stress potential problems (14.1%) that could arise if solutions were not implemented. Notwithstanding, findings from this study also show that the *Vanguard* reportage of the conflicts tends to portray that some level of government was responsible for the problem (12.4%) more than the *Daily Trust* news reportage (2.4%) of the same issue. The *Vanguard* particularly blamed the Presidency for failure to act with dispatch in its response to the alleged atrocities of the Fulani herdsmen, describing the President's silence on the issue as 'not golden' in an editorial of 31st, 2016, page 12. An example of this theme is taken from the *Vanguard* of May 28, 2016, when the medium undertook a review of President Buhari's first year in office. The news analysis written with the byline of Ugoji Egbujo, and headline: "Rampaging herdsmen, bloody massacres and a bias President", had accused the President of indifference to the spate of massacres allegedly perpetrated by Fulani herdsmen across the country. The report reads:

The herdsmen are predominantly Fulani and Buhari isn't just an ordinary Fulani. He was once a patron of the herdsmen and their vocal advocate on

herdsmen/farmers disputes. After the Agatu massacre, Federal Government agents spoke in manners that suggested that they were conflicted. But more depressingly, no meaningful arrests were made, no declaration of serious intent by government to find and punish murderers. After Nimbo Enugu, the presidency fell into an embarrassing and dangerous silence. Why would the president find the loss of many Nigerian lives in an incident that had such potentially inflammable consequences so trivial that the president issued not an immediate statement?" p.12.

On the part of the *Daily Trust* newspaper in its use of the Responsibility frame, the dominant theme propagated by the medium was that of confidence in the ability of some level of Government to alleviate the Fulani herdsmen-farmers communal conflicts problem (27.6%). This point is buttressed by the frequent use of law enforcement agencies as news sources (24.2%) in the reportage of the conflict between the herdsmen and farmers than that obtainable in the *Vanguard* newspaper (11.0%). There was also a rather limited use of the phrase "Fulani" or "Fulani herdsmen" as indicated in the micro-analysis of *Daily Trust's* headlines, choosing instead, the use of words such as:

"farmer-herders", "herders", "herdsmen" was frequent. Another equally dominant theme in the Responsibility frame in the *Daily Trust* was the suggestions of solutions to the problem (27.6%). Still under the Responsibility frame used by the *Daily Trust* newspaper, 16.5% suggest the conflicts require urgent action from government; 12.9% of the frame refers to potential problems while another 12.9% suggested that cattle rustlers and armed herdsmen, who may not necessarily be of the Fulani ethnic stock, were the cause of the conflict. Okoli and Okpaleke (2014:110) had submitted that, "recent developments tend to have implicated cattle rustling in the rising wave of violence in northern Nigeria, as exemplified in the phenomenon of Boko Haram insurgency and herder/farmer conflicts." Only 2.4% of the frame seems to suggest that some level of government was culpable for the problem.

Human Interest frame

The second most used frame by the *Vanguard* newspaper is the Human Interest as it accounted for 23.1% of the overall frames used by the paper. For the *Daily Trust*, it is the fourth used frame accounting for 15.0% of the overall frames used by the medium. The predominant themes in the Human Interest frame about the Fulani herdsmen-farmers communal conflicts emphasized how individuals and groups were affected by the problem

(*Vanguard* 30.5%; *Daily Trust* 29.9%). In the light of the priority accorded this theme by both papers in the frame, it would seem as if both media appear to be aligned on this issue. However, this is far from the reality in terms of the actual coverage. While the *Vanguard* chronicled how the indigenous members/farmers of a community were displaced, maimed and killed, as well as, the injustice meted out to them as a result of the activities of the Fulani herdsmen, the *Daily Trust* in its reportage, emphasized the challenges confronting the Fulani herdsmen which included the activities of cattle rustlers; rural banditry; killings of the Fulani herdsmen and limited support from successive Nigerian Governments in terms of infrastructure and social support. An example is drawn from the *Daily Trust* newspaper of May 2, 2016, page 5 with the headline: "20 herdsmen, 83 cows killed in Nasarawa". Under the Human Interest frame, the use of adjectives and personal vignettes to generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy or compassion recorded 22.4% and 18.2% in *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* respectively. An example of this theme can be found in a front page major story in the *Vanguard* of March 19, 2016, with the headlines: "Agatu Invasion: Benue lawmakers slam Buhari, Victims accuse his government of insensitivity as killings continue, Say military posted to Agatu not permitted to stop Fulani herdsmen". On the same date, in the same medium,

another headline reads: "Agatu Genocide: Benue lawmakers slam Buhari, Threaten to defend themselves, we've lost over 1000 people, Fulani herdsmen occupying destroyed communities" (p.5). Reports in the *Daily Trust* had headlines such as: "115 grazing reserves taken over-Miyetti Allah" May 8, 2016; "We've no hand in killing of 5 herdsmen-Abia community" April 11, 2016, page 6; "50 cattle breeders killed in fresh Taraba crisis" April 14, 2016, page 4.

In the *Vanguard*, 20.7% and 14.2% were recorded for themes that pertained to non-direct victim of the issue and themes that provided a "human face" in the reportage respectively; while 12.2 % was recorded for themes which go into the private or personal lives of the actors. An example of the latter can be found in a feature article of April 6, 2016, page 23 with the byline of Anayo Okoli in the *Vanguard* newspaper with the headline: "Enugu 76: How they ended up in prison while searching for their wives". The lede for the article read:

For the 76 Ugwuleshi indigenes in Agwu Community, Enugu State, they would forever hate that fateful day they gathered to organize a search party for two of their women allegedly abducted by Fulani herdsmen who have been having a running battle with them over destruction of their farmlands...While they

gathered to commence the search, they ran into some soldiers on patrol who seeing the large number of men confronted them. They were said to have satisfactorily explained themselves to the soldiers who it was said wanted to leave them. But suddenly, it was alleged, one Alhaji came out and met them and allegedly placed a call after which some more army vans arrived and they were clamped into prisons.

However, it is imperative to note that no effort was made by the reporter to balance the above story especially with regard to the allegation leveled against the Fulani herdsmen or "one Alhaji" who may or may not be of the Fulani ethnic group and law enforcement agencies to obtain their reactions to the incident. One of the cardinal precepts of journalism is objectivity which, Schudson (2001) observed, should ensure that both sides of a story are presented in a straightforward and balanced manner. Hence, Okoye (2006: 4) corroborates Schudson when he stated that: "if news is not objective, it becomes a public relations stuff or propaganda, which is interested in presenting only one side of the issue in order to persuade." For the *Daily Trust* newspaper, stories that refer to non-direct victim of the issue showed 20.8%, while 15.6% each of news stories with themes that dwelt on

the personal lives of the actors as well as providing a "human face" on the issue, was recorded for the paper respectively.

Conflict Frame

The Conflict frame ranked a third place in the overall usage of news frames by both dailies (*Vanguard* 21.9%, *Daily Trust* 18.4%) in the reportage of the Fulani herdsmen-farmers communal conflicts. The theme of news items which dominated the frame mostly reflected disagreements between residents of a community where a communal conflict had occurred that see themselves as indigenes and are often farmers, versus the Fulani nomads. The theme usually suggests a "we" Versu "them" slant; "North" Vs "South"; "Christians Vs Muslims"; Grazing reserves: "to be" or "no to be" which recorded 29.9% in the *Vanguard* and 30.5% in the *Daily Trust*. An example of this theme is taken from the *Daily Trust* of April 19, 2016, page 11 with the headline: "Fulani group seeks IPOB prosecution over Abia herdsmen killing." Another example is taken from the front page of the *Vanguard* of April 30, 2016, with the headline: "Enugu Massacre: Igbo Youths give Fulani herdsmen Monday deadline to leave Igboland." The reportage by the *Vanguard* newspaper was characterized by the frequent reproach of the Fulani herdsmen by individuals, religious leaders and pressure groups especially from the South-Eastern part of the country

(27.5%). The March 7, 2016 edition of the *Vanguard*, page 15 had the headline: "IPOB replies Buhari, says 'we would also not tolerate Nigeria, as MASSOB, IPOB set to crackdown on Fulani herdsmen.'" It is important to note that secessionist groups in the Southeast such as the MASSOB, IPOB were allowed greater space to state their opinions on the matter rather than opening up more opportunities for the Fulani ethnic group to react and state their side of the story and even where the opinion of a Fulani representative is reported, it appeared indicting. An example of this can be found in the *Vanguard* of March 5, 2016, page 5, with the headline: "Why we are attacking Agatu-Fulani herdsmen." A troubling aspect of the reportage of the Fulani herdsmen-farmers conflict in the *Vanguard* is the theme that the violence is horrific. Reports often refer to "massacre", "genocide", for example reporting sometimes includes the phrase "destruction of lives and properties", "corpses litter everywhere". There were also allegations of politically-motivated killings as it concerns the conflict. For instance, when one of the Igbo elites, Chief Victor Umeh of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) was interrogated by the Department of State Security (DSS) on treasonable allegations in the build-up to the Senatorial re-run in Anambra State, Southeast Nigeria, the headline in the *Vanguard* newspaper read thus: "Treasonable allegations: Freed Umeh

relives 15-hour interrogation by DSS' Says I was arrested for insulting Buhari, talking about Fulani herdsmen, promoting Biafra" *Vanguard* March 5, 2016. Nevertheless, Wolfsfeld (2004) stressed the tendency for the news media to intensify conflicts rather than minimise it. According to him, "Headlines that focus on threats, accusations, and confrontations generate anger on both sides and demands for retaliation quickly follow. Minor glitches become major problems, disagreements are turned into crises. Enemies become more frightening, opponents more vicious. The inevitable result is that the news media are more likely to escalate a conflict than to pacify it" Wolfsfeld (2004: 19). On the part of the *Daily Trust* newspaper, the focus of the theme was more on exploring more sides to the herdsmen-farmers conflict (26.3%). These sides included but not limited to, examining the challenges confronting Fulani herdsmen such as rural banditry; reportage which tended to suggest that not all herdsmen are necessarily of the Fulani ethnic stock; berating the media for the negative stereotype of the Fulani herdsmen; promoting dialogue to resolve the conflict between the herdsmen and the indigenes of farming communities. Editorials, Feature stories, interviews and opinion articles were constantly used to drive this aspect of the frame. An example of these themes can be found in the paper's editorial of March 20, 2016, page 3 with the headline,

"Wanted: National Program to End Pastoralism". The *Daily Trust* editorial had submitted: "The common narrative in the newspapers is that 'Fulani herdsmen' attack Agatu and its surrounding villages 'without any provocation.' This, the editorial had argued, "cannot be true". Another example is taken from the *Daily Trust* of May 8, 2016, page 48 with the headline: "Herdsmen attack: How Nigerian newspapers mislead readers with foreign photos." The feature report had quoted a Journalism scholar from the Journalism and Emerging Media School of Communication, Kennesaw State University, USA, Dr Farooq Kperogi as saying:

Writing or saying 'suspected Fulani herdsmen' equates 'Fulani herdsmen with criminals. That's both unfair and inaccurate.' To see how invidious and ridiculous this emergent reportorial phraseology is, replace it with descriptors like 'suspected Ogoni farmers', 'suspected Bini traders', 'suspected Yoruba spare part sellers' etc. and see how it sounds. What is suspected isn't an ethnic identity; it is the perpetrators of the crime.

Another example is found on the front page of the May 14, 2016, edition of the paper with the headline: "In South-East, Igbo merchants' now big-time herders." It is noteworthy to

mention here that in the use of pressure groups and ethnic organizations as sources, the *Daily Trust* heavily cited the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) as sources of information for news reportage about the Fulani herdsmen-farmers conflict. Still on the conflict frame, the Government and law enforcement agencies such as the Police and the military have been accused of not doing enough to forestall the violence. The *Vanguard* newspaper dwelt extensively on this theme. An example can be found in *Vanguard* of April 27, 2016, page 5 with the headline "Bishop Chukwuma blasts FG". The story lede read: "Archbishop of the Anglican Communion, Enugu Archdiocese Dr Emmanuel Chukwuma has warned that if nothing was done to checkmate the Fulani herdsmen, he will personally ask pro-Biafra groups to declare war on them." It is noteworthy to mention here that the herdsmen conflicts was further compounded by the allegations of re-establishing grazing reserves across the country by the Government, an issue that was strongly opposed and condemned in the different reportage undertaken by the *Vanguard* during the period under study.

Morality Frame

The second most commonly used frame by the *Daily Trust* newspaper is the Morality frame as it accounted for 20% of the overall frames used by the paper than the

Vanguard newspaper which recorded 13.2%. More moral messages were contained in the Daily Trust reportage (12.6%) than the Vanguard (7.1%). That the theme of the reportage offers specific social prescriptions on how to behave, accounted for 39.8% and 38.6% in the *Daily Trust* and *Vanguard* respectively. Similarly, in that order, 1.0% and 2.9% was recorded for stories that make a reference to morality, God and other religious tenets; both papers also recorded 46.6% and 51.4% for news reportage that refers to intentional bad behaviour. An example of the morality frame in the *Daily Trust* can be found on the March 6, 2016 edition of the paper with headline, 'Fulani to stop children from cattle rearing'; quoting the President of the Jonde Jam Fulani Youths Association, Saidu Maikano as saying: "our findings reveal that sometimes these children that are sent out to rear cattle are careless and they allow the cattle destroy farmlands. We don't want that because we want the farmers to be able to harvest and enjoy their yields." From the *Vanguard* newspaper, this example is taken in the April 15, 2016 edition of the paper, page 35 with the headline: "Benue warns against reprisal attacks on Fulani herdsmen".

Economic Consequences Frame

Overall, the economic consequences frame was the least used frame by both national dailies as it accounted for 8.5% in the *Vanguard*

and 13.6% for the *Daily Trust*. Mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future (*Vanguard*, 33.3%; *Daily Trust*, 35.7%); mention of costs/degree if expenses involved (*Vanguard* 48.9%; *Daily Trust*, 40.0%) and reference to economic consequences of not pursuing or not pursuing a course of action received 17.8% and 24.3% in the *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* respectively.

This study examines the news framing of the Fulani herdsmen-farmers communal conflicts by the Nigerian media, returning to the second research question that guided this study on how does the framing of the news reportage in the selected newspapers suggest ways to which readers make sense of the Fulani herdsmen-farmers conflict. As beguiling as it would seem to want to select one frame to explain how readers and audiences in the country would understand and interpret the Fulani herdsmen-farmers communal conflict, the reality is that the news framing of the conflict is complicated because of the many approaches to its interpretation.

The important role that the news play in the lives of the people cannot be underemphasized because the media serve as the vehicle which delivers information to a large number of individuals at the same time. According to Pate and Bashir (2012:32), "Issues like ideology, religion, regionalism, ethnicity and politics of resource allocation, power

sharing and other divisive national tendencies are openly debated on the pages of newspapers and airwaves of broadcast stations with no conclusive resolutions" by the Nigerian media. Ibrahim and Dabugat (2016:260) further submitted that "media accounts are often very graphic and validate their claims by including statements ascribed to eye-witnesses and descriptions of the reactions of community leaders, security commanders or government officials." They further held that:

The problem is that the character of such 'media speech' is usually inflammatory, freely dispensing hate messages in the guise of information and analysis. The stories are often followed by threats and counter-threats, accusations and counter-accusations. In that way, the media becomes the conduit through which the perceived plight and grievances of actors are broadcast. By amplifying the negative conversations between aggrieved parties, the media may be serving to deepen existing conflicts and inciting further violence. Clearly, hate speech in the media may play a substantial role in promoting popular narratives about rural banditry and social conflicts in mass

social discourse, thereby influencing how the issue is generally viewed by society (Ibrahim and Dabugat, 2016: 260).

Although an analysis of President Buhari's statements by his spokespersons (especially, his Senior Special Assistant, Media, Mallam Garba Shehu), and other official sources, usually condemn the communal conflicts, vowing to deal with the perpetrators of the violence, findings indicates that ethnicity, religion and political subjugation could be adduced as the reason for the Fulani herdsmen-farmers communal conflicts among readers especially on politically oriented social media posts and blogs supported by the internet which has enabled the citizenry to participate more actively in public dialogue. In the light of this, some readers in the Southern geo-political zone of the country might use the Responsibility frame in the *Vanguard* newspaper to likely conclude that the President as a cattle owner, was reluctant to deal harshly with the Fulani herdsmen because they are his kinsmen.

Another might infer that the Fulani herdsmen were attacking the Southern zone because their kinsman and patron is the President so they could get away with atrocities, which, perhaps was the reason why the law enforcement agencies were reluctant to act with dispatch during the crisis. An example of this can be found in the

Vanguard of March 19, 2016, with the sub-headline: "Agatu Invasion: ...military posted to Agatu not permitted to stop Fulani herdsmen." Results from the study showed that the *Vanguard* newspaper relied more on news sources from the opposition leaders, used more of anonymous sources, including the use of religious leaders, pressure groups and ethnic organizations were used mostly as sources for the reportage of the conflicts. On the part of the *Daily Trust*, the dominant theme propagated by the medium was that of confidence in the ability of the Government to alleviate the problem. Nonetheless, Governors and Senators from the northern part of the country had taken exceptions to the frequent attempt by the mostly Southern news media outlets to label Fulani herdsmen as criminals.

The Conflict frame could cause Christian readers to conclude that the Muslims were seeking to aggressively dominate the country through Islam. A headline in the *Vanguard* newspaper illustrates how much this frame may come into play: "Methodist Prelate accuses Buhari of plans to Islamise Nigeria", March 15, 2016, p.15. According to the report, the Methodist Prelate Dr Samuel Uche was quoted to have said: we are closely watching this government because we are aware there is a game plan to Islamise Nigeria and they are using the Fulani herdsmen to initiate it before they fully launch it out. But I tell you there is

going to be serious resistance from Christians." He added that: "The activities of the Fulani herdsmen have never been so pronounced like under this government."

However, on March 16, 2016, page 43 of the same newspaper, the Methodist Prelate denied the report and described it as a "misrepresentation of facts." The cleric said: "President Muhammadu Buhari was never accused of planning to Islamize Nigeria rather I said that the militant sect of the Fulani herdsmen with their Boko Haram collaborators think that they can Islamize Nigeria. Their efforts will always be resisted". It is informative to note that the presidential spokesman Garba Shehu, refuted the allegation leveled against the President. Still, in terms of religion and ethnicity, the Christians and ethnic groups in the South kicked against the allocation of grazing reserves to Fulani herdsmen in all the articles published by the *Vanguard* newspaper. Some readers may be taken by the ethnic dimension, while others may be taken by the religious and political subjugation implicit in the news framing reportage of the communal conflicts which could cause a risk of physical assault and violent reactions.

Conclusion

A significant contribution of this study has been on the analysis of the way Conflict, Human Interest, Attribution of Responsibility, Morality and Economic Consequences frames

could contribute to the understanding or misrepresentation of a phenomenon as evident in this case of the Fulani herdsmen-farmers communal conflicts in Nigeria. The findings have contributed scholastically by providing a more nuanced understanding of the conflict between Fulani herdsmen and farmers/indigenes of host communities. Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of news sources in the framing of the conflict. It is suggested that future research could build on this issue by examining whether citizens' exposure to these frames in various media outlets affect their political behaviour and electoral decisions.

In this study, an attempt has been made to identify framing as a delicate media tool that must not be used or abused to stereotype and negatively profile members and groups in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria if an escalation of communal conflicts is not the motive. Although, the challenge of communal violence is not the making of the media, it must, at all times, be a bastion of independent and balanced positions on national issues in order to promote peace and good governance. This is crucial in keeping with the tenets of social responsibility of the media. While the problem of the Fulani herdsmen-farmers communal conflicts will not be solved by the media ignoring the issue or sweeping it under the carpet, this study enjoins media professionals to balance their stories particularly in times of conflicts be it for print or broadcast reportage.

Nigeria is a nation that is blessed with a great diversity of cultures and every culture has its uniqueness. The media should refrain from exploring fault lines that seeks to promote a divisive 'we' versus 'them' outlook in their headlines and reports. They should rather strive to bring out and highlight the values and uniqueness in each culture which will engender tolerance and harmony in the society. In essence, the media should uphold those qualities that will weld Nigerians together because there cannot be unity if the media only stress elements that divide the citizenry.

The Government, at all levels- both Federal and States must never forget its obligations to Nigerians in securing lives and properties of the people. Hence, Government must not only be responsive and accountable, it must be seen to be so. It must be seen to act swiftly in curbing the challenges of communal violence, including Fulani herdsmen-farmers conflicts and other civic unrests across the country. It should strengthen the capacities of law enforcement agencies to forestall and quell future occurrences and revive community-conflict management mechanisms. Furthermore, there should be the development of rural infrastructure (including, affordable ranching system and investments in agriculture) for herdsmen and farmers respectively, as well as genuinely addressing agrarian insecurity and rural banditry.

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