

Ploughshares into Swords: National Newspapers Framing of the Conflict between Herdsmen and Farmers in Nigeria

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Abstract

The intermittent outbreak of hostilities between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria has naturally drawn some respectable media coverage. The high profile media interest is justified not only by the potential risk the tension posed to food security in the nation, but also its attendant toll on human lives and property. Media accounts of events usually reflect, at least, a tinge of the blinkers and frames of the tale bearers. In spite of a surfeit of empirical evidence detailing media coverage of conflictual situations around the world, limited literature clarifies media framing of the occasional but intractable duel between these two key members of the Nigerian agriculture community. Against the backdrop of the ethno-religious undercurrent in every crisis Nigeria has had, content analyses of three major newspapers in Nigeria were conducted to determine how news managers frame the farmers/herders brawl. Research evidence showed that while the research subjects used different sections of their media space to differently highlight the conflicts, the difference was not significant by prominence, geography or in frames.

Keywords: *.Conflict framing .Herdsmen/Farmers conflict .Conflict reporting .War and crises reporting*

Introduction

Nigeria, like many heterogeneous countries of the world, has had its share of conflicts. The unity and cohesion of this ethnically pluralistic and multi religious political entity has been severally strained to its elastic limits by occasional outbursts of internal fratricidal strife. Nigeria has indeed experienced all forms of conflicts- a secessionist civil war, resource control induced insurgency, a campaign of sectarian terror fuel by religious bigotry, all with the attendant loss of lives and property. The ethno-religious diversities within Nigeria is so magnified that it has almost always overtaken and overshadowed other differences among the people. Nonpartisan tension among major actors in the country easily snowballs into ethno-religious crisis. This multi-layered fault lines are easily exploited by the political elites and other centrifugal forces to fuel violence. This offers a backdrop for appreciating the bloody conflicts and simmering tension between nomadic pastoralists from Northern Nigeria and plant farmers across Nigeria.

According to Homer-Dixon (1998), environmental scarcities contribute to violent conflict in many developing nations. In Nigeria, the conflict between nomadic herders and sedentary farmers is a leading resource-use conflict. The cause borders principally on the competition to have access to land (for grazing and farming) and freshwater, resources which have become acutely scarce (Audu, 2013). Massive desertification of vegetative lands and drought in Northern Nigeria compel herders to migrate toward the South in order to provide green pasture and water for their livestock. In the course of their movement down South, the nomadic herdsmen momentarily settle in farming communities where green vegetation and water are available. Disputes arise between herders and farmers over allegations from both parties. On the one hand, farmers accuse herders of trampling their crops by the encroachment of herded livestock on their

farmlands and contaminating community water sources. On the other hand, herders accuse farmers of poisoning, killing or stealing their cattle and denying them access to grazing routes.

The conflict between herders and farmers is a protracted issue in Nigeria. Violent clashes between them have been frequent since the 1980s, but gained new momentum in intensity and reoccurrence at the country's return to civilian rule in 1999 (Blench, 2003). The progressive increase in the occurrence of clashes between herdsmen and farmers has been confirmed by different research findings and reports. It is reported that whereas only 18 incidences were recorded between 1997 and 2010, there was a surge of 371 attacks between 2011 and 2015 (SB Morgen report, 2016). The conflict has been responsible for the death and displacement of many people in various regions of Nigeria. Fatalities are not limited to the conflicting herdsmen and farmers as innocent members of host communities are also casualties of the conflict. According to the Human Rights Watch (2013), the conflict between Fulani herdsmen and farmers significantly contributed to inter-communal violence and death of about 3,000 people in North-Central region of Nigeria between 2010 and 2013. On February 24, 2016, Fulani herders were reported to have raided and killed over 300 people in Agatu community in Benue State. These attacks became so wanton and brutal that the 2015 Global Terrorism Index rated the Fulani Pastoralists as the fourth most deadly terrorist group, behind the Taliban, ISIL, and Boko Haram, in the world (Institute of Economics and Peace, 2015). Also, it is estimated that Nigeria loses 13.7 billion dollars in potential revenue annually to these clashes (mercy Corp Report, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

The use of framing as a construct in media research has been on the ascendancy. It is at the core of contemporary media analysis (Watson & Hill, 2006). Research interest in this perspective is driven by theoretical advances hypothesizing that beyond the agenda setting power of the media, mass media narrative is latently influential enough that frames chosen by media news managers could impose prisms that determine audience perspectives, attitudes and likely actions. What is excluded from the media by gatekeepers is definitely out of frame and whatever is precluded from media frame is arguably off the public agenda. Media frames indeed influence audience consciousness. The media engage in framing by selecting certain facets of a perceived reality and making them more salient in such a way that endorses a specific problem definition, causal interpretations, moral judgment, or treatment recommendation. Media framing research represents attempts to systematically uncover the ideological narrative employed by news managers.

There are internal and external factors that influence journalists and the media in the framing of news stories. These factors include the worldview of individual journalist and other media professionals, news routines and processes of media organization, organisational policies and ownership model, and the sources of news (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). According to Bruggman (2014), journalist mostly frame news stories in line with their personal interpretations of what they consider to be at issue, and at other times, they simply relay the frames presented by public actors that are the sources of their news stories.

The conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria have naturally drawn some coverage from mass media within and outside the country. While some critics have buffeted media coverage as stoking an already flammable issue, other observers have complimented the media for assisting to deescalate tension through professional reporting. Little is known about media framing of media coverage of the conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. Odunlami (2017) made an attempt to scientifically clarify the actual performance of the Nigerian media, specifically the newspaper. However, his empirical undertaking in this direction was undercut by the

limited scope of the study. Odunlami's study was confined to two newspapers, and the timeframe was also circumscribed to five months (January to May, 2016). This limited scope naturally affected the population of the study as well as the sample size and by implication possibly compromised the integrity of the research findings. This represents an expanded research effort designed to determine how three major newspapers in Nigeria framed the conflicts between the herders and farmers. The following four null hypotheses, all tested at 0.05 level of significance, guided the conduct of the study:

Ho1 There is significant difference in the formats of coverage of the conflict between herders and farmers among the selected newspapers.

Ho2 There is no significant difference in the level of prominence given to the conflict between herders and farmers among the selected newspapers.

Ho3 There is no significant difference in the geographic variation of coverage of the conflict between herders and farmers among the selected newspapers.

Ho4 There is no significant difference in the dominant news frames adopted in reporting the conflict between herders and farmers among the selected newspapers.

Review of Empirical Studies

Violent conflicts are a major global concern and, naturally, the causes and repercussions of these conflicts have prompted a plethora of research studies. Communication researchers, particularly, have sought to evaluate the role of the media within the context of varying conflict situations in different parts of the world. For instance, Zia and Syedah (2015) conducted a qualitative content analyses of three newspaper coverage of the conflict between India and Pakistan and concluded that the selected newspapers - *The Times of India*, *Dawn* of Pakistan and *The New York Times* of US - Predominantly gave negative frames to the conflict than positive coverage that could engender the resolution of the conflict.

Studying the role played by the Turkish media in the ethnic conflict between the Kurds and the Turks, Arcan (2013) examined the coverage of two Turkish newspapers- *Sözcü* and *Radikal* newspapers and concluded based on findings that the news stories in *Sözcü* newspaper were mainly from a belligerent/violence journalism perspective but *Radikal* newspaper dominantly adopted a peace journalism approach somewhat reflecting the newspapers' ideological and political leaning.

The study by Savrum and Miller (2015) was also within the context of an ethnic conflict. The study was based on the protracted ethnic conflict in Cyprus. Adopting the content-analysis research method, the news media from the Northern and Southern part of the country - the Greek Cypriot press and the Turkish Cypriot press - were comparatively studied to identify their reportage of news related to proposals to resolve the conflict. *Alithia*, *Haravghi*, *Phileleftheros*, *Politis*, and *Simerini* newspapers were selected to represent the Greek Cypriot press, while *Volkan*, *HalkinSesi*, *Afrika*, *Kibris* and *YeniDüzen* newspapers represented the Turkish Cypriot press. The results of the study shows that both sections of the press tended to be more neutral in their reportage, even though as same findings affirmed the hypothesis that the Greek Cypriot press published more negative headlines compared to the Turkish Cypriot press

Acayo and Mnjama (2004) conducted a study on the role of the print media in the resolution of the conflict between the government and rebel groups in Northern Uganda. The researchers content-analysed two newspapers in Uganda - *The Monitor*, a private-owned newspaper, and *The New Vision*, a government-owned newspaper. Findings of the study showed that *The Monitor* published more stories relating to the conflict than *The New Vision*.

Ozohu-Suleiman and Ishak (2014) present an empirical demonstration of how the local media can be influenced by societal idiosyncrasies even in their coverage of conflicts their home countries are not directly involved in. Four newspapers from four separate countries in Southeast Asia were content-analysed to study the coverage of the Israel-

Palestine conflict. The researchers examined the *Star* of Malaysia, *Philstar* of the Philippines, *Jakarta Post* of Indonesia, and *The Nation* of Thailand to ascertain how they reported the Israel-Palestine conflict after the Gaza War in 2009. Findings revealed that the two newspapers from Islamic countries, *Star* of Malaysia and *Jakarta Post* of Indonesia, slanted their coverage in favour of Palestine, and the newspaper within a Christian setting, *Philstar* of the Philippines, slanted its coverage in favour of Israel, while *The nation* of Thailand, a presumably neutral and non-aligned country, was sympathetic to the Palestine in its coverage of the conflict.

Lee (2004) investigated newspaper coverage of the war between the United States of America and Iraq in 2003. One U.S. newspaper- *The New York Times*- and one newspaper each from two Arab countries- Egypt's *The Arab News* and Saudi Arabia's *The Middle East Times*- were selected and comparatively analysed. Findings of the study showed that *The New York Times* relied more on U.S. officials as the source of information while *The Arab News* and *The Middle East Times* depended more on Arab officials for information and this affected their blinkers.

In the same vein, Goddard, Robbison and Parry (2008) examined the reportage of the 2003 Iraq War in the British press, using *The Sun*, *The Independent*, *Daily Mail*, *The Guardian*, *Times*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Mirror* newspapers as the focus of analysis. The newspapers were selected along the lines of downmarket, upmarket and midmarket, which reflect the reporting styles and the readership profiles of the newspapers. The study was aimed at ascertaining the degree of support the newspapers gave to the involvement of the British military in the conflict. Although the tone of reporting was significantly different among the three newspapers, there were similarities in their subject agenda.

Ntulume (2016) assessed how the Ugandan military involvement in the South Sudan conflict was portrayed in the country's media and presented empirical evidence showing that the deployment was mainly depicted as a "peace keeping and enforcement mission" and as a "rescue mission" in the selected newspapers.

Studies have also sought to identify frames used by the media when reporting conflict situations. One primary objective of Charkraborty, Borah and Hazarika's (2015) study was to examine the prominent frames used in newspaper reporting the violent conflict between native Bodo community people and Muslim settlers in Assam, Northeast India. Editions of *AsomiaProtidin*, an Assamese language newspaper, and *The Assam Tribune*, an English language newspaper were content analysed and result revealed that violence frame was most prominent in *The Assam Tribune* newspaper's coverage.

Research Design and Method

The researchers conducted content analyses of three Nigerian national newspapers: The Punch, The Guardian and Vanguard, all published between January, 2015 and August 2016, a period reflecting when media coverage of the issue peaked and the salience jump started national consciousness. The timeframe of the study population produced 1827 weekly and weekend editions (609 editions each). The weekend editions were purposively excluded as their investigative reporting format make them less responsive to incident reporting. With the exclusion of 522 weekend editions, 1305 editions (435 weekly editions multiplied by 3 newspapers) eventually constituted the target population and became the elements of the study. Using self-developed coding sheet that was calibrated along the following lines: format of coverage, prominence and position of story, and framing, the frame, which was the primary focus of the study, conflict frame, criminality frame, human interest frame, religious framing, ethnic frame, political frame, economic consequence frame and resolution frame. The unit of analysis constituted news reports, features, columns and editorials. The instrument was validated and the Holstiintercoder reliability test yielded 0.96 coefficients representing 96% agreement

between coders. The study was carried out at the records and document section of the LazOtti Memorial Library of Babcock University.

4.1 Presentation of Results

Table 1: Summary of Publications and Stories Analysed

Variables	Frequency	Percent(%)
Newspapers		
The Punch	168	24.5
The Guardian	190	27.7
Vanguard	329	47.9
Total	687	100.0
Years		
Year 2015	194	28.2
Year 2016	493	71.8
Total	687	100.0

Months	Year		Total
	2015	2016	
January	13	18	31
February	8	19	27
March	16	53	69
April	9	113	122
May	16	144	160
June	7	62	69
July	10	34	44
August	6	50	56
September	32	0	32
October	43	0	43
November	20	0	20
December	14	0	14
Total	194	493	687

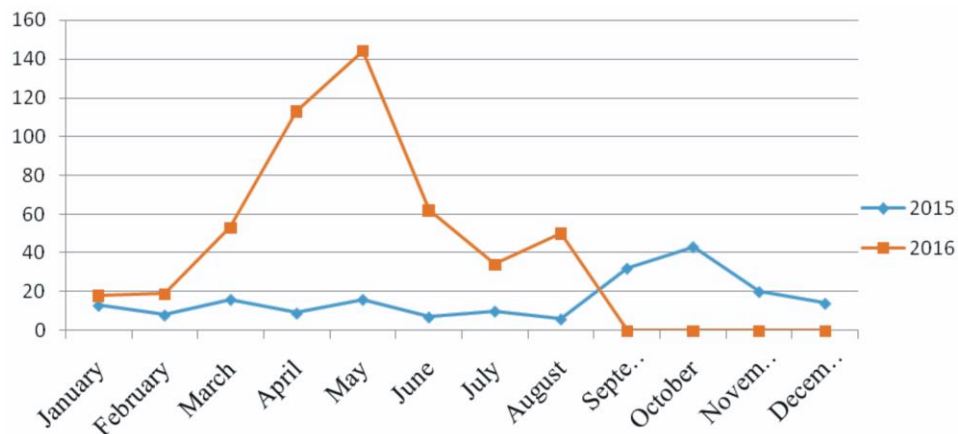


Figure one: Coverage of the Herders-Farmers Conflict across Selected Months

Table 1 and Figure 1 show that three newspapers were considered for this study, namely *The Punch*, *The Guardian* and *Vanguard*. From January, 2015 to August, 2016, *Vanguard* had the highest number of contents on the conflict between herders and farmers (n=329, 47.9%), followed by *The Guardian* (n=190, 27.7%), while *The Punch* (n=168, 24.5%) had the least number of contents on the conflict. In addition, coverage of conflict between herders and farmers across the selected newspapers appears to have been more frequent in 2016 (n= 493, 71.8%) than in 2015 (n=194, 28.2%). The frequency of reportage was at the highest peak for the year 2015 in the months of October (n=43) and September (n=32), whereas in 2016 the frequency of reportage was highest in the months of May (n=144) and April (n=113). Over the period of 20 months from January 2015 to August 2016, coverage of the conflict between herders and farmers by the three newspapers was most frequent between March and June 2016.

A condition precedent to the examination of the significant of difference and association between the variables is to first, find out the frequency of occurrence of the dimension of each variable. The out of this measure is then used to determine the hypothetical association between the variable, this applies to each hypothesis

Table 2 Formats of Coverage of the Conflict between Herders and Farmers

Variables		Newspaper			Total
		The Punch	The Guardian	Vanguard	
News Report	Freq (%)	146(86.9)	179(94.2)	280(85.1)	605(88.1)
Feature	Freq (%)	1(0.6)	2(1.1)	18(5.5)	21(3.1)
News Analysis	Freq (%)	0(0)	1(0.5)	2(0.6)	3(0.4)
Editorial	Freq (%)	5(3.0)	4(2.1)	12(3.6)	21(3.1)
Column	Freq (%)	16(9.5)	4(2.1)	17(5.2)	37(5.4)
Total	Freq (%)	168(100)	190(100)	329(100)	687(100)

Table 2 and shows the formats of coverage used in presenting the conflict between herders and farmers in the selected newspapers. The three newspapers presented the conflict through formats of news report (n=605, 88.1%), column (n=37, 5.4%) feature (n=21, 3.1%), editorial (n=21, 3.1%), and news analysis (n=3, 0.4%) accordingly. This suggests that the predominant format of coverage was news report (n=605, 88.1%) across the selected newspapers. *The Guardian* (n=179, 94.2%) covered the conflict more through news reports than *The Punch* (n=146, 86.9%) and *Vanguard* (n=605, 88.1%). Aside news report, two other major formats utilised by the selected newspapers in their respective coverage are: column (9.5%) and editorial (3.0%) in *The Punch*; feature (5.5%) and column (5.2%) in *Vanguard*; column (2.1%) and editorial (2.1%) in *The Guardian*. The news analysis format was the least adopted across the selected newspaper.

Null Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the formats of coverage of the conflict between herders and farmers among the selected newspapers.

Table 3a Analysis of Variance of the Formats of Coverage of the Conflict between Herders and Farmers among Selected Newspapers

Formats of Coverage	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9.289	2	4.644	4.398	0.013
Within Groups	722.260	684	1.056		
Total	731.549	686			

Table 3a indicates that there was a significant difference in the formats of coverage of the conflict between herders and farmers among the selected newspapers ($F (df= 2) = 4.398, p=0.013$). In order to pin-point where the significant differences are, the analysis continues in Table 3b.

Table 3b Post-Hoc Analysis Showing the Difference of Formats of Coverage of the Conflict between Herders and Farmers among Selected Newspapers

Dependent Variable: Formats of Coverage						
Scheffe						
(I) Newspaper	(J) Newspaper	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
The Punch	The Guardian	0.30777*	0.10883	0.019	0.0408	0.5747
	Vanguard	0.09321	0.09744	0.633	-0.1458	0.3322
The Guardian	The Punch	-0.30777*	0.10883	0.019	-0.5747	-0.0408
	Vanguard	-0.21456	0.09363	0.073	-0.4442	0.0151
Vanguard	The Punch	-0.09321	0.09744	0.633	-0.3322	0.1458
	The Guardian	0.21456	0.09363	0.073	-0.0151	0.4442

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The post-hoc analysis shown in Table 3b, indicates that a significant difference in the formats of coverage of the conflict between herders and farmers lies between *The Punch* and *The Guardian* (Mean difference= 0.30777, $p=0.019$). However, there were similar patterns in the way *The Punch* and *Vanguard*, *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* used formats of coverage to present the conflict between herders and farmers ($p>0.05$). In other words, *The Punch* and *The Guardian* significantly adopted formats of coverage such as news report, feature, editorial, news analysis and column to cover the conflict between herders and farmers in different measure. Consequently, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the formats of coverage of the conflict between herders and farmers among the selected newspapers is rejected.

Table 4: Level of Prominence Accorded the Conflict between Herders and Farmers

Variables		Newspaper			Total
		The Punch	The Guardian	Vanguard	
Main lead (Front page)	Freq (%)	4(2.4)	6(3.2)	8(2.4)	18(2.6)
Other (Front page)	Freq (%)	37(22)	20(10.5)	32(9.7)	89(13)
Op-Ed page	Freq (%)	5(3)	4(2.1)	12(3.6)	21(3.1)
Inside pages	Freq (%)	112(66.7)	158(83.2)	277(84.2)	547(79.6)
Back page	Freq (%)	10(6)	2(1.1)	0(0)	12(1.7)
Total	Freq (%)	168(100)	190(100)	329(100)	687(100)

Table 4 shows the position of stories published by the selected newspapers. Majority of the stories on the conflict between herders and farmers were on the inside pages across

the three selected newspapers (n=547, 79.6%). In reporting the conflict, *Vanguard* (n=277, 84.2%) placed stories on the inside pages more than *Guardian* (n=158, 83.2%) and *The Punch* (n=112, 66.7%). *The Punch*, however, gave more prominence to the conflict between farmers and herders through its front pages (Main+ Other front page, n=41, 24.4%), followed by *The Guardian* (Main+ Other front page, n=26, 13.2%) and then *Vanguard* (Main+ Other front page, n=40, 12.1%). Therefore, each of the three selected newspapers mainly accorded low prominence to the conflict between herders and farmers. Nonetheless, *The Punch* gave more prominence to the conflict in its coverage than the other two newspapers.

Null Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the level of prominence given to the conflict between herders and farmers among the selected newspapers.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance of the Level of Prominence Given to the Conflict between Herders and Farmers among Selected Newspapers

Position of Story	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.853	2	1.927	2.849	0.059
Within Groups	462.604	684	0.676		
Total	466.457	686			

The test of hypothesis depicted in Table 5 shows that there was no significant difference in the level of prominence given to the conflict between herders and farmers among the selected newspapers (F (df= 2) =2.849, p=0.059). This implies that *The Punch*, *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* gave similar prominence to the conflict between herders and farmers. In other words, *The Punch*, *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* covered the conflict between herders and farmers in their front pages, inside pages and back pages in a similar fashion. Consequently, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Table 6 Geographic Variation of Coverage of the Conflict between Herders and Farmers

Variables		Newspaper			Total
		The Punch	The Guardian	Vanguard	
North-Central	Freq (%)	46(27.4)	49(25.8)	71(21.6)	166(24.2)
North-East	Freq (%)	7(4.2)	9(4.7)	8(2.4)	24(3.5)
North-West	Freq (%)	8(4.8)	6(3.2)	10(3.0)	24(3.5)
South-East	Freq (%)	14(8.3)	35(18.4)	58(17.6)	107(15.6)
South-South	Freq (%)	2(1.2)	9(4.7)	31(9.4)	42(6.1)
South-West	Freq (%)	36(21.4)	30(15.8)	50(15.2)	116(16.9)
No Location	Freq (%)	55(32.7)	52(27.4)	101(30.7)	208(30.3)
Total	Freq (%)	168(100)	190(100)	329(100)	687(100)

Table 6 shows the selected newspapers' coverage of the herders-farmers conflict across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. The most frequently reported geographical location on the conflict across the selected newspapers was the North-Central (n=166, 24.2%); most reported by *The Punch* (n=46, 27.4%), *TheGuardian* (n=49, 25.8%) while *Vanguard* (n=71, 21.6%) reported the conflict between herders and farmers in the North-Central the least. The next location accorded coverage was the South-West (n=116, 16.9%) where *The Punch* (n=36, 21.4%) had the highest coverage, followed by *The Guardian* (n=30, 15.8%) and *Vanguard* (n=50, 15.2%). South-East was accorded 15.6 percent (n=107) of coverage of the conflict between herders and farmers across the selected newspapers. *The Guardian* (n=35, 18.4%) had the highest proportion of reports on

the South-East, followed by *Vanguard* (n=58, 17.6%) while *The Punch* (n=14, 8.3%) had the least number of reports on the herders-farmers conflict in the zone. The geographical locations least covered by the three newspapers were the North-East (n=24, 3.5%) and the North-West (n=24, 3.5%). These imply that the extent of coverage was accorded more for the North-Central, followed by the South-West, and the South-East; while the North-East and the North-West geo-political zones were accorded lowest extent of coverage on the conflict between herders and farmers.

Null Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the geographic variation of the coverage of the conflict between herders and farmers among the selected newspapers.

Table 7: Analysis of Variance of the Geographic Variation of the Coverage of the Conflict between Herders and Farmers among Selected Newspapers

Location of Story	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7.850	2	3.925	0.748	0.474
Within Groups	3588.063	684	5.246		
Total	3595.913	686			

Table 7 shows that there was no significant difference in the geographic variation of the coverage of the conflict between herders and farmers among the selected newspapers (F (df= 2) = 0.748, p=0.474). This suggests that *The Punch*, *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* had similar extent of geographic variation in their coverage of the conflict between herders and farmers. Consequently, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the geographic variation of the coverage of the conflict between herders and farmers among the selected newspapers is accepted.

Table 8: Dominant News Frames Adopted for the Herders-Farmers Conflict

Variables		Newspaper			Total
		The Punch	The Guardian	Vanguard	
Conflict frame	Freq (%)	17(10.1)	19(10)	37(11.2)	73(10.6)
Criminality frame	Freq (%)	54(32.1)	66(34.7)	104(31.6)	224(32.6)
Human Interest frame	Freq (%)	11(6.5)	11(5.8)	24(7.3)	46(6.7)
Religious frame	Freq (%)	2(1.2)	1(0.5)	0(0)	3(0.4)
Ethnic frame	Freq (%)	14(8.3)	9(4.7)	15(4.6)	38(5.5)
Political Response frame	Freq (%)	20(11.9)	25(13.2)	44(13.4)	89(13)
Economic Consequence frame	Freq (%)	7(4.2)	5(2.6)	2(0.6)	14(2)
Resolution frame	Freq (%)	21(12.5)	43(22.6)	54(16.4)	118(17.2)
Not Applicable	Freq (%)	22(13.1)	11(5.8)	49(14.9)	82(11.9)
Total	Freq (%)	168(100)	190(100)	329(100)	687(100)

From Table 8 the dominant news frame adopted for the herders-farmers conflict across the selected newspapers was criminality frame (n=224, 32.6%). The criminality frame was most adopted by *The Guardian* (n=66, 34.7%) followed by *The Punch* (n=54, 32.1%) and *Vanguard* (n=104, 31.6%). The news frame adopted next in proportion was the resolution frame (n=118, 17.2%), which was adopted most by *The Guardian* (n=43, 22.6%) than *Vanguard* (n=54, 16.4%) and *The Punch* (n=21, 12.5%). The least dominant frames adopted by the selected newspapers for the coverage of conflict between herders and farmers were religious frame (n=3, 0.4%) and economic consequence frame (n=14, 2%). These suggest that the dominant news frames across the selected newspapers were criminality, resolution and political response frames while the least dominant frames were religious and economic consequence frames.

Null Hypothesis Four: There is no significant difference in the dominant news frames adopted in reporting the conflict between herders and farmers among the selected newspapers.

Table 3a Analysis of Variance of the Frames of Story of the Conflict between Herders and Farmers among Selected Newspapers

Frame of Story	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	56.770	2	28.385	3.791	0.023
Within Groups	5121.442	684	7.487		
Total	5178.213	686			

Table 4.2.4a depicts that there was a significant difference in the dominant news frames adopted in reporting the conflict between herders and farmers among the selected newspapers (F (df= 2) = 3.791, p=0.023). The post-hoc analysis illustrated in Table 4.2.4b identifies where there were significant differences.

Table 3b Post-Hoc Analysis Showing the Difference of Formats of Coverage of the Conflict between Herders and Farmers among Selected Newspapers

Dependent Variable: Formats of Coverage						
Scheffe						
(I) Newspaper	(J) Newspaper	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
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The Punch	The Guardian	0.30777*	0.10883	0.019	0.0408	0.5747
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	The Guardian	0.21456	0.09363	0.073	-0.0151	0.4442

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The post-hoc analysis shown in Table 4.2.1b, indicates that a significant difference in the formats of coverage of the conflict between herders and farmers lies between *The Punch* and *The Guardian* (Mean difference= 0.30777, p=0.019). However, there were similar patterns in the way *The Punch* and *Vanguard*, *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* used formats of coverage to present the conflict between herders and farmers (p>0.05). In other words, *The Punch* and *The Guardian* significantly adopted formats of coverage such as news report, feature, editorial, news analysis and column to cover the conflict between herders and farmers in different measure. Consequently, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the formats of coverage of the conflict between herders and farmers among the selected newspapers is rejected.

Conclusion and Recommendation

On the strength of the findings, the study concluded that the three newspapers that constituted the focus of study devoted some respectable space to the herders and farmers schism. *Vanguard* newspaper recorded the most in terms of frequency and *The Punch* in terms of total space; that place of publication was totally immaterial in the coverage of the issue as all three newspapers reported the incident as it occurred in North-Central Nigeria even though their headquarters are located outside of this geopolitical zone. They all predominantly framed the clashes as criminality. Consequently, the study recommends that training should be conducted for reporters, editors and media proprietors to hone their framing skills.

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