

# Rethinking Terrorism Reportage: Assessment of Nigerian and International Media Coverage of *Boko Haram* Terrorism

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## Abstract

The mass media through their framing of news stories can determine to some extent if conflicts can either be escalated or de-escalated. For insurgency, which is a different kind of conflict entirely, the role of the mass media in building confidence in the people becomes very germane. This research was undertaken to assess the role of both the Nigerian media and the international media in the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. This was informed by the accusation and counter-accusation on the role of the Nigerian media and the international community in the Boko Haram insurgency between the Office of the National Security Adviser (NSA) to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and a leading national daily- The Punch. Out of the 2304 copies of questionnaire distributed, 2225, representing 96.6% were returned. The study covered the selected capitals of the selected states across the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. Survey was the research design, while multi-stage sampling and simple random sampling techniques were used. A major finding of the research was that both the Nigerian media and the international media were scored low in their coverage by the respondents. However, on comparable basis, the hypothesis showed that the respondents ranked the international media to be more objective in their reportage of the Boko Haram insurgency than the Nigerian media. The Study recommends, among others, that since insurgency is not a conventional warfare, both the Nigerian media and the international media should avoid the kinds of reportage that would give undue publicity to the insurgents.

**Key words:** *.Boko Haram .Terrorism .Nigerian Media .International Media .Nigeria.*

## INTRODUCTION

The *Jama'atu Ahlis-Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad* (People Committed to the Prophet's Teaching for Propagation and Jihad)), popularly known as *Boko Haram* took Nigeria by storm sometimes in 2009, when it launched a horrendous and ferocious attack in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, North-West, Nigeria. Boko Haram (western education is sin) driven by a *sunni* fundamentalist brand of Islam that believes that a theocratic state should be enthroned in Nigeria, to be based sole on strict Sharia law irrespective of the constitutionally-guaranteed secularism in the country (Walker, 2012; Olojo, 2013; and Muzaffar, 2014).

Founded by the slain Mohammed Yusuf in 2002 in Maiduguri and inspired by the ideologies of the Al Qaeda in the Magreb (AQIM), Al-Shabaab of Somalia as well as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and also feeding on the high level of poverty and illiteracy in Northern Nigeria particularly, the group established a religious complex and a school which attracted mostly the *almajiris* (child beggars and other peasants) from the North, with a view to indoctrinating them into jihadists and suicide bombers. By condemning the Nigerian State, especially the police for corruption, the group attracted a large followership. It is important to note that a section of the political leadership in Borno State was believed to have used this group to perpetrate election violence during the 2003 and 2007 governorship elections in the state.

However, the group was later abandoned after being used by some politicians, and as a result developed into a deadly and terrorist *salafist*-jihadist group that it has become today (Sawyer, 2014; Suleiman, 2014; and Oluokun 2014a). Between 2009 and 2014, it is believed that the terrorist group has killed well over 13000 people, excluding members of the Nigerian

Armed Forces and the police, staged numerous suicide bombings, destroyed properties running into billions of naira, and has displaced well over 500,000 people mainly in the three key states affected mostly- Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. The climax of the terrorist group's atrocities was the kidnap in April 2014, of about 276 female students of Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok, Borno State, who as at time of this research are believed to be still held either in Sambisa forest, the fortress of the group or relocated to different places. This resulted in global outrage, forcing the United Nations to place sanctions on the group, and the United States of America especially, designating it a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (See: Mordi, 2012; Egbeleke, 2013; and Oluokun, 2014b).

However, an important point to note is that terrorism thrives on media publicity globally. This is because through consistent media coverage, especially news framing, the media either wittingly or unwittingly, help to drive fear about such terrorist groups into people, thereby working towards the desires of such terrorist groups. Forges (1999), tends to sound a note of warning in this regard when he alerted that the media have been used as weapons of inflaming tension and accelerating the escalation of conflicts, not only in Nigeria but globally. He noted specifically that the Rwandan Genocide of 1994 was aided and abetted by radio; television was used in Serbia to whip up ethnic sentiments before the civil war; and that in the former Soviet Republic of Georgia, territorial disputes were equally aggravated by the media.

There is no gainsaying the fact that both the Nigerian media and the international media have been having a field day in the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, most of the reports dwelling on certain narratives and frames suggesting that Nigeria is already a failing state or even a failed state in the mould of Somalia. The focus of this research therefore is to examine how the Nigerian people perceive the role of both the Nigerian media and the international media in the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

The Boko Haram insurgency, no doubt has further pummelled the already battered image of Nigeria; and the media both local and international, may have played a role in this regard. An indication to this end emerged early in the year. The Office of the National Security Adviser (NSA) to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria was widely reported in the media for blaming the Nigerian media and also the international community for undermining the war against the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Specifically, in the *Punch* newspaper of Wednesday, February 4, 2015, the NSA's office which was represented by one Col. Bello Fadile at a seminar in Abuja condemned the Nigerian media in particular for being unpatriotic and "non-nationalistic" in their reportage of the war against the insurgents. According to him, the Federal Government's "soft approaches" strategy to prevent recruitment of more members for the insurgent group "is not being effective because we don't have the media. The media is one of our major problems". Col. Fadile also berated the international community for their lukewarm attitude to the Boko Haram insurgency.

But in a seemingly swift reaction to the comments of the Office of the NSA, the *Punch* newspaper in its editorial of Monday, February 16, 2015, entitled "Dasuki: Redefining NSA's Role in Terror War", condemned the comments of the NSA for pillorying the Nigerian media for their reportage of the terror war. The newspaper reminded the NSA that the mass media act as "watchdogs in society and Fourth Estate of the Realm" and should not be used as a scapegoat. Arising from the two contradictory positions above, how do the people perceive the role of both the Nigerian media and the international media in the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. Herein lies the problem of this research.

#### **Research Questions**

The following are the research questions guiding this study:

1. Have the Nigerian media and the international media been objective in their coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency and what is the extent of such objectivity?
2. How do the people perceive the role of the Nigerian media and the international media in the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency?

### Hypothesis

H<sub>1</sub>: The people will perceive the international media to be more objective in their coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency than the Nigerian media.

### Literature Review

There have been a plethora of studies especially theoretical on the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Most of these studies have been viewed from the perspectives of terrorism, counter-terrorism, conflicts as well as other narratives of identity politics. But this research will take a brief look at the Boko Haram insurgency, the media and conflict reporting as well as empirical studies on the Boko Haram insurgency. Olojo (2013), avers that there are certain drivers of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria which have made the sect to last this long. He listed these drivers as political interest and elite exploitation; poverty and underdevelopment; religion as well as firearms, funds and foreign fighters.

Concerning political interests and elite exploitation, he argues that the spectrum of public sympathy for Boko Haram cuts across both the elite and the masses in the North, and that while some of the supporters may not take part in suicide bombings, their refusal to betray them also undermines the Nigerian government's counter-terrorism efforts. Concerning poverty and underdevelopment, he states that these have been contributory factors which have made the terrorist group to find willing recruits, among the peasants in the North. For religion, Olojo notes that this has always played a central role as a defining feature and fault line of the Nigerian state. By exploiting religion, especially the "salafist" brand of Islam, Boko Haram got the attention of some ignorant but idle youths, who abound in the North. For the firearms, funds and foreign fighters, he noted that the bombing of the UN office in Abuja in August 2011 was a clear indication of the backing of Boko Haram by some foreign mercenaries, and that this used be the same tactics employed by Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Al-Shabaab of Somalia.

According to Ajayi (2012), he noted that it was the AQIM, formerly known as the "Algerian Salafist Group" which gave some members of Boko Haram training in combat, weapons handling and the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDS). He equally noted that intelligence report from the Nigerian government showed that the Algerian terrorist group transferred 40 million naira to Boko Haram in Nigeria, but the government source failed to reveal the bank(s) involved and the receivers may because of security and political reasons. For Ogunrotifa (2013), he locates the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency within the prism of Karl Marx's Historical materialism, using the Class Theory of Terrorism. According to him, this theory states that terrorism is an expression of an unending class struggle implicit in the hidden structures of oppression and structured contradictions of global capitalist system. He argues on that the antagonistic class relations between the ruling class and the proletariats translate into state and individual terrorism that has featured prominently in recent times, and that the discursive frame of terrorism cannot be analysed in isolation of its class nature and the socio-economic conditions that gave rise to it.

Thompson (2012), argues that just like other complex societal insurgencies, the Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria as manifested by Boko Haram, is a product of Nigerian societal and economic malaise as well as regional history and also tied to the broader Islamic revival as marked by the rise of Al Qaida and other terrorist groups. This view seems to resonate with those of Cook (2011), Francis (2011) and Stewart (2012).

In their analysis of the role of the mass media in the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, Hamid and Baba (2014), state that the mass media can play a laudable role in resolving the crises through adequate coverage. In this case according to them, the surveillance function of the media must be deployed effectively to warn people on an impending danger, and that the media should accept the engendering of peace in Nigeria as a sacrosanct responsibility. In a broad sense, Maikaba (2006), a cited by Hamid and Baba (2014,p.18), proposes some strategies that are germane to the resolution of conflicts in society as follows:

- Issuing reminders on mechanisms of peaceful resolutions: During conflicts, the mass media is expected to issue reminders on how best to achieve peace. The media should

assume the role of arbitrators and mediators, trying to settle the differences and reach a compromise.

- Objective coverage and reporting: The media can ensure a resolution to conflict by being objective in its coverage. In this way, the parties to a dispute may be willing to adhere to solutions to the problems that are proposed by the media.
- Suggesting new alternatives: In case of deadlock negotiations, the media should provide new alternatives on how best to solve the conflict.

Further, according to Ekwueme and Obayi (2012), the mass media play immense role in shaping the perception of the public, concerning the acceptance and rejection of deviant behaviour all over the world, as result the media can even influence the public acceptance of some otherwise aberrant behaviour of the government in their tackling the Boko Haram insurgency, through the media's news framing and presentation. They argue on that in spite of the fact that the mass media in Nigeria have also come under attacks by Boko Haram, they (the media) can still assist tremendously in building positive and courageous spirit in responding to the threats of Boko Haram, and that the choice of words, pictures and the language of the reports become quite imperative in this regard. In addition, they also stated that the Nigerian media should discourage the Nigerian opposition politicians from unduly criticising or making disparaging remarks aimed at discrediting the efforts of the government towards the Boko Haram insurgency for political gains.

To underscore their points further, Ekwueme and Obayi, cite the six principles developed by the Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Martin E.P. Segliman Committee after the September 11, 2011, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and explain how these principles can be applied in reporting the Boko Haram insurgency. The principles are entitled "Six Rules for Government and Press on Terrorism: Undercutting Fear Itself". The six principles state thus:

1. **Reduce Helplessness:** Dangers like the one posed by Boko Haram become less fearful when they are presented in controllable manner. The media should tell Nigerians in specific terms what actions they could take to reduce the danger of Boko Haram attacks.
2. **Blunt Availability:** According to Tversky and Tversky (1973) cited in the report, because evocative images are more available in memory, we tend to over-estimate how likely they are to occur. By showing, printing or airing vivid pictures of the victims of Boko Haram attacks, we are unwittingly playing into the hands of Boko Haram as these pictures help in spreading their message of fear.
3. **Reframe:** Framing has a lot to do in how people perceive risk and danger. Frame a risk in terms of loss and people are less likely to take it but reframe it in terms of gain and they are more inclined to take it. Instead of overly stating the number that died in a Boko Haram attack, we may pay more attention to the number that survived it. This will give people confidence that after all, the sect's attack is not an immutable death sentence.
4. **Tell the Story of Survival:** It does not help if our local media keep on harping only on government's lack of preparedness, ineffectual policies, the success of Boko Haram raids, and the sect's invincibility among others that tend to make people helpless in the face of a ruthless enemy. Rather, they should pay more attention to similar situations where the government came triumphant through diligent and purposeful use of resources.
5. **Preach Courage; It is Contagious:** Just as fear is contagious, so too is courage. Those who preach courage and heroism inspire it in others...Both the government and the media should inspire courage and not fear and helplessness when speaking on Boko Haram activities. Hence, those making such announcements (reporters and government officials) should convey a sense of courage and confidence as it will impact positively on the audience.
6. **Use Safety Signals:** The public should be informed of when threats are no longer expected as much as they should be told when there is a palpable threat. Leaving the public to live in perpetual fear of imminent Boko Haram attacks weakens their resolve to face the threat. So the media in collaboration with security operatives should give the people the all-clear signal to relax their anxiety and enable them go about their business when there are no immediate threats.

Olagunju and Ajadi (2014), in their study entitled "The Media and the Ideology of Insecurity; A Critical Discourse Analysis of Two Editorials on Federal Government-Boko Haram Face-off", revealed the shocking role of the media in the reportage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. The authors discovered that through words, phrases and clauses, the studied editorials present the Boko Haram insurgents as powerful, while the Nigerian government is the weakling and underdog. They concluded with a caution that the Nigerian media should be more sensitive to their choice of language in order not play into the hands of the insurgents.

Further, in an empirical study by Okoro and Odoemelam (2013), entitled "Print media Framing of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: A Content Analytical Study of the Guardian, Daily Sun, Vanguard and Thisday Newspapers", they found out that the Nigerian newspapers reported the Boko Haram insurgency from the frame of "policy response" and that this was clearly seen in the *Guardian*, *Thisday* and *Vanguard* newspapers. But they discovered however that this framing pattern was different from the *Daily Sun*, which emphasised ethnic and religious frames. They recommended the optimisation of positive frames which will conduce to the promotion of the peace media initiative which forms an important anchor for positive media interventions in the Boko Haram insurgency.

From the literature reviewed so far by the researchers, no empirical studies focused on the role of both the Nigerian media and the international media in the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. This research will therefore be a modest attempt at filling in that gap.

### Theoretical Framework

This research is based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory and the Social Responsibility Theory. The Uses and Gratifications Theory explains the media habits of people and the satisfaction they derive from their media behaviour. Traced to the early 1940s by Wimmer and Dominick (2011), they noted that the theory emerged as a result of research compelling interests in finding out people's radio listening and newspaper reading habits. According to Pavlik and McIntosh (2011, p.414), the theory explains what the people do with the media rather than what the media do to the people. They argue further that the Uses and Gratifications Theory makes three basic assumptions: (1) People actively use the media for their purposes; (2) People know what those purposes are and can articulate them; and (3) Despite individual differences in media use, there are basic common patterns among people. It follows therefore that the people will look up to the media for information about Boko Haram activities, and the media reportage is not expected to paint a scary picture of events but to let the people know that security operatives are on top of the situation. The way both the Nigerian media and the international media report the activities of the Boko Haram insurgents will determine the level of satisfaction which the Nigerian public will derive from their media behaviour.

The Social Responsibility Theory is one of the "Four Theories of the Press" enunciated by Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm in 1956. This theory believes that freedom carries an obligation; that is, while the media want to operate without government interference or control, the media should also be socially-responsible by playing according to the rule. The theory further believes that the media play a crucial role by keeping the citizens informed on issues in a democratic society, and so should be free from government control in order to perform that role well. However, as Pavlik and McIntosh (2011, p.460) note by citing Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, "the power and near monopoly position of the media impose an obligation to be socially responsible, to see that all sides are fairly represented and that the public has enough information to decide; and that if the media do not take on themselves such responsibility it may be necessary for some other agency of the public to enforce it... Freedom of expression under the social responsibility theory is not absolute right..."

In relation to the role of the media in the reportage of the Boko Haram insurgency, it becomes glaring that there must a country first before the media can even exist. So the media, especially the Nigerian media must not sacrifice the peace, progress and national security of the country on the altar of the "right to tell". The way the media cover the Boko Haram insurgency will also determine if the war will be won or lost.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study used the survey method of scientific inquiry. Survey was quite appropriate in eliciting people's views on the issue. According to Babbie (2010), survey is an excellent method for the measurement of attitude and opinions of people within a large population.

The population of this research was all those who were media-literate enough in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria to understand the issues concerning Boko Haram.

The sample size was 384 from the selected area of the study in the selected state in each of the geopolitical zones. This was based on Cozby (2004) sample size determination table, which states that at + or - 5 margin of error, a population of over 100,000 should have a sample size of 384. It follows therefore that the total sample from all the six geopolitical zones was arrived at by multiplying 384 by six, and this gave 2304 respondents.

The sampling techniques used were multi-stage and simple random sampling techniques. The multi-stage sampling technique was used to divide Nigeria into six geopolitical zones, then a state was selected from each of the zones, while the capital of the selected state formed the area of the study. This is represented in the table below:

**Table 1: Areas of the Study by Geo-Political Zones, States and Capitals**

S/N	GEOPOLITICAL ZONES	STATES	CAPITALS
1	North-Central	Plateau	Jos
2	North-East	Adamawa	Yola
3	North-West	Kaduna	Kaduna
4	South-East	Enugu	Enugu
5	South-South	Rivers	Port-Harcourt
6	South-West	Lagos	Ikeja

### Data Analysis and Results

**Research Question 1:** Have the Nigerian media and the international media been objective in their coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency and what is the extent of such objectivity? Before this research question was posed, there were some preliminary questions which bordered on the media-literacy level of the respondents on the Boko Haram issue. The views of the respondents are represented on the tables below:

**Table 2: Respondents Views On If They Have Been Following Stories On The Boko Haram Issue In Both The Nigerian Media And The International Media**

	Yes	No	Not sure
Nigerian Media	2225(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
International Media	1625(73.0%)	271(12.2%)	329(14.8%)

In Table 2 above, all the respondents- 2225, representing 100%, stated that they have been following stories on the Boko Haram insurgency in the Nigerian media, while 1625 (73.0%), of the respondents said that they have been following stories of the Boko Haram insurgency in the international media; 271(12.2%), said "No"; while 329 (14.8%), said "Not sure".

**Table 3: Respondents' Extent of Following Boko Haram Stories On Both The Nigerian Media And The International Media**

	Very often	Often	Less often
Nigerian Media	925(41.6%)	841(37.8%)	459 (20.6%)
International Media	972 (59.8%)	469 (28.9%)	184 (11.3%)

In Table 3 above, 925 (41.6%), stated that they follow stories on the Boko Haram insurgency in the Nigerian media "Very often"; 841(37.8%), said "Often"; while 459(20.6%), said "Less often". On the other hand, out of the 1625 respondents who said that they also follow stories on the Boko Haram insurgency in the international media, 972(59.8%), said they follow the stories "Very often"; 469 (28.9%), said "Often", while 184 (11.3%), said "Less often".

**Table 4: Respondents' Views On If Both The Nigerian Media And The International Media Have Objective In Their Coverage Of The Boko Insurgency**

	Yes	No	Not sure
<b>Nigerian Media</b>	879 (39.5%)	937 (42.1%)	409 (18.4%)
<b>International Media</b>	903 (55.6%)	357 (21.9%)	365 (22.5%)

In Table 4 above, 879 (39.5%), stated that the Nigerian media have been objective in their coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency; 937 (42.1%), said "No"; while 409 (18.4%), said "Not sure". Concerning the international media, 903 (55.6%), believed that they have been objective in their coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency; 357 (21.9%), said "No"; while 365 (22.5%), "Not sure".

**Table 5: Respondents' Views On The Extent Of Objectivity Of Both The Nigerian Media And The International Media In Their Coverage Of The Boko Haram Insurgency**

	A Large Extent	Some Extent	A Little Extent
<b>Nigerian Media</b>	342 (38.9%)	268 (30.5%)	269 (30.6%)
<b>International Media</b>	402 (44.5%)	372 (41.2%)	129 (14.3%)

In Table 5 above, out of the 879 respondents who believed that the Nigerian media have been objective in their coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency, 342 (38.9%), said the Nigerian media have been objective to "A large Extent"; 268 (30.5%), said "Some Extent"; while 269 (30.6%), said "A little Extent". For the international media, out of the 903 respondents who stated that they have been objective in their coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency, 402 (44.5%), said the international media have objective to "A large Extent"; 372 (41.2%), said "Some Extent"; while 129 (14.3%), said "A Little Extent".

**Research Question 2:** How do the people perceive the role of the Nigerian media and the international media in the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency?

To answer the above research question, the Likert scale was used. A benchmark of 3.0 was specified. It was used to determine the perception of the respondents on role of both the Nigerian media and the international media in their coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency.

This benchmark is arrived at by dividing the total values on the scale by 5 points, thus:

$$\frac{5 + 4 + 3 + 2 + 1}{5} = \frac{15}{5} = 3.0$$

Therefore, if a statement has a mean value that equals or is greater than 3.0, then it is accepted, if otherwise, it is rejected. Therefore to get the mean score for each statement, the scores recorded under Strongly Agree (SA), Agree(A), Undecided(U), Disagree(D) and Strongly Disagree(SD) were multiplied by their scale points- 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 and then divided by the total scores- 2225 and 1625 for the Nigerian media and the international media respectively. It is important to note that "F" stands for "Frequency".

**Table 6: Respondents' Perception of Role of the Nigerian Media in the Coverage of the Boko Haram Insurgency**

S/N	Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean Score	Decision
		F	F	F	F	F		
1	The Nigerian media's coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency tends to confer advantage on the terrorists.	929	432	102	317	445	3.5	Accepted
2	The Nigerian media's coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency tends to heighten tension in the country.	944	523	217	428	113	3.9	Accepted
3	The Nigerian media's coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency tends to instill fear into the people.	1112	327	111	321	354	3.7	Accepted

4	The Nigerian media' coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency tends to embolden the insurgents.	741	627	108	521	228	4.4	Accepted
5	The Nigerian media's coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency tends to suggest that Nigerian is becoming a failing state.	1214	721	94	71	125	4.3	Accepted
6	The stories of the Nigerian independent media are more balanced and objective than the government media.	983	773	126	312	22	4.2	Accepted

In table 6 above, since the mean scores of all the hypothetical statements are more than the benchmark of 3.0., it means that the statements are valid and are therefore accepted.

**Table 7: Respondents' Perception of Role of the International Media in the Coverage of the Boko Haram Insurgency**

S/N	Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean Score	Decision
	The international media tend to give undue publicity to the Boko Haram insurgents	F	F	F	F	F		
1	The coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency by the international media tends to give Nigeria a bad image in the international community	971	498	156	0	0	4.5	Accepted
2	The international media tend to exploit sometimes, the religious and geopolitical divide in Nigeria, in their coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency	847	402	279	97	0	4.2	Accepted
3	The international media's coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency tends to heighten tension in the country.	916	574	135	0	0	4.5	Accepted
4	The international media tend to overdramatise the casualties of the Boko Haram insurgency	525	490	321	200	89	3.7	Accepted
5	The international media's coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency tends to embolden the insurgents.	611	398	233	317	66	3.7	Accepted
6	The international media's coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency tends to suggest that Nigerian is becoming a failing state.	734	479	42	298	72	3.3	Accepted

In table 7 above, since the mean scores of all the hypothetical statements are more than the benchmark of 3.0., it means that the statements are valid and are therefore accepted.

### Hypothesis

H<sub>1</sub>: The people will perceive the international media to be more objective in their coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency than the Nigerian media.



**Table 8: Chi-Square Test of Hypothesis One**

N	df	Chi-Square Calculated	Critical Value	Decision
2225	2	65.6	5.99	H <sub>1</sub> is accepted

In table 8 above, the calculated Chi-Square ( $X^2_{cal}$ ) is 65.6; the tabulated Chi-Square or critical value ( $X^2_{tab}$ ) is 5.99, while the degree of freedom (df) is 2. It follows therefore that we accept the hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>), and conclude that the people will perceive the international media to be more objective in their coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency than the Nigerian media.

### Discussion of Findings

This research was triggered by the comments of the Office of the National Security Adviser (NSA) to the President of the Federal of Nigeria at a seminar in Abuja, in which he pointedly accused the Nigerian media and the international community of undermining the war against the Boko Haram insurgency as well as the reaction of one of the leading Nigerian national dailies- *The Punch*, which equally condemned the comments of the NSA. There is no disputing the fact that the mass media are quite tangential to either the resolution or the escalation of conflicts, as can be seen in the role played by the media in the Rwandan Genocide and other parts of the world. Through framing of news stories and outright unethical conduct, the media can cause serious tension in society during conflict situations.

What makes the Nigerian case more complex is that terrorism is relatively a new phenomenon in Nigeria, and the coverage of terrorism is also an emerging journalism practice. Be that as it may, it is quite obvious from the research that many Nigerians follow stories on the Boko Haram insurgency in the Nigerian media, as all the respondents-2225 (100%), stated that they have been following stories on the Boko Haram insurgency. This underscores the fact that the Boko Haram insurgency is an ill-wind that blows any Nigerian no good; both the rich and the poor, Christians and Moslems, Northerners and Southerners have all become targets of their atrocious campaign.

Apart from following stories on the Boko Haram insurgency in the Nigerian media, 1625 (73%) of the respondents, stated that they follow stories on the Boko Haram insurgency in the international media. This could be as a result of the fact that even the Boko Haram insurgents, apart from using YouTube and Twitter, always prefer to issue their videos and news releases through such international news agencies as the Agence France Presse (AFP), Reuters and sometimes international media organisations like Aljazeera; and most Nigerians also tend to believe that stories from the international media are more credible than those from the Nigerian media as attested by the finding from the hypothesis. Furthermore, more respondents- 903 (55.6%), believed that the international media are more objective in their coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. This could be interpreted to mean that the Nigerian media, because of the glaring politicisation of the Boko Haram insurgency, could frame their news stories from partisan perspectives, apportioning blames instead of imbibing the tenets of peace journalism.

On how both the Nigerian media and the international media report the Boko Haram insurgency, findings from this research tends to justify the fears and worries of the NSA, because the hypothetical statements on the Likert scale were validated and accepted. This means that the coverage of both the Nigerian media and the international media of the Boko Haram insurgency, gives undue publicity to the insurgents; heightens tension in the country; instils fear into the people; and cast Nigeria in the mould of a failing state, among others. This tends to justify the findings and views of Ekwueme and Obayi (2012), Okoro and Odoemelam (2013) as well as Olagunju and Ajadi (2014).

For the hypothesis ( $X^2_{cal-65.6} > X^2_{tab-5.99}$ ), which was accepted, the research revealed that even when the respondents did not make complimentary remarks about the both the Nigerian media and the international media in their coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency, the respondents still believed that the international media were more objective in their coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency than the Nigerian media.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The major objective of this research was to assess the role of both the Nigerian media and the international media in the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study, while one hypothesis was tested. The study showed that both the Nigerian media and the international media did not cover the Boko Haram insurgency in such a manner that would have led to either less damage or early defeat of the insurgents. Arising from this, the study recommends that for the Nigerian media, some of the professionals should be trained in how to report insurgency; since insurgency is not a conventional warfare, conventional journalistic practices alone should not also be used. Also, while carrying out independent investigations on terrorist attacks, the Nigerian media should also cross-check such information with the Directorate of Defence Information (DDI) and the central information unit, manned by the Director-General of the National Orientation Agency (NOA). Although as at the time of this research, the sun appears to be setting on the Boko Haram insurgency, the Nigerian media, should partner with the Joint Task Force (JTF), to inform the people on the stages of what appears to be final push for the Boko Haram insurgents.

For the international media, reporting terrorism in Nigeria must not be based on their news values only, as this tends to further batter the image of Nigeria in the international community; so they should understand that terrorism is a relatively new phenomenon in Nigeria, and that some other countries of the world have been battling terrorism for years now. Also, for the sake of objectivity and fairness, foreign journalists can decide to be embedded with the soldiers when on counter-terrorism attacks. Finally, the international media should avoid the reportage that could be as seen as giving undue publicity to the terrorists.

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