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## The Media's Role in Quelling Violent Conflict Involving Youths as Foot Soldiers: A Content Analysis of News Report on Boko Haram Suicide Bombers and Civilian Joint Task Force-CJTF

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### Abstract:

*The media has been used as tool for instigating violent conflicts in Nigeria to a large extent. Worse still, the youth are vulnerable tools for conflict promotion and hate communication. This trend has become a normal phenomenon, such that anytime, anywhere there is conflict, the youth are at the centre. While the mass media disseminate information about such conflicts, children and youth today like in any other time and clime where there is conflict, are now being used as agent of escalation leading to wanton destruction of lives and properties. The Nigerian youths have received their own fair share in the ongoing Boko Haram Terrorism insurgency. The Boko Haram insurgency is one that has lasted for almost a decade now, and the media has been at the forefront of acting as foot soldiers by spreading hate messages. This study examines the extent to which the media has been able to report the involvement of youths and children in violent conflict with a view to deescalating violent conflicts in Jos metropolis. The Cognitive Balance Theory was used to explain the research. The content analysis design was used for the study and the population was drawn from major Nigerian newspapers. Findings of the study revealed that most of the newspapers reported the issues without providing panacea to the authorities and society on how to address the challenges in their front page headlines. The study further revealed that violent nature in which the involvement of youths in terrorism was being reported did not augur well for conflict management journalism. Therefore, it is recommended that the media in Plateau State could be used to promote peace.*

*Sub-Theme: Communication, Youths and Conflicts*

**Keywords:** Media, youths, conflict, boko haram, social responsibility theory, cognitive balance theory

### 1. Introduction

In many parts of the world, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, the problem of children growing up amid conflict has seen an upsurge since the end of the cold war. This environment makes it harder for young people to make the normal transition into adulthood. Conflict environments prevent children from gaining a good education and learning useful skills. This in turn makes them feel excluded from mainstream society and they (mostly young men) turn to the armed militias. The increasing involvement of children and young people in many of the world's conflict-affected regions is an important area of concern for global security and the welfare of the younger generation. The issue of child combatants has received much press attention in the last decades, but now there is a growing awareness of what drives young people to join the armed forces. According to the 2007 World Development Report published by the World Bank, there are 1.5 billion people worldwide aged between 12 and 24 years 1.3 billion of whom live in developing countries. This means most young people are coming of age in societies that lack basic education and employment opportunities (IRIN, 2012).

Although, it is well known that young people take part in armed conflict in the world's politically unstable regions, there are no precise figures on the number of 15 to 24 year olds involved in fighting. According to Amnesty International, "an estimated 300,000 children and youths under 18 are currently participating in armed conflict in more than 30 different countries on nearly every continent. It is also generally believed that as long as young people see themselves as outcasts, they are more likely to seek immediate solutions to their survival, including warfare. These trends were observed in the United Nations Secretary General's 2001 Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict, which stated: "Young people with limited education and few employment opportunities often provide fertile recruiting ground for parties to a conflict (UNICEF, 2001). Their lack of hope for the future can fuel disaffection with society and make them susceptible to the blandishments of those who advocate armed conflict (Richards, 2013)." According to him, massive

youth militarization in West Africa has been symptomatic of a general "crisis of youth" amid state corruption, resentment, and unfulfilled expectations in the post-independence context. In Nigeria's North East region where Boko Haram activities have been on the increase, the involvement of youth in the theatre of conflict is viewed to be a two side of the coin. Some of the youths who are captured and forcefully conscripted or recruited become terrorists and suicide bombers, while others joined the military operations as volunteered in what is popularly termed as the Civilian Joint Task Force-CJTF due to the on-going terrorism by Boko Haram in Borno, Yobe, Adamawa and elsewhere in Northern Nigeria.

### *1.1. The Problem*

Times without number, the mass media have been at the forefront of disseminating messages in peace and conflict time to the public. The mass media, while carrying out their functions through information, enlightenment, education, advocacy, social responsibility, peace communication and people-oriented journalism, tend to disseminate messages to the diverse audience in a conflict zones which could either escalate or deescalate conflict scenarios. The youth within the conflict zones of Boko Haram activities are always either significantly involved as perpetrators of terrorism or as joining the fight against terrorism, as has been the case of the civilian Joint Task Force. The question that springs to the mind of the public is this; Does the coverage and reportage of youth's involvement for and against terrorism in the conflict zones contribute to their being used as foot-soldiers by the terrorist and the authorities? In order to provide answers to these questions, it is expedient that a paper of this nature which seeks to understand the extent to which this phenomenon and dimension to terrorism have been adequately reported in the mass media in promoting conflict management and peace journalism be written.

### *1.2. Aim and Objectives*

The aim of this article is to enhance mass media coverage and reportage on the issue of terrorism in Nigeria with a view to ensuring objectivity in reportage and conflict management journalism. In order to achieve this aim, this article has these objectives:

1. To examine the extent to which mass media reports the youth perpetration of terrorism and fighting against terrorism in Nigeria.
2. To ascertain how newspaper report issues objectively as to dissuade youths from being used as terrorists.

## **2. Review of Literatures**

### *2.1. Youth Defined*

The term youth, according to the United Nations General Assembly is a person between the ages of 15 and 24. However, there is no single agreed definition of whom and what constitutes youth, and definitions vary between countries and organizations. For example, the lowest age range for youth is 12 in Jordan and the upper age range is 35 in a number of African countries including Sierra Leone and Rwanda. The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF use the term adolescent for those aged 10-19, youth for those 15-24, and young people for those aged 10-24. There is also a degree of overlap between international definitions of youth and children, with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) defining a child as everyone under the age of 18; unless under the law applicable to the child, maturity is attained earlier (Hilker & Fraser, 2009).

In practice, youth is better understood as a transitional stage in life between childhood and adulthood, rather than as a rigid construct based on age. This new life stage can be characterized as a period of semi-autonomy, when young people experiment with adult roles, but do not fully commit to them (World Bank, 2007). There is a growing literature on the transition to adulthood and what it means to become an adult in different cultural contexts. Achievement of adulthood can be determined by various factors such as achieving economic independence, leaving the parental home, getting married and having children. In some societies, particular social or cultural rituals may also mark the transition to adulthood.

In Nigeria, one third of the population is young people between the ages of 10 to 24 years. The period of Adolescence is between the ages of 10 – 19 years (where as Youth: 15-24 years, Young people: 10-24 years and Children: 0-18 years) (UNFPA 2010:4). The Nigerian National Youth policy (2001:2), defines youth as comprising all young persons between the ages 18 and 35 years who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (UNFPA Nigeria, 2010). The term youth has also been variously defined in Nigeria. Ndu (2000) and Yusuf (2001) saw youths as neither adolescents nor children characterized by excessive energy that needs to be exerted, which if not guarded, is channeled into negative tendencies. The United Nations General Assembly and World Bank cited in Adewuyi (2008), defined the youth as people between ages 15 to 24 years. In Nigeria, the people within the age limit of 30 years are considered as youths hence they are allowed to participate in the National Youth Service Scheme (NYSC). For this paper, the NYSC definition of youth is adopted. Youths are filled with energy and when this energy is positively channeled or guarded, they are highly productive, and hence they are likely to contribute to the overall development of the society. On the other hand, when the energy is negatively channeled, restiveness and its resultant effects are likely to be felt.

Chika and Onyene (2010), observed that to be restive is to be unable to stay still, or unwilling to be controlled especially because one is bored or not satisfied with certain decisions, change or existing laws considered to be unfavourable ways of curbing youth restiveness in Nigeria. The study identified skill acquisition programmes, enlightenment campaigns, and formal education among others. Mutiba (2011) affirmed that education is the primary conduit for value formation. While preparation for examinations is afforded priority, value formation, character building, and focusing on building ethical standards in children regrettably are not given adequate emphasis in school curriculum. For formal education to help curb youth restiveness in the country education has to be

modeled or value inculcation and citizen education at all levels of education. Education must be made to be functional, meeting the students' needs. More emphasis should be placed on vocational and technical education which will help students to acquire skills that will introduce them to entrepreneurship development.

### 2.2. *The Influence of Media on Youth*

The mass media refers collectively to all media technologies which are used for mass communication and to the organizations which control these technologies. The mass media has a huge influence on people of all ages but teenagers are exposed to mass media more than any other adults are. In lack of interesting places for socializing and leisure activities, teenagers turn to social networks which are more available and cheaper than other ways for searching companionships (Jevtic, 2010). Researchers, public policy officials, and the general public as a whole have long been concerned about the consequences of youth's exposure to violence and sex in the media. Recent studies have documented the explosion of different types of media available to youth, and the widespread presence of violence in these media outlets (CIPHR, 2012). The influence of the mass media is best viewed as one of the many potential factors that help to shape behaviour, including aggression (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).

To Huesmann and Taylor (2006), one of the notable changes in our social environment in the twentieth century is the advent and saturation of mass media. In this new environment, radio, television, movies, videos, video games, and computer networks have assumed central roles in our daily lives. The mass media have an enormous impact on our values, beliefs, and behaviors. Unfortunately, the consequences of one particular element of the mass media exposure have particularly detrimental effects on viewers. During conflict or war, media play a crucial role in representing conflicts; especially when media systems are located in states-at-war, or find themselves in (geographical or cultural) proximity of these states, the media's traditional claims towards objectivity, factuality and truth-speaking have to face severe pressures. Often, they and their audiences are left with a feeling of powerlessness (Carpentier & Terzis, 2005).

### 2.3. *Youth and Violence*

Most violent youth behaviour is learned behaviour. According to Elliot (1994), the initial causes of violence are found in the early learning experiences in the family. They involve 1) weak family bonding, ineffective monitoring and supervision; 2) exposure to and reinforcement for violence in the home, and 3) the acquisition of expectations, attitudes, beliefs and emotional responses which support or tolerate the use of violence. Early exposure to violence in the family may involve either witnessing violence or physical abuse. Research suggests that these forms of exposure to violence during childhood increase the risk of violent behavior during adolescence by as much as 40 percent (Elliot, 1994).

In many international fora, according to Omeje (2013), Nigeria is perceived as a conflict-prone society and the youths are at the heart of most violent conflicts in the country. Recent empirical studies suggest that the youths are prosecutors of 90-95% of violent conflicts in Nigeria. This is pretty similar to what obtains in most other conflict-ridden societies. What probably raises anxiety about the Nigerian situation is the sheer magnitude, complexity, frequency, ramifications and seeming intractability of most violent conflicts. Omeje (2013) further stated that every geo-political region of Nigeria is characterised by entrenched structures of violent conflicts, with the youths as the principal driving infrastructure. In the three geo-political zones of the old northern region, the enormous damage inflicted on different communities and peoples by the incessant outbreak of ethno-religious conflicts and disputes relating to land rights and the *indigeneity problematique* (community squabbles between "indigenes" and "settlers") is common-knowledge.

Mohammed (2005), blames violence in Nigeria on the Fourth Republic. He stated that youth violence has reached unprecedented proportions in contemporary discourse on Nigeria's emerging democracy, beginning from May 29th 1999, when the country recommenced democratic rule. Mohammed (2005) added that Nigeria has recorded very bizarre experiences in the domain of violence committed by young people. These acts of violence embrace murder, religious uprisings, party clashes, cult clashes, shooting, stabbing, kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, including armed bank robbery, theft, burglary, rape, rioting especially against government policies, vandalism, ethnic militancy and so on. It should be noted that these types of violence are also characteristics of what Obateru (1994:71) identified as urban violence. He suggested that the youth are the future leaders; and so special efforts should be made to encourage and promote activities that are of interest to the young people in a way to promote tolerance, trust and cosmopolitanism among them.

### 2.4. *Boko Haram*

In 2002, Nigeria came face to face with a new security challenge arising from the activities of Boko Haram sect (otherwise known as the Yusufiyya movement). This genre of violence was fuelled by religious extremism. Boko Haram is a Jihadist militant organization based in North Eastern Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad. The movement was founded by a radical Islamic cleric, Mohammed Yusuf (Ngare, 2012). The sect originated precisely in Borno and Yobe States of Nigeria, but its activities are pronounced across the entire North Eastern Nigeria except Jigawa State. According to Higazi (2013:1) the Jihadist officially prefer to be called "Jama'atu AhlisSunnahLidda'awatiWal Jihad" meaning "people committed to the propagation of the prophets Teaching and Jihad. Boko Haram colloquially translates 'Western education is forbidden'. Boko Haram as the name suggests is adamantly opposed to what it sees as Western-based incursions that threaten the orthodox values, beliefs, and customs among Muslim communities in Northern Nigeria.

Mohammed Yusuf, the founder of the sect, started the movement as an itinerant preacher and gradually won the hearts of people mostly youth through his radical Islamic ideology. Forest (2012) contend that that Boko Haram is largely a product of wide spread

social – economic and religious insecurity whose repercussions resonate among certain communities in the North. But this begs the question: if the region for several decades has coexisted with these ills without conflict, why are the ills (pervasive poverty, endemic corruption, inequality, injustice, youth unemployment and absence of good governance) now serving as a catalyst for the emergence and spread of the Boko Haram insurgency. Nonetheless, it could be argued that the basis of the Boko Haram insurgency is more socio-economic than it is political or ideological. As aptly observed by Nchi, Poverty and ignorance are fertilizers for insurgency anywhere and in any age. When they combine and cloak themselves in religious, ethnic, or other partisan robes, they become ready incendiary for the most brutal and reckless of violence (Forest, 2012:210).

In addition to the afore-mentioned are the factors, such as youth unemployment, social inequality, social and economic exclusion, as well as the practice of itinerant Islamic catechism known in Arabic as the Almajiri system. All these factors combine to explain the rise and prevalence of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. This youthful membership is not surprising if we recall that in Nigeria, 'youth' has come to occupy 'a category of risk, it labels a dangerous, insurgent and unpredictable force which threatens the social and political fabric' (Pratten, 2012). Boko Haram's foot soldiers are also drawn from unemployed youth (graduates) and street children (*almajiri*) in northern Nigeria. Yusuf established a religious complex in his hometown that included a mosque and a school where poor families from across Nigeria and from neighbouring countries enrolled their children. However, the centre had ulterior political goals and soon, it started working as a recruiting ground for future jihadists (Agbiboa, 2012).

### 2.5. Boko Haram and Female Suicide Bombing

Nigeria's first recorded female suicide bomber, a middle aged woman struck in June, riding a motorcycle she went to a military barracks in Gombe, where she detonated her explosive vest killing one soldier. (BBC News Africa, 2014). As a result of the targeted attacks, school enrolment is already lower in North East states which are mostly affected. For instance, in Borno, school enrolment is down by 28 per cent, worse than any state in Nigeria. In 2014, 14 schools were burnt down in Maiduguri, the state capital of Borno State, forcing over 7,000 children out of formal education and pushing down enrolment rates in an already educationally disadvantaged region (IRIN, 2014).

Boko Haram is accused of unleashing a new weapon of war; the girl-child suicide bomber, the recruitment and use of children as child soldiers, in contravention of the UN Security Council resolution 1612 on children and armed conflict. Thus fuelling the concern that insurgency has entered a more ruthless phase. The recent trend in the on-going attacks is generally symptomatic of the several deep rooted sociocultural practices that shape the perception of children in Nigeria, especially in Northern Nigeria. The groups' tactic is completely condemnable and in violation of the fundamental rights of children to education, security, health, and protection. Malala Youfuszai, the Pakistani Nobel peace prize winner who stood up for girl-child education was shot by the Taliban, she advocates that:

Education is our right. Just as it is our right to sing. Islam has given us the right and says every girl and Boy should go to school. The Quran says "we should Seek knowledge, study hard and learn the mysteries of our world.

The escalating violence and recurrent attacks on schools has severely disrupted the rights of children to education, with 15, 000 children in Borno State reportedly having to stop attending school between February and May, 2013 (UNGA, 68th session, 2014). According to a UN report, Nigeria has the largest number of children globally who miss school as increased insecurity in the North shuts down schools and learning centres. On Wednesday, 12th November, 2014, Yobe State Government closed down schools in the wake of the gruesome suicide attack at government science school Potiskum. (Daily Trust Newspaper, November 2014).

### 2.6. Boko Haram: The Civilian Joint Task Force

The CJTF was formed in Maiduguri in June 2013 and because of its numerical advantage and local knowledge, the CJTF quickly drove Boko Haram out of the city by identifying members house by house. The CJTF has since become regimented into sectors and sub-sectors; with Maiduguri and other hot spots they are defending having sectors and sub-sector leaders. CJTF members operate a number of checkpoints in Maiduguri where they conduct stop and search operations. In doing this, however, they expose themselves to attacks by Boko Haram. In June 2015, for example, a male suicide bomber sent by Boko Haram militants killed three civilians JTF and injured several others at a checkpoint near Maiduguri (*SaharaReporters*, June 13, 2015).

The emergence of youths armed with primitive weapons mostly machetes, sticks, and amulets who mobilized themselves against Boko Haram terrorist's attacks frequently occurring in their communities as a way of supporting the counter-terrorism efforts of the state's Joint Task Force (JTF) has now been reinvigorated with the establishment of the army's 7th Infantry Division and the Multinational Task Force (MJTF) through the provision of combat support and intelligence gathering. The Civilian Joint Task Force is not a lawless set of youths who are engaged in jungle justice or extra-judicial killings. The creation of the Civilian Joint Task Force gained prominence as a result of the inability of the Nigerian military to protect them from the rampaging Boko Haram terrorists (IRIN, 2014). The impact of the CJTF as reported by the media is considerably felt as they tracked down Boko Haram members and engaged them in their communities. At the initial phase of their involvement, they killed the terrorists, but with their operations being streamlined within the rules of engagement in a war scenario, they now turned in captured terrorists to state's security forces.

The Civilian JTF members' efforts in tracking down Boko Haram members, made this group of youths become a major target of Boko Haram's terrorist attacks and casualties. For example, Boko Haram killed at least 100 CJTF's members in 2013 and twice as much in 2014. Between May 5 and 6 of 2014, the terrorists attacked in the town of GambaruNgalala to the death of more than 300 people, mostly youth members of the CJTF (BBC News Online, 13 May 2014). Similarly, in June 2015, CJTF members in Borno State were killed as they attempted to stop suicide bombers from detonating their bombs strapped on their bodies in large crowds (*All Africa*, 30 June 2015).



### 2.7. *The Media's Role in Conflict Management*

The media is vital to conflict prevention and early warning (Candan & Reeve, 2012). How people receive and transmit information about conflict in their immediate environment is very central to their perception of and about the conflict as well as how they would want peace and security to evolve. Where the media is used to fuel and escalate conflict, the tendency for the perpetuation of fear and prejudice that may propel people to violence is conceivably high. Fueling conflict could come in form of negative coverage and news reportage which promotes hate speech (Straus, 2007), incendiary rumour; deliberate underreporting and misreporting; over-reporting and sensationalization of crime, violence and insecurity that would incite violence; and where it is used to quell conflict, like coverage and reportage that promote peace and security, linking citizen to changing attitudes and behaviours. Others could be by providing early warning and signals of divisive issues or instability; balanced reporting; mediation and negotiation that would lead to reconciliation can assist in shaping the public understanding of the dynamics of violence, harness or encourage peaceful ways of addressing them and build communication, accountability and trust between the state and society (Cheibii, 2014). The later role of the media in conflict becomes more attractive in our world today if we must attain sustainable peaceful coexistence, security and safety of lives and property. Thus, in the views of Gilboa, (2009), the need for professionalism by the media becomes a necessity through the training and acquisition of resources that would enable the media practitioner to gather information and report them responsibly. The Media may play critical roles in the prevention and management of conflict, as well as deliberately or inadvertently driving conflict.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

### 3.1. *Social Responsibility Theory*

The need for a sociable responsible press has been the debate of media themes scholarly as asserted by McQuail (1987) when he states that the media must serve the public need. Social responsibility media theory was borne out of the need to curtail the excesses of the Libertarian press and regulate media activities to meet up with the need and obligation of the society in which it serves, Baran (2003). The core assumptions of the theory stipulated by the Robert Maynard Hutchison Commission of Freedom of the press was a clear cut between libertarian principles of freedom and the practical admission of some media control (McQuail, 1987). Thus the theory states:

1. Media should accept and fulfill certain obligations to society. These obligations do not chiefly reside, only on the cardinal functions of the media that is to educate, entertain and enlighten, but a step further into areas such as investigative journalism. That has now made the media a watchdog of the society and move into a new front of peace journalism in times of sensitive conflicts that could create disharmony in the society.
2. Media should set high standard of professionalism, truth, accuracy and objective reportage and discharge of their duties.
3. Media should avoid disseminating materials that might lead to crime, violence, or civil disorder or that might offend minority groups. In this regard, the media's role in conflict resolutions was enunciated in a period when there was aptly no news for it.

The social responsibility theory clearly laid onerous task on the mass media because it not only acts just as an agent of communication of views, opinions, issues and events, but that which could be used to not only stimulate, but also motivate youths to do what is morally, legally and socially right for the society. This is why this theory is apt for the discourse on the media's role in quelling rather than fueling conflict.

### 3.2. *Cognitive Balance Theory*

Cognitive Balance Theory was propounded by Heider (1946, 1958) to explain how people resolve inconsistencies in their interpersonal affects. Heider was concerned with the way an individual organizes attitude toward people and objects, in relation to one another within that individual's own cognitive structure. Heider postulated that unbalanced states produce tension and generate forces to restore balance. He says that the concept of a balanced state designates a situation in which the perceived units and the experienced sentiments co-exist without stress (Munroe, 2007)).

It is assumed that a balanced state of mind of an individual enables such a person to resist outside influences to commit evil or become a social deviant. An unbalanced state is assumed to be unstable and is assumed to produce psychological tension within an individual. This tension becomes relieved only when change within the situation takes Place in such a way that a state of balance is achieved. This pinpoints the communicator's interest in the theory for it implies a model of attitude change and resistance to attitude change, unbalanced state, being in an unstable state, are susceptible to change toward balance.

The youth are perhaps the most active consumers of media content. With increased availability of media content in different forms, young people can readily influence each other to achieve set goals. The coverage of suicide bombing and the counter insurgency efforts of the Civilian Joint Task Force could be said to be a clear example of how media content can stimulate the public in this regard youths towards achieving a balanced state from a perceived threat. Because the symbolic environment occupies a major part of people's everyday lives, much of the social construction of reality and shaping of public consciousness occur through the myriad information communicated to them. For this reason, the mass media could be increasingly used as the principal vehicle of justifying the defense of the people against a known and unknown threat to their socio-economic and political existence. Struggles to legitimize and gain support for one's values and causes and that which discredit one's opponents are now communicated more and more through the media. The youth are socially, practically and physically likely to become foot soldiers to the allurements of and to the cause which appeal most to their consciousness. When media influences lead viewers to discuss and negotiate matters of import with others in their lives, the media set in motion transactional experiences that further shape the course of societal defense and change. This is another socially mediated process through which symbolic communications exert their effect.

#### 4. Methodology

Quantitative content analysis as a method of research is done in a very systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables of contents in audio, visual and literal communication was adopted for this study. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2006: 135), content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid references from data or archival documents and records of staff. It is said to produce an objective, measurable, verifiable account of the manifest and content of the documents and records. It analyzes the denotative and connotative order of presentation. It works through identifying and counting chosen units in a system (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006: 135). This method consists of analyzing the content of documentary materials such as books, magazines, newspapers and contents of all other visual, audio materials.

The content analysis method was used because it is particularly versatile and practical, especially for the coding, in that it helps the researcher to identify present conditions and present data needs. The unit of analysis in this paper news items headlines, advertisements, editorials, commentaries, pictorials and other forms of opinions published on the pages of the papers. Copies of Daily Trust, Vanguard, and Thisday news report, features, news story, editorial/opinion., cartoon, pictures and special/graph content analysed on the news stories, on rising use of youths, children and girls by Boko Haram terrorist and Civil Joint Task Force between July 2014 and December, 2015 were content analyzed, instead of content; analyzing 405 dailies for each newspaper media, bringing the total to 1,215 newspaper publications from Mondays to Fridays, for the randomly picked newspaper issues that reported terrorism bordering on the context of this review.

#### 5. Result, Analysis and Discussion

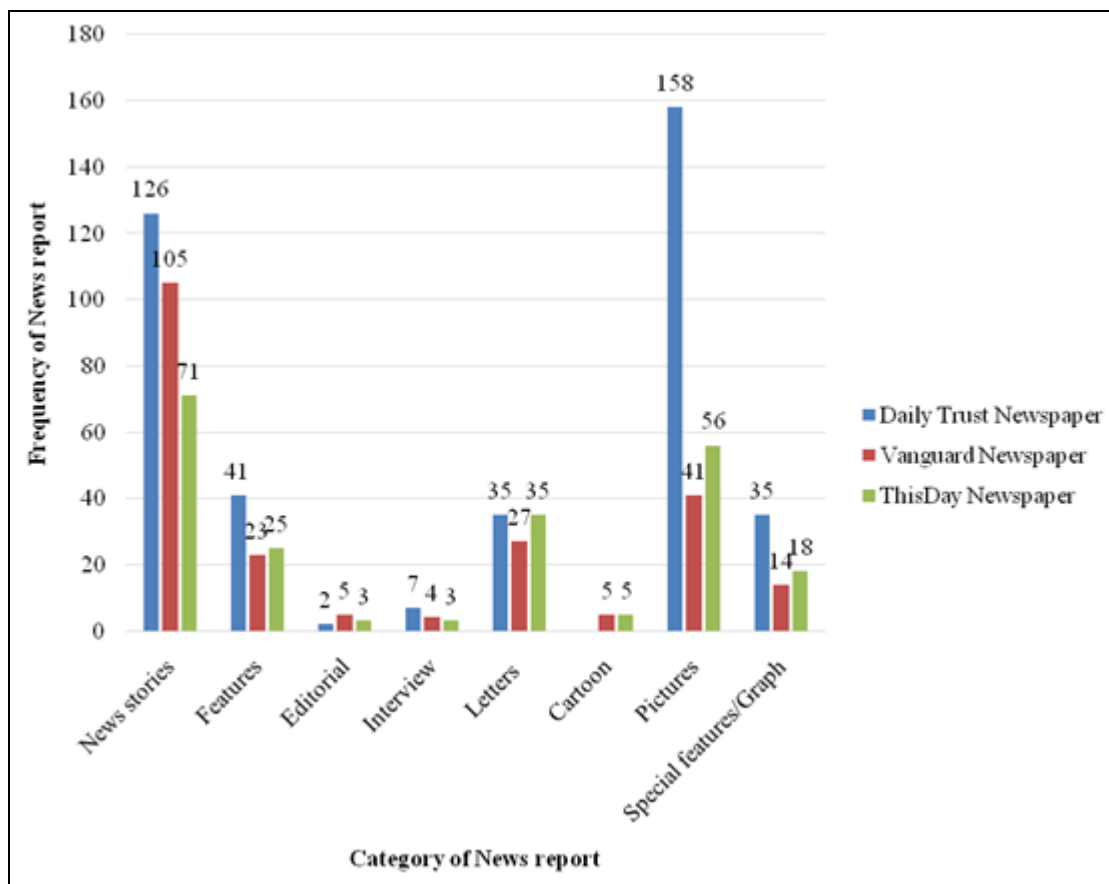


Figure 1: Newspaper Coverage of Suicide Bombings and Civilian Joint Task Force-CJTF activities from July 2014 –December, 2015

The table above shows the frequency of content matters published as it relates to Suicide Bombings and Civilian Joint Task Force-CJTF activities from July 2014 –December, 2015 by the newspapers under review. This table is an aggregated frequency of the entire news category by all the papers for eighteen (18) months, numbering 1,215 newspaper publications from Mondays to Fridays, randomly picked newspaper issues that reported terrorism bordering on the context of this review.

Daily Trust Newspaper had more coverage and reportage of the Suicide Bombings and Civilian Joint Task Force-CJTF activities within the period content analyzed that Vanguard and This Day Newspapers. The reason for this difference beside the national outlook of these papers is that Daily Trust Newspaper report more on issues affecting Northern Nigeria than the other two papers reviewed. It northern appeal meant that it commands more readership than the rest newspapers reviewed and thus had the tendency to significantly pursue and promote conflict management and peace journalism in its reportage. This assumption would be considered in the next table on the objective nature of the newspapers' coverage in this regard.

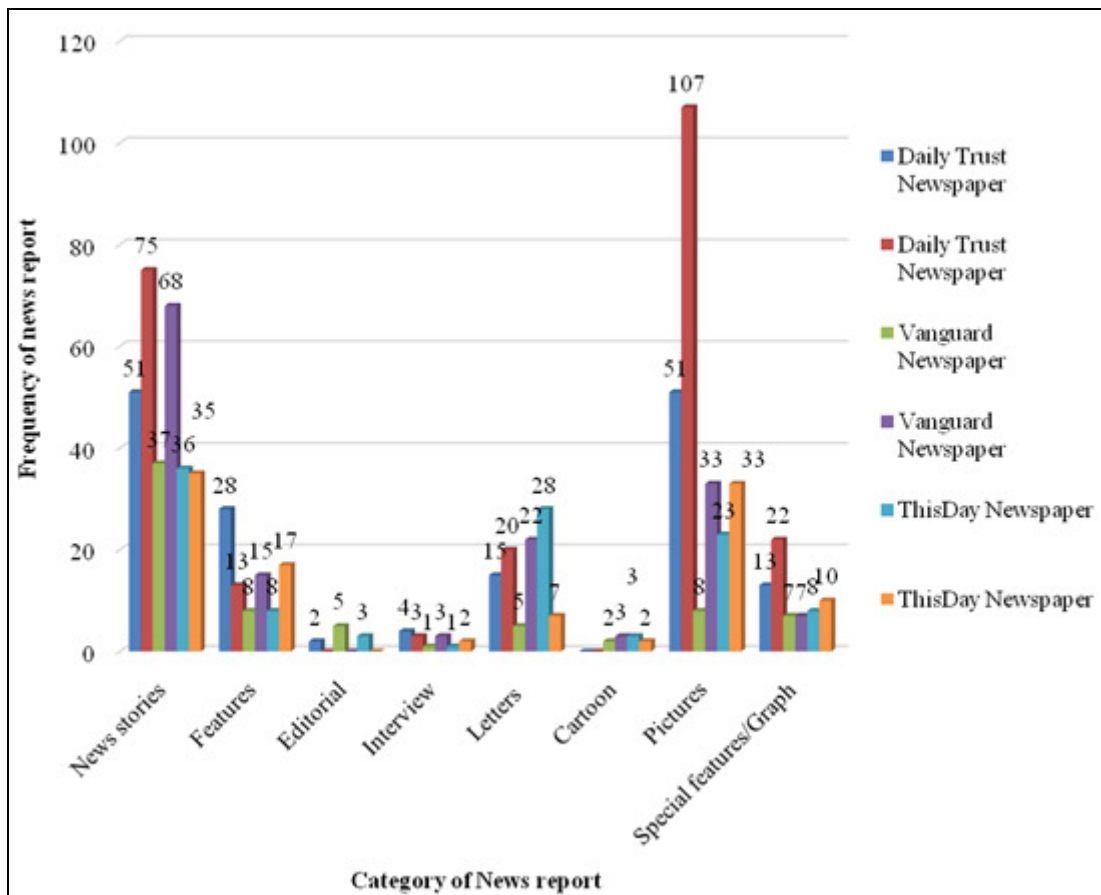


Figure 2: Level of objectivity of Newspaper Coverage of Suicide Bombings and Civilian Joint Task Force-CJTF activities from July 2014 –December, 2015 aimed at Quelling the Conflict

The aggregated placement of news stories is equally significant if it must attract the public attention to the promotion of conflict management and peace journalism. This table gave an overview of the news stories on Suicide Bombing terrorists' activities and the Civilian Joint Task Force efforts by the youths in curbing terrorism in the conflict zones as published by all the papers within the period reviewed. The emphasis laid on the news report would invariably direct the public attention to the importance of the involvement of youths in perpetuation and counter fight against terrorism to Nigeria's peaceful co-existence, socio-economic growth and development.

In summary, the lack of objectivity shown by all the newspapers could be traced to the source of news information that is usually lopsided in time of conflict of this kind. Most information reported and being reported come in form of news releases from security agencies, government officials and some non-state actors who volunteered information to international news agencies like Reuters and Agencies France Presses-AFP. Again, over sensationalism of news headlines and reports as well as publication of horrific pictorials from the scene of conflict without consideration for the ethical use of such so as not escalate tension is one that Nigerian media is bereft of.

## 6. Discussion of Findings

Conflict management and peaceful building reportage and journalism is critical to not only spotlighting the dangers inherent in the use of youths to perpetuate and fight against terrorism but in the promotion and sustenance of peaceful coexistence, socio-economic growth; prosperity and development of people within the conflict zones in the North east, Northern Nigeria and the entire country. The impact of Boko Haram activities especially with the new dimension of involving young men and women as foot soldiers has exacerbated terrorism to the level of fear of the youths in the area of conflict unprecedented in the history of the country. It has further heightened the public fear for their safety and drastically affected educational drive of youths in the area and those from other parts of the country willing to come to the North for their education. This is so, because, within the period of events reviewed, Daily Trust Newspaper, Vanguard Newspaper and This Day Newspaper all reported that academic institutions of learning were the worst hit areas of suicide bombings.

Reporting terrorism activities by the Nigerian mass media has seen the rise of concern on how objective the coverage and reportage have been over the years. One issue that has come to the front burner is the contestation for exclusivity which by and large drives up the sensational news coverage and reporting at the expense of objectively conflict sensitive journalism. Scholars have attributed this to the fact that a percentage of Nigerian journalists don't have requisite specialty and training in conflict management and peace building

journalism. Hence, the lack of objectivity becomes an ethical question in the media parlance that necessitated the social responsibility paradigm and developmental media tenet so as to guide against media misuse of privileges and freedom as enshrined in charters of human rights and national constitutions.

The fear that when media is not objective or ethical in its report and coverage of event it could lead to rivalry, rise in tension, reprisal attack and even cause war or escalate an existing conflict made the profession develop parameters in which it could be guided to objectively and ethically present news stories and reports. From the content analyses of the reports, the Nigerian newspapers is shown not to be oblivious of this fundamental role of objective and ethical reporting as Daily Trust presented 30.7% of its stories as ethical, Vanguard 24.52% while, This Day also presented 31.64% giving us an 86.86% ethical coverage. The submission here is that the Nigerian newspapers, especially the selected ones are adjudged as objective, being that they promoted not only the amnesty declaration but were against violence in the Nigeria society for whatever reasons and gains.

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, this study has been able to show that media's role in conflict is vital to the success of any mediatory move towards peace and reconciliation. The study has further showed that where news reports and stories are done in such a way that is not supportive of genuine involvement of youths in conflict management, but only hinges on sensationalism, it could debar them from becoming effective agents in defeating terror anytime and anywhere it raised its ugly head. This paper's view is that the media owes the society the sociably responsible duty of reporting in the form that would considerably and significantly deescalate conflicts, in this case defeat terrorism. The involvement of youths against the fight on terrorism by some could be seen as counterproductive where not properly managed as they could form another group of insurgents. Their portage so far on their involvement in the fight against terrorism has been noted to play significant role in the successes recorded by CJTF alongside the Nigerian Military. This study reveals that the mass media could be used to spotlight the role which youths in society play in quelling conflict. To this end, the media in this case, newspaper, become a veritable way in which youths' activities which the society stands to benefit from should be communicated to wider society. Hence, suffice it to say that media reportage goes a long way in mobilizing youths to undertake positive roles in the society aimed at settlement of conflicts.

## 8. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. The print media should continue to step up its effort in reporting more on the activities of youths in the conflict that are helpful to the fight against terrorism so that it could motivate other youths elsewhere to do same in the face of the growing threat to peace, safety and security to public lives and property that has overwhelmed the Nigerian Military.
2. In order to truly achieve a sustainable conflict management and peace-building reportage which would motivate the youths to arise in the defence of their fatherland, act of heroism as exhibited by the CJTF should be emphatically praised while acts of villainy as shown by those recruited into terrorism, suicide bombing, militancy, marauding herdsmen, armed robbery and kidnapping should be condemned on the pages of the Newspapers.
3. The Objective coverage of this forms of positive contribution of the youth to socio-political and security development of society should be enhanced by the Nigerian print media in particular and other medium like radio, television and the internet in general.

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