

THE NIGERIAN PRESS COVERAGE AND THE QUEST TO CURB KIDNAPPINGS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Kidnapping in Nigeria has assumed a dangerous dimension as it poses potential economic hazard in the country. This study takes base on the foregoing and therefore attempts to appraise the press coverage of kidnapping cases as part of efforts to curb the menace. The objectives of the study are to appraise the press coverage by looking at their roles in fight to curb kidnapping cases in Nigeria, assess the press adoption of reportorial genres in reporting, and to ascertain the effectiveness of the framing pattern of the stories on kidnapping. The Framing Theory provides the framework that guided the research. It is qualitative research and utilises data from online sources in journals, books, and book chapters. The findings among others are that enough prominence were not given to the topic as kidnapping stories were reported mainly as straight news without interpretative analysis. The study concludes that frames used by the press have impact on the public perception of the issues being reported. It specifically concludes that straight news was prominently used in reporting kidnapping. The study recommends among others that the press should work closely with government and relevant agencies in order to get detailed and credible information. Furthermore, it recommends that the print media should perform their role efficiently as the society's watchdog by engaging in ethical reporting in terms of investigative and interpretative journalism that would direct the leadership of the country to strengthen the security agencies to combat perpetrators of crime, kidnapping and banditry.

Keywords: Abduction, coverage, kidnapping, media, press

Introduction

The place of information and knowledge sharing cannot be overemphasised in the fight against insecurity anywhere in the world. The implication of the foregoing assertion is that critical stakeholders in the fight to ensure a crime-free society always play significant roles in ensuring that there is information and communication towards actualising set goals and objectives. This means that anywhere there is organised crime; communication, information-sharing, and collaboration of all stakeholders become indispensable. By definition, organised crime refers to an organisation of people participating in illegal activities such as arms

dealing, drug trafficking and smuggling; especially in situations or places where there are restrictions (Tyner & Serva, 2023). It is pertinent to note here that all crimes can be organised once individuals come together to plan and execute them under different guises.

In Nigeria, organised crime is documented to be on the increase in recent times (Ndubueze et al., 2022; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2022). Put in another way, recent events suggest that the country has seen a rise in cases of criminal activities. Organised crimes pose as serious national security threat to the country (Stephen, 2016). In fact, its very existence as a one indissoluble and indivisible state is

continuously being threatened by activities of internal aggressors engaging in criminal activities. Internal security threats by far pose greater challenge to Nigeria's corporate existence than any other form chiefly because the country has not witnessed direct confrontational aggression from its neighbours since it gained independence from Great Britain in 1960. To take steps to counter insecurity is inevitable. Implication of this is that there must be adequate information and communication as part of efforts to curb increase in the rate of crimes.

Among the different crimes prevalent in Nigeria are armed robbery, human and drug trafficking, kidnapping, rape and many more (Nwankwo & Okolie-Osemene, 2016). All stakeholders require genuine efforts at information-sharing to fight crimes (Fadason et al., 2023; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2023) of any magnitude and nature. Therefore, information and communication among the different stakeholders is necessary to take-on the onerous task to defeat crimes in Nigeria. Same applies in the case of kidnapping and adoption of people for ransom. According to Ahom and Azaigba (2021) kidnapping for ransom was not a prominent crime in the 1990s in Nigeria until Niger Delta militancy was in its full gear; with militants using the act as a tactic to draw attention of the government to their agitations. It is now known to be a security threat of national concern otherwise known as national security threat; of which government has sought ways to curb.

Adequate information about anything is considered an important way to bring about solution once a problem is identified. One of the numerous ways to get the needed information is through the media. The media is an umbrella term for all outlets responsible for the gathering, processing and dissemination of news and information to the audience (usually referred to as members of

the general publics). They are considered as good sources of information (Balicat et al., 2020). Media are not just the primary sources of information to the people all over the world but good information sources to government and its agencies as through mediums, people can send feedback to the authorities on what they feel, know, and see about government and occurrences around the government. While the people rely on the media for authentic information, they also expect the media to be the link between them and government.

In respect of crime information and the fight to curb criminalities in Nigeria, the media perform its traditional function as channels of communication and information-dissemination to the people. Press coverage and reportage of crimes is a good avenue to equip the populace with the requisite information; as they could learn different things from the media content to which they are exposed. Obaje (2017) lends credence and notes that media coverage of criminal activities can affect public perception in Nigeria. By the foregoing, it means that the people's exposure to information, their understanding of the information, and thoughts about crimes is shaped by how such issues are presented in the media. Accordingly, the media help promote public understanding of issues (The John Howard Society of Canada, 2019). One of such may border on criminalities, and it is geared towards proffering a collective solution to the menace.

The fourth estate of the realm is one of numerous names by which the media is known due to its influence in shaping and governing public affairs; through which it performs its duties of informing, educating, entertaining the public. The place of the media in society is critical due to its capacity to set agenda for public discourse and in the course of doing that shape public opinion on matters of great importance to the society.

Consequent upon this function of the media is the extension which results in behavioural and attitudinal change in our society. The media broaden and deepen one's perception, which implies that whatever is portrayed by the media have effects on the attitude and behaviour of members of the society and on how they perceive an issue in the society (Asemah, 2020).

All forms of organised crimes in Nigeria; including kidnapping for ransom have far-reaching implications for the development of the country – including its overbearing effect on economic growth and development. It is against this backdrop that solutions are always top of the discourse across different platforms and forums; the media, the academia, government-organised events among others. The media through its coverage and reportage not only draws attention to the issues but also create awareness on ways to bring them to an end. However, there are still cases of kidnapping and related crimes being reported on a daily basis in the country. Therefore, this study looks at the coverage of such areas of insecurity like kidnapping by the Nigerian press vis á vis concerted efforts by all stakeholders (especially the media) to end the menace. Consequently, the study is an attempt to appraise the coverage of kidnapping by the press in Nigeria. It also assesses the press adoption of reportorial genres in reporting kidnap-related stories. Furthermore, the study also focuses on the effectiveness of framing patterns on cases of kidnap in Nigeria.

Conceptual Review

The concepts of the Nigerian Press and that of Kidnapping are the major ones for review in this study.

The Nigerian Press

This conceptual review can best be captured "the Nigerian press: an evolution" or the Nigerian press and its historical

development. The convergence point for the history of the press in Nigeria is usually the Reverend Henry Townsend-established *Iwe Irohin* established in 1859 in Abeokuta. It was published in Yoruba language and was originally meant to serve as a bulletin for the Christian community in Egba-land but metamorphosed into what we now referred to as the birth of the Nigerian press. The foregoing is a reflection of the philanthropic and missionary influences on the birth of the Nigerian press with the primary aim to spread education and inculcate Western values. The missionary had thought it out that it was imperative to further missionary efforts through the establishment of newspapers.

The *Iwe Irohin* paved way for establishment of the Anglo-African and Robert Campbell who was a close associate of Reverend Townsend happened to be the editor. With Townsend, Campbell made significant impact in the establishment of *Iwe Irohin*. It was the problems between Townsend and the colonial administration in Lagos that propelled Campbell to establish his newspaper. The then colonial governor of Lagos, Sir Freeman patronised the newspaper through advert placement. According to Fatile (2004) Anglo-African published for a period of two years; between 1863 and 1865 with a varying pagination of between four and eight and a front page dedicated to the publishing of announcements, adverts, and notices. According to Fatile, the newspaper also published local and international news as well as editorials on its inside pages but received no patronage from the nationalists due to its stance on colonial matters. Consequent upon the foregoing, the paper was hit by financial problems that saw to its demise.

Within colonial or the pre-independence era were notable newspapers such as the *Lagos Times* established in 1880, the *Lagos Observer* created in 1882, the *Eagle and Lagos Critics* of 1883, *Lagos*

Weekly Record established in 1891. Others are the *Lagos Standard* (1894), the *Nigerian Chronicle* established in 1908, the *Nigerian Spectator* (1921), the *Comet* established in 1932, and the *West African Pilot* founded in 1937 by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. Notably, the Nigerian press of the era was reputed to have taken on the role of a stiff opposition of the then colonial government; creating a sense of political consciousness and nationalists' awareness through criticism of the programmes and policies. Such piece graced the front pages of the publications over a period of time.

After independence, the nationalists in the forefront of the fight for self-rule used their newspapers to champion the establishment of national identity and reinforcement of ethnic, tribal and sectional loyalties (Fatile, 2004). Such nationalists include Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, M. C. K. Nwachukwu, and Chief Anthony Enahoro among others. Thereafter, the press in Nigeria continued its growth (though with setbacks during the different periods of military juntas) and metamorphosed into what it is in modern times; one of the most vibrant and biggest in the continent of Africa. From the first republic, to the second, third and now fourth; the media in Nigeria has shown considerable progress (Inobemhe et al., 2023).

The press in Nigeria is one with a rich history of championing the fight for freedom; starting with the colonial era, and then the independence, down to the military regimes that characterised the West African nation since its first coup of January 15, 1966 and the counter coup that took place on July 29 of same year. Fatile (2004) lends credence that the Nigerian press had function as an instrument for the fights towards ensuring socio-political changes in the colonies and protectorates long before the country gained independence. In modern times, the press continues to make meaningful contributions

to the development of Nigeria. Both government and individually-owned media outfits are triumphing in the mass media space of Nigeria and have become a strong voice of the people to the government of the day.

Many press outfits such as *The Guardian*, *This Day*, *Vanguard*, *The Nation*, *The Punch*, *Business Day*, *Daily Sun*, *Daily Trust*, *Daily Independent*, *Leadership* amongst others, have dominated the communication channels by dishing out multiple hard and soft news to keep Nigerians abreast with current issues. In addition, the press through coverage and reportage has tackled head-on all forms of criminalities; including kidnapping, banditry, terrorism and many more by creating awareness and offering advice on concrete steps to be taken to end them all. This the press has done through news coverage and editorials. This conceptual review is relevant to this paper because it puts in perspective the nature, history and activities of the press in Nigeria in the quest to curb kidnapping.

Kidnapping

As a concept, kidnapping has several definitions. However, one of such multiple ones is its reference to the act of taking someone against their will and without any form of legal authority to do so; and could be either for pecuniary motives or for the purpose of fulfilling the agenda of an organised criminal group. This understanding of the concept of kidnapping can be considered as one that is wholistic. A definition offered by Crowe (2023) sees kidnapping as a general term that means to remove or confine individuals against their will without obtaining due legal authority to do so. According to Fage and Alabi (2017) kidnapping can be seen as the fraudulent and forceful abduction of a person or a group of persons for varied reasons; which range from self-determination struggles, religious, political and economic. The major take-away

from this definition is that kidnapping of individuals is usually premised on something. It confirms the popular aphorism that "nothing happens without a reason".

A breakdown of the definition offered by Fage and Alabi (2017) implies that when the Niger-Delta militants abduct expatriates under the guise of struggle for self-determination or economic, it is fraudulent. Same applies to abduction by the Boko Haram sect for reasons relating to religion. In addition, if in the midst of electoral campaigns, a politically exposed person (PEP) is abducted or that of a scenario or case of abduction with political undertone; which may be to either undermine an administration, all of such amount to same outcome. It is a fact that it amounts to fraudulent action of kidnap. Accordingly, an action of taking persons against their will to unknown places under any motive is deemed to constitute kidnapping; an act criminalised in most climes of the world.

Furthermore, a definition according to Uzoma and Nwanegbo-Ben (2014) puts it that kidnapping is the act connected with seizing and detaining including taking away an individual in a way that depicts the use of unlawful force, fraud, and often culminating in the demand for a ransom. Taking a person from his/her home or other places by the use of force, coercion, or fraud is what kidnapping is all about. Accordingly, the law considers as kidnaping, any act that results in the seizing, taking away, confining or detaining an individual or group of individuals against their will. The general consensus on the acceptable definition is that an act cannot be considered as kidnapping if the individual taken (otherwise known as the victim) is not removed or confined legally. Put in another way, once it is done outside the law; without warrant of arrest and in gestapo manner, it amounts to kidnapping; regardless of the person(s) or authorities involved.

In Nigeria, the history of kidnapping for ransom can be traced to a non-distant past; when militancy in the Niger Delta region was in its full gear. The menace soon became a lucrative business for persons with criminal intention as more and more success cases of large-scale kidnapping were reported. Such include the Chibok girls kidnap considered as one of the greatest that took place during the administration of Goodluck Jonathan (Ekechukwu & Osaat, 2021) who governed Nigerian between 2010 and 2015 following the demise of his predecessor Umar Musa Yar'Adua. The kidnap of the Chibok girls drew a global attention to the insecurity problems in Nigeria. It must be emphasised that kidnapping is a security issue/matter of global dimension (Pires & Guerette, 2019; Uzochukwu, 2023). And in Nigeria, it has caused several problems including religious tensions, ethnic profiling, among others. The most prevalent act of kidnapping in contemporary Nigerian society is kidnap-for-ransom and several notorious groups are known for this in both South and North of the country.

Review of Empirical Studies

Several scholars have dissected the problem of kidnappings in Nigeria. A few of the positions of these scholars are presented in order to provide perspective to the current study. For instance, Oriola and Agbele (2020) studied *The Nations* and *Guardian* newspapers coverage of kidnapping in Nigeria between 1st January and June 30th 2019. The study among other things sought to find out the frequency of kidnapping among the selected newspapers, the prominence given to the issue of kidnapping by the papers, the depth of coverage of kidnapping stories and the direction of reportage of kidnapping stories as reported by the newspapers. The study employed the content analysis method of scientific enquiry to execute the research. Findings from the study indicated that a total of 63 news stories

were reported by the newspapers. Further findings showed that the *Guardian* published more stories (58.7%) on kidnapping more than the *Nation* newspaper which published a total of (41.3%) of news report in its publications. The scholars found that both newspapers recorded low coverage of kidnapping stories within the period under review.

Furthermore, findings reveal that majority of the published stories on kidnapping were embedded in the inside pages of the newspapers. This shows that the two newspapers did not give prominence to the stories on kidnapping. This negates the established tradition in newspaper placement of stories on the front page to indicate the level of prominence accorded to a particular subject of importance. In addition, the findings equally showed that in terms of depth of coverage, the selected newspapers did not give adequate depth to stories on kidnapping. The newspapers instead gave more coverage to stories that have to do with politics, economy and a host of other topical areas. It is imperative to note that due to the lack of substantial coverage accorded to the issue of kidnapping, the scholars recommended that Nigerian newspapers should adequately accord premium to the problem of kidnapping so that the attention of the government will be drawn to the matter.

Corroborating the above study, Abba, Abbasaniel and Msughteraniel (2020) investigated the coverage of kidnapping in Nigeria using *Daily Trust* and *Guardian* newspapers. The major objective of the study was to gauge the frequency and prominence the sampled newspapers gave to the coverage of kidnapping in the country. The study adopted the framing theory as the theoretical framework upon which it hinged its theoretical analysis. Findings from the study showed that the two newspapers did not give substantial prominence to the issues that border on kidnapping for ransom. The study

further discovered that majority of the news items on kidnapping were found on the inside pages of the newspapers. These findings therefore, correlate with those of Oriola and Agbele (2020) in which they equally found that Nigerian newspapers did not give adequate coverage to the problem of kidnapping bedeviling the country.

Relatedly, Innocent, Mohammed and Eikojonwa (2021) in their study attempted to deconstruct media reportage of banditry in Nigeria. The basic thrust of their study was to investigate the issue of news imbalance attributed to news media especially on their reportage on the issue of banditry in the country. These scholars' study was motivated against the backdrop of North versus South divide when it comes to the issue of reportage of national issues. The study adopted the qualitative research technique where relevant materials were source from books, journals and articles etc.

Findings from the study indicated that different Nigerian media outlets report the same incidences in a different tone. For example, whenever an issue of crime is reported in the Northern part of the country is termed as banditry, and such crime occurs in other parts of the country, the same issue is given derogatory names and attracts captions that do not qualify the extent of the crime perpetrated. The media is cautioned not to give narratives to events in such a way that a particular group of people in the society are demonised. The study recommends that the media should uphold the principles of balance and fairness in the reportage of banditry in the country. It further notes that by adhering to uphold this principle, the media would be seen as being professional in fulfilling its mandate to society.

Furthermore, a study was conducted to appraise the mobilisation role of the Nigerian press in creating awareness about the abduction of the Chibok secondary school's girls that were kidnapped by the

dreaded Boko Haram militant group. Ajakaiye, Nwozor, Ojeka, Aleyomi, Owoeye, Ojeka-John, and Okidu (2021) examined how *The Nation*, *The Guardian* and *The Punch* newspapers contributed in creating awareness and drew public attention to the kidnapped of the school girls in North-eastern Nigeria. The study critically dissected the direction of slant, frequency of coverage, prominence of news report, features articles and editorials connected to the abduction of the school children. Findings from the study revealed that the press provided huge coverage of the abduction such that the government had to launch a campaign for the rescue of the girls. The study also found that it was as a result of the extensive coverage and publicity the press gave to the abduction of the girls that advocacy groups like the #BringBackOurGirls campaign organisation was formed to ensure that government was put under pressure to rescue the girls.

In the same vein, Santas (2015) carried out a study to determine print media coverage of the Chibok girls that were kidnapped in Borno State Nigeria. Two newspapers were sampled for the study namely *Daily Trust* and *The Nation* newspapers. The study period adopted by the researcher spanned from 14th of April 2014 to 14th of May 2014. The study utilised content analysis as its methodological technique. Findings from the study indicated that there was disparity among the newspapers in terms of the coverage of the abduction of the girls by the selected newspapers. For example, the study showed that *The Nation* newspaper covered stories about the abduction of the girls more than *Daily Trust* newspaper. This implies that *Daily Trust* down played the story by not making it a prominent issue that necessitates adequate coverage. The newspaper achieves this feat by avoiding editorials and in-depth feature about the abduction of the girls. Further findings of the newspapers indicated

that both newspapers reflected religious sentiments in their coverage of the Chibok girls. The study recommended among other things that, the press should uphold the core principles of fairness and responsibility in their coverage of sensitive national matters so as not to further escalate conflict in the society.

Theoretical Framework

This study is located within the ambit of the framing theory. The theory was first put forward in 1974 by Goffman in his book titled "Frame Analysis". The theory is regarded as the second level agenda-setting theory, "however, the framing theory is more focused" than the agenda setting theory (Baran & David, as cited in Ijwo & Omula, 2014, p. 146). Framing theory simply put in media parlance is when the media focuses attention on certain events and then place them within a field of meaning. Therefore, the theory suggests that, how something is presented to the audience (called the frames), influences the choice people make about how to process the information. In line with the foregoing, Ijwo and Omula (2014) add that frames are interpretative devices that all people use when making sense of the world around them.

Media frame is defined "as a central organising idea or a story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events" (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, as cited in Habiba & Yakubu, 2019, p. 631). The authors further wrote that media frames help in changing what seems trivial to a discernible event. The theory finds relevance to this study in the sense that newspapers do not simply cover the issues of kidnapping but undoubtedly reconstruct messages using different frame patterns primarily to capture them in a way that the audience may be influenced to see the issues from a certain perspective.

Methodology

The study is qualitative and therefore takes on the conceptual review approach. It adopted the use of relevant literature and empirical studies in its discourse section. This required the gathering of qualitative data from online journals and sources, including books to discuss the analysis of key issues as well as make conclusions in a positional manner.

Discussion

In line with the major objectives of this study which centers on the Nigerian press coverage of kidnapping and how that has helped in curbing the menace, a thematic discussion of findings along the following is considered; role of the press in the fight to curb kidnapping in Nigeria, the Nigerian Press adoption of reportorial genres in reporting kidnapping, and the effectiveness of framing patterns on kidnapping cases in Nigeria.

The Role of the Press in the Fight to Curb Kidnapping in Nigeria

Traditionally, the press is a channel of communication in written form through which information or messages get to the public with the aim to inform, create awareness, educate, mobilise or influence them towards accepting some form of development or change in the society. The press is an arm of the mass media, which is a conglomeration of various media of information dissemination with mediated forms of technology to reach the audience. Since newspapers, magazines (majorly the print otherwise known as the press) are aspects of the media (Janeau et al., 2023), then we can say that they are part of the broad spectrum of what constitutes the media as an industry. Therefore, as the press cover and report cases of kidnapping in Nigeria on their pages dedicated to news and editorials, they do so to create awareness, inform, educate, and mobilise members of the public.

It is equally a medium of promoting knowledge. McQuail (2010) notes that the mass media encompass newspapers, magazines, editors, journalist, and media owners who are poised to bring about an increase in public information. Most significantly, the press provides a forum for discourse of issues of public importance, be an investigator of the authorities when there may be impropriety, and promoter of knowledge while in the defense of the truth. Accordingly, news media provide information and alert audiences/readers of the changes that take place around the globe. It is for this reason that the newspapers have long been described as the watchdog of a free society (Saint Francis University, 2023). This is because the press helps to critically analyse public issues through their editorial pages, column, feature page etc. Such analyses made by the mass media on issues of human interest are vital to the growth and development of the society. Consequently, when kidnap cases are reported in the press, knowledge is created through solutions proffered by experts.

Agenda-setting function of the media is a unique one with many areas of importance primarily to direct the public on what to think about through constant coverage and reportage. Stemming from the foregoing, Ehigiator (2023) believes that media have the capacity to tell the people not what to think but what to think about. The agenda-setting function of the press empowers the media to determine what to give prominence, how to report that issue, and the frequency of publication – all geared towards presenting issues in the context within which they want the public to see them. The repetition of messages that border on public issues in daily news report coupled with the news media pervasiveness in the daily lives of the people constitute major issues in respect of agenda-setting powers and functions of the press in our world

(Valenzuela & McCombs, 2019). In essence, the media wield considerable influence when it comes to setting agenda for public discourse.

Interestingly, the frequency or prominence given to an issue by the press affects the attention and immediacy action public assigns to it. This is why the press is particular about ensuring that the news reaches the public timely with in-depth analysis and interpretations. Hence, it must have the following variables in its reportage: (i) coherent presentations of facts of the basic substance and information required for comprehending the subject been reported; and (ii) contextual background that provides connection to the past and concurrent issue at stake, personalities involved and event occurring. This way, the public begin to gain more exposure of the matter in order to devise the various techniques to tackle the problem. It is instructive to note that these variables illuminate grey areas and present the public a brilliant perspective from which the reported matters can be seen. Same applies to reporting crime like kidnapping; and the press in Nigeria is known for fulfilling this principle.

Some of the roles of the press as noted by Ehigiator (2023) in addressing the menace of kidnapping are: advocacy, educational role, sensitisation, information dissemination and mobilisation. In the case of the advocacy role, the Nigerian press through coverage and reporting of cases of kidnapping in the country advocates for an end to the acts while providing the necessary insights on why the people should not be left to be at the mercy of the rampaging kidnappers scattered throughout the length and breadth of Nigeria. In addition, the press in Nigeria takes on the educational role by educating the public on the dangers of kidnapping and providing travel advisory on the routes where kidnap cases may have been reported in conjunction with security outfits in the country.

Furthermore, the security agencies and government takes advantage of the reach of the press to sensitise members of the public on ways to avoid being kidnapped and what to do when in danger. Information dissemination is one of the core functions of the press, and they do this to ensure that the public has firsthand information on happenings in Nigeria; including kidnapping.

Adoption of Reportorial Genres in Nigerian Press Reporting of Kidnapping

From a general perspective of report writing, there exist different styles (herein referred to as genres). Such genres include fictional, informational, reportorial, evaluative approach among others (Siekiera, 2016). We also have the discourse genre (Leeuwen, 2008). There are various other classifications within the media space especially in the press. In line with the foregoing is the classification of news story into hard and straight news genres. Furthermore, the genre of reporting news could be columns, articles, features, advertorials, and editorials among others (Ehigiator, 2023). Studies have shown adoption of reportorial genres in Nigerian press reporting of kidnapping (Abba et al., 2021; Ajakaiye et al., 2021; Enobakhare, 2023). These validate that there is coverage of crimes in the Nigerian media.

In the Nigerian press coverage and reporting of kidnapping in Nigeria, studies have shown the use of different unique genres. In a study conducted by Ehigiator (2023) on the coverage of kidnapping by *Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers found out that straight news, editorials, features, column, opinion, and interview are the major genres adopted in their reportage. Relatedly, a study by Adekoya, Ifidon, and Chioma (2016) on the Nigerian newspapers namely *The Guardian* and the *Punch* found out that the prominent genres adopted for the stories within the period between April and July 2014 was straight news; and this is when compared with editorials and opinion

articles. The implication of the result of the study is that the press within the reviewed period focused on the use of straight news writing pattern to report crimes in the country. This aligns with the findings of Ehigiator (2023) in respect of the use of genres.

Features, straight news, editorials, and columns genres were found to be prominent in the report of kidnapping by Daily Trust and The Guardian Newspapers (Mohammed, 2023). The study specifically revealed that there was prominent use of the straight news genre in reporting self-planned kidnapping with 100 percent, home/village raid kidnapping having 87.01 percent, high-way kidnapping with 80.59 percent while others received 80 percent of the use of same genre. According to Mohammed, kidnapping could be political, self-planned, family kidnapping, village/home raid-type-of-kidnapping, and high-way kidnapping. Relatedly, Crowe (2023) noted that kidnapping can be categorised into stranger kidnapping, acquaintance kidnapping, and family kidnapping; which is considered as the most common and involve the abduction of children by relatives.

It must be noted here that in the Nigerian press, there is the use of nuanced genres in reporting kidnapping and related crimes as evidenced in some of the studies reviewed above. While some favour straight news approach, others simply adopt the use of columns and features where episodic frames may be assigned. The use of genres by the Nigerian press is one way they influence the perceptions of the audience and by extension the general on the subject matter. Since kidnapping is considered a problem with both social and economic implications, the reports and patterns of report by the media (to a large extent) have significant roles to play.

Framing Patterns and its Effectiveness in Reporting Kidnap Cases

According to the findings of the study conducted by Ehigiator (2023) the kidnap stories framed by the Nigerian press (specifically the *Guardian* and *Vanguard*) portray arrest of kidnappers, attack on kidnapping, response provided by government, individual response, efforts of security forces, security measures, and the impact of kidnapping. The implication of the foregoing is that the Nigerian press within the period under review portrayed kidnapping in different lights; and therefore gave the stories the needed treatment. This is believed to have created different perspectives and prism from which the security challenge can be seen by members of the public who are also the audience members of the studied publications operating in Nigeria. This aligns with framing theory on creating perceptions and prisms through which reported issues can be viewed.

Another type of frame used in the Nigerian press to report crime-related stories is the one known as episodic. According to Olumojobi (2017) three Nigerian newspapers namely the *Punch*, *The Vanguard* and the *Guardian* covered conflicts in Nigeria and focused on episodic treatment via news reports whilst neglecting the aspects that require interpretations and analysis in their framing of news. Episodic news frame is seen as giving stories an event-oriented report treatment or case study with concrete instances (Iyengar, as cited in Galasso, 2014). Its importance in the reporting of crime-related stories is that it helps paint a lucid picture of events that unfolded and takes the reader or audience to the scene providing a feeling as if s/he were right there.

Resolution frames, criminality frames and political response frames were found to be dominant in the reportage of conflict by prominent Nigerian newspapers; *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, and *Vanguard*

newspapers (Olumojobi, 2017). Similarly, Muobike (2017) in a study revealed that three primary frames; problem definition, cause, and remedy were used by *The Guardian* and *The Nation* newspapers in framing the Chibok girls abduction stories. Additionally, and according to the study, each frame category was further condensed in their reportage to the point that problem definition frames came under definition of the problems as government, insecurity, and Boko Haram, while cause frame adduced the cause of the abduction to good government, bad government, terrorism, and unity. Furthermore, the cascade of the third broad frame category which is remedy frame had under it sub-frames such as improve education, street protest, prayer and fasting, and security and training.

On the effectiveness of the frames of kidnapping stories by different newspapers within the Nigerian press landscape, it was discovered based on the studies reviewed that they were of a reasonable effect though no prominence was given to the issues bordering on the subject matter. Put in another way, though no reasonable prominence was accorded the stories, the frames were of significant effects in respect to stemming the tide and putting an end to the cases of kidnapping in the country. Ehigiator (2023) validated this assertion with the conclusion that though the Nigerian press appear to be effective in reportage of kidnapping, the stories seem to receive less prominence in respect of their placement on the pages of the newspapers.

Conclusion

This study concludes that press framing pattern of media contents directly affects the perception and attitude of audience to kidnapping and the manner in which they respond to security measures in staying on the alert against such occurrences. In addition, reportorial styles were adopted for the reporting of the stories though studies

reviewed showed heavy use of the straight news genre. In consideration of the importance of the issue of kidnap and its socio-economic impact on the individuals in the society, it is expected that focus would have been on the use of genres that are more journalistic; such as opinions, editorials, columns, interviews, and features. This is believed to be the most engaging and one that offers the better insights into the issues thereby enabling the public to have a good understanding of the topic of kidnapping. It is also expected that it will place them in good positions to offer their views on matters related thereof.

Recommendations

On the basis of the discourse above and conclusion, the study recommends that the Nigerian press takes on the reporting of kidnapping from human interest angle by presenting reports with deep analysis so as to create the needed awareness to end the challenge in Nigeria. Such analysis must provide the audience with the right perspective on understanding the issues of kidnapping, reasons for the abduction, and the probable economic, political, and social implications of the issues in the country. This will further create a sense of concern and encourage the audience to play more prominent roles in seeing to collective efforts towards ending the menace in Nigeria.

Furthermore, it recommends that the print media should perform their role efficiently as the society's watchdog by engaging in ethical reporting in terms of investigative and interpretative journalism that would direct the leadership of the country to strengthen the security agencies to combat perpetrators of crime, kidnapping and banditry. In addition, there should be a synergy between the government and press to gather relevant information and sensitise the public on the security measures towards avoiding kidnap situations. This can come in form of remedy/solution frames assigned to

stories. Consequent upon the foregoing, the study recommends the use of solution/remedy frames towards offering the

best possible solution to the security problems facing the country.

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