
NEWSPAPER COVERAGE AND BANDITRY IN NIGER STATE: A COMPARATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF *THE GUARDIAN* AND *DAILY TRUST* NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract

Over the years, security challenges are global phenomena that have bedeviled socio-economic development of the people. It is a phenomenon that has zero consideration for age, race, religion; ethnicity, or nationality. It is on this premise that this study assessed newspaper coverage of banditry in Niger State: A comparative content analysis of *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust Newspapers*. The study adopted two national dailies and content analysed. Media framing theory guided the objectives of the paper. Findings showed that within the period covered *Daily Trust* newspaper covered more stories on banditry as compared with *The Guardian* newspaper. The study recommends the following: The print media should give prominence to the reportage of cases of banditry and kidnapping and should organise debates on the issue as well as enlighten the public about the incidents. The print media should set agenda on the issue of banditry and kidnapping in a manner that would engage the audience participation in the tackling or proffering solutions to banditry in our society.

Key Words: Print Media, Coverage, Banditry, *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian* newspapers.

Introduction

Globally, the issue of state and national security is becoming one of great concern for scholars and security experts in the 21st century. This is because state sponsored conflicts, ethno-religious conflict; politically motivated conflicts and other forms of conflicts have recently come to constitute a subject of great concern (Kandi, Ibn-Mohammed & Eikojonwa, 2022). The case above, is not different in Nigeria for decades now; for instance, previous research and other media report shows that, in the first quarter of 2014 alone, 262 persons lost their lives in 15 separate attacks in Benue state and before and after the 2019 general election sporadic clashes has continued (Kandi, *et al*, 2022).

In one instance, bandits barefacedly attacked the state Governors convoy (Kenedy, Naomi & Halidu, 2019). Likewise, 16 separate attacks were reported in plateau, Niger State and Kaduna state. Banditry activities have of recent increased dangerously along Abuja –Kaduna road, the development left numerous motorist and passengers unaccounted for just as their belongings were taken away by the kidnappers. In most cases persons are kidnapped and taken to their hide out (Okoli, 2022). Ransoms are paid through their agent before the victims are released or

killed. From time to time hundreds of motorists traveling from Kaduna to Abuja as well as those travelling to other ways found them stranded for more hours as both lanes of the express way are blocked by cars hastily abandoned by their owners (Okoli, 2022).

In the last few years, Niger State, which used to be recognized among the most peaceful state in North central Nigeria have been battling with the issues of kidnapping and pockets of conflicts (Dipo, 2021). Remarkably, in the past conflicts motivated by religion, ethnicity and the struggle for resources and economic that were some of the major characteristics of many northern states were almost absent in Niger State. Regrettably, the last 5 years have seen Niger State hit by banditry attacks in Shiroro as the focal point of these attacks and kidnapping that terrorise peaceful coexistence of people in the area (Abdulaziz& Mac-Leva, 2021).

For example, in 2020, the attacks by banditry increased to the extent that aside GawuBabangidaSuleja, Bosso, Tafa and Chanchaga, the remaining local government areas in Zone B Senatorial District of Niger state were all taken over by bandits and kidnapers (Dipo, 2021). The above became worrisome for leaders within and outside Niger which makes them protest to the senate and as such got the presidents attention who then ordered air strikes on locations believed to have been the areas colonized by bandits in the state. Though, the people from the areas troubled by bandits argued that the direction by the president has not brought the necessary succor and peace to their areas as they accused the Nigeria Air Force of hitting the wrong targets or areas already deserted by bandits (Abdulaziz& Mac-Leva, 2021).

On the 17th February, 2021 students numbered around 27 students and teachers were abducted from a school in Rafi Local Government area, which also included some non-teaching staff in the school (Abdulaziz& Mac-Leva, 2021). Similarly, few weeks later, travelers on a state owned public transport were kidnapped at Kundu village in the same local government area of the state. (Abdulaziz & Mac-Leva, 2021).

Media reports play a key responsibility in the shaping of social reality because they are increasingly becoming a major source of citizen knowledge about societal issues (Ross, 2003). Media are recognised as framing forces that play a part in the construction of social reality and to the understanding of how detailed social problems are in nature (Schneider et al., 2010). Media content does not just bring to fore the unknown to the audience, but also substantiates or unsubstantiated what the audience perceives to be the reality of an event or issue (Sundin, 2015). Even though the news media serves as a mirror for the happenings in a community, it also shapes social phenomena in significant ways (Schneider et al., 2010). This, the media does through framing of people's perceptions and knowledge of conflicts and politics, which then affects, and sometimes shape their opinions and behavior, Because the

media report conflicts in a particular, Sundin (2015, p.2) says “media strongly influence the dynamics and outcomes of conflicts, and thus also shape the prospects of success of conflict parties”. Indeed, research on the role that the media plays in the construction of social conflicts shows that media most often do not report conflicts neutrally (Pate, Nwabueze, & Idiong, 2015). Consequently, even when media stays detached by just putting the allegedly 'objective facts' in their news coverage or participate and take positions by interpreting and explaining issues, it still affects the nature of conflicts, public opinion and public policy (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2012). This paper therefore interrogates how newspapers cover banditry in Niger State, using *Daily Trust* and *Guardian* newspaper as a case for analysis.

Statement of the Problem

The threat posed bandits are increasing every now and then in Nigeria. The issue is giving Nigeria bad image globally and has also impacted on government efforts to attract foreign investors. Banditry attacks and kidnapping have increased in Niger State for few years now, these attacks have been carried out in more than five out of the 25 local government areas recognized in the state. Notably among these local governments are Lapai, Rafi, Shiroro, Munya, Kontogora and even Paiko local government area (Masodomi, 2021). Buttressing the above, David (2022) asserts that banditry attacks in Grumana Community in Shiroro Local Government Area in Niger State led to the death of three people and over 50 persons were critically wounded. Similarly, attack on Mashegu Local Government Area of Niger State claimed one life with countless injured (David, 2022). Additionally, on January 25, 2020, 11 persons were killed and four women kidnapped as gunmen attacked Kudodo, Galapai, Dnakpala Makera and Dnalgwa communities in Shiroro Local Government Area (David, 2022). Interestingly, newspapers, in their course of reporting the issue of banditry in Niger state which is one the worst to have hit the states for decades now, have adopted various frames to past their reportage to their target audiences. As such, the various frames utilised, have influences on the audiences. The above can be attributed to the recognised relationship between newspaper frames and how their readers perceived their coverage of issues related to security. Against this backdrop, this paper interrogates the way *Daily Trust* and the *Guardian* newspapers respectively framed the banditry attacks in the state under investigation.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this paper is to examine newspapers coverage of banditry in Niger State, study of *Daily Trust* and *Guardian* newspaper. Specifically, the paper objectives are:

- i. Examine the different contents in which *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian* newspapers covers the issues of banditry in Niger State
- ii. Interrogates the direction of editorial contents on *Daily Trust* and *The*

Guardian newspaper on the coverage of banditry in Niger State

- iii. Identify the major terminologies adopted by Daily Trust and The Guardian newspaper in the coverage of banditry in Niger State
- iv. Discuss the extent of prominence accorded to the coverage of banditry by Daily Trust and The Guardian newspaper in Niger State.

Conceptual Review

The Concept of Banditry

The term banditry refers to the existence or an increase in violent crimes and armed robbery. Banditry also deals with the utilisation of threat and force in order to harass, intimidate, kill, rape and destroys a person's. This type of crime has become very common for decades now particularly in northern Nigeria (Nigeria Watch, 2018). Historically, the problem of banditry started before the civil war period in Nigeria when the process and act of governance suffered in some parts of the old Western region which resulted in various crimes, organised insurgency and politically motivated conflicts (Odinaku, 2018). Hence, with the return of democracy in 1999 ushered in local bandits who were mainly responsible for the stealing of animals and cattle's (Ndama, 2019). The incidence of banditry in Nigeria seems to be practically increasing for decades now, this Rotberg (2017) argued that crime against persons, such as rape; robbery and murder has increased in a very large scale and brutishness in Nigeria since 1999. The above is evident by the prevalent pattern of armed robbery in the country, which in effect explains the Africa-wide experience. In this regard, Onimode (2020) posits that the common forms of armed robbery and crimes in African countries includes but not limited to way-laying of people travelling on the roads, snatching of cars; and attack of people in their homes at odd hours. One could argue that these issues have been rising since the African crises started in the 1980s (cited in Chukwueme, Phinos, & Agaba, 2019).

Effects of Banditry in Nigeria

Banditry attacks have affected the peace and stability of Nigeria in the following ways according to Innocent, Ibn- Mohammed, and Eikojonwa (2021)

- i. The attacks by bandits have affected the lives and properties of people residing in Niger, Zamfara, Sokoto, Kaduna, Kebbi and Katsina states. Thus, approximately 21 million persons in the above states have been exposed to insecurity caused by banditry and kidnapping.
- ii. **Psychological stress and trauma:** The victims of banditry attacks have also been suffering from psychological and emotional trauma. These challenges are attributed by the suffering from being kidnapped and it usually has a lasting effect on the victims negatively.

- iii. **Atmosphere of fear and general distrust:** in areas suffering from banditry attacks, economic activities are usually limited due to the lack of trust and the high rate of danger in the area. Hence, people develop fear and anxiety which usually affects their movements and interactions with others in the area.
- iv. **Reduction of foreign direct investment:** It is no longer news that banditry and kidnapping has a serious effect on the level of foreign investment in Nigeria at the moment. It is a truism that because of kidnapping and banditry some areas in Nigeria, such as Zamfara, Kaduna and Sokoto are avoided by foreign investors.

Empirical Review

Ezegwu, Udoyo and Onuama (2019) conducted a study on the framing of Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) clashes with security forces in selected two national dailies (*The Guardian and Punch*). The study adopted content analysis method to collect relevant data. Results from the study showed that the newspapers covered the clashes, but a horrible number of 57 stories were published out of 192 editions of the newspaper utilised for the study, whereas a total of 6 frames were utilised to cover the issue. The study argued that newspapers in Nigeria should adopt and utilise more frame particularly positive frame in the coverage of crisis/conflict matters.

Adisa (2016) carried out a study on the effect of media frames on ethnic conflicts. The paper which explicitly tried to interrogate the level to which media frames about ethnic issues add to the increase of violence amongst various minority groups in Nigeria used primary method to gather relevant data from 26 ethnic group leaders in Nigeria. The work discovered that the patterns in which national dailies in Nigeria frame ethnic issues has a role towards increasing double standard, name calling, all of which started from the interest of the owners and as such increase ethnic questions and push the various tribes into pockets of conflicts in Nigeria. The author suggested that the Nigerian government must have a strong political will and tackle the issues without fear or favour.

In a study by Ngwu, Efetober, Ekwe and Chukwuma (2012) on rethinking terrorism reportage for sustainable development: An analysis of media

Coverage of the Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria. Data for the study was collected randomly from different states in Nigeria, representing the 6 geo-political zones in Nigeria. Adopting a survey method. The paper administered questionnaire to a given sample and the study discovered that the pattern of media coverage on Boko Haram is promoting the act of terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria. Danladi and Mohammed (2012) examined press coverage of the post-election violence in Bauchi and Kaduna. The paper adopted content analysis method. The study discovered that both papers showed that the newspapers sampled faced some

constraints in the reportage of the news on post-election violence. The study concluded that the post-election violence in Nigeria was managed and the general fragile situations.

Shehu (2017) conducted a study on newspapers coverage of herder/farmers conflict in Nigeria. Content analysis method was used. The study discovered that the headlines in the papers content analysed suggested that Fulani groups are being framed by the newspapers as “conflict mongers”. From the studies reviewed, it can be seen that most of the researchers used different methods and focused on areas outside Niger State. As such, newspaper coverage of banditry in Niger State has not been covered in previous studies. This is the major gap which this study will fill.

Theoretical Framework: Framing Theory

The major proponent of framing theory is Erving Goffman (1974) and the main assumption of the theory is that media often dwell more on certain events and then places them within a field of meaning. Argument by media scholars is that the framing theory borrowed its basic assumption from the key issues raised the proponent of the agenda-setting theory. As such, the framing theory and the agenda-setting theory are often inclined by researchers, to adopt Oller-Alonso's (2014) position, as either “theories competing or complementary ones”. In this direction, some authors argued that the framing theory be used together as the agenda setting theory and there are researchers with the position that the framing theory can practical exist and survives alone (Oller-Alonso, 2014). It is therefore key to state that frame and framing, as concepts, are very crucial to the utilisaton of the framing theory. Going by history, the origin of the framing theory can be traced to cognitive psychology and anthropology, prior to the above, the theory was used in other fields such as well as communication (Gorp, 2007).

Against this backdrop, one could assert's that the media often frame news or issues through selection and salience. In line with Entman's(1993) postulations, the media carries out framing by picking and identifying “certain facets of a perceived reality and making them more salient in such a way that endorses a precise definition of a definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or a treatment recommendation” (p. 52). Be that as it may, the importance of the media framing to this paper in hinged on the primary believe that the media's framing of issues and news shapes how the people will perceive and interpret issues in the society. It goes in line with how the frames used by newspapers in Nigeria to report news on banditry in Niger State and how it affects the discussion by their readers in the society.

Method and Materials

The paper adopted content analysis as the research method. Since the research objective is aimed at assessing newspapers coverage of rural banditry in Niger State. Content analysis was employed in conducting this study. This method is justified

by Kerlinger's (cited in Wimmer & Dominick, 2014, p. 163) content analysis is defined "a method of studying and analysing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables" It safeguarded the study and analyses of newspaper coverage of banditry in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner.

The population of the study thus, comprises all newspapers published in Nigeria. In this direction, the author purposively selects two national newspapers on the basis of their national spread; their level of coverage on banditry in Niger State; and steadiness on the news-stand. The papers selected are: *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust*. The period covers six months, spanning from June 1, 2022 to December 30th, 2022. Inside the study period, the total editions of the two dailies published and circulated a total 362. To determine the sample of the paper, the author utilised the technique of picking a sample suggested by Stempel in Wang (2006). Stempel likened samples of 6, 12, 18, 24 and 48 issues of daily newspaper and finds out that 12 issues from two constructed weeks efficiently and fruitfully epitomize the content of an annum. Using Stempel's technique, the sample size of this paper is 48 issues of each of *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian* newspapers.

Similarly, systematic sampling technique is used in selecting the editions of each newspaper studied. In line with the above, and adopting Alvi (2016) sampling technique, the interval for picking sample from the sampling frame was 8 and it is gotten by dividing 181 editions of each of the newspapers under study by the sample size which is $24 \left(\frac{181}{24} \approx 7.5 \right)$

Consequently, the interval value is approximately 8. Thus, the interval of collecting news reports adopted for the paper was 8 days (both the *Guardian* and *Daily Trust* Newspapers papers shared same study days. The units of analysis that was utilised for this paper comprised of the following: Editorials, Spot stories, Features, Pictures, Interview, Cartoons, Opinions, Syndicated columns and Letters to the editor.

The choice of these units puts it into clearer perspectives the frame given to the reports of "Banditry" by the two selected newspapers. Coder reliability is very central as it gives a study validation based on the facts that the data gathered is valid. Data were will be precisely examined via thorough review of contents on the papers. Additionally, scrutinised contents was further examined by the author to ascertain agreement with demands of content analysis in Mass Communication. Data derived from the contents of *Daily Trust* and *Guardian* newspaper on banditry in Niger State was analysed through tables, frequencies and simple percentages.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This research analysed a total of 24 editions for each of the newspapers studied. This gave a total of 48 editions respectively for both *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust* newspaper. The table below represents the total reportage of banditry by *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian* newspaper in Niger State.

Table 1: Media Coverage

Newspapers	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Daily Trust</i>	93	53.4
<i>The Guardian</i>	81	46.6
Total	174	100

Source: Field Survey, (2022)

Table 1 indicates the whole coverage of banditry by *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian* newspaper. The table showed that a total of 174 stories were acknowledged within the period reported by the papers. Importantly, the above further reveals that *Daily Trust* newspaper published 93 news on banditry representing 53.4%, whereas, *The Guardian* newspaper published 81 stories of the news on banditry representing 46.6%. Thus, the above means that there was more coverage of banditry stories on in Niger by *Daily Trust* newspaper when compared with the stories covered by *The Guardian* newspaper.

Table 2: Prominence of Published matter on banditry

Prominence	<i>Daily Trust</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	Total
Front page	26 (57.8%) (28%)	19 (42.2%) (23.5%)	45 (100%) (25.9%)
Middle page	7 (63.6%) (7.7%)	4 (36.4%) (4.9%)	11 (100%) (6.3%)
Inside page	51 (53.1%) (54.8%)	45 (46.9%) (55.6%)	96 (100%) (55.2%)
Back page	9 (40.9%) (9.7%)	13 (59.1%) (16%)	22 (100%) (12.6%)
Total	93 (53.4)	81 (46.6)	174 (100)

Source: Field Survey, (2022)

Table 2 revealed that the major news were published inside the pages of the newspapers with a figure of 96 (52.2%), 45 items which represented 25.9% were covered on the front page of the two newspapers, although 22 items which is equal to 12.6% were covered on the backpages of the papers selected.

Table 3: Length of Published matter on Banditry

Length of stories	Daily Trust	The Guardian	Total
Full page	5 (71.4%) (5.4%)	2 (28.6%) (2.5%)	7 (100%) (4%)
Half page	10 (71.4%) (10.7%)	4 (28.6%) (4.9%)	14 (100%) (8%)
Quarter page	16 (43.2%) (17.2%)	21 (56.8%) (25.9%)	37 (100%) (21.3%)
Less than quarter page	62 (53.4%) (66.7%)	54 (46.6%) (66.7%)	116 (100%) (66.7%)
Total	93 (53.4)	81 (46.6)	174 (100)

Source: Field Survey 2022

Table 3 indicates that the newspapers reported rural banditry more on less than quarter pages with a statistic of 116 (66.7%) followed by quarter pages with 37 (21.3%) issues. News on half pages were 14 (8%), full page news were 7(4%).

Table 4: Reportorial Genres

Types of Coverage	Daily Trust	The Guardian	Total
Editorial	3 (75%) (3.2%)	1 (25%) (1.2%)	4 (100%) (2.3%)
Spot stories	36 (52.9%) (38.7%)	32 (47.1%) (39.5%)	68 (100%) (39.1%)
Feature	5 (62.5) (5.3%)	3 (37.5%) (3.7%)	8 (100%) (4.6%)
Pictures	11 (11.8%)	20 (24.7%)	31 (100%) (17.8%)
Interviews	5 (71.4%) (5.3%)	2 (28.9%) (2.5%)	7 (100%) (4%)
Cartoons	7 (63.6%) (7.5%)	4 (36.4%) (4.9%)	11 (100%) (6.4%)
Syndicated Column	14 (53.8%) (15.1%)	12 (46.2%) (14.8%)	26 (100%) (14.9%)
Letters to the editor	3 (75%) (3.29.7%)	1 (25%) (1.2%)	4 (100%) (2.3%)
	9 (57.1%)	6 (7.4%)	15 (100%) (8.6%)
Total	93 (53.4)	81 (46.6)	174 (100)

Source: Field Survey, (2022)

Findings from table 4 indicated that out of 174 published materials by both *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian* newspaper, a comparison of the dailies under study indicated

that *Daily Trust* has the higher of all but one of the published contents with spot stories 36 (38.7%); opinions 14 (15.1%); letters to the Editor 9 (57.1%); cartoons 7 (7.5%); features 5 (5.3%); interviews 5 (5.3%); editorials 3 (3.2%); and syndicated columns 3 (3.29%), as against *The Guardian's* spot stories 32 (39.5%); opinions 12 (14.8%); letters to the Editor 6 (7.4%); cartoons 4 (4.9%); features 3 (3.7%); interviews 2 (2.5%); editorials 1 (1.2%); and syndicated columns 1 (1.2%). Nevertheless, *The Guardian* newspaper had the highest picture stories with 20 (24.7%) as against *Daily Trust's* 11 (11.8%).

Table 5: Frequented Terminologies in the Reportage of Rural Banditry in Niger State

Engagement	<i>Daily Trust</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	Total
Herdsmen/ Farmers	78 (56.9%) (20.7%)	59 (43.1%) (13.5%)	137 (100%) (16.9%)
Fulani	54 (60.7%) (14.4%)	35 (39.3%) (8%)	89 (100%) (11%)
Terrorists	10 (37%) (1.3%)	17 (63%) (3.9%)	27 (100%) (3.3%)
Killer herdsmen	3 (13%) (0.8%)	20 (87%) (4.6%)	23 (100%) (2.8%)
Extremists	23 (33.3%) (6.1%)	46 (66.7%) (10.5%)	69 (100%) (8.5%)
Crises/Conflict	62 (53.4%) (14.7%)	54 (46.6%) (12.4%)	116 (100%) (14.3%)
Militias	35 (36.5%) (9.3%)	61 (63.5%) (14%)	96 (100%) (11.8%)
Invasion	71 (60%) (18.9%)	48 (40%) (11%)	119 (100%) (14.7%)
Herdsmen/Boko Haram	20 (36.4%) (5.3%)	35 (63.6%) (8%)	55 (100%) (6.8%)
Massacre	4 (13.8%) (1.1%)	25 (86.2%) (5.7%)	29 (100%) (3.6%)
	16 (30.8%) (4.3%)	36 (69.2%) (8.3%)	52 (100%) (6%)

Source: Field Survey (2022)

Table 5 above shows the frequently used terminologies in the reportage of rural banditry in Niger State by both *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian* newspapers. Hence, data revealed the outcome of both newspapers' combined use of the following terminologies; Herdsmen/Farmers 137 (16.9%); bandits 119 (14.7%); crises/conflict 116 (14.3%); militias 96 (11.8%); Fulani 89 (11%); extremists 69 (8.5%); invasion 55 (6.8%); massacre 52 (6%); Herdsmen/Boko Haram 29 (3.6%);

terrorists 27 (3.3%); and killer herdsmen 23 (2.8%). In comparison, *Daily Trust* deployed more of the words Herdsmen/farmers with 78 (20.7%), bandits with 71 (18.9%), Crises/Conflict 62 (14.7%) and Fulani 54 (14.4%) as against *The Guardian's* 59 (13.5%), 48 (11%), 54 (12.4%), and 35 (8%) respectively.

However, *The Guardian* newspaper used more of the terminologies; Militias 61 (14%); extremists 46 (10.5%); massacre 36 (8.3%); invasion 35 (8%); Herdsmen/Boko Haram 25 (5.7%); Killer Herdsmen 20 (4.6%); and Terrorists 17 (3.9%) as opposed to *Daily Trust's* Militias 35 (9.3%); extremists 23 (6.1%); massacre 16 (4.3%); invasion 20 (5.3%); Herdsmen/Boko Haram 4 (1.1%); Killer Herdsmen 3 (0.8%); and Terrorists 10 (1.3%).

Discussion of Findings

Table 2 indicated that majority of the coverage were reported inside the pages of the newspapers with a number of 96 (52.2%), 45 items representing 25.9% were published on the front page of the two newspapers while 22 items which is equal to 12.6% were reported on the back pages of the newspapers.

Data from Table 4 indicates that out of 174 published materials by both *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian* newspaper, a comparison of the dailies under study shows that *Daily Trust* has the higher of all but one of the published contents with spot stories 36 (38.7%); opinions 14 (15.1%); letters to the Editor 9 (57.1%); cartoons 7 (7.5%); features 5 (5.3%); interviews 5 (5.3%); editorials 3 (3.2%); and syndicated columns 3 (3.29.7%), as against *The Guardian's* spot stories 32 (39.5%); opinions 12 (14.8%); letters to the Editor 6 (7.4%); cartoons 4 (4.9%); features 3 (3.7%); interviews 2 (2.5%); editorials 1 (1.2%); and syndicated columns 1 (1.2%). However, *The Guardian* newspaper had the highest picture stories with 20 (24.7%) as against *Daily Trust's* 11 (11.8%). A study by Afomachukwu (2020) on how Nigerian newspapers reports the Nigerian Armed Forces and Operation Python Dance II with a view to recognising the dominant frames in the stories covered indicates that stories bordering on human -interest were majorly covered during the reportage with 35% of total coverage whereas the security and attribution of responsibility reports had a substantial number of stories with 23% and 18% respectively. Further findings from the analysis show that the news on Operation Python Dance II were explanatory as majority (71%) of the stories were covered adopting the interpretative patterns of editorials, feature stories, columns/opinions and interviews.

Table 5 shows the frequently used terminologies in the reportage of rural banditry in Niger State by both *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian* newspapers. Hence, data revealed the outcome of both newspapers' combined use of the following terminologies; Herdsmen/Farmers 137 (16.9%); bandits 119 (14.7%); crises/conflict 116

(14.3%); militias 96 (11.8%); Fulani 89 (11%); extremists 69 (8.5%); invasion 55 (6.8%); massacre 52 (6%); Herdsmen/Boko Haram 29 (3.6%); terrorists 27 (3.3%); and killer herdsmen 23 (2.8%). In comparison, *Daily Trust* deployed more of the words Herdsmen/farmers with 78 (20.7%), bandits with 71 (18.9%), Crises/Conflict 62 (14.7%) and Fulani 54 (14.4%) as against *The Guardian's* 59 (13.5%), 48 (11%), 54 (12.4%), and 35 (8%) respectively. However, *The Guardian* newspaper used more of the terminologies; Militias 61 (14%); extremists 46 (10.5%); massacre 36 (8.3%); invasion 35 (8%); Herdsmen/Boko Haram 25 (5.7%); Killer Herdsmen 20 (4.6%); and Terrorists 17 (3.9%) as opposed to *Daily Trust's* Militias 35 (9.3%); extremists 23 (6.1%); massacre 16 (4.3%); invasion 20 (5.3%); Herdsmen/Boko Haram 4 (1.1%); Killer Herdsmen 3 (0.8%); and Terrorists 10 (1.3%). The above findings are in line with Innocent, Ibn- Mohammed, and Eikojonwa (2021) who in their study discovered that the media reports the same incidences in various parts of Nigeria in different tones, according to them, every crime committed in northern part of the country is associated with banditry but when similar crimes are committed in the southern parts of the country, the media attached different names and meaning to them

Conclusion

Banditry has increased in many states of the north at the moment in Nigeria which has no doubt affected lives and properties. The paper argued that *Daily Trust* newspaper provided more coverage and prominence to the rural banditry than *The Guardian* newspaper. The paper concludes that *Daily Trust* newspaper published 93 news on banditry representing 53.4%, whereas, *The Guardian* newspaper published 81 stories of the news on banditry representing 46.6%. Thus, the above means that there was more coverage of banditry stories on in Niger by *Daily Trust* newspaper when compared with the stories covered by *The Guardian* newspaper. It is imperative to state that *Daily Trust* newspaper reported the issues on banditry as a crises/conflict situation occurring between Fulani Herdsmen and individuals residing in less developed areas, whilst *The Guardian* newspaper reported news on banditry as an act of terrorism.

Recommendations

In line with the result, the paper recommended the following:

- I. The print media should give prominence to the reportage of cases of banditry and kidnapping and should organise debates on the issue as well as enlighten the public about the incidents.
- ii. The print media should set agenda on the issue of banditry and kidnapping in a manner that would engage the audience participation in the tackling or

proffering solutions to banditry in our society.

- iii. Prominence should be accorded to stories related to banditry attacks by Daily Trust and the Guardian newspapers, specifically those that affect the security of lives and properties as doing so draws better consideration of relevant authorities to the issues of security in Nigeria.
- iv. Lastly, professional training and retraining of staff should be provided to media houses as regards the reports of security news in the 21st century.

Limitations of the Study

Access to the internet at a point in time to source for related materials for the paper was the key limitation of the paper and also inadequate power supply.

Suggestion for Further Studies

The following studies are recommended for communication researchers along this path:

- i. Print media framing of Fulani-Herdsmen in Niger State.
- ii. Comparative analysis of print and broadcast media coverage of Banditry in Nigeria.
- iii. Audience perception of newspaper reportage of rural banditry in Nigeria.

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