MEASURING PUBLIC OPINION ON BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY THROUGH EDITORIAL MATTERS IN SELECTED NEWSPAPERS: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PUNCH, THIS DAY, DAILY SUN AND DAILY TRUST

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BY

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CERTIFICATION
This research project is an original work of Ganiyu, Muhammed Adekunle with registration number PG/MA/10/52332. It satisfies the requirements for presentation of research report in the Department of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my dear mother, Mrs Siddikat Ganiyu nee Durajaye for her love, care and commitment to her children.
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ABSTRACT

In an investigation into soft news public opinion on Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, the study content analyzed 520 issues of four newspapers (The Punch, This Day, Daily Sun and Daily Trust) over a six-month period from October, 2011 to March, 2012. With five units of analysis (including editorials, features, letters to the editor, opinion articles and press interviews) and four content categories (including editorial framing, agenda focus, frequency and editorial reaction) the study employed a coding sheet to collect relevant data for analysis and presentation. Findings revealed that political undertone that drove the Boko Haram violence was far more than the religious motive popularly associated with it. Findings also showed that the government and the elite class got less criticism in newspaper editorial reactions than the Boko Haram insurgents. The study concluded that the newspapers did not fully utilize the potency of editorials to hold the ruling class accountable for their contribution to the worsening case of violence brought about by Boko Haram insurgency. The study recommended that more critical editorials be done by newspapers on the shortcomings of the government and the elite class in order to foster national interest and curtail violence.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

The study was informed by the need to explore what kind of public opinion was disseminated in Nigerian press through their opinionated contents, such as editorials, features, letters to the editor, columnist’s opinion articles and media interviews on the protracted Boko Haram insurgency from October, 2011 to March, 2012.

In its core essence, this research study was inspired by the escalating modes of operation of Boko Haram militants, who initially were fighting government forces with swords, bows and arrows, home-made hunting rifles and petrol bombs. But now, they have developed their warfare into devastating acts of terrorism which include suicide bombings, shellings, assassinations and hostage takings. Similarly, Boko Haram targets have moved beyond government security operatives and the ruling class. They now include Christians, opposing Muslims and media establishments. The situation is so grossly alarming that hardly does any day pass by without a reported case of violence orchestrated by Boko Haram in Nigeria, especially in the northern region.

From July 2009 when the insurgency began up till this present time, the violence has claimed hundreds of innocent lives and properties worth several billions of naira. Beyond this, it has unleashed an alarming internal insecurity on the country across board, subsequent to which the nation suffers huge international disrepute. The current period in the nation’s history offers a similitude of bitter experience of spites and antics that characterized the build-up to the Nigerian civil war in the late sixties and the socio-political disenchantment which set the tone for outburst of public disorder that portrayed the June 12 national crisis of the early 1990s. What, other than Boko Haram insurgency, has been setting the tone of national debate in Nigeria? The federal government has found it a very hard nut to crack, and the citizenry have acknowledged it as a devastating terror.

In the media environment, newspaper reporters have had a field day on happenings pertaining to Boko Haram, going by the volumes of news reports they turn in to their media houses on daily basis. Apart from these conventional straight news stories which are ethically written without bias or personal sentiments, newspapers also explore
an array of organized avenues to put opinionated messages across to people. Such include feature articles and personalized columns of in-depth news analyses and interpretations, with which volumes of viewpoints have been written on Boko Haram mayhem in different newspapers all over the country.

However, there exists a very unique thing in a newspaper called editorial page. This page contains the corporate view of every newspaper industry on a topical issue that affects the public and on which necessary action should be taken for better situation to exist. Editorials have been noted as an effective tool for bringing about change in the governance and society. They are the only mouthpiece with which newspaper establishments can plainly express their views and opinions on a given issue, take a position on such issue and make an appeal for action (Chilton 2004).

To investigate how well the Nigerian press set public agenda on the Boko Haram insurgency, the proposed study finds the newspaper editorial opinions and other opinionated write-ups as a relevant ground. Thus the pivot around which the focus of this research shall revolve is the editorial and soft news pages which, as a matter of fact, form the only avenue to discover the official and corporate stand taken by newspapers on the Boko Haram issue.

A good background for an enquiry into media agenda on Boko Haram insurgency in the press cannot be complete without shedding light on certain issues. In a bid to fully comprehend what this study intends to unravel, therefore, a review of how, when, where and why the entire Boko Haram trouble was hatched is provided in the following chronicle.

Boko Haram in Hausa language literally means “Western education is forbidden”. The word boko originally means “fake”, but it has become the name with which Western education is generally called by Hausa people. Haram is an Arabic word for “forbidden”. Boko Haram is a label with which Jama’atul Ahlis Sunna Lidda’wati Wal-Jihad (People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad) was dubbed by residents of Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, where the Islamic group was founded in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf. Residents gave it the name because of its strong opposition to Western education and Western culture, which it sees as corrupting Muslims. For almost three years now (since July, 2009 specifically) the radical organization has
notoriously remained on the centre stage of bloody conflict with the government, security operatives and civilian targets in Nigeria.

Widely known as a group of armed and dangerous Muslim dissidents, Boko Haram now seeks to abolish the secular system of government and establish sharia law in the country through terror and aggression. The group is also infamous for attacking Christian churches, opposing Muslim clerics and media establishments.

As regards the circumstances under which the group was established ten years ago, it is obvious that it came into being to fulfill both religious and political agenda. For instance, the group worked in partnership with the government under former Governor Ali Modu Sheriff of Borno State. In a statement attributed to the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) chairman of Borno State, Alhaji Baba Basharu, Daily Trust (2011) reported that Boko Haram came to prominence in Borno State when it helped to bring Governor Ali Modu Sheriff to power in 2003. However, troubles began when Ali Modu Sheriff of All Nigeria People’s Party (ANPP) was working to win the state from his predecessor Mala Kachallah (who became governor under ANPP but defected to Alliance for Democracy [AD] in order to seek second tenure) in the wake of 2003 gubernatorial election. Sheriff entered into a pact with Boko Haram (then popularly known as Yusufiyyah Movement) with a promise to implement shariah rule in Borno State. After becoming governor, Sheriff created a Ministry of Religious Affairs and appointed Alhaji Buji Foi, who was then Boko Haram’s national secretary, as its first commissioner. The amity between the two camps lasted for a while until they fell out when Sheriff did not fulfill his promise to implement shariah law. At that point Muhammed Yusuf ordered Foi to resign from Sheriff’s cabinet. Foi resigned, and most staff of the Religious Affairs Ministry whom he had brought there also left along with him. Subsequently, Boko Haram began working to achieve shariah rule through preaching.

Soon, there was growing tension between Boko Haram members and the ruling class in Borno State. At a point there was a major clash between them and the police at Maidokiri, near the GRA in Maiduguri, and some of their members were killed. When Boko Haram members staged a procession to the cementry to bury their dead members, another clash took place with the police. The police accused some of them of riding their motorbikes without crash helmets and in the ensuing clash, 19 people died. Muhammed
Yusuf then went to a number of security agency offices demanding for justice for the two incidents. Soon after, Boko Haram members were attacking police stations and prisons. This ultimately led to gruesome events of July 2009 in which confrontations between federal forces and Boko Haram led to the death of over 700 members of the group, including its leader Mohammed Yusuf, who was killed in police custody.

A number of reasons have been attributed to the enormous followers mustered by Boko Haram group in northern Nigeria. Prominent among them is that Yusuf successfully attracted loyalists from unemployed youths by speaking out against police and political corruption (Eric Guttschuss, 2010). It has also been established that Boko Haram violent uprising in Nigeria is ultimately due to the fallout of frustration with corruption and the attendant social malaise of poverty, unemployment and low rate of formal education in the mostly affected states of northern Nigeria (Abdulkarim, 2011).

Beyond this, the manner in which Boko Haram was founded is another factor that endeared it to its followers. Set up in Maiduguri with an Islamic centre which included a mosque and a school, the group attracted many poor families in northern Nigeria and neighbouring countries of Chad and Niger to enroll their children. The centre also comprised a sprawling compound with an area of land covering about 2.5 miles. Thus the centre was used both as school and recruiting ground for jihadis to fight the state government in the confrontations that would follow Boko Haram’s severed relation with Governor Ali Modu Sheriff (Johnson, 2010).

From its inception, Boko Haram conducted its operations more or less peacefully, especially during its first seven years of existence. However, that changed in 2009 when the Nigerian government launched an investigation into the group’s activities following reports that its members were arming themselves. Prior to that, the government had reportedly ignored - in repeated manners - warnings about the increasingly militant character of the organization, including that of a military officer colonel Ben Ahanotu, who was then in charge of a local anti-crime operation in Borno State (Associated Press, 2009).

Eventually, with the July 26 (2009) Boko Haram attack on a police station in Bauchi at the end of which 39 militants and a soldier were killed, and clashes between militants and the Nigerian Police Force spread to kano, Yobe and Borno states, the
Nigerian government swung into action. Federal forces launched a deadly attack on Boko Haram stronghold in Maiduguri where members of the group had barricaded themselves. From July 28 to 30 when the federal offensive was carried out, more than 700 people were killed in the city of Maiduguri alone, according to the Red Cross (Press TV, 2009).

Documentary sources gleaned from press reportage between July 2009 and June 2012 reveals a vicious string of bloody violence ranging from Boko Haram bomb blasts to assassinations of prominent political and religious leaders, prison breaks, kidnappings and killings of expatriates, bank robberies, arsons, etc. It has also led to declaration of a state of emergency in the violence-ridden local government areas of Borno, Plateau, Niger and Yobe states as well as temporary closure of Nigeria’s border with Chad and Cameroon. In addition to this, several offensives and raids have been unleashed by government’s Joint Task Force (JTF) on Boko Haram hideouts, many of which resulted in gun battles and occasional shellings that brought about scores of casualties.

After three days of intense gun battles and mortal shellings, the federal forces succeeded in capturing Mohammed Yusuf, founder of Boko Haram. However, less than 24 hours of Yusuf’s stay in custody, he was killed by the police for allegedly trying to escape. His mutilated and bullet-poked body was publicly displayed with his hands still handcuffed to his back. This raised the question as to whether he was actually trying to escape when killed by the police or he was summarily executed in the interest of the ruling class to hide certain things about Boko Haram sponsors and operations which might be indicting.

Subsequently, there was an outburst of suspicion and foul play as some segments of the media, the general public and international human rights organizations believed some conspiracy lay beneath Yusuf’s death (Council on Foreign Relations, 2010). First, Yusuf’s hands were still handcuffed to the back of his mutilated body. Second, some of the officers who witnessed Yusuf’s killing told reporters that he had pleaded for mercy before he was executed. The fact that voices of officers shouting “no mercy” could be clearly heard in background of the video of public display of Yusuf’s dead body further corroborates this allegation. Third, he was not allowed to be properly investigated and tried at law court. His killing was thus regarded as extra judicial.
Sequel to the killing of Yusuf, Boko Haram members regrouped and succeeded in carrying out their first terrorist attack in Borno in January 2010, killing four people. Since then, their extremism and violence have kept escalating in terms of both frequency and intensity.

In July 2010, an interesting twist was added to Boko Haram setting when Abubakar Shekau, Yusuf’s former deputy who was hitherto believed to have been killed during July 2009 federal onslaught on the militant group, appeared in a video posted online claiming leadership of the movement. According to Reuters, Shekau took control of the group after Yusuf’s death in 2009. One after the other, Boko Haram has posted more than four online videos among which was a raw clip of how This Day Newspaper offices in Abuja and Kaduna were bombed on 26 of last April in suicide attacks carried out by the group.

The story of Boko Haram fundamentalists and their acts of violence complicate the conventional account of religious insurgency in Nigeria; it is one religious uprising twice intertwined with political subterfuge. The group’s flexibility in change of tactics and targets has defied all estimation of government security and intelligence services. Up north, the situation is such that for some time now it has become a challenge to get people to talk freely about the group’s activities and modes of operation. Families and individuals are scared to open up because they don’t know who is Boko Haram and who is not.

For the first time since he assumed office, President Jonathan recently admitted that there were Boko Haram sympathizers in his government and the security agencies, thereby pointing to how much the extremist movement might have penetrated into government and security circles (France 24, 2012). This is no gainsaying, given the fact of how Boko Haram succeeded in bombing the “heavily secured” National Police Headquarters and United Nations House last year August in Abuja, the federal capital of Nigeria. Boko Haram has continued to interest the reading public as a topical national issue up till date, and it may remain so for some time more.
1.2 Statement of Problem

One of the major roles of mass media is to bring society into a system of harmonious integration. Through this correlation function, the mass media are expected (among other things) to explain, interpret and comment on the meaning of events and conditions. They are also responsible for providing guides for established authorities in their policies and procedures as well as setting agenda and conferring status. All these constitute one of the four items of roles played by the fourth estate of the realm (Ndolo, 2011 & McQuail, 2005).

As the Boko Haram insurgency rages on with rising tension in Nigeria, there appears to be need for assessing how the press have played their roles in setting agenda on it through opinionated contents. There is also need to find out the press evaluation of measures taken by the government towards quelling the persisting insurgency. Going by the plethora of public outcries which trail the incessant violence occasioned by the Boko Haram insurgency, there is no gainsaying that the Nigerian masses are very much concerned about the problem and government measures towards putting it to rest.

Although there has been general assessment of Boko Haram violence in terms of material losses, such as Clothia (2012), Abdulkarim (2012) and Bartolotta (2011), what has not been determined is the way and level of mass opinion about Boko Haram in the context of the press. Consequently, a huge question arises from in the researcher’s mind; what if the media contents run contrary to public agitations and yearnings about Boko Haram? This is a poser that begs for an empirical answer. There is thus a need to investigate whether media contents are in consonance with general feelings or not, and also to make recommendations. This is the haunch that sparked off the focus of this research effort.

Similarly, there seems to be some relationship existing between the escalating violence and the media role of correlation of society. Hypothetically, if the press perform their correlation function well, it is expected that their editorial contents will impact on the government and society at large. However, as the Boko Haram violence keeps mounting, can we say that the media have not discharged their editorial responsibility or that Boko Haram issue has been ignored in the editorial focus of the press? There is clear need for this study in order to carry out an objective investigation of the problem and
arrive at a reliable conclusion. The most effective way of going about this is by content-analyzing newspaper’s editorial comments on the Boko Haram issue, and this is exactly what the study intends to carry out on *The Punch, This Day, Daily Sun and Daily Trust* newspapers.

Furthermore, given that Boko Haram has carried out suicide bombings on two offices of *This Day* newspaper as a “warning to deter the press from misreporting its activities to the public”, it was vital that a study of this kind be done to ascertain the level of press neutrality and grasp of the whole issue editorialwise. Hence *This Day* was included as one of the four newspapers whose editorial opinions were content-analyzed in the enquiry carried out.

1.3 **Objectives of Study**

The focus of this inquiry is to investigate how the press fared in correlation of society through soft news stories on the Boko Haram insurgency during the period of October, 2011 to March, 2012. To address this problem in a specific manner, the study sought to explore and find out the following:

1. The portrayal of Boko Haram in *The Punch, This Day, Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust* newspapers’ soft news stories
2. The kind of agenda set by *The Punch, This Day, Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust* newspapers on Boko Haram insurgency
3. The frequency of Boko Haram issue in the soft news stories of *The Punch, This Day, Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust* newspapers
4. The prevailing editorial reaction of *The Punch, This Day, Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust* newspapers towards Boko Haram insurgency

1.4 **Research Questions**

The following research questions were posed to guide the inquiry:

1. How did *The Punch, This Day, Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust* newspapers frame Boko Haram in the period under investigation?
2. What kind of agenda was set by *The Punch, This Day, Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust* newspapers in the period?
3. How frequent did Boko Haram come up as soft news focus of *The Punch, This Day, Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust* newspapers in the period?

4. What was the prevailing editorial reaction of *The Punch, This Day, Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust* newspapers on Boko Haram insurgency during the period?

### 1.5 Significance of Study

The need for an assessment of newspapers’ public opinions on the Boko Haram insurgency is as twice important as it is topical. Ndolo (2011) put this more succinctly by positing that the media promote national interests and certain behaviours especially in critical or emergency situations and during times of national crises. He went further by maintaining that they not only advance national interests in the spheres of politics, war, economic development, work, religion and sports but also mobilize the populace against unpopular policies and dictatorial regimes. From the foregoing Ndolo’s exposition, the significance of this research project can be weaved around the topicality of the research focus, i.e. Boko Haram insurgency and the need to investigate mass media’s editorial and soft news opinions on it.

The study will also enable the researcher to discover the level of coverage given to Boko Haram issue by the press in terms of editorial and soft news opinions and thus provide a benchmark for assessing media’s handling of the insurgency.

Similarly, the significance of this research project has been further reaffirmed by the call for inquiry into Boko Haram as a phenomenon in Nigerian society. The call which came out in the newspaper report published by *The Nation* entitled “Scholar seeks research on Boko Haram” and was attributed to Professor Francis Egbokhare of Linguistics Department, University of Ibadan, read:

> To prevent the Boko Haram threat from spreading to the academia, there is need for more research into the sect’s ideological, sociological and religious thinkings. … by doing so the academia will be helping to solve the Boko Haram problem. We need to analyse Boko Haram culturally, institutionally and situate it within the context of the Nigerian nation. (Olugbamila, 2012, p.1)
From the media perspective, the foregoing call raised a thought-provoking concern. Thus, a question emerges, and it can be framed in this manner: “Could it mean that the media’s inadequate grasp of Boko Haram as an entity had led to the alleged mis-reporting of the group’s activities? Or did all this really lead to the group’s threats and bombings of This Day offices? Undoubtedly, this call has further added some relationship between Boko Haram insurgency and media’s editorial opinions as researchable variables of interest.

Also, the study is very significant in that it will pave the way for further research into Boko Haram issue, such as audience perception of Boko Haram insurgency. As such, the research brings to fore the importance of newspapers as a guide to government and the general public.

Finally, the study will provide reliable data upon which conclusion can be drawn on the kind of agenda set by the press on Boko Haram insurgency. As such, the research brings to fore the importance of newspapers as a guide to government and the general public.

1.6 Scope of Study
This study covered The Punch, This Day, Daily Sun and Daily Trust newspapers. The editorial and soft news opinions of both newspapers served as the focus area for generation of data meant for investigating the problem under study. The Punch and This Day are among the top seven dailies in Nigeria in terms of circulation, according to 2009 newspaper survey conducted by Zus Bureau, an independent media audit agency commissioned by the Advertisers Association of Nigeria, the Media Independent Practitioners Association of Nigeria and the Association of Advertising Agencies of Nigeria (Brandwork Nigeria, 2012).

Editorial and soft news opinions of The Punch are premium to this inquiry because the newspaper commands the widest readership in the Nigerian reading public. Those of This Day are also of huge interest to the study because the newspaper has been attacked twice by Boko Haram militants on allegation of “hostile” reportage and taking sides with the government.
1.7 Definition of Terms

The key concepts that came up in the study are operationally defined as follows:

**Media agenda:** What the mass media want people to know about an important issue and how the media want them to react to it. Media agenda ultimately becomes public agenda when people think in line with it. This, in turn, brings about change in public policy by the government.

**Boko Haram:** The name with which the Jama’atul Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awati Wal Jihad (People Committed to the Propagation of Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad) are popularly known.

**Insurgency:** An armed rebellion against a constituted authority.

**Editorial:** An article that presents the opinion of a newspaper’s editors or publishers on a particular issue that concerns the public. It is usually published on the newspaper’s editorial page.

**Leader:** A synonym for editorial comment. It is also called *leading article*.

**Editorial reaction:** The central topic, message or position around which an editorial comment is built.

**Editorializing:** The act of injecting personal opinion into news writing. It is considered unethical in journalism.

**Editorial comment:** The general build-up of editorial writing in which the editorialist gives a background to explain the Boko Haram issue.

**Editorial reaction:** The position taken by the newspaper on Boko Haram issue vis a vis government.

**Frequency:** The number of times Boko haram comes up as a focus of an editorial or soft news in a particular issue of a newspaper.

**Editorial framing:** The particular language or word with which Boko Haram is described in an editorial.

**Public opinion:** The collection of views of many different people on a particular topical issue that stands as a reflection of general feeling in society.

**Editorial matter:** Opinionated contents, including editorials, features, letters to the editor, columnist’s opinion articles and media interviews.
REFERENCES


CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Focus of Review
The chapter seeks to bring together a collection of expert comments, arguments and findings on research studies earlier conducted in areas that are related to the press and Boko Haram issue in Nigeria. To do this in a proper way, the review also gleans from past works done on some research variables that bear certain historical antecedents to the problem under investigation.

This review is therefore aimed at discussing past research efforts made on problems concerning Boko Haram and religious violence in Nigeria vis a vis the mass media contents so as to find out information on what has been discovered so far, the suggestions brought forward by the researchers of those problems, the vacuum left off by their investigation, the methods of research they used and the relevance of such methods to the focus of this study.

2.2 The Concept of Media Agenda
The academic and normative interests in explaining media agenda converge on the connection between its puzzling causes and effects on media activities. What correlation exists between media agenda and public agenda? If the media set agenda for the public, what sets media agenda? The most critical media source in setting news agenda is newspaper (Theodor, 2010). Thus, agenda set by individual segments of the mass media may vary from time to time. For instance, newspapers’ agenda may vary from private ownership to government ownership. The agenda may be political (e.g. to get certain politician elected), economic (e.g. to get certain financial policies passed in the legislative house), social (e.g. to bring about a gender-focused reformation), religious (e.g. to project certain belief) or ethnic (e.g. to emphasize ethnic marginalization), e.t.c. All these varying agendas have been empirically pointed out in scholarly works, such as Okoli (2009) and Isa (2011).

However, Rufus (2010) has discovered that media agenda is not a sheer motive in the realm of politics, economy or religion. According to him, “Public agenda is about
how the public weighs in on key issues” (p. 17). In a similar perspective, Adah (2009) posited that media agenda may not necessarily be occasioned by certain ulterior political or economic drives, but the need to fulfill certain professional obligations which have been routinely programmed into the media establishment. This, he maintained, included the need to “outsell other newspaper titles and to hold on to wider circulation and audience reach” (p. 28). A critical look into the foregoing argument reveals that media agenda is more or less a managerial function, which has become an integral part of corporate image of the any newspaper organization.

In his own study which was carried out on a group of Lagos-based dailies, Laoti (2011) has found out two distinct dimensions in which media agenda are set on public consciousness. These two dimensions gave rise to editorializing and editorial reaction. According his explanation, the latter is ethically portrayed through the editorial page of a newspaper and the former is unethically manifested in the news reports of a newspaper. These two dimensions further gave rise to five constructs viz: political agenda, economic agenda, social agenda, religious agenda and ethnic agenda. The most manifest of these variables “is the political agenda mainly because many newspapers proprietors share certain amity and have some sympathy for the ruling class through mutual understanding” (p. 24).

Away from the foregoing, one other pertinent question that springs up from past research efforts revolves around whether media agenda is the same as editors’ agenda or publishers’ agenda. Findings have shown that both cases occur, except that the situation is more pronounced in the latter. Newspaper owners are found to be mostly individuals who are business oriented and socially responsible. The economic determinism, however, has taken a prior place in the scheme of things in the routine running of newspaper business. News commercialization is one very phenomenon that points this out in the modern media environment, both private and government owned.

Consequently, this has brought out the question of whether or not news is a commodity. If we take it as a commodity, then it stands to go the way of highest bidder, just like an article put up for sale in an auction. If, on the hand, it is not anything of commodity then it is ethically wrong to intersperse news bulletin with commercials or fit up the cover page of a newspaper with bottom strip adverts. The matter appears to be
more reasonably resolved by Akande (2008) in his study on the relationship between news and advertising. He submitted as follows:

Though news is not the same thing as newspaper advertisement or television commercial, it is however a powerful vehicle of conveying messages to people. This is more so because news commands a high level of credibility and believability from the general public. What, other than this, does the advertiser need to bring his products down to the threshold of acceptance and patronage? But this does not presuppose that news in itself is a commodity up for sale. (p. 57)

2.2.1 Are Editorials Editors’ Opinions or Publishers’ Opinions?
Several research scholars and media critics have sought to answer this poser in an array of ways. In a sample of leading newspaper editors in Abuja the Federal Capital Territory, Ojooba (2010) discovered that 70% of respondents agreed that what makes their newspaper’s editorial reactions is a consensus of opinions reached at editorial board meeting which comprises the senior editors and the cartoonist. 20% held that their newspapers’ editorials stem from the views of their publishers (i.e. proprietors) while 10% declined to specify on the question, taking it as bordering on managerial or policy domains of their media organizations.

From the foregoing, it is instructive to note that media agendas are considered as part of professional running of newspaper organizations and not necessarily a managerial routine. This submission is similar to the findings of Igboke (2009) and Otu (2011) in their analyses of survey questionnaires administered on news editors of print media based in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State. Individually, both researchers concluded that editorial opinions of the newspapers sampled were the professional responsibility of the editors.

While making his position known on the issue, Otu (2011) further commented:

The obvious thing about media management in Nigeria is that not all media outfits are established or run by government. Even among those media organizations set up by private concerns, not all of them have
proprietors who are keenly interested in the political or economic or religious affairs of the public domain. Most media outfits are business-oriented ventures that are interested in lasting the business environment through utilization of resources and maximization of profit. (p. 47)

2.2.2 What Is the Impact of Mass Media on Public Agenda?

The mass media can impact on public agenda by selectively reporting news and covering only one side of a story (Mortensen, 2010). Does this also happen in editorial reactions of newspapers? To unravel this question, Zhu, Watt, Syder, Yan and Jiang (1993) conducted a content analytical study on selected dailies in New York city and discovered that, “there is a great deal of cause-and-effect relationship between public issue priority formation and social interaction on one hand and between public issue priority and media agenda on the other” (p. 25).

In an earlier study carried out in African setting, Pratt and Manheim (1988) found out that the agenda dynamics in the media environment was hugely dominated by the political enclave which in turn was brought about by elite conspiracy to overtake media ownership.

Collectively, the foregoing citations point more or less to the same phenomenon - the media environment is far saturated with conflicting interests from both political and business circles. This, perhaps, prompted the inquiry carried out by Marquis, Schaub and Gerber (2011) to fathom the fairness of media in handling political campaigns in Switzerland. The research findings not only provided staggering statistics on ownership interest in media endorsement, especially in privately own press but also called the impartiality of the media to question.

A similar situation was replicated by the study conducted by Harding (2011), which brought about his postulation of general concepts in the study of the press and public opinions, which among other things, hold that “the press is a catalyst of change in society of conflicting interests” (p. 381).

Curiously yet, in an assessment of the role played by local newspapers in citizens’ volunteerism consciousness in Japan, and another probe into the limits of media advocacy in public matters, Rausch (2002) and Timothy (2010) found out that media
agendas are a necessity borne out of the media contact with society as mediators. They further maintained that the role of mass media as mass mobilizers and correlators made them inextricably bound to set public agenda. This very line of argument has been towed by Remaley (2008) in his treatise on fifteen things every journalist should know about public engagement.

2.2.3 Public’s Issue Agenda vs Media’s Issue Agenda

A number of research findings have pointed out in various ways on how public’s issue agenda and media’s issue agenda affect each other. Notable among these are Uscinski (2009), Haas (2009) and Shanahan (2011). Uscinski and Haas have found out that both public and media affect each other, a situation which brings about the mass media yielding to public pressure on certain development. This, according to them, could be illustrated through the incident of a impending bill on the floor of the legislative house against which the general public are staging protests. At this stage, the agenda (hitherto public agenda) becomes media agenda. The media may in turn modify the issue at stake by some form of adjustment, and then it turns out as media’s agenda which is then implanted on the public consciousness. The government on its own will issue out some public policy which will be in line with the law emanating from the legislative body. It is thus a string of cause-effect relationship that does not have a fixed starting or end point.

From the preceding evidence, it can be concluded that what constitutes public agenda may and may not at all times be media agenda. But then, often times media agenda prevails on the public because of the power of the press as the watchdog of society. The press are the gatekeepers who sift what is newsworthy from what is not, and by so doing decide what the public should think about and reason along with – agenda setting in action.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical relevance of agenda-setting function of the mass communication media has been found to be of prime value to this research effort. According to Severin and Tankard (1997), the agenda-setting theory of the media refers to media’s capability in raising the importance of an issue in the public’s mind through repeated news coverage.
Onabajo (2005) wrote that the first systematic study of the agenda-setting hypothesis was reported in 1972 by McCombs and Shaw (1972) when they hypothesized that the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign by influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issues.

In an earlier study, however, Lang and Lang (1955) has submitted that the mass media force attention to on certain issues and that they build-up public images of political figures. This is also applicable to media in Nigeria where issues of national importance were consistently reported in the news casts, news analyses and editorials (e.g. sharia imbroglio of 1999-2000, Obasanjo’s third term bid of 2006, Patricia Etteh’s scandal and impeachment of 2007, the on-going state of emergency in the power sector, the current Boko Haram insurgency, etc). The mass media in all these and other issues alerted the general public on their seriousness and suggested what individuals in the mass society should think about, know about and have feelings about.

In his study of the agenda setting, Funkhouser (1973) posits that there is a strong correlation between public ranking of an issue as important and the amount of coverage given to the issue by the media. In other words, the issues to which the public give high ranking are also the issues to which the media are giving a lot of coverage. This position is saliently supported by Edy and Meirick (2007) in their research into how media agenda setting and framing influenced the public support for U.S invasion of Afghanistan following the September 11 terrorist attack of the World Trade Centre. Their content analytical study of nocturnal network news during the period of the military campaigns reveals that the U.S. media framed the events of September 11 in terms of both war and crime, and set them (i.e. the frames) as a public agenda. Their findings also show that the American public also ranked the cross-border antiterrorism measure of their government as a top national priority.

### 2.4 Agenda Setting, Framing and Priming: A Case of Theoretical Distinction

There has been ongoing controversy about whether agenda setting, priming, and framing are distinct theoretical paradigms or simply linguistic distinctions without difference. The heart of the controversy is over whether the three phenomena share a common mechanism (Scheufele, 2000). It has been widely argued that agenda setting posits that
the more the media cover an issue, the more top-of-mind and salient that issue is for the public, and the thoughts that easily come to mind are the ones about people at the pinnacle of decision making (e.g. Price and Tewksbury, 1997; Scheufele, 2000). Priming can be considered a consequence of agenda setting; once an issue has been primed, or made salient, it plays a large role in evaluation of leaders and policies (e.g. Iyengar & Kinder, 1987).

Some researchers have argued that framing is no more than aspect, or second-level agenda setting. Where first-level agenda setting makes issues salient, second-level agenda setting makes aspects of the issue salient by the same mechanism (e.g., Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; McCombs, 1997 & Zaller, 1992). McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escober and Rey (1997) cited Entman’s (1993, p. 52) salience-based definition of framing to support their argument that framing and second-level agenda setting are essentially the same: “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text”.

Yet elsewhere is his treatise, Entman (1993) suggested that frames work differently from agendas. His description of a frame suggests that salience is not produced by repetition but rather by their structure of narratives. Frames, he says:

Define problems, i.e. determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits usually measured in terms of common cultural values; diagnose causes, i.e. identify the forces creating the problem; make moral Judgment, i.e. evaluate causal agents and their effects; and suggest remedies, i.e. offer and justify treatments for the problems and predict their likely effects. (P. 52).

Whereas agenda-setting and priming theories suggest that material that is incorporated into a narrative structure will be more salient to audiences that materials that is not. Framing also suggests that the same information can be perceived differently depending upon the narrative in which it appears (e.g. Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). In his later work, Entman (2003) contrasts repetition with ‘cultural resonance’ as a mechanism for influencing audience media texts.
This controversy over the relative explanatory powers of repetitive and resonance is irresolvable in this current formulation in part because agenda-setting research measures effects by seeing how closely the media agenda matches the public agenda. Framing research, on the other hand, measures frame adoption indirectly by observing how exposure to a media frame shifts public opinion on a relevant policy issue.

2.5 Effects of Agenda-Setting, Priming and Framing

Second-level agenda-setting theory posits that media influence public opinion by altering the relative accessibility of considerations in people’s minds. That is, what do people think about when they think about an issue? Framing theory, on the other hand, is less about the information called to mind than it is about efforts at making sense of an issue, or how people think about an issue.

Iyengar (1987) grounded his earliest framing studies in attribution theory, the basic assumption of which is that people habitually ask themselves why something happened, why someone did something. Similarly, one of the seminal figures in framing theory, Goffman (1974, p. 8), wrote: “I assume that when individuals attend to any current situation, they face the questions, they employ frames in order to organize experience and make sense of it.” Framing theory also draws on work in prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984), which shows that presenting precisely the same choice with different implicit frames of reference can profoundly affect people’s decisions. As Scheufele (2000) has put it, “Framing influences how audiences think about issues, not by making aspects of the issue more salient, but by invoking interpretative schemas that influence the interpretation of incoming information” (P. 309).

Some works have addressed both the “what” and the “how” of public thinking. Scheufele (2000) who ultimately rejected accessibility as a framing mechanism, nevertheless pointed that “the frequency and hierarchy of issue frames in media outlets used by individual influences frames alter the mix of considerations that come to mind, but they also contend that people may suppress activated knowledge if they think it is irrelevant to the decision task” (p. 312). Priming studies that involve the phenomenon of spreading activation (e.g., Domke, Shah & Wackman 1998 & Valentino, 1999) might also be said to occupy a middle ground between agenda setting and framing.
Yet here again, framing theory and second-level agenda-setting theory talk past each other because they measure different dependent variables. Aspect agenda-setting research measures the correlation between the content of the media and the considerations in people’s heads (typically in a natural environment) and assumes that these considerations affect issue opinions in commonsense way. Framing research manipulates messages (typically in the lab) and assumes that the subsequently measured changes in opinion are the product of changes in how people think. Direct measures of frame adoption are almost nonexistent in experimental studies of framing effects, although it is presumably frame adoption that leads to framing effects (Scheufele, 2000). Most framing studies lack a manipulation check that would provide likely measures of how audience perceive frames. Shah, Wats, Domke and Fan (2002) successfully examined citizens’ reactions to naturally occurring media frames, demonstrating that the public responded to certain media frames in ways that defied the manifest content of the text.

Perhaps because from the beginning, agenda-setting theory in its various levels has always coped comfortably with the diversity of the media environment when it comes to either issues or considerations. Framing is a different story. First developed by theorists exploring media hegemony (e.g. Entman, 1991) and them by experimental media effects researchers (e.g. Iyengar, 1987), framing theory in its first decade had little to say about the possible existence of multiple competing frames and the effects of frame competition on audiences.

This study cannot be considered a critical test of the relative explanatory value of framing and agenda setting as contrasting mechanism of media influence. Indeed, it is not primarily a study of media influence. Instead, it supports Edy & Meirick (2007) by conceptualizing the mass media as making interpretative resources available to the public through their press coverage events and phenomena and asks what the public make use of those resources and how.

Agenda-setting theory also proposes that the public agenda or what kind of things people discuss, think worry about and sometimes ultimately press for legislation about is powerfully shaped and directed by what the news media choose to publicize (Larson, 1994). In this connection, the global media attention on the United Nations Beijing 2000
Women Conference is apropos. The intense media spotlight on the call for abolition of female circumcision (one of the key issues addressed at the conference) had ripple effects on the perception of female circumcision practice in the global scene. First, the media popularized the practice in the frame of “female genital mutilation”. Second, the media paved the way for popular support for anti-female circumcision campaigns carried out especially by non-governmental organizations. This consequently led to public call for legislation against the practice in most nations of the world, including Nigeria.

Adding a stunning touch to the agenda-setting study, MacQuail (2000) has posited that it is a process of media influence (intended or unintended). He has also emphasized that the media influence is not on the direction of opinion, but only on what people think about. The concept has been mainly applied to political communication and election campaigns especially. While several research inquiries have been carried out to test the validity of the agenda setting theory, such as Williams and Semlak (1986), Becker and Byrnes (1974), Lazarfield et al (1944), Davis and Robinson (1986), its salience still stands firm. It is on record that the contemporary theories of priming and framing owe their origins to agenda setting theory.

Agenda setting also refers to the idea that there is a strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media place on certain issues (e.g based on relative placement or amount of coverage) and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This view squares well with Dearing and Rogers (1996) who posited that the media influence public opinion by emphasizing certain issues above others. The amount of media attention or the media salience devoted to certain issues increases their accessibility and consequently influences the degree of public concern for these issues. It can be gleaned from the preceding discussion that agenda setting studies the extent to which people regard issues as being important as a result of the emphasis on these issues in the media.

A practical example of agenda setting in the light of the foregoing perspective was how the media emphasized the use of condom over other ways of avoiding the HIV/AIDs. This was one of the findings of a survey conducted by Ochonogor (2005). The findings also indicated that due to prevailing salience of sex and condoms in the media campaigns against HIV/AIDs, the large segment of the public do not know that
HIV can be contracted through such means as sharing of unsterilized skin-piercing objects, unscreened blood transfusion, from infected mother to child, among others, aside from sexual intercourse. This, he maintained fueled the notion held by the public that sex is the primary source of acquiring the virus, hence victims are regarded as wayward and promiscuous people, and so not given the required attention.

In essence, agenda setting posits that the more the media cover an issue, the more top-of-mind and salient that issue is for the public (Scheufele, 1997). The culmination of agenda setting function of mass media is openly manifested when the public or mass audience cannot decide on the significance of an event until they have heard the media version of its reportage. The media messages on the public, though heavily depending on certain mediating factors (such as predisposition, selectivity of exposure, selectivity of attention, selectivity of retention and other audience characteristics) do possess potentially strong attitudinal effects.

The findings on agenda setting also include that the media may not be particularly successful in telling people what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling the people what to think about (Cohen, 1963). This undoubtedly, underscores the relevance of the mass media in the scheme of things in society. This position is informed by the fact that what people think about is what they will discuss and ultimately press for legislation about (Tejumaiye, 2005). Thus, in their agenda-setting function the mass media can confer status on leadership issue or be at the vanguard calling for a reorientation, a reawakening, a rebirth in thinking and new ways of life.

In a literary re-appraisal of the agenda setting, Folarin (1988) posited that it (i.e. agenda setting) does not ascribe to the media the power to determine what we actually think; but it does ascribe to the media the power to determine what we are thinking about.

Further, Folarin held that the major elements involved in agenda setting include:

i. The quantity or frequency of reporting

ii. Prominence given to media reports through headline displays, pictures and lay-outs in newspapers, magazines, films, graphics or timing on radio and television.

iii. Cumulative media specific effects over time. (p. 56)
The agenda-setting theory also examines the relationship between media priorities and audience priorities in the relative importance of news topics. This is corroborated by Emerinyeonu (1995) as quoted by Sambe (2005) when he (the former) posited that how popular an issue is perceived to be among the people corresponds to how much prominence such an issue is given in the media of communication. In this connection, Emerinyeonu brings out a kind of synergy between public agenda and media agenda through agenda-setting function. Needless to say, however, that there exists a sharp distinction between both. Of more relevance to this discussion is the three-level process of agenda setting as presented by Sambe (2005). The process comprehends the stages involved in situating an issue such as a new government policy (e.g. U.S declaration of Boko Haram as a terrorist group) in the perception of the mass public. The three stages are:

i. Creating awareness of an issue or event.
ii. Establishing priorities that could be placed on the information, e.g. amount of time and space devoted to a particular issue or event by the media, the position of such information, the type of headline size use, etc.
iii. Perpetuating the issue. (p. 2)

Media emphasis on an event also influences the audience to see the event as important because through such emphasis, the media have effectively turned the event to a topical issue under public focus.

2.6 Press and Editorial

Olaolu and Iyiola (1984) defined editorial as “the opinion of the paper on a given subject” (p. 49). The foregoing definition forms the operational framework of editorial writing in its precepts and applications. It touches on all edges of authorial views and or interpretations of the purpose which editorial comments serve, i.e. opinion.

In their writings, several other editorial writers and experts have lent credence to the Opinion-centeredness of editorials or leaders. Spencer (1983) as quoted by Olaolu (1984) defines editorial as “an expression of facts and opinion in concise, logical and pleasing order for the sake of influencing opinion or interpreting significant news in such
a way that it’s importance to the average reader will be clear” (p. 35). While Lyle dwelt much on the opinionatedness of editorials, Hillier stressed their topicality and interpretativeness in his own writing. Hillier wrote, “Editorial is a critical interpretation of significant, usually contemporary event so that the publication’s typical reader will be informed influenced or entertained” (p. 87). The word critical as used above, denotes evaluation and not mere fault finding.

In a similar perspective, Teel and Taylor (1991) added that editorial pages are usually distinguished clearly from the news pages and are the primary place where newspapers express opinion. This clarification goes further to state the need for editorial pages to be conspicuously distinguished from news pages. The same position is taken by Ogunsiji (1991) who posited that the editorial page is the opinion of a newspaper on a particular issue and is always confined to the editorial column.

Conversely, Dewitt (1976) takes a different view of what editorial is as well as its purpose. According to him, the editorial is the cutting edge by which the communication media exercise leadership. It thus gives personality to the individual medium. With this scholarlarly statement, Dewitt holds on to the result-orientedness of editorial - a step ahead of the earlier definitions. Writing further, he concluded that a newspaper with a vigorous and carefully researched editorial page is likely to fashion a lively investigative news coverage.

In a uniquely different stance, however, some other scholars of journalism held that editorial writing is as important as news writing. To these schools of thought, editorial comments of newspapers are such a thing of necessity that failure to have them in any edition makes the production news-valueless. Editorials are thus seen as a must. Taking side with this position, John and Roy (1971) declared:

Most of us turn to the mass media primarily for information or entertainment. In addition, however, whether we want it or not most of these media also provide us with substantial helpings of opinions sometimes slipped in under other guises. In newspapers, most expressions of opinion are clustered together on the editorial page, or in multipage editorial section. (p. 81)
2.7 Editorials and Style
Considered as a literary form, the editorial is a special form of an essay. More particularly, it is a journalistic essay; its subject matter is concerned with the events of today.

A stylistic representation of editorial does not, as a matter of necessity, imply that it treats purely ephemeral matters. Its subject matter although of contemporary interest because of the focus of the news of the day, may have its root in the past and its sequel in the future. It is, in other words, a serious comment in essay form about those present happenings, which are important and significant to society. Such happenings concern policies of government, social problems, economic affairs, security issues, international relations and many other matters of public and quasi public concern.

Of course the editorial is not the only kind of journalistic essay. The news story, for instance, is an essay which combines the elements of composition and narration but which seldom contains opinions. The special feature article, an essay which combines the same two elements of style, is longer and contains a looser and freer form of composition.

In his comments on editorial and style, Chilton (1970) posited, however, that the editorial is a compact essay of exposition or argumentation seldom contains of more than three or four hundred words in length, with virtually no elements of narration, and represents the opinion of an institution (the newspaper) rather than that of the individual writer.

This definition of editorial as a journalistic essay and the preceding differentiation of the types of journalistic essay do not, however, perceive it with the exactness that is necessary. On this, Chilton remarked, “What finally gives the term editorial a distinctive meaning is not merely the form of its composition but the tone or manner” (p. 45).

2.8 Editorial Writing: Past and Present
In the early centuries of the printing press, information and opinion were intertwined. Most of the pamphlets and roadside leaflets printed for circulation aimed at primarily to spread opinion rather that information. Even in the emerging newspapers of the nineteenth centuries, opinions and fact mingled freely in most communications. With the
increasing size of newspaper circulation, the improvement in public education and the
demand for greater emphasis on information, editors evolved the concept that news
should be kept free from opinion. During this period of transition, it would have been
possible to banish opinion openly expressed entirely from the newspaper.

The foregoing is a relevant premise upon which the events pertaining to historical
background of editorial writing in the seventeenth century Europe were set. At the end of
eighteenth century, newspapers were printed and sold by entrepreneurs who had learned
the trade of printing. These journalists reported facts and gossip about events and served
as mediums for the expression of opinion. At first, these newspapers had no editors. The
entrepreneur printer called himself a “printer”. He gathered and clipped news, printed the
paper and attended to the business of what we now call advertising, circulation, and job
printing; but he made only a feeble effort to interpret events or to exert editorial
leadership. Although the paper contained expressions of opinion about public affairs,
these were usually contributed by outsiders in the form of letters.

Editorial writers of early centuries (18th and 19th centuries) belonged to the
partisan school when the distinction between news and opinion was not sharply drawn.
Most European newspapers of an earlier day had the leaning of this school. Many of the
French newspapers in this sense, dealt almost exclusively with controversial subjects.

At the end of the last century, however, increasing mobility in the modern society,
political apathy and certain other factors have changed the character of editorials so that
today their chief function is interpretative. This is the non-partisan school of thought. In
this connection, an editorialist is seen as more of an interpreter and less of a leader or
argumentator.

The fast changing trends in political consciousness and socio-economic
modernization have brought about a radical, egalitarian school in editorial arts. Owing to
its origin to the Libertarian theory of the press, the radical school holds not only that the
editorial writer presents his argument on an issue but also that he takes a stand on one
side of the controversy.

As far as the modern day editorialists are concerned, an editorial comment that is
worth its salt should identify a topically burning issue, analyze it to the background, draw
out the argument for and against it and takes a distinctive stand.
2.9 Biased Editorial, Editorializing

Is there any such thing called biased editorial? Could editorial be biased? Could it be used as a propaganda tool? These and other related questions have bugged the mind of media researchers. To draw out the matter of these questions requires going down to basics of editorial writing and ethics.

In an assertive definition of the term editorial as applied in the United States press, Chilton (1970) has stated that the term editorial is an elliptical form of editorial article. The term means that editor’s comments are distinguished from the news stories written by reporters and the letters contributed by readers.

William Pinkerstone as quoted by Olaolu et al (1984) also shared the same position as above. According to him, an editorialist is “an unofficial keeper of public conscience who takes sides and argues his position like any other embattled intellectual. Editorial writer deals in what the philosophers call value judgments or moral judgments” (p. 46).

Traditionally, an editorial tells readers what it considers right or wrong. It fights for good causes on one side and attacks the forces of evil on the other side. It is glaring from the above line of reasoning that journalists’ right of opinion views are better expressed through editorials. In fact, the freedom of expression of the newspaper organization is safeguarded through editorial writing.

In a sharp retortion, Leonard and Ron (1991) argued for opinion-centeredness of editorial:

One of the easiest ways to spot a critic who is ignorant of the way newspapers function is to listen to the occasional attack upon the editorial pages as biased, one-sided subjective and opinionated. They are: that’s what they are supposed to be. (p. 34)

The point of editorial professionalism in Leonard and Ron’s perspective, is the very fact that an editorialist does not only analyze issues but also takes position with any side of the controversy having been convinced of its cause. In this regard, no editorial will be worth its effort except if it is opinionated, and as such, one-sided.
But while drawing a note of caution on this issue, Olaolu, having established the fact that editorials have made or marred the reputation of many newspapers, concluded that experienced editors will always avoid excessive show of partisanship and be cautious about his choice of word.

Taking a similar view on the question of editorial bias, John and Roy (1971) posited that taking a side by a newspaper in political candidates is a sin except on its editorial page. When during a political campaign a newspaper comes out in favour of one candidate over the other, that support represents the thinking of the editorial page editor and his editorial writers. The publisher (i.e. the owner) too may influence the decision.

The position taken above boils down on journalistic ethics. It is therefore more of a question of professionalism than that of individualized interest. It follows, then, that those who do have the media of information under their control have not only freedom but also responsibility – a responsibility to society to employ these media in the public interest
REFERENCES


CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design
The research design used for this study was content analysis. This is an objective, systematic and quantitative analysis of manifest content of communication (Sobowale, 1983). It is also defined as a scientific method used in the analysis of the media contents for the purpose of ascertaining the status and character of a given phenomenon (Okoro, 2001). Content analysis is very appropriate for researching the variables of this study because it has widely been accepted as useful method for investigating the level of presence of a given content in Mass Communication in order to establish the impact of the content on the audience.

In their scholarly exposition on content analysis, Wimmer and Dominick (1987) have specified ten steps to be followed by a researcher. They include formulation of research question or hypothesis, definition of study population, selection and definition of unit of analysis, construction of content categories, establishment of quantification system, training of coders and conduct of pilot study, coding of contents according to established definitions, analysis of collected data and drawing of conclusion.

Similar measure was provided by Budd et al (1967) as quoted by Okoro (2001, p. 33) in a shorter seven-step approach.

3.2 Population of Study
What determines the population of study in an organized research is the problem under investigation (Nworgu, 1991). The study population for this project research was the issues of The Punch, This Day, Daily Sun and Daily Trust newspapers. The Punch is chosen because it is currently the most widely read newspaper in Nigeria. This Day is chosen because, apart from being among the top seven dailies in the country (among which it ranks fourth), it bears more relevance to the focus of this study, having been bombed twice by Boko Haram militants over what they alleged to be “misreporting and taking sides with the government”. Daily Sun is included because of its tabloid leaning
(which provides a haven for soft news) while *Daily Trust* is selected because of its northern affiliation. All these gave the research a kind of national scope.

### 3.3 Sample size

Sample size refers to the members or elements which have been proportionally selected from the study population and on which the actual investigation is carried out. It is a smaller group of elements drawn through a definite procedure from a specified study population (Ohaja, 2003). Having a sample size is borne out of the impracticability of studying the entire population in most research inquiries.

Issues of *The Punch*, *This Day*, *Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust* newspapers published from October, 2011 to March, 2012 (covering a six-month period) formed the sample size of this study. With the exception of Saturday and Sunday editions, all issues published within the specified period were meticulously accessed for investigation. Thus, a total of 524 issues combining all the four dailies were sourced and content-analyzed.

### 3.4 Unit of Analysis

The units of analysis for this study comprised five related variables, including editorials, features, letters to the editor, opinion articles and media interviews. They are further itemized and coded in the table below:

**Table of Units of Analysis with Codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>CODE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Editorials</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Features</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Letters to the editor</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Opinion articles</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Media interviews</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5  Content Category Coding

Coding is an essential stage in content analysis. It offers the researcher the ease of converting data into understandable alpha-numeric values, with such values representing specific attributes of given variables and indications. The following items were carefully coded to aid data gathering and analysis for this study:

Table of Content Categories with Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>BOKO HARAM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>EDITORIAL FRAMING [V001]</td>
<td>Terrorists [05]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Militants [04]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Religious fighters [03]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fundamentalists [02]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Boko Haram [01]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>AGENDA FOCUS [V002]</td>
<td>Political [03]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Religious [02]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Economic [01]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>FREQUENCY [V003]</td>
<td>Very constant [03]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Constant [02]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Erratic [01]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>EDITORIAL REACTION [V004]</td>
<td>Critical [03]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lenient [02]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Non critical [01]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.6  Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for collecting data for this study was the code sheet, which is the most suitable tool for content analyzing manifest contents of messages and information. The code sheet was used to cover all the variables necessary for arriving at reliable answers for the research questions already framed for the study.

3.7  Validity and Reliability of Instrument

Validity of a study represents the extent to which the study design measures what it purports to measure (Ezeji, 2007). Study’s reliability, on the other hand, lies with its consistency (Burns, 2000). Generally, research scholars have agreed on the impossibility of ascertaining study’s validity without inquiring into the nature and meaning of researcher’s variables (Roger, 1968; Whitney, 1997 and Kerlinger, 2000).
In order to verify the content validity and reliability of the research design meant for this study, a panel of senior academic staff of Mass Communication Department, University of Nigeria, Nsukka was constituted. With clear guidelines and terms of reference, the experts (who formed the panel) reviewed the contents and framings of the study’s background, problem, objectives and scope. Also, the panel appraised the study design in terms of its relevance to the research questions and study objectives and established the study as valid and reliable.

3.8 **Method of Data Analysis and Presentation**

All field data will be analyzed within the context of the research questions using descriptive statistics. Tables will be used to summarize the findings for easy interpretations while frequency counts and simple percentages will be used to express findings for effective comprehension.
REFERENCES


CHAPTER FOUR
DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Procedure of Analysis
The data analysis for this research report was founded on four newspapers (The Punch, The Nation, Daily Sun and Daily Trust) sampled for content analysis over a period of six months which comprised 130 days. Analysis was premised on four research questions set out to frame content categories. For each of these questions, a table of frequencies (i.e. scores) and percentages was drawn, and an explanation of the emerging data was provided.

4.2 Data Presentation
4.2.1 Research Question 1: How did The Punch, This Day, Daily Sun and Daily Trust newspapers frame Boko Haram in the period under investigation?

To provide an empirical answer to this question, “editorial framing” was coded as content category. It was measured with five variables, viz: Boko Haram (01) fundamentalists (02), religious fighters (03), militants (04) and terrorists (05). Details of these are presented in the table overleaf.
Table 1a: Framing of Boko Haram in *The Punch, This Day, Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust* from October to December, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEWSPAPER</th>
<th>BOKO HARAM FRAME</th>
<th>FUNDAMENTALIST FRAME</th>
<th>RELIGIOUS FIGHTERS FRAME</th>
<th>MILITANT FRAME</th>
<th>TERRORIST FRAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Punch</td>
<td>1,932</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>2,601</td>
<td>022</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This Day</td>
<td>2,017</td>
<td>2,301</td>
<td>2,680</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Sun</td>
<td>1,603</td>
<td>1,906</td>
<td>2,005</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Trust</td>
<td>2,101</td>
<td>2,472</td>
<td>2,901</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7,653</td>
<td>8,979</td>
<td>10,187</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1b: Framing of Boko Haram in *The Punch, This Day, Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust* from January to March, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEWSPAPER</th>
<th>BOKO HARAM FRAME</th>
<th>FUNDAMENTALIST FRAME</th>
<th>RELIGIOUS FIGHTERS FRAME</th>
<th>MILITANT FRAME</th>
<th>TERRORIST FRAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Punch</td>
<td>2,041</td>
<td>1,863</td>
<td>1,244</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This Day</td>
<td>2,016</td>
<td>2,270</td>
<td>2,881</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Sun</td>
<td>2,172</td>
<td>2,513</td>
<td>2,021</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Trust</td>
<td>2,015</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>2,091</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8,244</td>
<td>8,646</td>
<td>8,237</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1c: Assessment of *The Punch* framing of Boko Haram from October, 2011 to March, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Framing</th>
<th>Scores from Oct. to Dec. 2011</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Scores from Jan. to March, 2012</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book Haram</td>
<td>6833</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5148</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamentalists</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious fighters</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Militants</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorists</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>7163</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>5741</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Table 1c on framing of Boko Haram from October, 2011 to March, 2012 reveals that in the last quarter of the year 2011, 95% of public opinion in *The Punch* soft news framed the insurgents as Boko Haram, 1.3% framed them as fundamentalists, 1.6% framed them as militants while 1.8% framed them as terrorists. However, analysis of 2012 first quarters indicates a slight fall in framing of the insurgents as Boko Haram and a slight rise in framing them as terrorists. In figures, this is represented by 90% for Boko Haram, 1.8% for fundamentalists, 0% for religious fighters and 6.6% for terrorists.

Table 1d: Assessment of *This Day* framing of Boko Haram from October, 2011 to March, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Framing</th>
<th>Scores from Oct. to Dec. 2011</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Scores from Jan. to March, 2012</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book Haram</td>
<td>6919</td>
<td>82.8%</td>
<td>7167</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamentalists</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious fighters</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Militants</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorists</td>
<td>1223</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8361</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>8457</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of Table 1d on framing of Boko Haram from October, 2011 to March, 2012 shows that in the last quarter of the year 2011, 82.8% of public opinion in *This Day* soft news framed the insurgents as Boko Haram, 2.3% framed them as fundamentalists, 0.1% framed them as religious fighters, 0.2% framed them as militants while 14.6% framed them as terrorists. In contrast, assessment of 2012 first quarter reveals an appreciable downward trend in the terrorist frame with 9.5% while there was a slight upward trend in Boko Haram frame with 84.7%. This shows a downswing of 5.1% in terrorist frame from last quarter of the year 2011 to first quarter of the year 2012.

**Table 1e:** Assessment of *Daily Sun* framing of Boko Haram from October, 2011 to March, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Framing</th>
<th>Scores from Oct. to Dec. 2011</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Scores from Jan. to March, 2012</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boko Haram</td>
<td>5514</td>
<td>85.5%</td>
<td>6706</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamentalists</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious fighters</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Militants</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorists</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>6447</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>7657</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information provided in Table 1e indicates that in the last quarter of the year 2011, 85.5% of public opinion expressed through soft news published by *Daily Sun* framed the insurgents as Boko Haram whereas in the first quarter of the following year 2012, it rose slightly to 87.5% (with just 2% increase). There was also a significant difference change in terrorist frame from 9.7% in the last quarter of 2011 down to 6.6% in the first quarter of 2012. However, a slight upward swing was recorded in the context of fundamentalist frame from 3.6% in the last quarter to 4.4% in the first quarter of the following year.
Table 1f: Assessment of Daily Trust Framing of Boko Haram from October, 2011 to March, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Framing</th>
<th>Scores from Oct. to Dec. 2011</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Scores from Jan. to March, 2012</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book Haram</td>
<td>7474</td>
<td>90.6%</td>
<td>6106</td>
<td>87.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamentalists</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious fighters</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Militants</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorists</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8248</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>7012</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 1f, it is understood that a 3.5% decrease occurred in Boko Haram frame from the last quarter of 2011 to the first quarter of 2012. On the other hand, there was a 3.8% increase in the trend of terrorist frame within the same period of investigation. This perfectly squares with the upsurge in the Boko Haram violence towards the end of the first-quarter of 2012.

4.2.2 Research Question 2: What type of agenda was set by The Punch, This Day, Daily and Daily Trust newspapers in the period under investigation?

In order to unravel this question, “agenda focus” was coded as content category. It was measured with three variables, viz: political slant (03), religious slant (02) and economic slant (01).
Table 2: Focus of Agenda on Boko Haram in the Soft News Published by *The Punch*, *This Day*, *Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust* from October 2011 to March, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Number of Boko Haram Stories</th>
<th>Agenda slant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Political</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Punch</strong></td>
<td>Oct.</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov.</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dec.</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jan.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feb.</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>295</td>
<td>185(61%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>This Day</strong></td>
<td>Oct.</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov.</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dec.</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jan.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feb.</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>418</td>
<td>262(62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daily Sun</strong></td>
<td>Oct.</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov.</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dec.</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jan.</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feb.</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>527</td>
<td>194(37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Trust</td>
<td>Oct.</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov.</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec.</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan.</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb.</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>300</td>
<td>200(67%)</td>
<td>79(26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GRAND TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>1540</td>
<td>841(54%)</td>
<td>606(40%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of the preceding Table 2 reveals that out of the 295 soft news stories on Boko Haram published by *The Punch* from October, 2011 to March, 2012; (representing 61%) had political agenda slant; 80 (representing 28%) had religious agenda slant while 30 (standing for 10%) got economic agenda slant. In *This Day*, there were a total of 418 stories out of which 262 (equivalent of 62%) tilted towards political agenda, 131 stories (equivalent of 32%) tilted towards religious agenda while 25 stories (equivalent of 6%) went the way of economic agenda. As for *Daily Sun*, there were 527 total stories out of which 194 (covering 37% favoured political agenda, 316 (covering 60%) favoured religious agenda and 17 (covering a tiny 3%) favoured economic agenda. In its own figures, *Daily Trust* had a total of 300 stories with 200 (taking 67% aligned with political agenda, 79 (taking 26%) aligned with religious agenda while 21 (taking 7%) aligned with economic agenda.

Beyond this, it is also observed that a grand total of 1540 soft news stories were published on Boko Haram by the four dailies content analyzed for the study, out of which 841 (making up 54%) went in favour of political agenda, 606 (making up 40%) went in favour of religious agenda and 93 (amounting to 6%) went to favour economic agenda.

### 4.2.3 Research Question 3: How frequent did Boko Haram come up as soft news focus of *The Punch, This Day, Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust* newspaper in the period under investigation?
The content category coded to source data for solution to this question was “frequency”. It was measured with three-point continuum, viz: erratic (01), constant (02) and very constant (03). To arrive at proper data gathering, a modality of simple percentage ration of total number of Boko Haram soft-news stories in each issue of the four dailies selected was carried out. For this objective, Boko Haram stories covering from zero to 39% of all soft news stories of the day was coded erratic, those covering from 40 to 69% were coded constant while others covering from 70 to 100% were coded very constant.

**Table 3:** Frequency of Boko Haram as a Focus of Soft News in *The Punch, This Day Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust* Newspapers from October, 2011 to March, 2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Total no. of soft new stories for the month</th>
<th>No. of Boko Haram stories</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No. of non Boko Haram stories</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Punch</td>
<td>Oct.</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov.</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dec.</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jan.</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feb.</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1691</strong></td>
<td><strong>295</strong></td>
<td><strong>18%</strong></td>
<td><strong>1396</strong></td>
<td><strong>82%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This Day</td>
<td>Oct.</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov.</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dec.</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jan.</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feb.</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1759</strong></td>
<td><strong>418</strong></td>
<td><strong>24%</strong></td>
<td><strong>1341</strong></td>
<td><strong>76%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of Table 3 indicates that The Punch had a total of 1691 soft news stories from October, 2011 to March, 2012. Out of this figure, 295 soft news stories were related to Boko Haram insurgency (forming 18% of the total soft news package), 1396 soft news stories were unrelated to Boko Haram (forming 82% of the whole soft news package).

In This Day newspaper, the entire soft news package totaled 1759 out of which 418 (i.e. 24%) focused on Boko Haram while 1341 (i.e. 76%) focused outside Boko Haram issue. In Daily Sun, a total of 1925 soft news stories were published within the period under investigation. 527 (i.e. 27%) of these stories revolved around Boko Haram insurgency while 1398 focused on issues outside Boko Haram. In Daily Trust, the totality of soft news coverage was 1475 out of which 300 stories (i.e. 20%) centered on Boko Haram and 1175 (i.e. 80%) centred on non Boko Haram issues.

Furthermore, a general analysis of Table 3 shows that a total of 6850 soft news stories were content analyzed in all the four dailies out of which 1540 were concerned with Boko Haram issue (thus representing a less than average 22% of the whole
opinionated news) while 5310 others were concerned with non Boko Haram matters (thus representing a larger chunk of 78% of soft news in the dailies).

4.2.4 Research Question 4: What was the prevailing editorial reaction of The Punch, This Day, Daily Sun and Daily Trust newspapers on Boko Haram insurgency during the period under investigation?

In order to fully solve this research question, “Editorial reaction” was coded as a variable with three values, viz: non critical (01), lenient (02) and critical (03).

Table 4: Degree of Editorial Reaction of The Punch, This Day, Daily Sun and Daily Trust Newspaper on Boko Haram Insurgency from October, 2011 to March, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Number of editorials on Boko Haram</th>
<th>Number of editorials critical of government</th>
<th>No. of editorials critical of Boko Haram</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Punch</td>
<td>Oct.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dec.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jan.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feb.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This Day</td>
<td>Oct.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dec.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jan.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feb.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of Table 4 reveals that a total of 43 editorials were written on Boko Haram issue during the period under investigation. Out of this figure, 12 editorials belonged to *The Punch*, 12 belonged to *This Day*, 10 belonged to *Daily Sun* while 09 belonged to *Daily Trust*. Furthermore, 14 (equivalent of 33%) out these 43 editorials criticized the government’s handling of Boko Haram insurgency while 29 (equivalent of 67%) criticized the violence perpetrated by Boko Haram group.

### 4.3 Discussion of Findings

This study was focused on content analysis of public opinion as reflected through soft news published by four newspapers (*The Punch, This Day, Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust*) from October, 2011 to March, 2012.

On framing of Boko Haram, as sought by the first research question, the study discovered a general non-existence of “religious fighters” as a frame for Boko Haram in soft news opinion. However, the major swing of frame was noted in the use of “Boko Haram”, “fundamentalist” and “terrorists”. There was also a general trend along a
continuum formed by these three variants (i.e. Boko Haram, fundamentalists and terrorists) with Boko Haram and terrorists standing at either end of it.

Beyond this, the study also discovered that “terrorist” frame was increasingly adopted in the opinion expressed during the first quarter of the year 2012. This squares well with the upsurge in Boko Haram violent activities in the country (as reported in the hard news) at the period under investigation.

There was also a very constant occurrence of Boko Haram as an issue of prominence in soft news of the four dailies content analyzed, indicating that the hard news prompted the opinion expressed in the soft news. However, the question as to whether or not the trend of fact goes in line with the trend of framing in the soft news is a curious matter that will be left for subsequent study on hard and soft news relationship.

On the kind of agenda set through soft news opinion, as sought by the second research question, the study found out that the general opinion situated Boko Haram insurgency in the context of political agenda of the perpetrators.

On the frequency of Boko Haram as a soft news focus in the press as sought by the third research question, the study discovered an appreciable rate of occurrence which indicates the topicality of Boko Haram as a news-worthy phenomenon in society.

As regards the prevailing editorial reaction of the four dailies under investigation on Boko Haram insurgency (which was sought by Research Question 4) the study found out that Boko Haram insurgents were more criticized in their editorials than the government. Can this, as a matter of fact, justify the claim by Boko Haram group that “certain” media are biased and pro-government in their reportage of the insurgency and the accompanying violence? The findings of this study point to a general media disfavour towards hostility and violence (which Boko Haram is more belligerently identified with) when compared to government’s double standard and counter-offensives. Consequently, unless such allegation is focused on “general” media bias, it does not square up with the findings of this study.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary
The topicality of Boko Haram insurgency (which this study has investigated) is so enormous that amazing events have kept unfolding on it by each passing day. The main focus of this research was to unravel the swing of public opinion on Boko Haram insurgency through the newspaper soft news contents, which included editorials, features, letters to the editor, opinion articles and media interviews. So far, findings emanating from data analysis of the study revealed a general trend in the frame of “terrorists” for Boko Haram. This implies that majority of public opinion sees Boko Haram as terrorists.

Secondly, the findings also indicated that Boko Haram (as a single event or phenomenon) had a tremendous prominence in the order of topicality of news in media contents.

Thirdly, findings showed that Boko Haram insurgency was a politically motivated struggle.

Finally, findings established it that newspaper editorials criticized more of Boko Haram insurgents and less of government and the ruling class.

5.2 Conclusion
This study has so far delved into the complicated problem of public opinion on Boko Haram group and its violent activities in Nigeria. There are two key areas from which the study draws its conclusion. One is on the government, the other one is on the press. The government has got less than adequate criticism from newspaper editorials and this has created some form of complacency in its efforts to get rid of Boko Haram uprising. On their own part, the newspapers have not fully utilized the potency of editorial reaction to hold the ruling class accountable to their contribution to the worsening case of violence occasioned by Boko Haram insurgency.
5.3 Recommendations
To a very large extent, the outcome of the study analyses and findings have shown a great concern with which the reading public have expressed their views and opinions on Boko Haram violence and the zeal with which newspapers have periscoped the insurgency on their editorial pages.

In order to bring about a measurable solution to Boko Haram issue through opinionated contents of the press, the study recommends that more editorial writings be done by the newspapers to target the government and the ruling class about issues bordering on areas of their deficiencies or shortcomings. This effort should also offer steps and suggestions on more proactive and (by extension) participatory measures to be taken towards quelling the violence.

Secondly, the study recommends that further investigation be carried out by concerned government agencies and the state security operatives on the involvement of political elite and the ruling class in the violence perpetrated by Boko Haram as revealed by the soft news opinion in the newspapers that were content analyzed.

Thirdly, the study recommends that a similar content analysis be carried out on soft news published on line in the social media blogs. This will provide a platform for comparison of shades of opinion in public reactions to Boko Haram issue from the conventional newspapers and the online ones.

Fourthly, the study recommends that all cheap political statements made by the ruling class and the elite in order to score political points be stopped. This, the study believes, will create room for inward looking into areas of shortcomings of all stakeholders in society such that they will close ranks and work towards peace.

Fifthly and finally, the study recommends that a similar investigation involving the use of survey be carried out to sample opinion on Boko Haram issue. This survey, it is believed, will provide some corroboration or otherwise for the findings presented in this report.
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