A Comparative Analysis of *Daily Trust* and*Punch* Newspapers Framing of the Kidnappers' Identity

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Abstract
The activities of kidnappers are increasing at an alarming rate in Nigeria. Various newspapers were observed in carrying out their functions about these recurring happenings, to have employed variant frames in presenting identities of the kidnappers. This study analysed 336 editions of the *Daily Trust* and *Punch* newspapers to ascertain how these national dailies framed kidnappers' identities. The study used quantitative content analysis as a method, composite weeks to draw sample and coding sheet as instrument of obtaining relevant data. The study was situated within the argument of framing theory. The study found that *Daily Trust* framed the kidnappers as Muslims (63.9%) and *Punch* (55%) used religious frame. It further found that *Daily Trust* framed the kidnappers as Fulanis (27.9%) and *Punch* (32.4%) used ethnic frame. The study established that both newspapers framed kidnappers in Nigeria as Fulanis Muslims. The study recommended that newspapers and other media outlets in Nigeria need to have explicit editorial standards to reduce ethnic, and religious prejudice in crime reporting.

Key Words: Framing, Identity, *Daily Trust*, The *Punch*, Kidnappers

Introduction

The easy movement of people and products throughout Nigeria has been seriously hampered by the activities of kidnappers that continue to surge. Kidnapers have disrupted trade and economic activities by impeding the movement of commodities across marketplaces, in addition to affecting personal safety. Because foreign investors and entrepreneurs are becoming more hesitant to visit Nigeria for safety concerns, this insecurity is also an obstacle to international trade. Before the increase in kidnapping, people were relatively free to go about their lives, which promoted development and economic growth. Unfortunately, this reality has changed significantly due to the surge and prevalence of kidnapping. Kidnapping has become a general term in both public and private discourse. The word is derived from the words of "kid" which means child, and "nab" which means to steal (Ngwama, 2014). Adewale (2009) highlighted that, despite being a long-standing issue, kidnapping in Nigeria now seems to be a

growing concern. In depicting the meaning of kidnapping, Ngwama (2014) asserted that kidnapping can be seen as any unlawful abduction or detention of a person or individuals against their will, regardless of age, since the Western world became accustomed to the practice of taking children for use as labourers or servants in the American colonies in 1673.

The first abduction in Nigeria began in 2006 when militants from the Niger Delta took some oil workers hostage in protest against regional inequality, claiming that Nigeria is built to the detriment of the region, which serves as the nation's cash cow (Ngwama, 2014). He further added that the abductors involved in the criminal activity for a variety of complex reasons; joblessness, revenge, rituals, financial gain, and political purposes. This practice, which began with the abduction of oil expatriates, has now extended to include clergy members and their children, Nigerian politicians and their families, as well as religious leaders.According to Reuters (2009), there have been 512 documented kidnapping instances this year, compared to 353 for year 2008. It went on to explain that violent extremists mostly carried out kidnappings in the north of Nigeria over the past ten years for ideological, political, and financial reasons, with the majority of these abductions initially occurring in the northeast. However, in the northwest and north-central areas, criminal gangs known as "bandits" have been mostly responsible forrecent attacks. It is possible to interpret their increased emphasis on schools as an effort to optimize gains, as their motivations seem to be solely commercial. Governments are under pressure to use all available methods to secure the release of youngsters when school young stars and children are kidnapped.Additionally, a government-backed ransom payout will indeed exceed a private one. However, there are other groups that are affected as well. This includes citizens abducted from villages and travelers frequently being picked up on highway trips (Teniola & Pelumi, 2021).

Recently, kidnapping was added to the long list of Nigeria’s violent and criminal activities, such as the *Maitatsine* riots in the 1980s, the religious conflicts in Kaduna and Plateau States in the 1990s and early 2000s, the banditry in the Northwest, the Biafra agitation in the 1960s, the activities of militants, bunkers, and unidentified gunmen in the Southsouth and Southeast respectively, and the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast since 2009. The media's important role in spreading information, especially through mainstream outlets, is partly responsible for the increased awareness of these security concerns. The media have brought attention to these concerns in great detail, accomplishing one of its primary mandates which is dissemination of information. As affirmed by

Mohammad, (2014), Nigerian newspapers have been instrumental in covering significant insecurity-related stories, such as the 2014 *Chibok* girls kidnapping, and counterterrorism operations, like the 2017 capture of billionaire abductor Chukudumeme Owuamodike, who is popularly known as Evans, as well as the 2018 *Dapchi* girls' abduction. As reaffirmed by Uloko et al. (2024), the frequency of kidnapping in Nigeria has persisted and is consistently highlighted in both print and electronic media, with cases reported every month. It is obvious that newspapers in Nigeria have been consistently reporting issues related to insecurity such as kidnapping. But the stories are presented differently, sometimes utilizing various frames to project issues, individuals or group. As indicated in the findings of Yusuf (2001) the Southwest media, for instance, have relentlessly framed the Hausa/Fulanis Muslims of the North as indifferent to the country's diverse population and crisis-hungry. As Odamah (2010) further asserted that the newspapers owned by SouthernChristians disregard victims of crimes because they are Hausa-Fulanis Muslims.

On his part, Ayuba (2020) stated that in the Northeastern region, kidnapping is primarily driven by the terrorist actions of *Boko Haram*, he also added in the Northwestern and Northcentral geopolitical zones, kidnappings are mainly associated with the activities of bandits, Fulanis herdsmen, and other forms of communal violence.

In their effort to present issues such as kidnapping, newspapers may tend to associate such activities with specific communities, religion or ethnicity which could harm their social position and reputation. As affirmed by Howard (2003), Ozohu-Sulaiman (2013), and Popoola (2014), this biased or unjust reportage by newspapers will likely harm the status and reputation of the framed victims in a stereotypical manner. Investigating and contrasting how the *Daily Trust* and *Punch* newspapers present the identity of kidnappers is the goal of this study. It specifically aims to respond to the following research inquiries:

RQ 1, How did*Daily Trust* and *Punch* newspapers frame the religious identity of kidnappers in Nigeria?
RQ 2,How did*Daily Trust* and *Punch* newspapers frame the ethnic identities of kidnappers?
RQ 3, What is the tone used by *Daily Trust* and *Punch* newspapers regarding the ethnic identity of kidnappers in Nigeria?

Nature of Literature

Conceptualization of Newspaper Framing

One of the ways newspapers influence how people perceive important events is by employing the technique known as 'framing'. Weaver (2007) claimed that the term "framing" was first used in communication studies in a 1980 research article published by *Journalism Quarterly*. Between 2001 and 2005, the *Communication Abstract* found that there were 165 articles that defined the term (Omar, 2024). In depicting the import of framing, Okoro (2013) seesframing as the hypothesis that a problem's portrayal in newspaper reportage can affect how viewers understand it (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Ngoa (2012) describes framing as assigning a specific meaning to an issue. It is also affirmed that framing involves picking out and emphasizing certain parts of the communication text and giving them more importance than others (Sani, 2014). This framing impacts how an issue is delivered and shapes the views of the public (Bullock, 2001). According to Scheufele and Tewskbury (2007), Framing can be depicted as a manner of media presentation in such a way that corresponds with the present fundamental conceptual frameworks toward their listeners. The study pointed that framing is not just the way that information is presented in the text by journalists for their audience, frames also exist in the journalists, the audience and in the culture they share (Dalhatu & Shehu, 2020).

In the field of communication, framing refers to how news reports can influence people's opinions by employing specific frames that aid in the reader's understanding of the subject (Druckmann, 2011). This is in line with the assertion of Entman (1993) that framing affects how viewers understand news by highlighting some aspects of the content and underplaying others. This has the potential to greatly affect how individuals feel about certain topics or occurrences. In line with the views of scholars above, framing plays an integral role in the audience's comprehension, because their reactions and perceptions are tailored toward how they understand framed issues.

Newspaper framing of an issue may result in escalatory or de-escalatory effects based on particular interpretations or selective representations of reality (Macdonald, 2003). This is because newspaper framing affects how we perceive the reality that is revealed to us. Particularly problematic in crises because frames divide people into "good" and "bad" or "us" and "them" categories (Shinar, 2002). Newspaper frames provide a "pseudo environment" for people to experience and understand events they cannot observe directly. They reflect a process of

recurring selection and emphasis when conveying perceived reality (Lippmann cited in Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2008).

According to Okoro and Odoemelam (2013), a newspaper frame is an insight or picture framework formed about the news that restricts a subject matter and consequently concentrates focus on the crucial aspects within. It is contended by Dimitrova and Connolly-Ahern (2007), that Newspaper frames can be viewed as a method of coordinating process for media coverage that gives the audience member of such a frame instant meaning by emphasizing, excluding, or selecting particular information or concepts. Researchers also affirmed that newspaper framing prioritizes certain characteristics over problems or occurrences (Dimitrova et al., 2005). Similarly, Skonieczny and Morse (2013) argue that media framing suggests that the media significantly influences public opinion by legitimizing certain issues.

Kidnappers' Identities in Nigeria

Identity is a complex construct encompassing the characteristics and attributes defining individuals and groups, shaped by social contexts and group memberships, influencing self-perception and societal perceptions (Saminu, et al., n.d.). in a study by Obarisiagbon and Aderinto (2018), kidnappers are seen as opportunistic criminals who exploit weaknesses in the criminal justice system, including corruption and inefficiency. Their actions are fueled by public distrust of law enforcement, and some sources indicate potential ties between kidnappers and corrupt police officers. It is contended by Otu, et al. (2018) that Kidnappers are seen as victims of socio-economic challenges and systemic injustices, using cultural narratives to justify their actions and ease guilt. It is further explained by the study of Anazonwu, et al. (2016) Kidnappers constitute a heterogeneous group, driven by diverse motivations and often engaging in strategic planning influenced by ideological beliefs.

According to the findings of Schmid (n.d.), Nigerian kidnappers, particularly those associated with *Boko Haram*, strategically exploit socio-political instability to further their objectives. They exhibit advanced skills in combat, negotiation, psychological manipulation, and the use of violence, often orchestrating large-scale abductions and influencing official responses to their advantage. However, Adeniyi (2019) asserted that *Boko Haram*, founded by Mohammed Yusuf, is notorious for high-profile kidnappings including the 2014 abduction of schoolgirls in *Chibok*, with Abubakar Shekau as a key leader. The *Fulani* Herdsmen, known for violent conflicts over land and resources, are also

implicated in numerous kidnapping incidents throughout Nigeria, especially in the Northcentral region.

It is further identified that many kidnappers are former political thugs who were armed and trained by politicians during election campaigns. Specific names may vary, but individuals like Alhaji Hamisu Bala Wadume, a notorious kidnap kingpin, has been highlighted in the context of political connections and criminal activities (Adeniyi, 2019)). It is further viewed that some kidnappers are in criminal gangswho are known for organized kidnappings. In the Niger Delta, militants use kidnapping as a protest tool against the government and oil companies, targeting expatriates and officials (Adeniyi, 2019).

Kidnapping is carried out by a range of actors, including criminal organizations, extremist or separatist groups, opportunistic individuals, ransom networks, and street gangs. The identity of kidnappers however, varies significantly depending on the region, context, and specific situations (Ezemenaka, 2018). The author classifies kidnappers into three main categories: organized, common, and radical. Organized kidnappers operate professionally with systematic planning and often execute multiple kidnappings. Common kidnappers are more opportunistic, lacking the structured approach of their organized counterparts. Radical kidnappers are ideologically motivated (Phillips, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

This paperis anchored on the framing theory.Media experts argue that the primary concerns brought forth by the agenda-setting theory's proponent served as the basis for the framing theory's core premise (Shuaibu, 2023)**.** The concept of this theory was first posited by Gregory Bateson in 1972 (Arowolo, 2017). Framing theory has historical roots in cognitive psychology and anthropology; earlier applications of the theory occurred in communication and other related domains (Gorp, 2007). In line with Entman’s perspective, framing theory is a theoretical framework that aims to explain "the way journalists normally shape and contextualize news content." As a result, framing theory applies to both macro and micro-level constructs (McQuail, 2005). According to Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007), there are two ways to further divide framing, which are macro and micro levels. On the macro level, framing refers to how communicators connect information to audiences' existing frameworks so that even complicated topics are delivered in a manner that makes sense given their previous experience; on the micro level, framing refers to how individuals use information and how it appears to create their perceptions.

Framing Theory is about selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text in such a way to promote a particular problem definition (regional, cultural, or social), causal interpretation, moral evaluation, or treatment recommendation for the item described. An important thing to consider is the media framing of kidnappers' identities in Nigerian newspapers, which may result in tribal and religious stereotypes. Through the lens of framing theory, one may see how the media selectively highlights some aspects of kidnappers' identity while downplaying others, newspapers' framing of kidnappers' identity which has the power to shape public opinion, official actions, and society's perceptions of crime and security in Nigeria. Framing theory allows for a more in-depth analysis of the power dynamics, socio-political objectives, and ideological biases at work in the media's framing of kidnappers through the analysis of language, images, and narrative structures used to represent these persons. Furthermore, the application of framing theory aids in clarifying how these representations shape public discourse about crime and criminality in Nigerian society as well as social reality.

Methods of the Study

Quantitative content analysis was employed as method of data collection; Content analysis is a research method for creating reliable and accurate connections between data and context (Krippendorff, 2004). The rationale behind selecting this method is to obtain pertinent information from newspapers that would be used to address the research questions: how did*Daily Trust* and *Punch* newspapers frame the religious identity of kidnappers in Nigeria?, how did*Daily Trust* and *Punch* newspapers frame the ethnic identities of kidnappers? And what is the tone used by *Daily Trust* and*Punch* newspapers regarding the ethnic identity of kidnappers in Nigeria? posed in the study (Shehu, 2015).

The universe which is a class or group of persons, variables, ideas, or phenomena (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011), is the daily editions of the *Daily Trust*and*Punch*newspapers for two years.That is, from January 2022 to January 2023 (24 months). This period was selected due to the recurrent decimal of kidnapping attacks on Nigerians. The study adopted a multi-stage sampling technique.Multi-stage sampling involves conducting two or more levels of sampling techniques (Sedgwick, 2015). Therefore, the newspapers were selected purposively based on their geographical location and circulation.*Punch* newspaper is located in the Southern part of the country and with a circulation of 80,000 copies daily.*Daily Trust*on the other hand, is the most widely circulated

print medium in the Northern part of the country and one of the top seven national dailies in Nigeria. Meanwhile, the editions of the newspapers were selected using a composite week sampling technique. That is, 336 samples were selected from 1,464 editions of the two mentioned newspapers.

A self-designed coding sheet was used by the researcher in gathering data. An emergent design was used in the coding sheet's design. Allocating numerical values to content categories aids researchers in their data collection process by organizing the data into a homogeneous subset. This ultimately leads to quantification and measurability, or the capacity to analyze highly quantitative data (Nwodu, 2006). An emergent approach to coding is one in which the categories are decided after data is collected, typically based on a conceptual or theoretical explanation (Asika, 2004). This coding sheet contained all relevant variables that are related to the study's research questions. The categories used in this study arereligiousand ethnic identity of kidnappers. Meanwhile, each of these categories has some sub-categories and stories that contained news stories, editorials, feature or commentary and letter to the editors as units of analysis. An intercoder reliability test was employed, using HoIsti's formula to determine the percentage of agreement between two coders. HoIsti's formula was used in calculating the inter-coder reliability. In line with the aforementioned, it is agreed that to assess the reliability of coding, the same body of content must be coded by at least two different coders (Krippendorff, 2004). Descriptive statistics was used as a method of analysis and the data were analyzed with the assistance of theStatistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), where frequencies and percentage were employed to present the data.

Results and Findings

The data were presented, analyzed and interpreted by the use of frequency and percentage of each of the kidnappers' identity as framed by *Daily Trust* and *Punch* newspapers.

TABLE 1: FRAMING OF KIDNAPPERS' RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

	Daily Trust	***Punch***	**Total**
Muslim	78(63.9%)	61(55%)	139(59.7%)
Christian	11(9%)	27(24.3%)	38(16.3%)
Others	33(27%)	23(20.7%)	56 (24%)
Total	122(100 %)	111(100%)	233(100%)

Table 1 above shows that kidnappers are identified as Muslims in 78 cases representing 63.9% by *Daily Trust* in its total reporting. Similarly, *Punch* reports 61 cases where kidnappers are identified as Muslims, representing 55%. In total, the kidnappers were depicted by *Daily Trust* and *Punch*newspapers as Muslims in 139 of the 233 reports that were documented, approximately 59.7%. A clear disparity exists between the two publications regarding the portrayal of kidnappers as Christians, with a notably reduced frequency in one of the newspapers. Specifically, *Daily Trust* characterizes kidnappers as Christians in only 11 out of 122 instances (9%), whereas *Punch* did so in 27 out of 111 occurrences (24%). Collectively, both newspapers depict kidnappers as Christians in 38 out of the 233 cases (16.3%). Additionally, in having the religious frames as others, it is because none of the newspapers align the religious affiliations to either Muslim or Christian. This "others" could either be African traditional religions (ATR) or Judaism. Here *Punch* has 23 stories out of 111 cases representing 20.7% of its coverage; *Daily Trust* has 33 stories out of 122 cases representing 27%. This "others" frame was employed in 56 out of 233 occurrences, representing 24% in both newspapers.

This suggests that kidnappers are mostly associated with Islam by *Daily Trust* and *Punch*, which may support preconceptions that relate Islam to criminal activity. Given that *Daily Trust* reports much fewer cases than *Punch*, the discrepancy in how kidnappers are framed as Christians points to different editorial goals or prejudices. Although it also draws attention to the media's selective framing of religious identities in crime reporting, the addition of the "others" frame shows an effort to broaden religious representation.

TABLE 2: FRAMING OF KIDNAPPERS' ETHNIC IDENTITY

	Daily Trust	***The Punch***	**Total**
Fulanis	34(27.9%)	36(32.4%)	70(30%)
Hausa	34(27.9%)	13(11.7%)	47(20.2%)
Igbo	9(7.4%)	12(10.8%)	21(9%)
Others	45(36.9%)	50(45%)	95(40.8%)
Total	122(100%)	111(100%)	233(100%)

The data presented in table 2 above indicate that both newspapers consistently associate incidents of kidnapping with the Fulanis ethnic community. *Daily Trust* identifies 34 out of 122 articles (27.9%) as relating to the Fulanis people, whereas *The Punch* 36 out of 111 articles (32.4%), identifies the kidnappers as the Fulanis people. Collectively, references to the Fulanisas the kidnappers are found in 70 of

the 233 stories which represent 30% of the total coverage. This means that both newspapers often identify the Fulanis ethnic group with kidnapping cases. *Punch*identified the kidnappers as Hausas in 13 of the 111 stories, representing 11.7%.*Daily Trust* identified the kidnappers as Hausas in 34 of its 122 stories, representing 27.9%. Thus, a total of 47 out of 233 reports, which amounts to 20.2%, described the Hausa people as kidnappers.

Therefore, kidnapping was linked to the Fulanis and Hausa ethnic groups by both *Daily Trust* and *Punch,* Ethnic stereotypes could be strengthened by such framing, which could exacerbate interethnic tensions and unfavourable opinions in the Nigerian society.

Furthermore, by identifying Igbo ethnic groups as kidnappers in both newspapers, *Punch*, has 12 out of 111 reports that identified the Igbos as kidnappers, representing 10.8%, while *Daily Trust*identified the Igbos as kidnappers in 9 out of the 122 reports, which represents 7.4%. In total, 21 out of 233 reports identified the Igbos as kidnappers, representing 9% of all reports. The most common category in both newspapers is “others”, used to represent unclear or non-specific ethnic groups as the kidnappers by both newspapers. This “others” could be Yoruba, Tiv or Nupe; *Punch* has 50 of its 111 reports, representing 45%, while *Daily Trust* has 45 of its 122 reports within the same category, representing 36.9%. This signifies that this category forms 95 out of the 233 reports representing 40.8%. This suggests that although both newspapers occasionally linked the Igbo ethnic group to kidnapping, they more often used the "others" category to describe not specific ethnic groups, making up for a significant 40.8% of all the entire reports on kidnapping within the period understudy. This dependence on ambiguous categories may be an attempt to avoid direct ethnic identification or a lack of specific information regarding the identities of the perpetrators.

Table 3, is on the tone used by *Daily Trust* and *Punch* newspapers regarding the ethnic identity of kidnappers in Nigeria

TABLE 3: TONE REGARDING THE ETHNIC IDENTITY OF KIDNAPPERS

Tone	*Daily Trust*	*Punch*	Total
Positive	20 (16.4%)	15(13.5%)	35(15%)
Neutral	65 (53.3%)	55(49.5%)	120(51.5%)
Negative	37 (30.3%)	41(36.9%)	78 (33.5%)
Total	**122 (100%)**	**111(100%)**	**233(100%)**

Table 3 shows that the leading tone in both newspapers is neutral, with *Daily Trust* using it in 53.3% of its stories and *Punch* in 49.5%, putting them together at 51.5%. This indicates that both newspapers often assume neutrality in their reporting, presenting the facts without showing strong emotional judgment or bias about the ethnic identities of those involved in the kidnapping. *Punch* had the highest representation of the negative tone with 36.9%, while *Daily Trust* had 30.3%, accounting for 33.5% of the tone of the reports. In the reports, the negative tone has put the ethnic groups involved in kidnapping as criminal and disruptive to society. Such a tone only serves to reinforce framing of these groups as threats to public safety and national security. The positive tone was used least, accounting for 15% of the coverage, with *Daily Trust* using it in 16.4% of the cases and The *Punch* in 13.5%. This, although minimal, shows the points where the newspapers became more empathetic, probably acknowledging that some of these ethnic groups engage in criminal activities, perhaps for some systemic or structural reasons.

This means *Daily Trust* and *Punch* newspapers were mostly neutral and objective in their usual reporting of kidnappers' ethnic identities to present the facts without showing significant emotion or judgment. When they, however, express their opinions, *Punch* tended to be more liable to passing judgment on the ethnic

groups for framing them as menaces to society, while *Daily Trust* was not be so critical.

Discussion of Findings

The questions used in this study were answered by using the reviewed literature, theoretical approach and the results of the analyses of the data obtained from the field.

RQ 1:How did*Daily Trust* and *Punch* newspapers frame the religious identity of kidnappers in Nigeria?

It is found that both newspapers primarily depict kidnappers as Muslims, despite differences in the emphasis they place on the identity. 78 reports representing 63.9% of all stories reported by *Daily Trust*, featured kidnappers as Muslims. Similarly, 55% of *The Punch's* coverage of 61 cases showed kidnappers to be Muslims. Collectively, 139 out of 233 (59.7%) recorded the kidnappers were Muslims by the two newspapers. According to this inclination, Muslim identity is usually emphasized when kidnappers' identities are covered and presented to the audience, especially in *Daily Trust*. There is a chance that *Daily Trust's* larger percentage stems from its regional readership and coverage, especially in Northern Nigeria, where the majority population is Muslim. Due to the prevalence of the frame, there is a chance that public opinion could be shaped by the ongoing association between Muslims and kidnapping, which could reinforce prejudices or misconceptions about the Muslim population. This is similar to the finding of Huntington (1996) that Islam is a faith of war that praises military virtues.

In framing the identity of Christians as kidnappers, *The Punch* has 27 cases where kidnappers were framed as Christians, representing 24.3%of its coverage. While *Daily Trust* has 11 cases representing 28.9%. The lower framing of Christians as kidnappers could reflect the newspaper's regional and religious readership, which may be more sensitive to framing Christians negatively. It is worth noting that *The Punch* presented kidnappers as Christians more frequently. This is contrary to the finding of Demarest et al. (2020). According to him,the Southern media seems more inclined to stereotype Islam and Muslims in general as kidnappers. It indicates that, of the 233 reports covered by both newspapers, 38 stories identified kidnappers as Christians, which represents 16.3%. It suggests that the emphasis on Christian identity is lower than that of Muslim identity.

Therefore, for the reports on kidnappers' identities whose religious affiliation does not align with either Islam or Christianity, the "others" frame was used. This

“others” could either be African traditional religions (ATR) or Judaism. *Punch* has 23 stories under this section, representing 20.7% of its reporting, and *Daily Trust* has 33 stories, approximately 27% of its total coverage. In total, the "others" frame section has 56 out of 233 stories, approximately 24% of the total reports. It shows that both newspapers made a deliberate attempt to include nonreligious reporting regarding the kidnappers' identities, which may help prevent the reinforcement of religious preconceptions, particularly in cases when the perpetrators' religious identity is ambiguous or unrelated to the crime.

RQ 2, How did*Daily Trust* and *Punch* newspapers frame the ethnic identities of kidnappers?

It is clear that framing Fulanis as kidnappers by both newspapers is more than other ethnic groups. *Punch* linked the Fulanis to kidnapping in 36 out of 111 reports (32.4%), while*Daily Trust* affiliated the Fulanisto kidnapping in 34 out of 122 reports (27.9%). In total, 70 out of 233 reports have mentioned the Fulanis as kidnappers, approximately 30% of the entire coverage. This framing reflects a common narrative which often linked the Fulani ethnic group to insecurity, especially in rural regions, and demonstrates a recurring inclination on the part of both newspapers to equate this community with kidnapping cases. This confirms the position of Ayuba (2020) on the ethnic identity of kidnappers in the northwestern and north-central geopolitical zones that Fulanis are mainly involved in the activities of bandits, herdsmen/farmers conflict, and other forms of communal violence.

In framing the identity of kidnappers as Hausas, *Punch* reports 13 out of 111 reports (11.7%) that involve kidnappers as Hausas, whereas *Daily Trust* reports a much higher number, recognizing Hausas as abductors in 34 out of 122 reports (27.9%). In total, the Hausaswere identified in 47 out of 233 reports, representing 20.2% of the total coverage. When it comes to framing Igbos as kidnappers, both newspapers show comparatively lower numbers. *Punch* framed Igbos in 12 out of 111 reports (10.8%), while *Daily Trust* provided the same in 9 out of 122 reports (7.4%). Collectively, the Igbos were identified as kidnappers in 21 out of 233 reports, representing 9% of the total coverage. This implies that the Igbos were not as frequently linked to kidnapping cases as the Fulanis and Hausas, but that the newspapers acknowledged their involvement, though to a lesser degree. This corroborates the study of Yusuf (2001) the southwest media, for instance, has relentlessly framed the Hausa/Fulani Muslims of the north as indifferent to the country's diverse population, and also, that they are crisis-hungry.

Meanwhile, for the reports on kidnappers' identities whose ethnic affiliation does not align with Fulanis, Hausas, or Igbos, the "others" frame is used. This “others”could be Yoruba, Tiv or Nupe In this section, *Punch* has 50 out of 111 reports (45%), and 45 out of 122 reports (36.9%) from *Daily Trust* fall into this category. This depicts that "Others" category has 95 out of 233 reports, representing 40.8% of all the coverage. This category (“others") is indicative of the difficulties in determining ethnic affiliations in a large number of abduction cases. Subsequently, the way ethnic identities are framed in kidnapping reports by *Punch* and *Daily Trust* emphasizes specific groups, mostly the Hausas and the Fulanis, with less emphasis on the Igbos. The heavy reliance on the category "others" suggests that many kidnapping incidents are not classified according to ethnicity, which may indicate the multifaceted nature of criminal behaviour in Nigeria.

RQ 3, What is the tone used by *Daily Trust* and *Punch* newspapers regarding the ethnic identity of kidnappers in Nigeria?

The findings of the analysis of *Daily Trust* and *Punch* newspapers reveal some insight into how the media frame the ethnic identity of kidnappers in Nigeria. In both newspapers, the dominant tone used was neutral; 51.5% shows that these news outlets often cover the issue of kidnapping objectively and in a balanced way. The neutral tone, which keeps up with the journalistic approach to the facts of the news item: no overt emotional judgment or bias regarding the ethnic background of the victims and the perpetrators. The Framing Theory presents that the media will be an active player as to how issues will be presented before the public while balancing in a way as not to emphasize a certain moral judgment. However, the level of usage can be seen to vary: while *Punch* has 36.9%, *Daily Trust* has 30.3%, giving a total of 33.5% of the entire reports in the usage of a negative tone. The negative tone constructs the ethnic groups said to be involved in kidnapping as criminal and disruptive of societal living, projecting them as a danger to civil liberty and national security. This is a confirmation of study by Shaw (2012) that tone utilized negatively or destructively encourages miscommunication between ethnic groups, which in turn fosters journalism about war and human rights violations.

From the perspective of framing theory, this negative framing through the tone of the reports, perpetuates a harmful frame that focuses on the negative involvement of theethnic groups in criminal activities. The framing could make the public conceptualize such groups mainly from the perspective of crime and thus, creates stereotypes or stigmatize the ethnic identities concerned. The two newspapers

employed a positive tone at a minimal rate that varied between 15% of the entire reports of both newspapers.*Punch* maintained this tone of reporting at 13.5%, while *Daily Trust*used it at 16%. On the use of positive tone, Shaw (2012) asserted that the positive and constructive use of tone fosters the connection and advancement of human rights and peace journalism. The positive tone denotes the period when the newspapers highlight certain underlying factors, including socioeconomic circumstances or systemic injustices, which might have motivated the perpetrators to commit atrocities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that *Daily Trust* and *Punch* newspapers framed perpetrators of kidnapping in Nigeria as Muslims and, Hausa/Fulanis, since these narratives recur frequently in the reporting of the newspapers; this pattern implies that media outlets throughout Nigeria may have a similar tendency. It concludes that the primary frames employed in framing kidnappers' identities center on their religion and ethnicity. It also concludes that *Daily Trust* and *Punch* used neutral tones when reporting on the ethnic identities of kidnappers, observing journalistic balance; occasional negative framing, on the other hand, reinforces stereotypes, while minimal positive tones concentrate on systemic issues, fostering understanding and peace journalism. The study recommends that media outlets should have explicit editorial standards to reduce religious and ethnic prejudice in crime reporting. By integrating checks and balances within editorial procedures.

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