Portrayal of War Languages on Boko Haram Terrorism in Four Nigerian Dailies

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ABSTRACT
Cognizant of the speed at which the menace of Boko Haram is besieging Nigeria and the quest for its curtailment, this study makes a comparative analysis of the use of language in the portrayal of Boko Haram terrorism among Dail yTrust, Vanguard, Leadership, and Punch newspapers to determine their use of war language at the expense of peace journalism. Many studies have uncovered that newspapers are competent in making peace to reign depending on the approaches they adopt in reporting conflicts. War language tends to inflame conflicts while peace language mitigates it. The objectives of this study are to examine the useof war language in the newspapers' report of Boko Haram insurgency and to compare the prominence given to war language by the sampled newspapers. The study adopts quantitative content analysis method and framing theory. Findings from the study reveal that most Nigerian newspapers carry war language in their reports. The study recommends that Nigerian journalists should enhance their knowledge of peace journalism so that they can make vital hand-outs in finding solution to the Boko Haram terrorism.

Key words: *War, languages, Boko Haram, terrorism, dailies*

Introduction

History has it that Adolf Hitler used the media to create hatred for Jews during the Second World War (Jimoh & Danladi, 2012). Boko Haram became a known conflict to the world by the media in Nigeria and beyond. This has made it significant to some writers in Nigeria and abroad to come up with literature explaining the events in their judgments and proffering solutions to the problem. Notwithstanding the analytical literature in circulation, attempt has been scantly made to investigate newspapers' portrayal of Boko Haram from the view point of peace and war journalism which the researcher is set out to examine.

In trying to portray the relevance of newspapers in this regard, Thomas Jefferson briefly explains the power of the press on people's perception by stating that "Were it left for me to decide whether we should have a government without newspaper or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate for a moment to prefer the latter." This statement by Jefferson situates the newspapers in the society as a leading vehicle for shedding light on perceived issues of public interest. Despite being among the oldest in the mass media category, newspapers exert such influence in the society that people look up to them not only for the news of the day, but for their opinions on topical issues (Aneato, 2009).

Nigerians hold divergent views of democracy and its advantage to their lives. Some see it as synonymous with insecurity to their lives and property owing to the involvement of thugs and hoodlums which perhaps led to the emergence of Boko Haram. Others, especially politicians, identify it as suitable for the country. Given the importance of peace to the citizens, studies on Boko Haram have attracted experts' attention whose literature helps policy makers both governmental and nongovernmental to strategize how to curtail the menace. Notwithstanding the universality of terrorists' activities in many parts of the world, to Nigerians, Boko Haram became a new experience.

Ozohu-Suleiman (2013) notes that the concerns that follow media's anti-social record of inciting and encouraging conflicts i.e. the discontent of war journalism did not end with only suppositional prescription of a shift to peace journalism correspondence. Researchers and experienced journalists have spent time suggesting how the media might shift from war to peace correspondence in covering conflicts. Key contributors in this regard include Galtung (1998), McGoldrick and Lynch (2000), Howard (2003), Kempt (2003), and El-Nawawy and Powers (2008).

Moreover, Ibrahim (2012) observes that Nigeria as a country has suffered a lot from numerous ethno-religious crisis since independence. Most times the coverage of such crises by the Nigerian press has been described as partisan, which further

promotes the polarization of the country along regional lines. Okpara (2010) unveils in his study that the Nigerian media are yet to effectively play the surveillance function in their reportage of conflicts which has led to the emergence of unabated conflicts in Nigeria.

Also, Okali (2011) corroborates the above findings when he suggests that the Nigerian media have not done well in discharging their surveillance role which has an adverse effect on the security of the Nation. Sharing the same view, Amienyi (1989) evaluates the specifics of media performance in Nigeria and reports that certain socio-cultural factors are serving as obstacles to reporting issues for national integration.

Commenting on the impact of newspapers' framing on the audience, Oso and Pate (2007) note that the political elite(s) through its/their use of ethnic and other divisive strategies use the press to whip up emotions during elections and the various social conflicts the country has witnessed in recent time. However, in the case of Boko Haram, similar accusations that newspapers are being used by political elites to ignite the menace keep growing. Lawrence (2011) reveals in his study that the Nigerian media has been biased in their reportage of the Boko Haram insurgency. He further contends that their reportage of the insurgency has most often glorified the act of terrorism.

A lot of researches suggest that media are capable of inflaming or mitigating conflicts depending on the way they report it (Ozohu, 2013; Nacos, 2007; Hoffman, 2006; McQuail 1987; Wilkinson, 2000). For this reason, there is a shifting interest towards peace journalism, whereby the media are expected to give voice to all parties, focus on invisible effects of conflicts, and be truth-oriented, people-oriented as well as solution-oriented.

Cognizant of these facts, the study raised the following research questions:

To examine the adoption of war language in the newspapers' report of Boko Haram, the study asks:

RQ 1: What is the frequency of war language in the newspapers' reportage of Boko Haram?

To compare the prominence given to war language by the sampled newspapers, the study asks:

RQ 2: What level of prominence is given to war languages in the newspapers' report of BokoHaram?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Peace Journalism and its Conceptualization

Peace journalism according to Howard (2009) reflects a modernization of the original values of the news media. It is rooted in the belief that the news media in many societies can be a powerful force to reduce the causes of conflict and to enable a conflict-prone society to better pursue conflict resolution. Peace journalism combines journalism with peace as an external aim and understands itself as "a normative mode of responsible and conscientious media coverage of conflict that aims at contributing to peacemaking, peacekeeping, and changing the attitudes of media owners, advertisers, professionals, and audiences towards war and peace" (Shinar, 2007, p.2). Media have to be peace-inclined in their watchdog role between the government and the governed.

According to Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) cited in McGoldrick (2006, p.4), "Peace journalism is when editors and reporters make choices – of what stories to report, and how to report them". Galtung (1998) views peace journalism and war journalism as two competing frames in the coverage of a conflict. He memorably likened war journalism to sports journalism, which characteristically sees its object in terms of a zero-sum game where winning is all. A better model, he argues, would be health journalism. Here the plight of a patient with cancer, for example, would be described; the causes as well as the range of possible remedies and future preventative measures would be offered. This model would prove more

productive in the context of conflict reporting than focusing on violence, negative events and siding with a particular protagonist.

By taking an advocacy, interpretative approach, the peace journalist concentrates on stories that highlight peace initiatives: tone down ethnic and religious differences, prevent further conflict, focus on the structure of society, and promote conflict resolution, reconstruction, and reconciliation by giving voice to all parties (not only two opposing sides), and create empathy and understanding. Other peace journalism approaches include taking a preventive advocacy stance–for example, editorials and columns urging reconciliation and focusing on common ground rather than on vengeance, retaliation, and differences–and emphasizing the invisible effects of violence (e.g. emotional trauma and damage to social structure). Through careful, consistent, and conscientious application of peace journalism practices, the peace journalist hopes to create a setting in which the causes of and possible solutions to the conflict become transparent (Yang Lai Fong, 2009).

Media and Coverage of Terrorism

Regarding CBS coverage of 1979 -1980 Iranian hostage crisis, Palmerton (1988), cited in Slocum (2005, p.135), puts forward a premise that "the meaning of terrorism is shaped in large part by the major vehicle we use to gain our primary information about events occurring outside our immediate circle of experience: the news media" therefore hinting that the peoples' definition of terrorism is largely dependent on media narrations. This has informed the caution that:

> News coverage and reports of terrorism are essentially focused on the spectacular and dramatic violence or carnage they involve. They use a narrative to underline the misery and misfortune of the victims, without any reference to their background or why they are victims. In other words, the narrative in the news stories about terrorist acts concentrates on the human interest angle, without emphasising or discussing on the historical background of the perpetrators of the violence acts or the victims of the violence acts... the emphasis on the tragedy, violence, reactive and

> theatrical aspects of terrorist acts at the expense of detailed analysis of the events is so one-sided that one American political philosopher refers to broadcast coverage of terrorism, in particular, as a "phonograph of grief". The objective of this kind of narrative is to unleash a common pattern of emotional display of anger, tension of anticipation, fear, and grief (Azeez, 2010, p.9).

Others have conceded that the real issue is not so much the relationship between terrorism and the media which is widely acknowledged to exist, but whether such relationship actually affects public opinion and government decision making (Hoffman, 2006). Consequently, assuming that media representations of terrorism are largely the source for peoples' information about terrorism (Kowoll, 2012), theorists have also raised mocking questions about the dramatic narration and manners in which media report terrorist acts (Azeez, 2010).

According to Zellizer and Allan (2002), 9/11 terrorist attack on America shook to their foundation the familiar notions of what it means to be a journalist, how best to practise journalism, and what different publics can reasonably expect of journalists in the name of democracy. Azeez (2010) ascribes the reason for this to the predicament associated with terrorism reporting unlike any other tea, bread, and butter news event.

Terrorism presents a number of dilemmas and paradoxes to journalists, whose responsibility is to inform the public objectively, fairly and accurately. Thus, there are many unsettling questions on the ways the media report terrorism, for which scholars of mass communication have not found absolute and definite answers. Such questions include whether or not the media are accomplices to the aims of the terrorists who crave cheap publicity; whether the media are not actually magnifying the threat and fear in people in the way they report terrorism instead of allaying their fear; and whether or not the media are really objective and accurate in the way they report terrorism and in their narrative and framing of terrorists (Azeez, 2010, p.3).

Empirical studies have identified various narratives or styles used by media in reporting terrorism. Nacos (2007) observes that media often report terrorism in a tradition of 'thoughtless' and 'stereotypical' pattern, and they also adopt a 'follow-the-leader pattern' which she describes as the tendency of the news media to adopt the language of the leading government officials in their social construction of terrorism.

Some scholars have also picked on the choice of words used by media in reporting terrorism within the framework that the language adopted in reporting terrorism can affect people's perception of terrorism and may have important consequences for public policy support concerning actions and reactions in response to violence (Dunne, Moore & Nosek, 2005). Azeez (2010) states that media tend to use evaluative language in defining or labeling terrorists for the purpose of priming and constructing a version of reality. Such choices of words are likely to imprint certain relative long-term impression about certain social grouping on the mind of the people. From this perspective, thus:

> The media ought to know that words have power…. Still (partly through the use of words), the press has convinced both itself and the public that only 'Muslim' are 'terrorist'. Strangely, there are no 'Christian' or 'Jewish' terrorist! The Catholic Irish republican Army which has carried out attacks against Irish and English Protestants was never called an organization of 'Christian Terrorist' nor is the protestants Ulster defence Association so termed, though it too carried out acts of terror against Catholics (Hussain & Rosenbaum, 2004, p.178).

Stereotyping, sensationalism \and demonization of religion, ethnic groups, or geographical entity are also visible in media reporting of terrorism (Hussain& Rosenbaum, 2004; Akter, 2010; Dakroury, 2008) One grand narrative through which terrorism is reported is what Schmid and de Graaf (1982) have called a dramaturgical paradigm consisting of good and bad.

This one sided narrative of media in reporting terrorism has therefore veiled their role as the arena where various angles of

public issues are played out in order to stimulate independent thoughts and actions from the public. Using the utilitarian value of American media coverage of 9/11 attack, Norris (2003, p.295) asked the following questions: "Did the public find information that facilitate the cognitive construction of judgment necessary to understand events? Did news frame build or disrupt bolds of national, social and political trust?

Researchers seem to be in relative consensus that news media framing of terrorism is still skewed towards propagating the dominant definition and explanation, which is often that of the government, instead of opening wide arrays of information for the public. This is to say that the government has an upper hand on what should be defined by the media.

Theoretical Approach

As the study is on how Boko Haram insurgency is presented by the sampled newspapers, a framing theory is adopted which can explain the solution-orientation in the reportsof the selected newspapers or otherwise. The idea that framing and frames are primary means through which people make sense of a complicated world got its modern impetus from two scholars, Gregory Bateson and Erving Goffman (Entman, Matthes, & Pellicano, 2009). Framing has been defined as the means events are organized and made sense of, especially by media, media professionals, and their audiences (de Vreese, 2001).

Framing is based on the postulation that how an issue is characterized in news reports can have a sway on how it is understood by audiences. To frame means to select some aspects of a perceived reality over others and make them more salient in a communication in order to promote a particular problem definition, moral evaluation, causal interpretation or solution recommendation (Entman, 1993).

Consequently, the framing of events and news in the mass media can therefore methodically affect how recipients of news come to understand these events (Price, Tewksbury & Power, 1995). Norris,

Kern and Just (2003) point out that the conventional news frame in any society is expected to play a central role in shaping public reactions especially where there is a broad consensus creating a shared 'one-sided' interpretation among most leaders and who share a common national culture and identity.

Method

The study adopts quantitative content analysis; the reason for the choice of this method is to get relevant data from the newspapers that will answer the research questions raised for the study. It is through the content analysis that the frequencies of approaches to war journalism can be coded. Furthermore, all the editions of the years 2013-2014 by the *DailyTrust*, *Vanguard, Leadership and Punch* newspapers formed the population of the study. The choice of the Newspapers is based on the data the researcher is set out to examine which has to do with the newspapers' coverage of the Boko Haram insurgents vis-à-vis war frames.

The newspapers to be analyzed were purposively sampled because of their wide readership in the country. The choice of the editions was systematically sampled where the nth element is seven editions after skipping six editions, excluding weekend's editions. 328 editions across the newspapers were sampled, 82 from each. A coding sheet was designed by the researcher to collect the data for analysis. The coding sheet contained all the variables relevant to the research questions. The categories are the war approaches and articles constitute the units of analysis. Simple descriptive statistics is adopted where frequencies and percentages are used in displaying issues in tables.

Results

This section presents the data generated, analyses them and interprets them for the purpose of answering the research questions raised in the study. The data were analysed and compiled in tables based on their frequencies and percentages.

Peace journalism suggests abandoning some words which are war-oriented. The terms are categorised into "demonizing language", "victimizing language" and "emotive language". Words such as *terrorist, extremist, cruel, barbaric, fundamentalist, fanatic, brutal* and *vicious* are categorised as demonizing languages which are often found to support war journalism. Words such as *devastate, destitute, tragedy, pathetic* and *defenceless* are categorised as victimizing language while words such as *massacre, genocide, assassinate* and *decimate* are categorised as emotive language in conflict reporting. The tables below identified the language with their frequencies and percentages.

Table 1: Use of Demonizing Language

Indicators	Daily Trust		Leadership		Vanguard		Punch	
Terrorist	100	31.15%	1462	41.76%	693	45.99%	204	29.9%
Extremist	26	8.1%	481	13.74%	177	11.75%	109	16.0%
Cruel	27	8.4%	172	4.91%	52	3.45%	44	6.5%
Barbaric	24	7.5%	138	3.94%	67	4.45%	36	5.3%
Fundamentalist	29	9.0%	203	5.80%	172	11.41%	66	9.7%
Fanatic	13	4.0%	66	1.89%	65	4.31%	62	9.1%
Brutal	78	24.3%	387	11.05%	214	14.20%	102	15.0%
Vicious	24	7.5%	592	16.91%	67	4.45%	59	8.7%
Total/Percentage	n=321	100.00%	n=3501	100.00%	n=1507	100.00%	n=682	100.00%

Going by the frequency of demonizing language in the sampled newspapers, it indicates the failure of the sampled newspapers to play a third party role which is synonymous with peace journalism. While this can be attributed to their lack of expertise in reporting conflict-related issues, a very serious implication in the analysis of the results is the fact that most professionals in the

newspaper houses are not vast in knowing all the ramifications of peace journalism, as such, making it difficult to adhere to the diction that is in synch with peace journalism. The percentages which appeared in the framing of reports on Boko Haram insurgency showed that the use of demonizing language in the sampled newspapers is high. Thus, it encourages the ongoing war between the insurgents and the government by taking side. By this result, the sampled newspapers have not been acting with the view to eschewing the existing conflict.

Table 2: Use of Victimizing Language

Indicators	Daily Trust		Leadership		Vanguard		Punch	
Devastate	26	16.7%	15	1.9%	169	43.7%	8	4.7%
Destitute	14	9.0%	28	3.6%	10	2.6%	3	1.7%
Tragedy	58	37.2%	400	51.2%	141	36.4%	115	66.9%
Pathetic	51	32.7%	111	14.2%	52	13.4%	43	25.0%

Defenseless	7	4.5%	227	29.1%	15	3.9%	3	1.7%
Total/Percentage	n=156	100.0%	n=781	100.0%	n=387	100.0%	n=172	100.0%

As portrayed by the percentages in the table, the use of victimizing language is not as high as the use of demonizing language even though they still encourage war, with lesser effect. By implication, the sampled newspapers have little knowledge of peace journalism or are not ready to accept it as a practice worth-applying in the contents of their reports. Going by the frequency of victimizing language which was determined by the individual newspaper's reportage of Boko Haram insurgency, their expertise and the importance attached to peace journalism is at a minimal level.

Table 3: Use of Emotive Language

Indicators	Daily Trust		Leadership		Vanguard		Punch	
Massacre	54	44.6%	1504	55.1%	197	22.3%	166	57.6%
Genocide	32	26.4%	1112	40.8%	104	11.8%	95	33.0%
Assassinate	21	17.4%	96	3.5%	546	61.9%	12	4.2%
Decimate	14	11.6%	16	0.6%	35	4.0%	15	5.2%
Total/percentage	n=121	100.0%	n=2728	100.0%	n=882	100.0%	n=288	100.0%

The data in this table show that most newspapers are making the readers emotive and are therefore complicit in encouraging the war instead of discouraging it. However, in all the expressions that encourage war which include *demonizing, victimizing* and emotive language, *Daily Trust* has the lesser usage of those expressions in comparison to other newspapers, followed by *Punch*, followed by *Vanguard,* but the one with more frequencies of those language was *Leadership*. The analysis showed that some newspapers have expertise in controlling the rise of war taking into consideration the use of their language more than others.

Discussion of Findings

Drawing on existing literature, El-Nawawy& Powers (2008) cited in Ozohu-Suleiman (2013) developed 11-point typology of media that best perform conciliatory function. Among the typology are: avoiding the use of victimizing terms such as *martyr* or *pathetic*, unless they are attributed to a reliable source; avoiding the use of demonizing labels such as *terrorist* or *extremist*, unless they are attributed to a reliable source as well as emotive languages.

By the result of this study, it was observed that *Leadership* is the highest in using demonizing language to report with 3501 identified words. This may suggest that their staff members are not conflict-sensitive when compared with the *Vanguard* which has 1507 identified words. Another factor that may explain why *Vanguard*became second may be connected to its location i.e. Lagos where the activities of Boko Haram are rare, thereby making it reluctant in designing strategies to bring the insurgency to an end. *Punch* became the third with the frequency of demonizing language at 682.This can be related also to lack of knowledge of the peace journalism or reluctance because of less impact the insurgency has on the area it is located. *Daily Trust* has less frequency with 321.This suggests that they have expertise on peace journalism and the location i.e. Abuja where they operate as most of the immediate community is vulnerable to the activities of Boko Haram.

The need to take into cognizancethe diction of peace-related language by the press has become very crucial as they are the people framing issues for the audience which covers both the insurgents and the victims. However, the use of demonizing language has implications on peace journalism as it may succeed in making the insurgents feel mislabeled and blackmailed thereby instigating them to continue with the fight. Scholars emphasize the impact of framing on the audience which makes avoiding some language necessary. According to Norris, Kern and Just (2003), the idea of 'news frames' refers to interpretive structures that journalists use to set particular events within their broader context. They explain further

that “News frames bundle key concepts, stock phrases, and iconic images to reinforce certain common ways of interpreting developments.

Hermann and Hermann (1998) note that in reporting insurgency, the media not only dispatch information but, like good drama critics, interpret it as well. They skew what they give by deciding which events to report and which to ignore, intentionally or unintentionally expressing approval or disapproval to create an atmosphere of public support, apathy, or irritation. In this manner, as long as insurgents are primarily interested in how the audience-the national and foreign publics - and decision-makers in a government reactto their acts, insurgents’ aims can never be achieved without the media. So also, emphasis has been made on the power of the media in instigating or suppressing any violence. According to Ozohu-Suleiman, (2013, p.17), “Accelerating or impeding security, and shaping or refining opinions are similar ways of acknowledging that the mass media can serve as a powerful tool for inflaming disagreement and diffusing conflicts or facilitating peace”.

However, avoiding the emotional language used by the media presupposes peace journalism. With the frequencies of demonizing, victimizing and the use of emotive language and their percentages, it can be observed that most Nigerian newspapers are poorly adopting peace journalism in their report. This will have a negative impact on peace journalism as the insurgents and the government will continue the fight. Peace journalism recommends avoiding any form of fight which the media is now championing. Peace journalism otherwise known as conflict sensitive journalism which combines journalism with peace as an external aim understands itself as "a normative mode of responsible and conscientious media coverage of conflict that aims at contributing to peacemaking, peacekeeping, and changing the attitudes of media owners, advertisers, professionals, and audiences towards peace" (Shinar, 2007, p.2).The resultshave shown that some newspapers adopt the use of war journalism excessively in their report while some try to be conflict sensitive in their report comparatively.

To answer the questions raised, the study reveals that the portrayal of war language in the sampled newspapers is high and can lead to the rise of further conflicts. It reveals also that, in their reportage, much prominence is given to war than peace approaches.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that despite the arguments surrounding the adoption of peace journalism as a way of promoting peace by the media, most Nigerian newspapers are poorly adopting it as evident in the contents of the sampled newspapers. However, the evidenceof its poor adoption may be based on the acceptance or rejection of peace journalism by the industry a journalist is working with. Professionalism has it that a journalist should report objectively, thereby detaching personal ideas in their reports regardless of the benefit it renders to the society. This makes journalists a third party to conflicting parties, which is the thrust of peace journalism.

Some scholars are of the view that journalists are promoters of peace and can therefore compromise objectivity. Moreover, the objectivity in journalism, according to some scholars, is only theoretical. It also concludes that some of the newspapers lack training in knowing how to adopt peace journalism in their reportage. Again, some newspapers have negligence to the ongoing menace as they have beensafely pursuing their activities in the areas that are not prone to Boko Haram attacks.

The study recommends that workshops should be frequently organized to be addressing issues of public concern, Boko Haram insurgency inclusive. It also recommends that regardless of the demands of professionalism, peace-driven approaches to reportingconflicting issues should be the priority of Nigerian journalists.

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