

The Role of News Media Reporting of Conflict, National Security and Counter Terrorism in Nigeria

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Abstract

Conflict and terrorism pose a grave danger to security, stability and development of Nigeria. Terrorist/violent groups exploit the media easily due to symbiotic relationship of feeding off each other. Current journalism celebrates conflicts as primary news value, thereby emphasizing violent aspect of conflicts. This paper examined the current methods of news media reporting of conflicts national security and counter terrorism with special focus on security views. The methodology adopted to generate data for the study was based on primary and secondary sources. Under primary source, the study made use of critical participatory action research (CPAR) an aspect of focus group discussions instrument. Two FGD were organized with the military, air force and other security experts/workers in Jos, Plateau State and Makurdi, Benue State. This is to elicit responses directly from those engaged in conflict/terrorism war in Nigeria. The study examined current methods of reporting conflict and terrorism with the aim of identifying novel methods of reporting conflict and terrorism that will promote peace, national security and counter terrorism in Nigeria. The theoretical basis for the study is the peace journalism framework advanced by Lynch and Galtung. The findings of the study reveals that current methods of news reporting promotes war journalism as against peace journalism advanced by the Johan Galtung's Perspective. The study therefore recommend among others that conflict and terrorism reporters should adopt peace journalism reportage instead of war journalism that escalate rather than de-escalate conflict and terrorism in Nigeria.

Keywords: News Media, Conflict, Terrorism, Counter Terrorism, Peace Journalism.

Introduction

Conflict and terrorism pose a greater danger to the national security, stability and development of Nigeria. Since independence, Nigeria has struggled with national integration problematic and national security as one of the national question because of one conflict or the other. These conflicts have contributed significantly to slowing down the pace of Nigeria's economic growth and national development. In recent times, the situation has worsened with wide spread conflicts across Nigeria, such as the Niger Delta crisis, electoral violence, ethno-religious crisis, Boko Haram insurgency, and the most recent being herders/farmers conflict and banditry/kidnappings etc. These conflicts happens in different parts of the country and the

public learn about them through the news media reports, which have become a powerful tool of publicity for these conflicts.

In view of the awareness of news media's power to amplify news, terrorists and other violent groups seek media attention to achieve their propaganda objectives and gain control over society Nacos (2006) and Bowden (2004) have argued that terrorists and other violent groups are able to exploit the media easily because of "a symbiotic relationship" of feeding each other. While terrorist's strikes provide what the news media crave most – drama, shock, tragedy, and grief, terrorists get precisely what they need: massive publicity and the opportunity to showcase their ability to strike against even the strongest nation states.

This seemingly symbiotic relationship between the news media and terrorists has generated many scholarly debates on the role of the news media in terrorism with many scholars indicting the current war journalism oriented news reporting methods, which emphasizes the superficial and sensational aspects of conflicts (Lynch & Galtung, 2010) as defacto aiding and furthering terrorist imperatives (Lumbaca & Gray, 2011; Ross, 2007; Cohen-Almagor, 2005; Nacos, 2002). These scholars have suggested news media blackout and violent conflict and terrorism activities as solution to reducing their visibility and desired impact. These scholars argue that, without the amplification of the news media, the propaganda objectives, and implicitly the mission, of terrorist and other violent groups will largely fail, (Dover & Goodman, 2012). The suggestion for media blackout to reduce the visibility of terrorist actors in the news media, however, violates the public's right to information on personal and national security (Wu, 2015, Weiman, 2014). And "information failure" of the media in providing timely and credible information can contribute to escalating conflicts (Lake & Rothchild, 1996).

Some scholars blame conflict journalism education curriculum, which celebrates "conflicts" as a primary news value (Galtung & Ruge, 1965), as responsible for the emphasis news reporters place on violet aspect of conflict. It is against the backdrop of the preceeding arguments that this paper interrogates the indictment of current war journalism oriented methods of reporting conflict and terrorism activities. The review of these news reporting methods aimed at articulating and developing novel methods of reporting conflicts and terrorism that could promote peace, national security and counter terrorism in Nigeria. Aslam (2014) argues that, "peace journalism provides this alternative professional paradigm for journalists to enable them view, interpret, source, and narrate conflicts in ways that seeks non-violent responses in society. Arguing from the perspectives of Lynch and Galtung's (2010) peace journalism conceptual framework; this paper has undertaken the task of engaging security/counterterrorism experts in a participatory action research to critically assess existing methods of reporting/framing security/terrorists activities so as to articulate methods of conflicts and terrorism that could help promote peace, national security, counter terrorism and national integration and development in Nigeria.

In view of the preceding analysis, the central question that will guide this paper, therefore, is: How could the ideals of peace journalism be integrated into the journalism education and be

translated into professional practice of news reporting of conflicts and terrorism? What other novel methods, could be articulated in reporting conflict and terrorism that could promote peace, national security and counterterrorism?

Statement of Problem

Scholarship on media and conflict accuses the news media of sharing “a symbolic relationship” with terrorists by feeding off each other (Nacos, 2006; Bowden, 2004), with many scholars indicting the current war journalism oriented news reporting methods (Lynch & Jaltung, 2010), which emphasize the superficial and sensational aspects of conflicts, as aiding terrorists imperatives (Lumbaca & Gray, 2011; Ross, 2007; Cohen-Almagor, 2005; Nacos, 2002). These scholars argue that without the publicity and amplification of the news media, the propaganda objectives and mission of terrorists and violent groups will largely fail, and therefore, the news media blackout on terrorists activities can be a solution to reducing their visibility and desired impact. The suggestion for news media blackout to reduce the visibility of terrorists action, however, violates the public’s right to information on personal and national security. “Information failures” of the media in providing timely and credible information can contribute to escalating conflicts (Lake & Rothchild, 1996).

Galtung and Ruge (1965) blame current journalism education curriculum, which celebrates “conflict” as a primary news value, as responsible for the emphasis, news reporters place on violent aspects of news reporters place on violent aspects of conflict. These scholars have suggested a reform of journalism education curriculum to include the discipline of conflict resolution in journalism training at the basic level as “such knowledge can better inform journalists in their work, especially in their analysis of conflicts and in their reporting efforts to diffuse conflict” (Howard, 2003, p. 54).

Instead of news media blackout, this research project interprets the indictment of current war journalism oriented methods of reporting conflict and terrorists activities as a wakeup call for a review of these methods of reporting conflict and terrorism that promote peace, national security and counter terrorism in Nigeria. Accordingly, this study inquires into how the ideals of peace journalism can be integrated into journalism education and be translated into professional practice of news reporting of conflict and terrorism. Through critical participatory action research method, this research hopes to articulate constructive and viable proposals from journalism education academics, conflicts reporters and peace workers/counterterrorism for the military, air force, police and other security experts on practical strategies and news reporting methods that can help transform news reporting of conflicts into a viable tool for peace building and promotion of national security

Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this research paper is to examine current war journalism oriented news reporting methods, indicted by scholars as aiding conflicts and terrorists activities, with a view

to articulating novel methods of reporting conflict and terrorism that could promote peace, national security and counter terrorism in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- i) Critically evaluate current methods of reporting conflict and terrorism in the news media in Nigeria.
- ii) Identify counter terrorism experts methods that are to aid journalism profession in terms of conflict and counterterrorism reporting in Nigeria.
- iii) Assess ways through which reporting of conflict and counter terrorism can be an avenue for promoting peace in Nigeria.
- iv) Identify best journalism practice of reporting conflict and terrorism that will promote peace, National security and counter terrorism in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Scholarship on the news media and conflict, largely, describe the relationship between the news media and terrorist/violent groups as “Symbiotic”. This is because, while terrorists get precisely what they need: massive publicity...and the news media are rewarded as well in that they energize their competition for audience size and circulation and thus for all important advertising revenues (Necos, 2006; Bowden, 2004). This assumption of a symbiotic relationship has generated many scholarly debates, with three dominant trends emerging from current literature. The first set of scholars implicitly indicts the news media as accomplices of terrorists groups by allowing these groups to use the media as “an instrument to generate publicity and draw attention to their cause (Lumbaca & Gray, 2011; Rose, 2007; Nacos, 2002). A second perspective, examines the possibility of news media coverage of terrorism including audience members to engage in acts of terrorism (Picard, 1986). A third set of scholarship attempts to measure the psychological impact and effect on the public news media reports of terrorists activities (Weiman, 2006; Weinberg & Davis, 1989; Yung & Ostman, 2003).

Deriving from the foregoing, there are two important conclusion that can be generated from the current literature which are worthwhile considered for further inquiry. First, Dover and Goodman (2012) argue that the symbiotic relationship between the news media and terrorism implies that without the amplification of the news media, the propaganda objectives, and implicitly the mission, of terrorist groups will largely not be achieved. Second, scholars are of the view that, the current war journalism-oriented methods of reporting conflicts and terrorism contribute to escalation of violence by placing undue emphasis on the superficial and sensational aspects of conflicts (Lynch & Galtung, 2010; O’Neil, 1986, Chemack, Bailey & Brown, 2003). The indictment of current methods of reporting conflict and terrorist activities invariably calls for reassessment of these news reporting methods with the aim of articulating and developing novel methods of reporting conflict and terrorism that could promote peace, national security and counterterrorism, as the major objective of this paper.

This paper, therefore, argues that the reporting of conflicts and terrorism is a special area that demands an alternative reporting method that can help transform conflicts. Peace journalism provides this “alternative professional paradigm for news reporting of conflict, which could

enable journalists to view, interpret, source and analyse conflicts in ways that seek non-violent responses in society. According to Aslam (2014), the application of peace journalism methods of reporting conflict “ultimately would help in transforming conflicts and lead them towards resolution. In this way, the journalist can educate, inform, correct misrepresentations, build confidence, and offer options for peaceful resolution of conflicts. As opposed to war journalism, which emphasizes violence, propaganda, the elite, and victory, peace journalism is oriented towards peace, truth, the people and solution (Lynch & Galtung, 2010).

Conflict is a human interaction, which involves parties with incompatible interests. What renders such incongruity an overt and explicit strife is the awareness of the suitability and the ensuring choice of confrontation. Awareness is raised by communication, either with the environment or with the rivaling party. Communication produces information, which affects each side’s decision. Whether to harsh out the differences or shun them. Thus, communication becomes a crucial determination in conflict and conflict resolution; it creates consciousness and attentiveness to, the other. Destructive and debilitating communication, which promotes voices, distortion, interruptions, deception, ploys, and false clues, promotes and escalate conflicts. In contrast, constructive or beneficial communication relies on honesty, open channels and the effort to align the sent message with the received one. Such a pattern of interaction strives for accommodation and the relaxation of tensions and hostilities, (Tillet 1999; Lederach & Jenner, 2022; Pruitt & Kim, 2004).

Conceptual Clarification

National Security

The concept of national security was developed mostly in the United States of America after World War II. Currently, the concept encompasses non-military security such as economic security, energy security, food security etc. National security could be widely interpreted to mean many similar things or situations by different scholars and analysts. The concept of security on the other hand “is not alien and has been central even in the primitive societies” (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013:286). The English word “Security”, argued Mesjasz (2004), originates from Latin word “*Se-curus*”- “*Se*” meaning “without” and “*curus*” meaning “uneasiness”. That implies that security originally meant “liberation from uneasiness”, or a “peaceful situation without any risk or threat”. The word “security” has a wider range of meaning including “to feel safe” and “to be protected” and is used to describe situations without any risk or worries (Peterside, 2014 cited in Charles, 2016). National security to some “can be most fruitfully defined as the ability of a nation to protect its internal values from external threats” (Berkowitz & Bocks, 1975: P. x). To others, “it is a protective condition which statesmen either try to acquire, or preserve, in order to guard the various components of the politics from either external or internal threat” (Cohen & Tuttle, 1972 cited in Charles, 2016).

Romm (1993, p.16) has operationalized national security to mean “the continued ability of a country to pursue its internal life without serious interference. The McMillan Dictionary sees national security as bordering on the protection or the safety of a country’s secrets and its

citizens. The Thesaurus streamlines the italicized words as synonyms for national security-*spying, espionage, intelligence/ counter intelligence, snooping* etc.

Imobighe, summarizes National security in a more congruent, encompassing and comprehensive words to be:

freedom from danger or with threats to a nation's ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and legitimate interests and enhance the wellbeing of its people. Thus internal security could be seen as the freedom from or the absence of the tendencies which could undermine cohesion and the corporate existence of the nation and its ability to maintain its vital institution for the promotion of its core values and socio-political and economic objectives, as well as meet the legitimate aspirations of the people. Internal security also implies freedom from danger to life and property (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013; Charles, 2016).

To Afolabi, (2016); National security can be described as the sum of the efforts, energy, intelligence, commitment and the use of institutions (and their products) to enforce and ensure adequate protection of interests, people and properties of a nation. It also involves the overall protection of a nation's integrity and sovereignty. On a wider scope, national security may be too complex to be captured in one definition because of its meaning in content and implications (Afolabi, 2016).

Counterterrorism

Terrorism is the systematic use of violence to create a general condition of fear in a population and thereby to bring about a particular political objective. Terrorism has been practiced by political organizations with both rightist and leftish objectives, by nationalistic and religious groups, by revolutionaries, and even by state institutions such as armies, intelligence groups and police (Abagen & Tyona 2019). Terrorism is, in the broadest sense, the fear and terror among masses of the people; or fear to achieve a religious or political aim. It is used in this regard primarily to refer to violence during peacetime or in war against non-combatants [mostly civilians and neutral military personnel]. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019). From the above explanations, therefore, terrorism can be defined as the unlawful use of violence, especially, against civilians in pursuit of religious or political, social or ideological, ethnic or racial and philosophical objectives or aims.

According to Weinberg *et al* (2004), "terrorism is a politically motivated tactic involving the threat at use of force or violence in which the pursuit of publicity plays significant role". Leonard Weinberg and another scholar, Ami Pedahzur have also described terrorism in the following words;

It is important to stress that terrorism is not an ideology but an activity. Presumably then it is an activity that a variety of political groups and organizations may engage in either on a full-time basis or sporadically in some instances, the group may employ terrorism in conjunction with other forms of

political activity. The latter may range from making non-violent propaganda to more intense types of violence, as in Civil war (Weinberg & Pedahzur, 2004, p. 48).

The concept Counterterrorism has various definitions due to differences in views of scholars Oyewole (2013) refers to a rival political strategy to the political goals terrorism seeks to achieve that involves an obligation to maintain and restore order from the disorder created by terrorism. The varying nature of terrorism and their driving force in different countries determine what should be committed into countering it. These include funds, personnel, institutions and time (Crelinsten, 2009). These assertions explain why Chailand (1987) sees counter-terrorism as a response to terrorism and also one of the crucial outcomes of it. Echoing this, Richardson (2011) opined that until policy makers have a grip of the factors that lead to terrorism, they may be unable to make and implement policies to prevent the act. A comprehensive policy in response to terrorism is an upshot of an understanding of its root causes (Kundnani, 2015). However, a response should entail police investigation, military actions and preventive measures (Kundnani, 2015). These are hard and soft approaches to countering terrorism. Hoefl (2015) aptly explains this when he acknowledges that ‘war on idea’ (soft approach) and ‘not war on terror’ is crucial in dealing with terrorism, but that military actions (hard approach) may be necessary where terrorists defy the soft approach. He concludes that measures in countering terrorism that work for a given country may not work for another (Hoefl, 2015).

Lum, Kennedy and Sherly, (2006) succinctly submitted that ‘counter-terrorism strategies may include prevention and alleviation of early risk factors, situational prevention of actual events, or post-event responses. The Nigerian government has been involved in all of these three phases through programmes like deradicalisation to prevent military actions and post-terrorist attack responses (Amy, 2014; Dasuki, 2013). This study adopts Stepanova’s definition because the definitions for both counter-terrorism and anti-terrorism are inseparable and this aptly captures the Nigerian situation. It also describes the combination of hard and soft approaches to counterterrorism. Stepanova’s definition goes thus:

Counter-terrorism is seen as a security task performed by the security component of a national or international authority, the use of political, legal, economic, civil society and other peace-building instruments for the purposes of both countering and preventing terrorism is more broadly referred to as anti-terrorism (Stepanova, 2003: cited in Faluyi, 2017).

Hence, the anti-terrorism referred to in this definition will be jointly adopted with that of counter-terrorism and both will be utilised as a single definition of counter-terrorism.

Peace Journalism

Peace Journalism has the characteristic and the capabilities of encouraging constructive communication (Peleg, 2006). This paper illustrates how the introduction of peace journalism

into conflict theory can advance the theoretical understanding and actual practice of conflict transformation. Peace journalism, as a motivator of peace and as a promoter of depolarization and de-escalation (Galtung, in Hackett & Zhao, 2005), can accomplish a significant role in inspiring journalists to portray disputes in a different manner than that to which they usually ascribe. A successful conflict resolution process must be based on genuine and honest interaction between antagonists, whereby unmet human needs are frankly discussed and interests and motivations rather than positions are candidly aired. Interest such as the fulfillment of basic needs motivate parties to pursue conflicts in earnest. The continuing ignorance of such grievances turns conflicts into deep-rooted or protracted ones (Azar, 1985, Burton, 1987, Montville, 1990; Peleg 1999). Peace journalism, with its keen eyes for causes and stimuli and with its commitment to a broader and fairer depiction (Galtung, 1996; Lynch & Mc Goldrick, 2005), can and should bring such unattended human needs to the fore and alleviate intractable conflicts (Peleg, 2006).

This paper, therefore, argues that peace journalism should assume the role of third party in its facilitation capacity; allowing for the rivaling sides to get to know one another; to uphold understanding and empathy, to focus on creativity and human ingenuity to resolve conflicts and to emphasize truth-oriented, people-oriented and solution-oriented journalism to expedite peace. The relationship between conflict theory and peace journalism is reciprocal and contributive in both directions. Therefore, the research question in the heart of this paper can be presented as “what insights does conflict theory offer into how the media can serve as a third party to conflicts?”

The concept of peace journalism and news framing are very central to understanding of the subject matter of this paper. This paper is anchored on the theoretical basis that the news media play an important role in conflict situations, with the nature of the role – as being perpetrators of conflict or agents for peace – which largely depends on the framing and agenda setting of the news media. As argued by Aslam (2014, p.21), “if the agenda of the media is non-violence and the framing is peace-oriented aimed at reducing conflict and support rapprochement, it can de-escalate violence and influence public opinion towards resolving conflict.”

On the other hand, framing is the selection of some aspect of perceived reality and making them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular interpretation of events or issues (Entman, 1993). Through careful organization of thoughts, news, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs, news media frames represent events and people in a specific ways and this can influence opinion of people on how events or people are viewed by news media audiences. Scholars have argued severally that many news framing effects have demonstrated this potential impact of news frames on audience perception of issues (Dickerson, 2001; Fuglsang, 2001, Pan and Kosick, 2001; Paterson, 2001; Shah, Domke and Wackman, 2001, Zoch, 2001). Andsager (2000), for instance, found that in reporting events, the news media do not merely convey the information, but rather “news coverage plays a substantial role in shaping public opinion through frames that shape the way journalists report the news (Andsager, 2000, p.578).

Given the impact of news frames on public opinion on issues, this paper argues, therefore, that the framing of conflict and terrorism in the news media requires the development of alternative methods of practice that will contribute to peace building and counter terrorism. It is on the basis of the foregoing that, this paper also posit that peace journalism provides that alternative professional paradigm for news reporting of conflict, which would enable journalists to view, interpret, source and narrate conflicts in ways that seek for non-violent responses to issues of conflicts and terrorism in the society. Aslam (2014), is of the opinion that, the application of peace journalism methods to reporting of conflict and terrorism, “ultimately would help transform conflicts and lead them towards peaceful resolution of conflicts. In this way, journalists would educate, inform, correct misrepresentations, build confidence and as well offer options for the resolution of violent conflicts in the society.

Informed by the Johann Galtung’s peace and war journalism framework (1996), this paper posit that, “peace journalism is a form of journalism that seeks to transform conflicts from their violent dispositions into more constructive forms by conceptualizing news, empowering the voiceless, and seeking common grounds that unify rather than divide human societies” (Aslam 2014, p.67; Tehranian, 2002). Consequently, the pattern of news reporting for peace journalism aims primarily at telling news stories of conflicts “in a way that encourages conflict analysis and non-violent response to issues of conflicts in society” (Mogekwu, 2011, p.247). stated by Lynchu (2013, p.9) “Peace journalism has its orientation towards peace process as opposed to violent events; truth as opposed to propaganda; people as opposed to the elite, and solution as opposed to victory.”

Peace journalism shed light on structural and cultural causes of violence as they impact on the lives of people in a conflict arena as part of the explanation for violence. It also frames conflicts as consisting of many parties and pursuing many goals rather than a simple dichotomy. An explicit aim of peace journalism is to promote peace initiatives from whatever quarters and to allow the readers to distinguish between the slated positions and the real goals (Ifeyinwa, 2016). Peace journalism is based on the fact that there is something wrong with typical conflict reporting. The basic principles of peace journalism are creativity, constructiveness, concrete, compassion and concise reporting of news especially as it relates to conflict and counterterrorism.

Theoretical Framework

Scholars in the course of trying to situate terrorism and its dimension in proper perspective have developed theories to explain the type, nature, patterns and dimensions of terrorism. They include the following among others: The political theory of anarchism as a theory of terrorism; the political theory of fascism as a theory of terrorism; the philosophical theory of rational choice as a theory of terrorism; the globalization theory of terrorism; psychiatric theories of mental illness as a theory of terrorism; theories unique to domestic terrorism; biological theories of terrorism; traditional criminological theories applied to terrorism, etc. (Obakhedo & Obakhedo, 2016; Obakhedo, 2011, Viotti & Kauppi, 2001)

These theories based on the cause-effect relationship have led to some further clarification and categorization of terrorism into: political terrorism; criminal terrorism, repressive revolutionary, sub-revolutionary and secessionist terrorism (Nwolise, 2005; Kuper & Kuper, 1996); agro-terrorism; bioterrorism; catastrophic terrorism; counter terrorism; domestic terrorism, eco-terrorism; international terrorism; narco terrorism; non-political terrorism; nuclear terrorism; political terrorism (limited and unlimited political terrorism); post-modern terrorism; religious terrorism or religious fundamentalism; state and state-sponsored terrorism; quasi-terrorism; individual terrorism psychotic, criminal mystical, revolutionary, repressive, military and state-sponsored terrorism (Harle, 1989); mass terror, which includes endemic, authorized, repressive and enforcement terror; dynastic terror, also known as assassination or, in an earlier incarnation, tyrannicide; random terror; focused terror and tactical terror (Combs, 1997, p.15).

However, this research is anchored on the framing theory. Framing has to do with the choice of some aspect of the perceived reality and making them more salient in a communication text, in a manner that will promote a particular interpretation of events or issue (Entman, 1993). Many news framing effects have demonstrated this potential impact of news frames on audience perception of issues (Dickson, 2001; Fulgson, 2001) Pan & Kosick, 2001., Paterson, 2001; Shah Domke & Wackman, 2001; Zock, 2001 Andsager (2001), for instance, found that in reporting events, the news media do not merely convey the information, but rather, “news coverage plays a substantial role in shaping public opinion through frames that shapes the way journalists report these news (Andsager, 2000, p. 578).

Given the impact of news frames on public opinion on issues, this research argues, therefore, that the framing of conflict and terrorism in the news media requires the development of alternative methods of practice that will contribute to peace building and counter terrorism. This aspect of framing should be anchored on peace journalism perspective that offers alternative news framing ideas that seeks for non-violent responses to issues of conflict and terrorism in the society.

Aslam (2014) suggest that, the application of peace journalism framing methods to reporting conflict and terrorism, ultimately would help transform conflicts and lead them towards peaceful resolution of conflicts. In this way, journalists would educate, inform, correct misrepresentations, build confidence and as well offer options for the resolution of violent conflicts and terrorism in the society.

Research Methodology

Data for this study is generated using both primary and secondary sources. Primary method of data was based on the use of participatory action research (PAR) method also known as focus group discussion (FGD) with the expert security personnel drawn from the military, airforce, police and other security experts in Jos, Plateau State and Makurdi, Benue State. It should be noted that, critical participatory action research (PAR) is a method of “research which involves all relevant parties in actively examining together current actions (which they experience as

problematic) in order to change and improve it. It is action which is researched, changed and re-researched, within the research process by participants (in this case the Nigerian security experts) (Aslam, 2014, p.96). Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) identify three key attributes that distinguish participatory action research from conventional research as: Shared ownership of research project (between researcher and participants); community-based analysis of social problems; and an orientation toward community action. In this way, participatory action research is reflexive and aims at helping the researcher/participants to investigate “reality in order to change it” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p.567). In the context of this paper, participatory action research is most suitable because it aided both the researcher/participants to critically and collectively review the current methods of reporting conflicts and terrorism (which are problematic) in order to develop alternative methods, which could help promote peaceful resolution of conflicts and contribute to national security and counter terrorism. As argued by Habemas (1987; 1996) in Kemmis and McTahhart (2005, p.578), “the process of participatory action research is one of mutual inquiry aimed at reaching inter-subjective agreement, mutual understanding of situation, unforced consensus about what to do, and a sense that what people achieve together will be legitimate not only for themselves but for every reasonable person.

Accordingly, because participatory action research aims to create an avenue for people to search together collaboratively, this study employed the instrument of focus group discussion (FGD) to engage peace/counter terrorism security personnel and workers to review current methods of reporting/framing conflict and terrorism in Nigeria. Freire (1993) and Kozol (1991) have shown that focus group discussions are well suited to problem-posing and problem-solving inquiries, such as this present study, as “real-world problems cannot be solved by individuals alone; instead, they require rich and complex forms of communal knowledge and practice.

A series of focus group discussions was, therefore, organized with the peace/counter terrorism security experts/workers in the army, Airforce, Police both in Jos, Plateau state and Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria. Data collected from the focus group discussions is analyzed qualitatively, identifying major themes that emerged from the interactions with these groups as contained in the next section of the study.

Presentation of Data/Analysis and discussion of Major Findings from the FGD with Peace/Counter Terrorist Experts in Jos, Plateau State and Makurdi, Benue State.

Conflict and terrorism pose a great danger to the national security, stability and development of Nigeria. These conflicts happen in different parts of the country and the public learn about them through the news media reports, which have become a powerful tool of publicity for these conflicts. It is in recognition of the symbolic relationship between the news media and terrorisms and the indictment of the current war journalism oriented methods of reporting conflict and terrorism activities that FGD was organized with security experts/workers in Jos, Plateau State and Makurdi, Benue State, so as to ascertain the current methods been used, nature of training needed and to suggest way forward or novel methods of reporting conflicts and

terrorism that could promote peace, national security and counterterrorism in Nigeria. Below is the analysis and presentation of the FGD as indicated above:

What are the current Methods of Reporting Conflict and Terrorism that seek to promote the Course of Terrorists and Contribute to the Escalation of Conflicts in Nigeria.

To respond to the above question which emanates from the first objective of this research, the following major themes have been identified from the responses of the FGD with the security personnel such as the Army, Airforce, Police experts on terrorism in Jos, Plateau State and Makurdi, Benue State. The first major theme from both groups identified is the issue of biased and imbalance reportage by the news media of conflict and terrorism activities. In his response, one of the participant averred that one of the worst form of journalism or news reporting currently is the biased and unbalanced reporting of conflict and terrorism. Unbalanced reporting is also attributed to skewed reporting conflict and terrorism. According to this view point, skewed narratives or unbalanced narratives; “you tend to over report one side of a story, of a particular situation and then under report the other side”. This could be done to gain popularity or for personal and sectional interest of the reporters. The informant gave an instance of the manner in which herders/farmers conflicts over time has been reported with clear tendencies of bias, unbalanced accounts and skewed narratives by the news reporters, thereby heightening tension rather than promoting peace, national security and counterterrorism. To buttress this point of skewed narratives and unbalance/biased reporting, one of the respondent, a military personnel involved in counter terrorism stated thus:

“over” the years, there has been this vicious cycle of attacks and then counter attacks or reprisals between most of the locals who are basically farmers and their counterparts, the Fulanis, who are most times herders. In most cases, what you find in the media is lopsided. Oh! Fulanis have done this, done that! I am not saying they don’t do that. No, that’s not what I mean, but if we are to go by what we see, the Fulanis are always responsible, what about the farmers? What happened before the Funali attack is not reported! That’s where bias, skewed and unbalanced reportage comes in and it has escalated rather de-escalate conflict and terrorisms”.

The security personnel also gave reasons for the current form of news reporting of conflict to be the desire by reporters to win public sympathy, poor knowledge of the conflict situation. For instance, an army respondents blame the current methods of reporting conflict to;

poor understanding of what conflict entails, taking side with a particular group against the other by reporters, inability to remain neutral, reporting unverified and inauthentic news. The desire by news reporters to State figures and violent aspects of conflict and terrorism instead of reporting positive side of conflicts to build peace, national security and counter terrorism is not good for peace building. Sensationalism, skewed narratives, biased and unbalanced reporting of conflicts by journalists over the years has fueled conflicts and terrorism rather

than promote peace, national security and counter terrorism which is the basis for Johann Galtung's peace journalism perspective.

The current methods of news reporting of conflicts and terrorism has also been criticized in the works of Lynch and Galtung (2010) who argued that the superficial and sensational aspects of conflicts reports have escalated conflicts and terrorism rather than de-escalate it. However, to recommend news media blackout as suggested by Lumbaca and Gray (2011); Ross (2007) and Cohen-Almagor (2005); & Nacos (2007) is not the best because society has the right to have access to any form of news. Therefore, total blackout violates the public's right to information on personal and national security (Wu, 2015; Weiman 2014). Lake and Rothchild (1996) have also argued that information failures of the media in providing timely and credible information can contribute to escalating conflicts and terrorism. These views by these scholars cited above, corroborates the views canvassed by participants during FGD with security personnel in Jos and Makurdi as presented above.

The second objective deals with ways news reporting can assist to reduce conflict and counter terrorism in Nigeria. The data gathered shows that journalists do not report from the scene of conflicts, they should not have interest in the conflict which result in negative reportage of conflicts and terrorism; there is also the factor of monetary inducement as the reason for poor reporting of conflicts instead of positive sides of it. In fact, one of the respondents revealed during FGD in Jos that reporting positive aspects of conflict can greatly enhance peace, national security and counter terrorism. She gave an example of how a Moslem hid Christians in his house during one of the crisis in Jos. When the incidence was reported it drew the attention of peace loving people both within and outside the country; an action which led the United Nations to grant international recognition to the Moslem peace maker and the lady reporter was also given an award.

Such kind of news reporting is in line with Johann Galtung's peace journalism and news framing which are very central to this research. The research build on the theoretical assumption that the news media play an important role in conflict situations, with the nature of the role – as perpetrators of conflict or agents of peace-largely depending on the framing and agenda setting of the news media. "If the agenda of the media is non-violence and the framing is peace-oriented aimed to reduce conflict and support rapprochement, it can de-escalate violence and influence public opinion towards resolving conflict". (Aslam, 2014, p.12).

The FGD also indentified quackery (poor training background), arm chair reporting, emotional attachment and fear; ethic and religious affiliation. Sectionalism/regional interest is also responsible for poor reporting by journalists. Infact, one of the respondents a military personnel, gave an instance where he said;

“the Southern press reports Niger Delta conflicts different from the manner in which Boko Haram conflicts is reported in the media. The same way the Western press/media reports a President of Southern extraction is different from the way a Northern President is portrayed by the same media in Nigeria”. Others attribute

current methods of reporting as been the absence of professionalism, lack of regimented training of journalists, involved in reporting conflicts and terrorism; lack of discipline/punishment to erring journalists, non-adherence to the ethical principles of the journalism practice and above all, absence of institutional mechanisms to punish erring journalists. All these factors been attributed to the current poor conflict reporting by news reporters in Nigeria. The implication of the foregoing is that current methods of conflict and terrorism reportage have contributed in aggravating conflicts instead of reducing it.

In view of the foregoing, the research argues that, the reporting of conflicts and terrorism is a specialist area that demands alternative reporting methods that can help transform conflicts. And peace journalism provides that. “alternative professional paradigm for news reporting of conflict, which would enable journalists to view, interpret, source, and narrate conflicts in ways that seeks non-violent responses in society. To support their view point, the application of peace journalism methods to conflict reporting “ultimately would help transform conflicts and lead towards resolution. In this way, the journalist can educate, inform, correct, misrepresentations, build confidence, and offer options for resolution”. (Aslam, 2014, p.2). This view is opposed to war journalism, which emphasizes violence, propaganda, the elite, and victory, peace journalism is oriented towards peace, truth, the people and solutions (Lynch & Galtung, 2010). This takes us to the next segment of the FGD which deals with ways news reporting of conflict and terrorism can be improved.

In response to the question three which is objective three of the study dealing with ways reporting of conflict and terrorism can be improved? Below are the major themes identified from the FGD with security personnel in Jos and Makurdi. First and foremost, it was suggested by one of the respondents that journalists should always clarify their source of news before reporting it to the public. In other words, reporting conflict and terrorism should always be based on first hand information. News reporting should be based on facts and accurate reporting and not on hearsay or emotional attachment. Another respondent an airforce official in Makurdi, Benue State was of the view that news reporting of conflicts and terrorism should be based on objectivity. By objectivity here means that journalists reporting conflict and terrorism must hear from both parties to the conflict. They should report from the theatre of conflicts and terrorism. They should de-emphasize emotions, self-interest and be courageous. To report conflict and terrorism that will promote peace, national security and counter terrorism, reporters should try as much as possible to avoid distortion of facts; process information received and above all, engage in conflict analysis process.

The above view have also been canvassed by Entman (1993) particularly as it relates to framing of news. Framing has to do with the selection of some aspects of perceived reality and making them more salient in a communication text, in such a way that will promote particular interpretation of events or issues. Many news framing effects studies have demonstrated this potential impact of news frames on audience perception of issues. (Dickerson, 2001; Fuglsang, 2001; Pan & Kosicki, 2001; Paterson, 2001; Shah, Domke & Wachman, 2001; Zoch, 2001). In

his study, Andsager (2000), for instance, found out that in reporting events, the news media do not merely convey the information, but rather news coverage plays a substantial role in shaping public opinion through frames that shape ways journalist report the news (Andsager, 2000).

Given the impact of news frames on public opinion on issues, this research argues, therefore, that the framing of conflict and terrorism in the news media requires the development of alternative methods of journalism practice that will contribute to peace building and counter terrorism. This is where Johann Galtung's peace journalism and not war journalism comes handy, as an alternative shift to news reporting of conflict which enable journalists to view, interpret, source and narrate conflicts in ways that seeks non-violent responses in society. This study is therefore anchored on Johann Galtung's peace journalism framework which states that, peace journalism is "a form of journalism that attempt to transform conflict from the violent channel into constructive forms by conceptualizing news, empowering the voiceless, and seeking common grounds that unify rather than divide human societies". (Aslam, 2014, p.67).

In the same way, Moge kwu (2011, p. 247) argues that, the pattern of news reporting for peace journalism aims primarily at telling news stories of conflict "in a way that encourages conflict analysis and non-violent responses in society". As summarized by Lynch (2013, p.9). "Peace journalism has its orientation towards peace process as opposed to violent events; truth as opposed to propaganda; people as opposed to the elite, and solution as opposed to victory". These views as canvassed by these various scholars complements the views and suggestions generated from the FGD with security personnel in Jos, Plateau State and Makurdi, Benue State. This analysis takes us to the next objective and final question bordering on the kind of training needed by journalists assigned the responsibility of reporting conflict and terrorism.

In an attempt to provide answers to the question: what kind of training needed by journalists assigned the responsibility of reporting conflict and terrorism? The following views were canvassed as major themes from the FGD organized with security personnel in Jos, Plateau State and Makurdi, Benue State. First and foremost, intelligence based information gathering training for armed conflict and terrorism reporters was recommended by the security experts during discussion. The Army personnel particularly suggested that conflict and terrorism reporters should be given regimented training as well as basic military training courses, such as intelligence and use of intelligence for information gathering should be introduced to news reporters of conflict and terrorism.

An air force personnel respondents suggested that institutions offering journalism courses should engage security experts as part of the training team. Courses on conflict and terrorism reporting is relevant to achieve objective and accurate report of news by journalists in a manner that will promote peace, national security and counter terrorism. One of the security respondent suggested that Universities offering Mass Communication should liaise with NUC and other relevant bodies such as the NUJ, Nigeria Guild of Editors to review the curriculum in such a manner that will incorporate security based reporting courses, Professional discipline and regimented training, how to report news at the theatre of war, objective, unbiased and balanced

reportage devoid of sensanalisation. FGD members also suggested that a working synergy between news media houses and security agents should be established to collaborate especially in the area of conflicts and terrorism reportage. Courses should be introduced and taught from 100 Level to 400 Level in our Universities. This will enable journalists and news reporters of conflict and terrorism to be properly trained in the area of conflict and terrorism reportage. To achieve this noble objective of peace journalism, courses on conflict analysis and conflict theories should also be introduced as part of mass media training.

The above suggestions are in line with the views of Galtung and Ruge (1965) who have argued that current journalism education, celebrates “conflict” as a primary news value responsible for the emphasis on violent aspects of conflict, instead, these scholars, just like the views of the FGD, have suggested a reform of journalism training to include discipline of conflict resolution in journalism education at the basic levels as “such knowledge can better inform journalists in their work, especially in their analysis of conflict and in their reporting efforts to diffuse conflict”, (Howard, 2003, p. 54).

It is in recognition of the very important role news media plays in the area of information dissemination that this study do not subscribe to views canvassed by some scholars of news media blackout, instead, this study interprets the indictment of current methods of reporting conflict and terrorism activities as a clarion call to review these methods in order to articulate and develop novel methods of reporting conflict/terrorism that could promote peace, national security and counter terrorism using the idea of peace journalism advanced by Lynch and Gultung (2010). This novel idea is to complement the overall journalism education and how news reporting of conflict and terrorism can become an avenue for promotion of peace, national security and counter terrorism.

Conclusion

This study examined current methods of news media reporting of conflict, National Security and terrorism in Nigeria. The idea was to see if the current journalism education as well as methods of reporting conflict/terrorism activity has the capacity to articulate peace journalism reporting methods that could help promote peace, national security and counter terrorism. At the end of the analysis of views from Secondary sources and FGD with security experts/counter terrorism in the military, airforce and other security personnel indicated that the current methods of news reporting of conflict and terrorism education has succeeded in promoting war journalism instead of peace journalism that could promote peace, national security and counter terrorism. The second conclusion is that the current methods of news reporting of conflict and terrorism is devoid of conflict and analysis process and conflict theory. Thirdly, the current methods of reporting conflict and terrorism is not in line with peace journalism practice as advanced by Johann Galtung and therefore, cannot promote peace, national security and counter terrorism.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends as follows:

- i. The current methods of reporting conflict and terrorism promotes war journalism and therefore should be replaced with Johann Galtung's peace journalism education, which seek to promote peace, national security and counter terrorism.
- ii. Mass Communication curriculum on news reporting of conflict and terrorism needs to be introduced in the journalism education as the current methods, do not promote peace, national security and counter terrorism.
- iii. Conflict analysis process and conflict theories needs to be incorporated in the journalism education. This will inculcate in journalists reporting conflict and terrorism basic understanding of conflict situations and how they can be resolved.
- iv. The research recommend a reform of journalism education curriculum to include the discipline of conflict resolution in Journalism training at the basic level as such knowledge can better inform journalists in their work, especially in their analysis of conflicts and in their reporting efforts to diffuse conflicts and promote peace, national security and counter terrorism in Nigeria.

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