

AUDIENCE PERCEPTION ON PRESS COVERAGE OF FULANI HERDSMEN AND FARMERS' ATTACK IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study looked at the Audience Perception of Fulani herdsmen and Farmers Attack in Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design as a research method and used the questionnaire as the research instrument. Questionnaire was distributed to residents in Akure North Local Government Area of Ondo State. The study found out that residents in the study area were not satisfied with the news coverage of the Fulani herdsmen farmers' attack in Nigeria. It also revealed that despite been aware of the Fulani herdsmen-farmers' attack, the print media did not give prominence to the media coverage and reportage of the topic under discuss. Respondents also revealed that they understand the information been disseminated from time-to-time by the national dailies but sometimes, the information is not really clear and comprehensive as it ought to be. The lack of objectivity in report suggests that the print media coverage is slanted. There is the observation that the media is not considerate of all the voices in the conflict situation hence, it will be difficult to rely on the reports as an authentic and objective view of the conflict situation. However, the findings of this study indicated that Respondents indicated on the average that they are not satisfied with the coverage of the Fulani herdsmen conflict. This is the case as the average falls below the threshold of significance. Satisfaction is a function of the report covering areas of concern valued by the reader. The non-satisfaction with news report is a clear indication that the newspapers have not met the needs of paper readers who rely on the print media for factual and comprehensive coverage of the conflict.

Keywords: Audience, Fulani-Herdsmen, perception, Nigeria.

Introduction

Conflict is a phenomenon that occurs naturally in our daily lives and plays a significant role in human life. Any personal difference in interest between persons or groups might be viewed as a conflict. Conflicts may also be defined as actions taken with the intention of impeding another person from achieving their aims. Conflicts may appear in a variety of settings, including the workplace, the household, a moving vehicle, government, and other spheres of human endeavor. There are times when a disagreement escalates into a fight and leads to bodily harm. It may manifest as overt animosity and hostility between people or as conflict

between formalized groups of people. Conflict may be simple to identify but difficult to settle (Keghku, Alon & Fanafa, 2019).

Keghku (2004) noted that conflict is inevitable in every trying organization or human endeavor. However, if conflict is not acknowledged or controlled, it may become disastrous. Conflicts were formerly disregarded by behavioral scientists, in part because it was believed that conflict was bad for an organization and that efforts should be focused on ways to maintain harmony at all times. However, conflict is increasingly seen as a crucial component in the correct comprehension of organizational behavior. It has subsequently been discovered that not all disputes are destructive and that possibly a certain amount of conflict is unavoidable.

According to Blench (2003), the disputes between farmers and herders started at the turn of the 20th century as a result of two significant events: the development of modern veterinary services, which led to a rise in herder sizes; and increased farming as a result of population pressures. The demise of the traditional system of cattle routes; the decreasing significance of dairy production; migration and disease; and the intensification of agriculture in riverine areas known as fadama cultivation were also highlighted by Blench (2010) as four major factors that affect conflict between herdsmen and farmers.

Due to the many conflicts, they have with farmers and indigenous people in some villages where their cattle graze, the nomadic Fulani herdsmen have recently gained considerable national notoriety in the Nigerian media. Conflicts have been documented in many sections of the nation throughout the years as a result of the Fulani nomads' livestock destroying agricultural lands, with the resulting loss of life and property (Abugu and Onuba, 2015: 44). Following the Agatu communal violence in Benue State, North-Central Nigeria, in late February 2016, media coverage of the Fulani herdsmen was particularly intense. It was claimed that attackers, thought to be Fulani herdsmen, attacked nine communities; Aila, Akwu, Adagbo, Okokolo, Ugboju, Odugbeho, Ogbanlu, Egba, and Obagaji; shooting and killing residents, including women and children.

"Agatu is not the only hometown in Benue State to experience what is now referred to as baptism of fire from herdsmen," says a special story from the online daily Premium Times (Maya, 2016). According to the research, "suspected herdsmen assaulted scores of communities in the four local government districts of Guma, Gwer-East, Buruku, and Gwer-West between 2011 and 2014, some of them more than once." Nevertheless, on April 26, 2016, the news that 40 people had been killed by Fulani herdsmen in Nimbo, Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area, Enugu State, South-East Nigeria, stirred up Nigerians.

Both law enforcement authorities and the Federal Government have come under fire for their recurrent reluctance to take meaningful action in response to these deaths, which have drawn public condemnation. According to a 2012 project report by the Women Environmental Programme (WEP) on conflict mapping into the Fulani herdsmen and farmers crisis, which was funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), the root of the conflicts between herdsmen and farmers was essentially a "conflict over material needed for existence. Since both groups depend on

the same resource known as the green of the land to thrive or even just exist, there is conflict between them.

A Fulani herder's fortune is determined by the quantity of his herd of cattle. The movement of the Fulani herders and their cattle at any one moment, however, is greatly influenced by ecological and climatic factors. In order to find locations with plenty of grass and a water source for their animals, they travel from the arid Sahel and dry savanna regions of the North to the rain forests of the South. They move not only as a consequence of the whims of the weather, but also as a result of the criminal activity of rural bandits and livestock rustlers (Egwu, 2016). A democracy cannot be strong if its citizenship is weak, according to Galston (2011:263), and the mass media plays a crucial role in developing and maintaining the shared experiences of society by giving Nigerians the knowledge they need for informed citizenry. As a result, the caliber and diversity of media content that the general public is exposed to is directly tied to and entwined with the socio-political disposition of a society.

Statement of the Problem

According to Abubakar (2019), the Fulani are a group well renowned for their work raising cattle. Despite this, many Nigerians and even foreigners may be found working in the livestock industry. Those who are more susceptible to attacks by herders appear to demonize the whole Fulani tribe without realizing that the majority are innocent. Due of their conflicts with Nigeria's farmers, Fulani herders have been given a variety of frames by some of that country's publications. Abdulrahman Dambazau, who was the interior minister at the time, demanded an immediate end to the country's ongoing problems between farmers and herders, claiming that Boko Haram extremists were using such conflicts to frighten Nigerians under the cover of farming disputes (Daily Trust, 2016). Additionally, the Sultan of Sokoto has stated that the herders carrying weapons and inciting violence are not Nigerians; rather, in his view, they are foreigners who have entered Nigeria to disturb the peace; as such, they should be regarded as terrorists by Nigerian security forces (Daily Trust, 2016). The complexity of violent battles between herders and farmers in various sections of the nation is revealed by the Nigerian military and politicians' recent classification of certain Fulani herdsman as Boko Haram accomplices (McGregor, 2014). The necessity to look at the complex root causes and the politization of an issue that affects nearby nations is further highlighted by the reported involvement of camel pastoralists from the Republic of Niger in various disputes in Nigeria's north-western and central areas (Blench 2010; Krause 2011; Abass 2012; Audu 2013; McGregor 2014). The peaceful cohabitation between the Fulani and other tribes, particularly farmers among them, is no longer amicable, which has on a macro level brought the country into strife.

According to Ozohu-Suleiman (2013), research on how the media react in times of war is necessary because of the rising importance of the media on national and international security policy. According to Blench (2004), natural resource conflict has significantly increased throughout West Africa in general and Nigeria in particular since the early 1990s. The conflicts between pastoralists and farmers are particularly concerning. According to studies, the media has a significant role in every society's ability to live in peace (Shehu, 2015).

In an effort to determine the underlying factors that lead to herders/farmers conflict through survey studies, factors such as climate change, increased farming on pastures, cattle invasion

of farmlands, attacks on non-Fulani women by herders, obstruction of stock routes and water points, scarcity of freshwater, burning of rangelands, cattle theft, inadequate animal health care and disease control, overgrazing on fallow lands, cattle defecation on streams and roads, ineffective coping mechanisms, etc (Folami 2009; Ofuoku and Isife 2009; Adekunle and Adisa 2010; Blench 2010; Odoh and Chigozie 2012; Solagberu 2012; Audu 2013, Bello 2013; McGregor 2014; Olayoku, 2014). The dispute between farmers and herders, according to Musa, Terwase, and Igbawua (2016), is a barrier to the growth of the agricultural industry and, as a result, to Nigerians. Therefore, they suggest the creation of grazing reserves as a remedy so that herders might move from conventional to contemporary techniques of animal husbandry. In addition, a study by Idowu (2014) that further research be done on the way war is portrayed in Nigerian publications. The audience's perspective and the human element of all of these events have not been taken into consideration, despite newspapers' attempts to carry out their duty by reporting on occurrences like the farmer-herders fight. This study intends to investigate how readers interpret news coverage of a Fulani herdsman and farmer incident.

Objectives of the study

The broad objective of this study is to analyze and bring to the fore the audience's perception of the Fulani herdsman farmers' attack in Nigeria. Other objectives are

1. To investigate whether the audience is satisfied with the level of reportage on the Fulani herdsman farmers' attack in Nigeria.
2. To investigate audience perception vis-à-vis newspaper framing of the Fulani herdsman attack in Nigeria.
3. To investigate the objectivity level of the reportage of the Fulani herdsman farmers' attack in Nigeria.
4. To bring to the fore the level of coverage the newspapers provided in the gathering of comprehensive and understandable information regarding the Fulani herdsman farmers' attack in Nigeria.
5. To find out the audience's recommendations/suggestions to overcome herdsman farmers' attack.

Research Questions

The following questions have been put together by the researcher to garner data for the study. They are:

1. To what extent is the audience satisfied with the reportage of the Fulani herdsman farmers' attack in Nigeria?
2. What is the audience's perception of the newspaper framing of the Fulani herdsman farmers' attack in Nigeria?
3. What is the objectivity level of the reportage of the Fulani herdsman farmers' attack in Nigeria?
4. What is the level of coverage provided by the newspapers in the gathering of comprehensive and understandable information regarding the Fulani herdsman farmers' attack in Nigeria?
5. What is the audience's recommendations/suggestions based on their perception to overcome herdsman farmers' attack in Nigeria?

Literature Review

Activities of Herdsmen in Nigeria

Unquestionably, the Fulani represent a considerable portion of Nigeria's economy. They are the main breeders of cattle, goats, and sheep since those are the main sources of meat and reasonably priced animal proteins consumed by Nigerians. Over 90% of the cattle population is owned by the Fulani, who also possess one-third of the agricultural GDP and 3.2% of the country's total GDP (Fabiye&Otunuga, 2016). In 2015, Nkwopara, Okoli, Igata, and Okutu (2015) validated those cattle rearing and cattle rearers had throughout the years given their quota to the economy of the South-East and the nation at large in their study titled "Menace of Fulani herdsmen: Tales of miseries from the East." Since they have maintained the production and sales of meat in marketplaces throughout the nation, the role of Fulani herders is unavoidably significant. The livelihood and existence of individuals who live in their regions of grazing, especially in rural areas, are visibly threatened by the current actions of Fulani cattle rearers in the South-East, notwithstanding their diverse value. There is no question that Fulani herders may be found in almost every village in the South-East geopolitical zone. According to Nkwopara et al. (2015), the actions of the Fulani herders have sparked religious strife in the majority of Nigeria, particularly when the herdsmen and farmers clash, which is frequently uncalled for. Fulani herders prevent farmers from cultivating their land peacefully. Conflicts between Fulani farmers and herdsmen have led to fighting between Christians and Muslims. The massacres committed by Fulani herdsmen and farmers have devastated the majority of villages, driving people off their farms and removing their main source of income. With the Fulani herders constantly having their own rules and the farmers being at their mercy, this situation is getting intolerable.

While farmers view the herdsmen as a threat to their crops and agricultural products because they permit their cows to graze on farmer crops, herders blame religious differences for the conflict's origins in the slaughter of their cows (Bello) (2013). According to Kasarachi (2016), the current wave of violence in Nigeria has interrupted religious, educational, and socioeconomic activity causing political instability and putting the country's unity in jeopardy. Conflicts between herdsmen, deaths, damage to property, and violations of human rights are turning Nigeria into a conflict-ridden society and a defenseless country over time.

Newspaper Reports on Herdsmen Activities

The framing of conflicts, such as those caused by Boko Haram, militancy in the Niger Delta area, abduction, the rebirth of the Biafra agitation, inter-ethnic conflicts, and herdsmen-farmers conflicts, has been seen as one of the media's primary sources of our collective experiences (Eyekpimi, 2016, Adisa, Mohammed and Ahmad, 2015). Most of the time, the manner news report is written implies the behavior or responses that are anticipated from the reader. Retaliatory killings in reaction to framing in event reporting and editorial remarks in the media are the cause of the ongoing instability in the nation (Adisa&Abdulraheem, 2017). Because of the media's reputation and their ability to reach a wide audience, government efforts to address all of these disputes and difficulties appear to have little constructive influence. As a result, it appears that the herdsmen-farmers clashes have persisted unabatedly, resulting in the loss of both lives and property. When the news first appears in the media, people often prepare themselves for a possible assault by fortifying themselves. Benue, Enugu, Nasarawa, Kaduna, Taraba, Kebbi, Kaduna, Delta, Ekiti, Oyo, and Niger states, among

others, have their own stories to tell about herdsmen-farmers clashes in Nigeria. These stories can be found from Kwara State to Kogi State.

The newspaper's primary purpose is to inform its readers about events around the globe, particularly those in their nation, state, town, city, and region (Okunna, 1999). Newspapers are sources of information. Because newspapers present an accurate, thorough, and intellectual description of every day event in a framework that provides meaning, people have a strong belief in what they read. Because of their ability to set the agenda, the different mass media (magazines, newspapers, the internet, television, etc.) can focus our attention on particular subjects. To enable a complete change in society, the mass media must aid in raising awareness, increasing information flow, and rallying the public to achieve national goals and ambitions.

The complicated herdsmen-farmers conflicts in Nigeria include the Agatu massacres in Benue state, Nimbo in Enugu state, and Southern Kaduna when many people were killed and property worth millions of dollars was destroyed. Given that Herdsmen killed a record-breaking 1229 persons in 2014, the Global Terrorism Index placed them as the fourth deadliest extremist group in the world (Eyekpimi, 2016). Surprisingly, some academics contend that the media frequently assign guilt and that once a criminal is found; the process of creating an enemy image starts (Howard, 2003; Popoola, 2014; Ozuhu-Sulaiman, 2013).

Therefore, casting doubt on the media's purported umpire role in conflict reporting. This becomes the basis of the continuous argument that the framing of conflicts by the media, like the Herdsmen-farmers Conflict, has either led to an escalation or a de-escalation of the conflict (Howard, 2004; Moge kwu, 2011; Popoola, 2014; Adisa, 2012). Thus, using the media as an interventionist in a responsible manner is necessary for the process of establishing peace. The aim of the media during a peace negotiation should be to uphold the accord. Finally, the language of newspaper reports comprises vocabulary containing connotative terms like "to accuse" or "to claim" to sway public opinion on various social, political, or moral issues.

Media Direction to Reporting of the Attacks

Effective information and communication processes are long held to be necessary for successful growth, according to the development communication school of thought. To empower and enable a healthy, dynamic civil society, create efficient and successful economies, and ensure social security, proponents contend that communication and information flows are vital to development programs. With growth being a mirage for such a society without it, the purpose of the media in a community torn by conflict is to give a forum for peace and conflict management.

According to Bamidele (2012), it is the responsibility of the media to give unbiased, accurate information that can aid in the process of healing and reconciliation during times of war or other difficult circumstances. This is similar to the finding made by Nwankpa and Onyekosor(2015) that the media's responsibility in times of conflict is to uphold impartiality and moral reporting.

To help media outlets, handle conflicts, Omotoso and Rasdaq (2015) establish the following five ethical conflict reporting guidelines:

1. The media should view it as a duty to encourage conflict-sensitive reporting;
2. The media should think carefully before reporting certain conflict stories to prevent escalation;
3. The media should consider what other goal is expected to be achieved in the reporting of a conflict and whether the response is not to avoid harm triumphing over good as is unethical;
4. The media should think carefully about whether their conflict reporting approach could withstand the test of time.
5. The media should keep in mind that it cannot and should not rely on conflict coverage for its livelihood.

For his part, Adelabu (2015) lists five key considerations for the media to keep in mind when covering and managing conflicts, including treating conflict victims with respect and dignity at all times; respecting the opinions of their sources; self-identifying when covering conflicts; respecting all parties involved in conflicts, and fairness without taking a position or side in any conflicts while covering them.

Chukwuma, Diri, and Oginibo (2015) listed the significance of the media in conflict management in their submissions. They stressed that to resolve disputes, the media should offer a forum for all interested parties or those who have been wronged to gather and discuss the issues at hand. They go on to claim that the media can increase community members' understanding of culture, social customs, traditions, attitudes, and aspirations. They ought to experience a sense of inclusion in society issues. This will result in compromise and arbitration. In other words, the media must be utilized as an interventionist tool from the very beginning of the peace-building process. The media should uphold an agreement reached during a peace negotiation as its plan.

Theoretical Framework

The Framing theory serves as the study's foundation. According to Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007), framing is founded on the idea that how an issue is presented in news broadcasts may affect how its audience interprets it. According to McQuail (2010), the term "framing" has two important definitions. First, journalists construct and contextualize news items inside familiar frameworks and a hidden meaning structure. The second is concerned with how framing affects the general audience. According to McQuail, the public should embrace the frames of reference presented by journalists and view the world similarly. The theory is useful for the research because it aids in establishing the pertinent contexts in which the farmer-herder conflict, which has resulted in the deaths of several innocent Nigerians, has been covered by the press. Numerous research, including those by (Van Gorp, 2005; McNair, 1988; and Horsti, 2003) in McQuail, (2010) have followed this theory.

Empirical Review

Conflicts between farmers and herders have been researched from a variety of angles, including the economy, security, and religion. Research on Fulani herdsmen and community violence, including climate change as a precipitator, was done by Nte (2016). According to the

study, there is a connection between Fulani herdsman-related community violence and climate change. Nte draws the following conclusion: Fulani herders are dependent on pastures, which the desertification of the Sahel area has depleted. As a result, they go to extreme lengths to get these pastures, rendering them vulnerable to the opposition, which they fight back, and community wars. The report suggested that the government develop policies to provide grazing reserves and dams for pasture and water in states with a majority of Fulani people so that they do not roam great distances in search of food.

In research carried out in Delta State in 2010, Ofuoku and Isife looked at the origins, ramifications, and solutions of farmers' conflicts with nomadic cattle herders. They uncovered the causes of these disputes and proposed remedies for potential crises. The survey design approach was used by the authors to sample 20 Nomadic cattle herders and 80 farmers from eight localities. They revealed the causes, which include crop devastation, cow waste in waterways, a lack of grazing land, disrespect for local authorities, sexual harassment of women, and harassment of nomads by adolescents from host communities. Other causes include bush fire, livestock theft, and cattle wandering. The establishment of a local development plan process was suggested by Ofuoku and Isife as a way to lessen such disputes or confrontations. Additionally, they recommended that parties (Farmer and Herder) reach a local agreement on compensation.

Tenuche and Ifatimehin (2009) investigated resource conflict between farmers and Fulani herdsman and its implications for resource sustainability in separate research. The research covers the interaction between Fulani herders and farmers as well as the struggle over community resource sustainability. The researchers made the case that the trampling of cattle herds by their hooves causes the soil of agricultural land to be compacted, the destruction of crops by herdsman, and unrest. It is known that these conflicts have their origins in the land tenure system, where settlers and natives compete for land, as well as ineffective government development plans. According to the study's findings, the government should maintain a good system of land tenure and offer a clear grazing regulation.

Celestine and Coleman (2017) looked at how the herdsman-farmers conflict in central Tiv Land, Benue State, Nigeria, was covered in the media. According to the survey, 71.3% of the conflict-related stories were printed on the inner page. Therefore, the pair advised Nigerian journalists to forgo episodic reporting and establish a clear agenda on conflicts for the Nigerian population. The disparity in the literature is that many studies discuss the causes of the conflict and the media attention given to the problem. This study investigated the contexts in which these reports were produced.

Methodology

The study used a survey research design using a quantitative methodology. Data was gathered from the Ondo State Bureau of Statistics for respondents in Akure South Local Government. The sample size for the study, 399 respondents, was determined by using Taro Yamane's (1973) formula. The non-probability sampling approach with purposive sampling was employed. Questionnaire was utilised as a research instrument. Data was presented in tables for straightforward interpretation using standard deviation. The participants in this study gave their complete agreement for its conduct.

Data Presentation and Analysis

In coding the data, the use of weighted measures was adopted. Hence, the scale is represented in this order. Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, undecided =3 Disagree= 2, Strongly Disagree = 1, The standard deviation is a measure of dispersion it measures how spread out the values of the mean in an array of scores is. It also tells the extent numbers of the array to differ from the mean value in the tendency as it tells the average of numbers in a frequency distribution. The criterion means for this study is 3.5. This indicates that any value under the Likert scale table which falls below 3.00 is rejected.

Presentation of Data

Table 1: Responses on Audience satisfaction of the Fulani herdsmen farmers' attack reportage in the newspapers

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
Are you aware of the existing rift between the Fulani Herdsmen and Farmers' attack in Nigeria?	4.2907	.65023	Significant
Are you satisfied with the news coverage of the Fulani Herdsmen farmers' attack in Nigeria?	3.0902	.94144	Not significant
Do you the newspaper coverage of the attacks in Nigeria is done with an audience perspective in mind?	3.3008	1.68939	Not significant

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The mean score to the variable "Are you aware of the existing rift between the Fulani Herdsmen and Farmers' attack in Nigeria?" is significant ($M=4.2907 \pm .65023$) this implies that respondents on the average agree that they are aware of the conflict between herdsmen and farmers. The values for responses to the statement "Are you satisfied with the news coverage of the Fulani Herdsmen farmers' attack in Nigeria?" is not significant ($M 3.0902 \pm .94144$). This also means that on the average, respondents are undecided. The response to the variable "Do you the newspaper coverage of the attacks in Nigeria is done with an audience perspective in mind?" is also not significant ($M=3.3008 \pm 1.68939$). These values show that respondents claim to be aware about the conflict but they are not in agreement about the way newspapers cover the conflict.

Table 2: Audience Perception Vis-À-Vis Newspaper Framing of the Fulani Herdsmen Attack in Nigeria

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
I am aware of the Fulani Herdsmen attack in Nigeria	4.4211	.60414	Significant
My awareness of the issue arose from constant updates in the national dailies	2.9749	1.42285	Not Significant

I keep up with recent trends and happenings via the national dailies	3.0902	.94144	Not significant
Print media updates on the Fulani herdsmen attack are rightly reported as happened	2.3333	1.47054	Not significant
The print media give prominence to the coverage and reportage of the Fulani herdsmen attack in Nigeria via story placement in their publications	4.5714	.96641	Not Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Respondents indicated on the average that they are aware of the Fulani Herdsmen attack in Nigeria as the mean score (4.4211 ± 0.60414) is significant. However, the mean score for awareness as derived from constant updates in the national dailies is not significant (2.9749 ± 1.42285). The values to the statement "I keep up with recent trends and happenings via the national dailies" is also not significant (3.0902 ± 0.94144) this is as the mean score falls below the threshold for significance. The mean score in response to the variable "Print media updates on the Fulani herdsmen attack are rightly reported as happened" is $M=2.3333 \pm 1.47054$ which is not significant indicating that the reporting is not accurate. Responses to the variable "The print media give prominence to the coverage and reportage of the Fulani herdsmen attack in Nigeria via story placement in their publications" are significant as the mean score indicates. What this implies is that the media gives front page coverage to the story of herdsmen attack.

Table 3: Objectivity Level in the Reportage of the Fulani Herdsmen Farmers' Attack by Newspapers In Nigeria

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
News reports regarding the Fulani herdsmen farmers' attack in Nigeria is written without bias	3.3058	1.74700	Not significant
The level of objectivity in the reportage of the Fulani herdsmen farmers' attack by newspapers in Nigeria is commendable	2.3208	1.06679	Not significant
I am satisfied with the level of reportage given to the Fulani herdsmen farmers' attack by newspapers in Nigeria	2.8045	1.19331	Not significant

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The values for objectivity all fall below the threshold of significance. The average score for the variable "News reports regarding the Fulani herdsmen farmers' attack in Nigeria is written without bias" has the mean score of $M=3.3058 \pm 1.74700$. The mean score is not significant suggesting that respondents on the average do not agree that the reports are without bias. The mean score for responses on the statement "The level of objectivity in the reportage of the Fulani herdsmen farmers' attack by newspapers in Nigeria is commendable" is not significant ($M=2.3208 \pm 1.06679$). This implies that respondents on the average do not consider report on

herdsmen attack to be objective. The response to the statement “I am satisfied with the level of reportage given to the Fulani herdsmen farmers’ attack by newspapers in Nigeria is not significant (2.8045 ± 1.19331). This also indicates that respondents are largely not satisfied with the way newspapers cover herdsmen attacks. Overall, the values for objectivity are very low hence respondents consider the newspaper coverage largely as lacking objectivity.

Table 4: Comprehensive Understanding of the Information Provided on the Fulani Herdsmen Farmers’ Attack in Nigeria

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
I understand the information provided by the newspapers regarding the Fulani herdsmen farmers’ attack in Nigeria	4.3559	1.16423	Significant
The information provided on the pages of the newspapers in Nigeria regarding the Fulani herdsmen farmers’ attack in Nigeria is comprehensive	1.9925	1.22061	Not Significant
I understand the information provided by the newspapers regarding the Fulani herdsmen farmers’ attack in Nigeria because they are facts	3.9398	1.19521	Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Responses to the statement “I understand the information provided by the newspapers regarding the Fulani herdsmen farmers’ attack in Nigeria” are significant as the mean score ($M=4.3559 \pm 1.16423$) is significant. The mean score or the responses to the statement “The pieces of information provided on the pages of the newspapers in Nigeria regarding the Fulani herdsmen farmers’ attack in Nigeria is comprehensive” is not significant (1.9925 ± 1.22061) which implies that the information provided by the newspapers are not comprehensive. Lastly, the value of the mean for the statement “I understand the information provided by the newspapers regarding the Fulani herdsmen farmers’ attack in Nigeria because they are facts” is also significant ($M=3.9398 \pm 1.19521$). What these responses imply is that the sampled respondents are able to make sense of what is written about the herdsmen attack but they feel the coverage of such issues are not comprehensive enough.

Table 5: Media Recommendations/Suggestions to Overcome Herdsmen Farmers’ Attack

Recommendations	frequency	Percentage
Empowering journalists for investigative journalism	187	46.9%
Newspaper journalists should engage all sides before going to the press	111	27.8%
Editors should scrutinize reports	101	25.3%

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Few respondents indicated the kind of changes they would love to see in the reportage of the Herdsmen conflict issue. One hundred and eighty-seven respondents held that journalists

should be empowered to do investigative journalism (46.8%). One hundred and eleven respondents held that the journalists should engage all sides in the conflict before going to the press (27.8%) while 101 respondents indicated that the editors should scrutinize reports (25.3%). These suggestions were made in order to ensure objectivity and for audience satisfaction with the products of the press.

Discussion of Findings

To what extent is the audience satisfied with the reportage of the Fulani herdsmen farmers' attack in Nigeria?

Respondents indicated on the average that they are not satisfied with the coverage of the Fulani herdsmen conflict. This is the case as the average falls below the threshold of significance. Satisfaction is a function of the report covering areas of concern valued by the reader. The non-satisfaction with news report is a clear indication that the newspapers have not met the needs of paper readers who rely on the print media for factual and comprehensive coverage of the conflict.

What is the audience perception of newspaper framing of the Fulani herdsmen farmers' attack in Nigeria?

The framing of the conflict is a very important variable as it is crucial to the response that the policy makers and the general audience will make of the combatants in a conflict situation. Respondents do not agree that the Print media updates on the Fulani herdsmen attack are rightly reported as happened ($M=2.3333 \pm 1.47054$). This implies that there is a credibility gap in the reporting of the herdsmen conflict. Respondents agree that the print media give prominence to the coverage and reportage of the Fulani herdsmen attack in Nigeria via story placement in their publications. It is the case that such attacks are presented as a very important issue in the papers hence they usually carry front page attention of the print media. What can be deduced from these responses is the fact that Fulani herder conflict are considered very important however, the coverage lacks genera credibility with the public.

What is the objectivity level of the reportage of the Fulani herdsmen farmers' attack in Nigeria?

Objectivity is the ability of newspaper reports to consider both sides in their reports. The values for objectivity all fall below the threshold of significance. This suggests that the audience do not consider newspaper coverage of the herdsmen conflict to be objective. Respondents did not agree that the reports on the herdsmen conflict are without bias ($M=3.3058 \pm 1.74700$). they do not agree that the level of objectivity in the reportage of the Fulani herdsmen farmers' attack by newspapers in Nigeria is commendable ($M=2.3208 \pm 1.06679$). The lack of objectivity in report suggests that the print media coverage is slanted. There is the observation that the media is not considerate of all the voices in the conflict situation hence, it will be difficult to rely on the reports as an authentic and objective view of the conflict situation.

To what extent is the information provided by the newspapers comprehensive and understandable regarding the Fulani herdsmen farmers' attack in Nigeria?

Respondents indicated that the agree the information provided by the newspapers regarding the Fulani herdsmen farmers' attack in Nigeria is something they understand

($M=4.3559\pm1.16423$). However, they do not agree on the average that the information is comprehensive (1.9925 ± 1.22061). This is the case as there are doubts about the credibility and objectivity in the paper reports on the conflict. A comprehensive report has the capacity to provide insights which will come in handy in the resolution of the conflict. With this state of affairs. A genuine resolution of the conflict will appear as a tall order since the information available is not comprehensive. Those who therefore rely on the print media might be misguided by the available information in print.

What is the audience's recommendations/suggestions based on their perception to overcome herdsmen farmers' attack in Nigeria?

Few respondents indicated the kind of changes they would love to see in the reportage of the Herdsmen conflict issue. Eighty-seven respondents held that journalists should be empowered to do investigative journalism (21.8%). Sixty-six respondents held that the journalists should engage all sides in the conflict before going to the press (16.5%) while 34 respondents indicated that the editors should scrutinize reports (8.5%). These suggestions were made in order to ensure objectivity and for audience satisfaction with the products of the press.

Conclusion

This study looked into how the Nigerian attack by Fulani herdsmen on farmers was perceived by the public. The investigation's theoretical foundation was grounded in framing theory. As the stories develop over time, the increase in media coverage of Fulani herdsmen in the news has some impact on how the general population perceives the herdsmen's identity, motivations, and response. The state's intergroup interactions would be affected by these reports on herders' conflict on a practical level.

First, this study reveals that media coverage are frequently biased, non-objective, and lacking in public credibility. This is the case because there are questions regarding the veracity and objectivity of the paper's conflict reporting. Given the current situation, a sincere resolution of the disagreement will seem like a difficult task because the information at hand is incomplete. The information that is available in paper may consequently lead those who rely on it astray.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study suggests that media coverage of conflicts with a herder's theme should embrace conflict sensitivity. Conflict sensitivity is the capacity of a journalistic piece in a newspaper report to enable comprehension of the operational context, comprehension of the interaction between an intervention and the context, as well as acting upon the comprehension of this interaction, in order to minimize negative effects and maximize positive effects. Investigative reporting should be made possible for journalists. This would suggest that publishers should offer the necessary instructions, tools, and insurance to safeguard the journalists as they do their jobs. Before going to the media, journalists should interview all parties involved in the dispute. Ideally, newspaper editors should carefully review the reports that their journalists submit to make sure that they are sensitive.

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