

The Politics of Media Reportage in the Herder-Farmer Conflict in Nigeria

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Abstract

The farmers- herders conflict in Nigeria is a burning issue that has attracted heated discourse in the media, the discourse of farmers-herders conflict characteristically assumes discordant tunes anchored on claims of rights and arguments of ownership but the politics of the reportage in the various media channels has complicated the issue and called for a clearer picture of the reality of the situation. The thrust of this study is to examine the politics of media reportage on the farmers-herders conflict; how the media have presented or represented the issues surrounding the conflict to the public. Using the analytical research method, the paper randomly refers to newspapers editorials and feature articles, print and electronic media news reports, discussions, interviews and press conferences on the farmers-herders conflict as units of analysis. Key research questions are: what information did the media reports give out to the public on the farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria? How political are the media reports on the herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria? What is the way forward, if necessary, for media reportage of ethno-religions conflicts in Nigeria? This study finds out that a number of Nigerian Media gave out information on the number of casualties from the herders-farmers' crises in Nigeria, pictures of herders with guns, history of the herders-farmers conflict, causes of the herders-farmer conflict, pictures of victims of herder-farmer crises with injuries and pictures of attacked farm lands and burnt houses. Others include pictures of refugees fleeing the herder-farmer conflict zones and the refugee camps on the front pages of their papers. The study concludes that the media adopted a mix of politics of sensationalism, blame, rhetoric and provocation, while other media adopted a mix politics of investigation, reconciliation and peace in their reportages.

The paper recommends that media in Nigeria should play the politics of media reportages developmentally and socially responsibly so as to avoid inciting further violence but encouraging peaceful co-existence between herders and farmers.

Key words: Conflict, Farmer-Herder, Media, Politics Reportage.

Introduction

For centuries, Fulani herders have lived in relative harmony with settled farming communities. These two groups have benefited historically from symbolic partnership to keep crop land fertile and cattle well nourished (Bagu & Smith, 2017: 4). This peaceful co-existence had enabled most disputes between the two groups to be resolved amicably, through traditional mediation mechanisms. However, this cordial rapport has increasingly deteriorated due to the scramble for limited natural resources for survival between farmers and herders (Kaja & Smith, 2020, P-9). The conflict between herdsmen and farming communities in Nigeria has evolved into a deadly dimension with many lives lost and property destroyed across the country.

A report shows that from 2001 to 2016, about 60,000 deaths resulted from Fulani militia attacks in Nigeria (IEP, 2016). In 2014, the Fulani herdsmen were ranked the 4th deadliest terrorist group in the globe for killing 1,229 people in 2014 up from 63 in 2013 (IEP, 2015). In 2016, the Fulani herdsmen killed more people than Boko Haram in Nigeria. The Amnesty international claimed that in January 2018 alone the Fulani herdsmen claimed the lives of 168 people, in April, 19 people including two Catholic Priests in Benue and in June, more than 86 people in Jos, Plateau State, (Nwankwo, Ayadiuno, Ali & Madu, 2020:191-192).

Several studies validated media's contribution to violence, instability and fragmentation of Yugoslavia (Robertson, 2004, as cited in Ciboh, 2017:2). Many blamed the media for inciting the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. In Nigeria, media are known to sensationalize crises situations, promote prejudicial stereotypes about groups and individuals, and even instigate and sustain violent conflict (Yusuf, 2002, Ahmed, 2002, Pate, 2011 as cited in Ciboh, 2017:2). Media are strong forces in constructing social reality of conflicts and selectively representing these realities through practices and reportage. Thus, depending on specific interpretations or selective representation, media reportage of conflict can have escalatory or de-escalatory consequences (Ciboh, 2017:3).

Studies have found that the way a news story is presented suggest the expected reactions or behaviour from the recipients. Adisa and Abdulrahem (2017:11) have observed that the incessant unrest between herders and farmers arising from the reprisal killings are attributed to media frames and sensational electoral comments. A study carried out by Onyebuchi, Obayi and Nwagu (2019) report that the coverage of the herdsmen and farmers conflicts is mostly unfavourable and argued that media reportage should rather support the de-escalation of the dispute via the use of soft words and objective coverage and reportage of the conflict devoid of political and ethnic-religious sentiments (Nwankwo et al, 2020:193). Shehu (2017) contends that newspaper portrayal of Fulani people, including the Fulani herders as conflict mongers increases the sensitivity of Fulani-phobia which hinders the resolution of conflict (Nwankwo et al 2020:193).

Several researches have been conducted by scholars on the herders and farmers conflict in Nigeria. A study by Gever and Essien (2019) focused on the two critical issues namely the newspaper level of attention and the language of reportage. Odunlami (2017) has analyzed the main themes and essential speakers in newspapers narratives of the conflict while Shehu (2017) investigated newspapers' reportage of the conflict mongers. Ciboh (2017) also conducted a content analytical study of newspaper framing of the armed attacks. Notwithstanding all these, studies on the politics of the media reportage of

the farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria are almost non-existent. This study is therefore, apt to fill this research gap by examining the inherent politics in the media reportage of the conflict: how the media have presented or represented the issues surrounding the conflict.

Statement of the Problem

As a result of media reportage which has assumed sensationalism, clashes between cattle herder and farmers over scarce resources have reached crisis level in Nigeria as death toll escalates astronomically on the daily basis. Many studies have been conducted by scholars on the herders-farmers crisis however there is an existing research gap as none of the studies have investigated the inherent media politics in the reportage of the conflicts (Sambe, 2005:206). Several studies have confirmed media influence on fueling violence, instability and fragmentation in Nigeria. Generally, the media are known to sensationalize crisis situation, promote prejudicial stereo-types about groups and individuals and even instigate violent conflicts (Yusuf, 2002: Pate, 2011 as cited in Ciboh, 2017:3).

The sensational role of the media has underscored the precepts of Kukah (1999) who opines that “next to God is perhaps the media that legitimized what Nigerians consider to be the truth in any given situation” (Collins, 2018, Para, 1). Idowu (2017) submits that the political nature of media reportage is partly responsible for the escalation of conflict between herdsmen and farmers which has displaced more than 100,000 people in Benue and Enugu States, and left them under the care of relatives or makeshift internally Displaced Person (IDPS) camps while many are still struggling to rebuild their lives (Okoro, 2018:2). This study therefore seeks to examine how the media have politically presented or represented the issues that are escalating the conflict.

Objectives of the Study

This study sets out to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To identify the nature of information on the herders-farmers conflict from select media reports’ in Nigeria?
- ii. To examine the politics of the media reports on the herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria?

Research Questions

- i. What is the nature of information on the farmers-herders conflict from select media reports in Nigeria?
- ii. How political are the media reports on the farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria?

Contextual Definition of Concepts

Conflict: Conflict refers to the clashes and disagreement between farmers and herders over farming and grazing rights which has resulted in the several losses of lives in the

affected areas. In many case crops are destroyed, properties destroyed and victims who are survivors thrown into famine, economic, social and psychological distress.

Farmers - Herders: these are the two groups at the center of the conflict over farming and grazing right. The farmers are into tilling and cultivation of the land, either for subsistence or large scale agriculture, while the herders are the nomadic, pastoralists who roam about for the purpose of feeding their livestock. Both groups contest for land to achieve their desired objective. But then the land is static while human population keeps growing astronomically as the duo keep competing over it.

Media: the scope of media comprises the press, broadcast, social media, films videos and any published material that discusses the conflict between the herders and farmers in Nigeria.

Politics: Media reasons, decisions and appeals that determine the final action of publishing a news story.

Reportage: the act of sourcing, gathering and reporting of news about herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria; the reporting of news about herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria by the press and the broadcasting media or the activity or the style of reporting events about herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria in newspapers or broadcasting them on television or radio. Iyorza (2004: 30) states that a report should be accurate and should give credit to the source when reported as news; it should be balanced and fair, it should brief enough to give out the necessary information, and must be clear on the human interest; it must be objective above all while the facts must be subject to verification. News is an account of recent happening as gathered and processed by the news reporter while reportage is a packed report involving the perspective of the news reporter, the editor and features of the newsmakers.

Review of Literature

Concept of Media Politics

This is a broad concept which time and place will hardly permit us to do justices to it. Nevertheless, the study will take an incursion into the subject briefly for the sake of clarity. Media politics is an enormous challenge that faces Nigeria as a country. It seems this problem is common among non-western democracies where primordial politics dominate almost every face of our lives with no exception in media practice. Today, journalists find it difficult to practice what is referred to as autonomous reportage (Waishbord, 2013:235). The autonomous reportage being emphasized here according to Odiegwu-Enwerem, Oso, & Amodu (2020:182) is reporting with limited external influence which include but not limited to cultural, political, social, economic and religious ties. Thus, it is instructive to emulate the western democratic societies where objectivity” fairness, truth, independence and secreting remain dominant values such that the adversarial relationship heightens between sources and journalists.

In keeping with the above, Siebert, Peterson & Schram (1963) maintain that the role of the media in the modern societies includes upholding the tenets of social

responsibility through professional standards of truth, accuracy, and fairness in reporting. Owolabi (2017) (in Odiegwu, Enwerem, Oso, & Amodu 2020:282) argues that the media should report in a way to reflect and respect society and its diversity and plurality while avoiding actions that could cause violence and anarchy.

Conversely, the mass media have thrown over-board professionalism either for economic gains or to satisfy their conies. Media bias and slanting have replaced good journalistic practices. According to Usigbe & Ilo (2019:09) bias in the media takes place when a news medium's reportage is perceived to be unfair and unbalanced. Slanting on the other hand is the presentation of news reports from a stand pint or angle that reflects the biases of the medium. In his study Lichter (2014:2) says journalism is always measured against some standards of dispassionate information- based reportage, which exhibits a concern for fairness, balance, and impartiality. The author further contends that bias and slanting are variously used to refer to distortions of reality, favouritism or one-sidedness in presenting conflicts through close-minded or partisan attitudes.

In Nigeria, Media ownership is closely tied to ethnicity and by extension the pattern of media reportage brazenly takes ethnic colouration. This anomaly predates the independence of Nigeria where newspapers that were published before and after the formation of NUJ towed the line of their proprietors and remained partisan. We could refer to the role played by the record (1891-1930) of Thomas Horatio Jackson, *Lagos Daily* news of Herbet Macaulay (both men founded first Nigerian political parties). They however, used their newspapers to beat drums of division for them (Omu, 1978, cited in Daramola, 2013:44). Dahl (1961) and Pols-by (1963), (Cited in Onoa 2005:82) concords that the mass media are part of the machinery through which rival pressure and policy proposal are expressed, made known, brought to arbitration in a multiple contest that makes for shifting equilibrium of influence. In the words of Amenaghawon (2015), (cited in Odiegwu-Enwerem. Oso & Amodu 2020:287):

...the origin and growth of Nigerian press evolved along the lines from the missionary days, through anti-colonialism, anti-military, regional or tribal press and thus created an impression for the emergence of what is commonly referred to as Lagos-Ibadan and Abuja-Kaduna (i.e, south-north) axis a template that virtually defines media practice along those seemingly innocuous but potent lines - providing a lens through which press activities in the country are viewed.

Similarly, the country is highly polarized along ethnic, religious, and geographical lines, which make analyses of issues sometimes, becloud emotions (Canci & Odukoya, 2016 & Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). In the contemporary days, the aforementioned may not be clearly demonstrated, but instead, the presentation and representation of news stories in a special way to achieve their sole objective can never be ruled out. It is in the light of above that Ahmed (2008), Odunlami (2017) Omenugha, Uzuegbunam, & omemnugha (2019) (as cited in Odiegwu-Enwerem, Oso & Amodu (2020:283) that the media have been accused of sensationalizing crises, promoting

prejudicial stereotypes about groups and individuals, and indeed instigating and sustaining violent conflict in Nigeria. This has obviously exhibited media politics in Nigeria.

Review of Empirical Studies

Abdulbaqi & Ariemu (2017) carried out a study on newspapers Framing of Herdsmen- Farmers conflicts in Nigeria and its implication on the peace- oriented journalism. The study content analysed 100 samples of news stories on herdsmen-farmers conflict in selected newspapers, but focused attention on the dominant framer used in the conflict and the implications on peace- oriented journalism. The study revealed that situation oriented framers are mostly featured. Reports on herders-farmers conflicts are ignored. Reports on Herders-farmers conflicts are more violent, specific and narrowed featuring words like ‘killer herdsmen’ and ‘gun-carrying herdsmen’, ‘Jihadists herdsmen’, ‘greedy farmers’ ‘intolerable farmers’ and so on. The study maintained that such words cannot help in building peace between those in the center of the conflict. The authors therefore, recommends that the media operators should be more conscious in their choice of words in reporting herdsmen – farmers conflicts rather than employing words that are more divisive, stereotypic and conflict inciting. The study further advocates mass - newspaper of social happenings.

Odiegwu-Enwderem, Oso & Amodu (2020) did a study on News sourcing, positioning and thematic focus Examining Newspaper portrayal of Herdsmen – Farmers conflict in Nigeria. The study analysed the contents of six newspapers to explore the primary sources, The prominence accorded the conflict reports, and the themes focused on their reportage. Finding are that out of the 139 strives considered for the study, newspapers relied mostly on their correspondents and herdsmen representatives as primary news sources. Public condemnation / protests and government / public intervention were the dominant thematic focus. The north- south media axis phenomenon in Nigeria re-echoed in the coverage as the frame of herdsmen- against-farmers, is indicated more in the southern-based newspapers consistent with the prevailing public option. The study in conclusion suggests that the media in Nigeria relied mainly on third party sources with the consequence their reports on the issue could be subject to source of credibility deficiency.

Nwakwo et. al. (2020) state that discursive constructions of the farmer-pastoralist conflict in Nigeria is evident in newspapers’ play of critical roles in propagating various discourses of the conflict in the same way they serve as agents of popular culture. Newspaper discourses are dichotomous on conflict between ecological reasoning and ethnic or regional as well as religions inclinations. Onyebuchi, Obayi and Nwagy (2019) wrote on the newspapers’ coverage of herdsmen attacks on host communities in Nigeria to find out the frequency of news coverage, its level of prominence depth of coverage as well as direction of herdsmen attacks on host communities. The study reveals that the coverage is most often unfavorable and posits that newspapers should support the de-escalation of the dispute through the use of soft words and objective coverage and reportage of the conflict bereft of political and ethno-religions sentiments.

Gever and Essien (2019) investigate newspaper coverage of the conflict between farmers and herdsmen in central Tiv land, Benue State, Nigeria, with specific emphasis

on text format, frequency, prominences, depth of coverage, language of reports and audience assessment of the newspapers only covered the conflict as it happened but little attention was paid to victims of the conflict in the reportage. The study therefore suggests that Nigerian newspapers should refrain from episodic reportage and set a proper agenda for the Nigerian public on conflicts.

Usigbe & Ilo (2019) study bias and conflict reportage in Nigerian media, the case of Tiv vs Fulani herdsmen. The study sought to know whether group affiliation can cause perception of bias in news and if so, what possible consequences there are among media outlets who perceived their news story as bias. The paper further argues that reports may take sides with pre-existing notions and may be biased against a certain party in the conflict. The study however, suggests that the media can do more in de-escalating crises by refraining from using words and phrase that can stereotype parties in a conflict.

Iyorza (2008) suggests government control using laws that would enhance longer hours of international broadcasts during which programmes content of radio and television relevant to Nigerian realities, history, culture, artifacts, values and national interest are featured. The position to broadcast media programmes in English Language, Pidgin English and other foreign languages for people in other parts of the world to listen, view and understand is predicated on the belief that government controlled media is a political strategy to inform the world about the realities of the farmer-herder conflict and to control the flow of information to avert further escalations of the conflict. Iyorza (2017) also posits that Nigerians who believe in fueling political and religious crises in the country need urgent change in behaviour.

Chukwuma, Diri and Oginibo (2015) wrote on an exploration of the role of the mass media in crisis management, in which the writers express the power of the mass media to escalate or de-escalate conflict situation. They point out clearly instances the mass media have been able to escalate crisis by agenda setting influence of framing the news to incite the members of the public. This corroborated what Obot (2004 p.103) that the mass media are by themselves social structures and can either serve as tool for conflict exacerbation or vehicle for conflict resolution. This the study concludes that, in building peace, the mass media should be considered an integral part of the strategy of combatants, with acts designed to intimidate and terrify or appeal to the wider international community. Control over local media is an important objective of all parties in conflict resolution. Thus building an independent pluralist media must therefore be an objection of peacemakers. Therefore, ignoring the media in conflict situations can endanger all other peace building efforts.

The above reviews dealt with herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria at different perspective but none of the studies considered the issue of media politics in the reportage of the conflict between herders-and farmers in the country. Thus, the study however, wants to fill the lacuna that exists as a result of the aforesaid.

Theoretical frame work

The study argument is based on the two media theories, framing and social responsible theories to support and explain the anticipated roles as well as contribution of the mass media in building peace between the herders- farmers conflict in Nigeria.

Framing as a concept is known in media studies as an extension of agenda setting theory. Framing describes the supposed effect that media reportage has on people's opinions regarding the issues more salient in domain, by making same issues in the public audience, readers and the viewer's mind. The mass media could also shape the consideration that people take into account when making judgments on issues relating to conflict and peace building among communities in Nigeria.

According to Entman (1993), Iyenger (1996) framing is, therefore, based on the assumption that the way an issue is characterized in the media reportage-positively, negatively or even neutral – could influence people's perception regarding that particular issue. As Entman (1993) noted, "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and for treatment recommendation for the item described". For this reason, the media could over-colour, could escalate or de-escalate, raise panic and could be seen in the herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria where prominence is given to headlines, pictures and layout in newspapers, magazines, films, graphics or timing on radio and television (Gever,2013,P.110).

Social responsible theory is an outcome of a commission of media experts known as the Hutchins commission of inquiry of 1947. These media gurus emphasized the notion of social responsibility and pointed out the key journalistic standards of practice to be maintained by the press. The assumptions of the theory are, that freedom carries with it corresponding responsibility which, the media must not compromise (Macquail,2005,p.171). the details of this theory de-emphasize media politics, slanting and bias reportage thus, they provides support for the study as it shows that media practitioners have a responsibility to present, represent an unbiased account of herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria without slanting to any region or state.

Analyses of Selected Media Reports

Title: Is the media fuelling herder vs. farmer clashes?

Media Source: News African Magazine

Website: <https://newsafricamagazine.com>

Date: 31st July 2018

Reporter: Tom Collins

This news magazine's headline assumes a rhetorical dimension and uses the politics of sensationalism the essence is to provoke discourse on the role of the media in the herder-farmer crises in Nigeria. The summary of the report is that the media has politicized the herder-farmer crises through inciting reports that have escalated the conflict. The media outfit itself made comments like: "The issue is being portrayed as a land-grab by Muslims who are trying to Islamicise parts of Nigeria". With such remarks, the magazine became political, intentionally or otherwise, but the aim is to provoke parties (farmers, herders Association or politicians) to the conflict to approach the magazine outfit with the view to correcting wrong impressions. For example, at the end of the report, a line reads: "With politicians and the media intent on using the conflict to fit their own agenda, the mantle now falls to religious leaders around the country to instill a sense of calm in their communities and resist exporting the unrest outside the middle belt."

**Title: Nigeria loses 8,343 persons to farmers-herders conflict, says Report
...As Benue, Plateau top states with most attacks**

Media Source: Vanguard

Website: <https://www.vanguardngr.com>

Reporter: Dirisu Yakubu

This report also employs sensationalism and fear by casting the headline to reflect such a high figure of persons who have lost their lives to herder-farmer crises, especially in Benue and Plateau States of Nigeria from 2005 to date according to findings by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, ACLED. The report further enumerates close to 900 attacks between the herders and the farmers. The emphases on high figures of victims of herder-farmer and number of attacks is not out of place but have been deliberately positioned by the editor, perhaps to draw attention to the media outfit.

Title: Various dimensions to farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria

Media Source: Premium Times Nigeria

Website: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/>

Reporter: Taiwo-Hassan Adebayo

This report uses the politics of reason; itemizing reasons why a course of action happened and setting the agenda for the media audience to view the causes of a phenomenon. The report from this newspaper identifies various dimensions to the causes of herder-farmer conflict to include climate change, proliferation of small and light arms, demographic explosion, Jihadi infiltration, and weak governance, poorly secured international boundary among others, as exacerbating the violence.

Title: Nigeria: Livestock reform is key to solving farmer-herder conflict

Media Source: The Africa Report

Website: <https://www.theafricareport.com/>

Reporter: Comfort Ero

This reportage adopts the approach of reconciliation, seeking to find solution to the herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria. The paper describes as insufficient, the Nigerian Government's response of deploying Nigerian authorities to the affected areas to deal with the conflict but stresses the need for the Government to seek solution to the main cause of herder-farmer conflict: competition over land and water. Part of the report's suggestion is that [Nigerian authorities should work with donors and private sector partners to urgently address the conflict](#). Abuja and supportive state governments should display stronger political backing for the new plan, improve public communication and win the support of herders and farmers by assuaging their concerns and dispelling misperceptions about NLTP's purpose, while the federal and state governments should engage with donors and investors to ease funding shortfalls. The paper also suggests that the Federal Government should also increase efforts to build up expertise and train people on how to manage ranches and grazing reserves.

Title: Herders-farmers clash: In search of lasting solution to age-long conflict

Media Source: The Guardian

Website: <https://guardian.ng/saturday-magazine/>

Reporters: Lawrence Njoku (Enugu), Onyedika Agbedo (Lagos), Charles Ogugbuaja (Owerri), Joseph Wantu (Makurdi), Isa Abdulsalami Ahovi (Jos) and Ahmadu Baba Idris (Birnin Kebbi)

This report also adopts the politics of solution in the reportage. State Governments' regular meetings with herders and farmers could be recognised as efforts towards de-escalating the crisis between the two parties, the replacement of open grazing with ranching in the country and establishment of ranches, Periodic provision of information, education and strategic communication on the development of grazing reserves in the frontline states.

Title: Fulani Herdsmen Are Not Under Attack in Ebonyi, Says Police

Media Source: Channels Television

Website: <https://www.channelstv.com>

This report adopts the politics of refute for the purpose of promoting peace. One of the responsibilities of the media is to promote peace in reports and encourage national development. Channel Television began with a sensational approach by reporting that "At Least 15 Killed as Suspected Herdsmen Attack Communities in Ebonyi". This was capable of evoking emotions of fear of reprisals among the Fulani herders within Ebonyi State and other states. The report also introduced agitations among members of Ebonyi community. This politics of refute was necessary to avert further crises. To refute this report, the spokesperson for the Ebonyi State Command, DSP Odah Loveth Obianuju warned the public to beware of distorted and misleading videos in circulation all over social media and said there was no record of threat to the life of the peace-loving herders or their cows, neither to those residing in the said camp or in the entire State. The Commissioner of Police Ebonyi State, CP Philip Sule Maku also reassured the general public particularly the Fulani Herdsmen and their host community in Ebonyi State of the command's continued commitment to ensuring the safety and security of their lives and properties. The Deputy Governor of Ebonyi State, Barr Eric Kelechi Igwe swiftly reacted in a report tagged "[Attack On Ngbo Community Not Done By Fulani Herdsmen, Says Ebonyi Govt](#)" that the government is in touch with the leadership of the Fulani herdsmen (Miyetti Allah) who have denied involvement in the attack, adding that the herding community has sworn that [they will not on any account perpetrate an attack](#) on any party of Ebonyi State. This was extended to also politics of peace in the reportage.

Findings and Discussions

Findings show that media reportage on the herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria is quite rhetorical, sensational and provocative enough to increasingly fan the embers of hatred between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers in the country. The Media's theory of Corporate Social Responsibility demands that the media should be responsible in their reports while transmitting information in a manner that will promote healthy and social and infrastructural development in the society. Sensationalism brings about palpable fear among media audience. The media, as findings reveal, used high rate of death figures of

victims of herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria to show the seriousness of the crises. In addition, most of the media used pictures of victims with severe machete cuts and bullet wounds on their bodies, some in their pool of blood, while some media have reflected the burial ceremonies of the victims. This is found to be quite provocative and capable of fueling the crises the more. The media's inciting reports is therefore a deviation from these theories and such media reportages could be termed "politics of sensationalism".

In another development, findings also reveal that media reportage on herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria attempted to strive on the promotion of peace between the parties in conflict by adopting a historical approach into how, when and why the herder-farmer conflict has come into existence in Nigeria. This approach is more tilted towards living up to the Corporate Social Responsibility expectation of the media. Thus the media have engaged the "politics of reasons" in their reports by explaining the causes of the herder-farmer conflict and itemizing reasons why the conflict happened thereby setting the agenda for the government to know and proffer solutions to the herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria.

Findings from the above analysis also show that media reportage on herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria seeks to reconcile and bring peace between the herders and the farmers. The quality and thrust of some of the media reportage shows that the intent to expose the areas of weakness of the government and authorities, including the security agencies in combating the crises and to make suggestions on alternatives to bringing lasting peace in Nigeria. Most of the media reportages analysed above also tilt towards promoting peace between the herders and the farmer. Findings showed a report of a state government refuting circulated rumour on the herder-farmer clash with the intent to avoiding the escalation of further crisis in the state. This is called the "politics of refute".

The media's adoption of sensationalism, reasons and appeals for solutions to the end of the herder-farmer conflict and reconciliation as well as promotion of peace indicates the plurality of Nigeria's media approach to reporting conflict while the reasons for adopting specific approaches makes the Nigerian media political. This is also a justification of the framing theory which gives the media audience a picture of the narrative between herders and farmers without any colouration. The major shortcoming of adopting the media framing theory in some of the media approaches to reporting is the fact that a true representation of issues involving ethnic, religious or tribal conflict is capable of inciting violence among the warring parties. Also the viability of the Social Responsibility Theory is tested in the findings of this study. The theory is found to be utilized and seems to be adopted in a manner that is capable of watering down the tensions generated by the herders-farmers conflict.

Conclusion

Politics in this context has been used to refer to appeals and techniques adopted by the media to communicate to their audience with particular intent for the media's gains. From the foregoing, two research questions were raised in this study: what information did the media reports decide to give out to the public on the farmers-herders

conflicts in Nigeria and how political are the media reports on the farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria? This study concludes that a number of Nigerian Media gave out information on the number of casualties from the herders-farmers' crises in Nigeria, pictures of herders with guns, history of the herders-farmers conflict, causes of the herders-farmer conflict, pictures of victims of herder-farmer crises with injuries and pictures of attacked farm lands and burnt houses. Others include pictures of refugees fleeing the herder-farmer conflict zones and the refugee camps on the front pages of their papers.

Also the media reports were political in nature; with motives and appeals behind them. Thus, the media channels reportages characteristically traded blames and sensationalized their audience with the nature of their reports while others were investigative and reconciliatory in nature with the aim of promoting peace between parties to the conflict. Others media channels featured newsmakers such as the leaders of the *Meyitti Allah*, Governors of states in the conflict zones and expert views by incorporating their voices into their reportages. In conclusion, the media adopted a mix of politics of sensationalism, blame, rhetoric and provocation, while other media adopted a mix politics of investigation, reconciliation and peace in their reportages.

This study considers politicking in media reportages as normal but recommends that media in Nigeria should play the politics of media reportages developmentally and socially responsibly so as to avoid inciting further violence but encouraging peaceful co-existence between herders and farmers. This study also recommends that media reporters should be positively minded in their reports on the herder-farmer conflict and should detach their sentiments from such reportages even if they come from the same region with any of the parties to the conflict.

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