

Media Coverage of Police Brutality and ENDSARS Protests in Nigeria: A Newspaper Analysis

EKE, Chigozi

PhD Student, Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies,
University of Port Harcourt Rivers State.
¹08033733954; chigozi_eke@uniport.edu.ng

Opeyemi Muideen Adeyemi

PhD Student, Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies,
University of Port Harcourt Rivers State.
08039603111; opeyemi_adeyemi@uniport.edu.ng

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Abstract

This study ascertained the media coverage of police brutality and ENDSARS protests in Nigeria: a newspaper analysis. The objective was to examine the frequency of reportage of Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria by Vanguard and Guardian newspapers among others. The agenda-setting theory and social responsible theory underpinned this study. The population of the study consisted of 246 editions of the newspapers published between 1st October, 2020 to 30th January, 2021: a study period of four months. Krecie and Morgan's guide for sample selection was employed to select 148 issues of the two newspapers as the sample of the study. Data were presented in tables and analysis done using simple percentages. Findings of the study revealed that Vanguard newspaper carried the most number of stories on the Police brutality and EndSars issues in Nigeria, compared to the The guardian newspapers. The study concludes that the two newspapers gave the Police brutality and EndSars protest issues in Nigeria low prominence in their reportage, but projected the Police brutality and EndSars protest issues in a positive light. It was therefore recommended that the media should be encouraged to continue to offer balanced and neutral reportage of issues in Nigeria or negatively portraying them unnecessarily.

Keywords: Media coverage, Police brutality, Endsars protests, newspapers analysis,

Introduction

The history of police brutality in Nigeria dates back to the colonial period. The goal of creating the police at that time was to promote the economic and political agenda of the colonizers (Human Rights Watch, 2015). In many communities where colonial rules were resisted, the police engaged in brutal attacks to suppress their resistance. The other constabularies were created in what was then called Northern and Southern protectorate. The use of violence to suppress the people by the police from the beginning as created a disconnection between the people and the force; this has defined law enforcement practices in Nigeria since that period. The same basic structure was retained after Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1960. By this time, public perceptions of the of the use of the police force to extend colonial domination, for example, in the suppression of demonstrations from the late 1920s, workers strikes in the 1940s and communal violence from the 1950s. Post-independence, successive

military regimes used the police to enforce authoritarian rule, further entrenching a culture of violence and inhibiting the development of democratic institutions, founded on the rule of law (Human Right Watch, 2015).

With this disconnection, the ordinary citizen feels and perceives that the police force has been disloyal to their primary duty of protecting lives and properties but rather they attack citizens for economic gain. Reports by international and local non-government organizations show that the relationship between the police and the citizen they are meant to protect is characterized by brutality, unlawful arrest and exploitation (Dadas, 2017). There are local reports motorists to stop at checkpoints and then threaten and sometimes shoot at those who refuse to pay bribe for as negative perception as well as low confidence in the police force.

The Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) was created in Lagos State in 1992, a time when notorious armed robbers such as Shina Rambo were in control of the state (Midenda, 2017). It was created as a faceless police unit that performs almost two decades of its creation, the unit has spread across the various states of the country. The spread of the unit across the nation without a proper structure, accounts for some of its lawless characteristics. The current report of police brutality using the #Endsars on Twitter has brought public attention to it. The online campaign about the police brutality is new, however, Nigerian pop stars has over the years expressed their worries, fears and incidents of police brutality. The Nigerian movie industry, Nollywood has also portrayed cases of brutality and corruption within the Nigerian police force in their productions.

The presupposition here is that media play a crucial role in the socialisation and education of members of the society in which it operate. The media affect us in many ways: as a major socializing influence, a carrier of culture, a source of information, education, entertainment, a key player in political communication and participatory democracy and a communicator of ideological values, norms, attributes and beliefs. The indispensability of the media is incontestable going by the plethora of responsibilities placed on the media by the constitutions of various democratic societies. The media as the fourth estate of the realm saddled with the responsibility of upholding and advancing democratic ideals because the press from the classical liberal theory views the press as a defender of public interests and watchdog on the workings of government. Since then, journalism is seen as truly an estate of the realm, more articulate and more powerful than other estates.

Interestingly enough, if the press is allowed to perform its primary function unhindered that is, free of censorship, the press will obviously perform maximally in informing the public on issues considered critical and germane to societal development; articulate public opinion objectively guide and act as a check on government and individual. The slogan- the media as the fourth estate of the realm is what links the press to the society though an ideological resonance (Franklin, Harmer, Hanah, Kinsey & Richardson, 2015). The media equally represent and construct conceptions of what constitutes a successful and valued life; along with what is considered to be deficient, deviant, marginalized or undesirable. In a way, the media exert influence on identity and character formation as well as defining who we are including other issues which have to do with stigma, self-esteem, social relations, economic and political positions.

Similarly, talking about the power of the press (media), Dennis and Merrill (1999) clearly assert that the media are quite powerful. Without contradiction, they obviously considered and agreed with the hypodermic needle model of media effects where the media infected the minds of individuals directly with powerful messages. In a way, the media tell us what to think about and how to think, which constitute the theoretical issues of agenda setting

and framing. As part of the perceived role of the mass media, the press or mass media are obligated to present ideas and information that will enlighten and widen the horizons of the citizens to prepare the citizens to take independent and rational decisions for self-actualization. Besides, another important role of the media is that the media are obliged to provide reasoned independent information to the citizens while carrying out watchdog roles on the government.

However, it is believed that the media do not give adequate coverage to Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria, perhaps, the media are believed to be at the vanguard of societal emancipation right from the colonial days in Nigeria by setting agenda for the public opinion leaders and the public. The media effects have been extensively researched by communication scholars and consensus reached that the media indeed have powerful or minimal effects on its audience. Then, the gaps in media effects research have not told us if thematic contents of the media are geared towards driving or making our social institutions to be more proactive to media publications. Also, it is not clear if the media see themselves as partners in progress with other social institutions and not a mere watch-dog.

Statement of the problem

The press is an agency responsible for the dissemination of information. This is the overriding function of the press in every society which is to inform the citizens about issues of national interest. Police brutality and EndSars protest is no exception. As a result of this function, citizens rely on the press as their major source of news, particularly news events outside their immediate domains. Since news gathering and information dissemination basically refer to surveillance of the environment. In recent times, Police brutality and EndSars protest happened in many states in Nigeria. This has resulted to the loss of lives of many people and the disruption of social activities in the nation. This therefore, became a challenge to the government, the public and even the media organizations in Nigeria. Could the print media have reported the incidence in such a way that contradicts the public views? How has the press reported the incidence? Reporting Police brutality and EndSars incidence as an issue with two sides (truth/falsity; and how/what causes Police brutality and EndSars protest incidence) introduces diversionary debates, uncertainty and scepticism into the discourse. This, in a way can negatively affect people's understanding and government readiness to address the police brutality and EndSars protest and people's vulnerabilities.

Nevertheless, some researchers have noted that the Nigerian press did not give significant coverage and interpretation to the various issues arising from the Police brutality and EndSars protest. This is why some scholars accused the press of 'vulture reporting' in connection with Police brutality and EndSars protest showing interest mostly when a newsy issue happens. Thus, giving the protest undue publicity and manipulating its reports which in turn tends to bring more confusion than solutions. The media play a crucial role in shaping public perception and understanding of social issues in the context of Nigeria, recent events surrounding police brutality and the ENDSARS protests have garnered significant attention. However, an in-depth analysis of how Nigerian newspapers report on these events is essential to comprehend the media influence, biases and the overall portrayal of these critical social issues. Based on these, the researcher is interested in providing empirical evidence that will establish the true trend on media coverage of police brutality and NDSARS protests in Nigeria: A newspaper analysis with focus on the Nigerian national daily newspapers; *Vanguard* and *Guardian newspapers*. This will help in identifying potential impacts on public opinion and societal responses.

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives were to:

1. examine the frequency of reportage of Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria by *Vanguard* and *Guardian newspapers*;
2. ascertain the prominence accorded the reportage of Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria by *Vanguard* and *Guardian newspapers*; and
3. Determine the portrayal of the reportage of Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria by *Vanguard* and *Guardian newspapers*.

Theoretical framework

The Agenda Setting

The basic premise of agenda-setting theory is that the way in which news media report particular issues influences and helps to shape public awareness and debate (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In much the same way that a committee agenda ranks items to reflect their significance, with the least consequential matters receiving only scant attention or not being discussed at all, media agendas reflect a process of selection (prioritising) with certain issues enjoying sustained and prominent coverage in news reports while others are relatively marginalised or ignored. In this sense, agenda-setting theory has clear affinities with news framing and media effects. In a classic formulation of agenda setting, the suggestion is new media and mass communication do not tell us what to think, they may tell us what to think about. Agenda setting, however, does not posit a simple uni-directional model in which news media set the priorities for public debate, but suggests that typically a number of contesting agendas vie for prominence.

The relevance of this theory to the study is that media determine the protest and its importance to the public. Media scholars believe that by giving a particular topic a prominent treatment in their agenda over a period of time, the print media would have succeeded in making the audience believe that the reportage is indeed important. The agenda setting function of the media portrays the media as capable of setting agenda for police reformation discussion and this plays a key role in determining the direction of police brutality and EndSars protest thinking. This theory is significant in this study because populace knows the power of the mass media and therefore uses them to their advantage of committing awareness messages on police brutality and EndSars protest. In this respect, the print media need the populace and the Nigerian populace needs the print media to reach out to the public. This is a good example of how the mass media should carry out their agenda-setting functions for the purpose of police reform and development.

The Social Responsibility Media Theory

The social responsibility media theory was propounded by F. S. Siebert, T. B. Peterson and W. Schramm in 1963 (Anaeto, Onabanjo & Osifeso, 2008). This theory was propounded to checkmate the abuse of the press freedom as guaranteed in the libertarian press theory. Precisely, the social responsibility media theory advances that if the press enjoy absolute press freedom then such a freedom carries “concomitant obligations”. That is the press is obliged to be responsible to society for carrying out certain functions of mass communication (Anaeto, *et al* 2008). The study adopts the social responsibility media theory based on assumption that media, as the fourth estate of the realm are obligated to the society (audience) to furnish the audience with well-articulated information that will drive the audience to take independent decisions for either self or societal emancipation. Today, it is practically impossible to separate man from the media and media consumption in every home is becoming immeasurable.

The social responsibility theory is relevant to this study because it requires the media to have certain sacrosanct obligations to fulfil mainly through meeting high professional standards of truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance in the discharge of their duties. In the same

vein, truth, accuracy, objectivity, fairness, independence, balance, and a watchdog role are among the most important values that define journalism, and that the media are ethically, morally and professionally obligated to provide the public with honest, accurate and reliable reporting that does not deliberately distort or suppress information. The journalist could facilitate conflict resolution by presenting reliable, objective and natural information, as well as report conflict with appropriate sensibility. This means that journalists should not be careless or irresponsible in their reportage of Police brutality and EndSars protest so as not to stir up or fuel violence. Also, journalists need to be properly grounded in law and ethics, and most importantly, they should understand the theoretical, philosophical and constitutional foundations of their profession. Journalists should also be skilled in the use of language, critical thinking, as well as modern technology. The extent to which Nigerian newspapers practice advocacy and development journalism depends on the extent to which they apply ethics to their daily information gathering and dissemination activities. The overall aim of advocacy, ethical and responsible journalism is to achieve sustainable peace and development in Nigeria, in line with the social responsibility theory.

Conceptual review

Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS)

The Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) is a dreaded anti-crime unit of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) founded in 1992 by Simeon Danladi Midenda, a retired Commissioner of Police who added the word „Special“ to the already existing Anti-Robbery Squad which turned out to be Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) (Ogbette, Idam & Kareem, 2018). According to Spokesman of the Police Force, Jimoh Moshood, SARS is one of the 14 units under the Nigeria Police Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department which was created to arrest, investigate and prosecute people involved in violent crimes such as armed robberies, murders, kidnappings, hired assassinations and other forms of extreme criminality. Anti-Robbery as a modus operandi of the Nigeria Police Force for combating armed robbery has been as old as the Police Force itself. As a unit also, anti-robbery had always existed in all Criminal Investigation Departments at Force Headquarters, Zonal and State Command levels (Ogbette et al, 2018). In the past years till date, torture has remained widespread across Police units, but especially in those of SARS (Amnesty International, 2016).

Incidence and Prevalence of Police Brutality

In 1992, The Nigerian government introduced a special anti-robbery squad (SARS) to curb the alarming rise in armed robbery and street crime; no sooner had they began operation when they started acting with impunity and targeting wealthy-looking youth with flashy cars and expensive gadget (Amnesty International, 2020). Youth were being maltreated, extorted, assaulted, raped, tortured and murdered by those supposedly put in place to protect them (Edo & Sagay, 2012). For over a decade, citizens and human rights organizations accused the special anti-robbery squad of inhumane treatment without getting any response from the government until in October, 2020 when the youth united and staged a nationwide protest tagged “End SARS” which ended in more police brutality with the government still not looking into the issue of police brutality (Amnesty International, 2020).

In January 2021, channels news reported the case of Mr. Onyema, a man who was physically assaulted by policemen of the Criminal Investigation Department in Benin City for refusing to settle out of court with a paedophile who raped his 6 years old daughter. Also, in 2021, Mr. Monday, a bus driver was shot and murdered in cold blood along Third East Circular Road, Benin City by policemen when he refused to give them 100 naira which was a usual unofficial daily extortion from bus drivers in Benin metropolis by men of the Nigerian police.

The youth in Benin City in their hundreds took to the streets in protest to which the police under the guise of maintaining order, unleashed more terror on them. Police brutality and other inhumane abuses of civilians' fundamental human right have consistently been a major defect of the police force. This has drawn the attention and censure of both the Nigerian public and international bodies (Ogunode, 2015). Although torture is sometimes considered as an interrogation process for gathering strategic information in the Nigerian police force, study has revealed that it is ineffective in getting reliable information (Aborishade & Obileye, 2015)

Empirical Review

Nwachukwu, Ugochukwu and Egbra (2014) did a survey on "Newspaper coverage of Nigeria police activities: a content analysis." This study is a content analysis of newspaper coverage of police activities in Nigeria from January to March, 2012. Three national dailies (the Nation, the Punch and Daily Sun) were studied. Among the specific objectives were to determine the volume of coverage of the activities of Nigeria Police by selected newspapers, the story types in which police activities are presented in the newspapers and direction of stories by the selected newspapers on the activities of Nigeria Police. The research is structured on agenda – setting theory. Population of study is 273, while the sample is 162 within a period of 36 days. It was found out that the police activities during the period of study were presented mostly as straight news and the direction of stories were mostly negative. The reviewed study and the current study are related as both studies hinge on newspaper coverage of Nigeria police. But whereas the reviewed study hinged on newspaper coverage of Nigeria police activities: a content analysis, the present study hinges on newspapers framing of Police brutality and EndSars protest coverage in Nigeria. The area of divergence is on the objectives and scope.

Faruk (2019) conducted a study on "Newspapers' reportorial analysis of farmers-herders conflict in Southern Kaduna, Northwest, Nigeria." The objectives were to analyse the level of prominence to the coverage of farmers-herders conflict in Southern Kaduna by the select newspapers and to identify the frames used by the select newspapers. The study adopted content analysis as research method, using coding sheet to obtain relevant data. Framing theory was adopted to underpin the study. Findings revealed that not much prominence was accorded to the conflict and the frames were not completely positive. The reviewed study and the current study are both related as both studies focus on newspaper coverage of crisis in Nigeria. But whereas the reviewed study centred on the newspapers' reportorial analysis of farmers-herders conflict in Southern Kaduna, Northwest, Nigeria, the pioneer study centres on newspapers framing of Police brutality and EndSars protest coverage in Nigeria. The both studies differ in the areas of objectives and scope.

Normeshie (2018) carried out a study "Media coverage of social protest in Ghana: a qualitative study of the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily newspapers*." The objective of the study was to find out the nature of portrayal of protest events and protesters, the factors which informed news selection decisions, consideration of protest story sources and the tone employed in such coverage. A content analysis was employed using qualitative content analysis and individual in-depth interviews. A total of 57 news stories were analysed, and nine media practitioners were interviewed. The study found that the protesters were sometimes portrayed as violent, disruptive and lawless. They were also represented as people with ulterior motives who used the protests to pursue their hidden agendas. The findings also showed that the media employed both negative and positive tones during coverage of the events. The reviewed study and the pioneer study are related as both studies focus on media coverage and social protest. But whereas the reviewed media coverage of social protest in Ghana: a qualitative study of the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily newspapers*, the pioneer study focuses on newspapers framing of

police brutality and EndSars protest coverage in Nigeria. The area of difference is on the objectives, scope and methodological approach.

Methodology

The research topic usually gives a clue to the research design to be adopted; topics pertaining to press coverage of issues require content analysis. Therefore, what makes this study peculiar is the topic – Media Coverage of Police brutality and ENDSARS Protests in Nigeria: A Newspaper Analysis – hence it necessitated a content analysis. Content analysis is the systematic, objective and quantitative (qualitative) analysis of message characteristic. The manifest content in this study comprises straight news, features and opinion pages/editorials and they form the units of analysis. In more contemporary times, content analysis is a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inference from text. The justification for this method is embedded in its ability to identify trends over long periods of time.

This study entails a qualitative/quantitative (descriptive) analysis of the news content of *Vanguard and The Guardian* newspapers from October 1, 2020 to January 30, 2021. The period of the study (2020-2021) was purposively chosen based on timeliness as a core news value. This was the critical period when the Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria assumed a more attention with devastating effects for the country. The contents of the two newspapers were carefully analysed to determine the direction or tilt of press coverage given to the Police brutality and EndSars issues, or the prominence and frequency of coverage given to the issues during the period.

Research population does not only refer to people and objects but also refers to printed messages such as newspaper reports. For content analysis, this is often a set of messages. The newspapers that were on the news-stands in Nigeria in the period under review are the set of units to which generalizations were made in this research. According to the data collected from the Nigerian Press Council, Abuja, there are 13 national dailies in circulation, namely: *The Punch, Vanguard, The Guardian and ThisDay, The Sun, The Nation, The Mirror, The Daily Independent, The Sketch, The Tribune, ThisDay, The Daily Times, and The New Nigeria*. Out of the 13 national newspapers, two that is, *Vanguard and The Guardian* newspapers were purposively selected because their daily publication were widely circulated and read nation-wide.

The purposive selection of the two national dailies was therefore based on their national spread or wide circulation and the fact that they were readily available on the news-stands every day. Another purpose for selecting the four national newspapers was that they allocated some pages exclusively to Nigeria paramilitary issues on a daily basis. This is coupled with the fact that two out of the two selected newspapers, *Vanguard and Guardian* were published by indigenes of the Nigeria extraction and the newspapers are Lagos-based. However, the researcher did not use any regional, community or local newspapers because the Police brutality and EndSars protest problem has gone beyond those lower levels to national, continental and global levels.

The time frame for the study is equal to four months, there are approximately 123 days in four months and each of the two selected national newspapers would publish equal number of issues within four (4) months. For the four (4) months period, each newspaper would publish 123 issues. Therefore, the two dailies would publish 246 editions. This figure formed the population of the study.

Vanguard and Guardian newspapers were purposively selected based on their national spread, their frequency and prominence of publication as earlier stated. As for the selection of

the editions that were content-analysed, the sampling procedure started with the construction of a calendar to help in the systematic selection of the newspaper editions to be analysed. Systematic sampling requires the making of a list of whole population (sampling frame). This sampling method involves selecting every unit from the list of the target population after the beginning unit is chosen at random. Instead of randomly picking a number from this list, the researcher chose newspaper editions at an interval of seven days, that is, every eighth edition was picked.

The constructed calendar began from 1st of October, 2020 and ended in 30th of January, 2021. With the aid of the constructed calendar, the researcher sampled the dates on which to pick editions of the two newspapers, representing 12.6 % of the population size. Using the standard set by Krecie and Morgan (1970), for every population size of 246, a sample size of 148, that is, 11.36% at 95% level of confidence should be selected. Therefore, a sample size of 12.6% that was selected for analysis was considered representative.

From the entire population of 246, the researcher was able to determine the number of respondents and find out the sample size (n) through the Krejcie and Morgan Table. Based on this established data the sample (s) is 148. At the end, a total of 148 editions of the *Vanguard* and *Guardian* newspapers were selected as sample. Since the sample was 148, this number was divided by the two newspapers. The division produced 74 (seventy-four) editions for each two newspapers under study. The inclusion of a constructed calendar in this study, hence, increased the randomness of the sample. Seventy-four (74) issues of each of the two newspapers were systematically sampled, using the constructed calendar as a frame. The unit of analysis could be a single word or a symbol, a single assertion about a subject or an entire article or story. In this study, the units of analysis were straight news reports, features, letters-to-editors, editorials, cartoons and supplements about the in Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria.

Straight News Reports: these were pieces of information about significant and current events that were written and published in Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria

Feature Articles: these were articles written about issues in Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria, which provided more details than the straight news.

Letters-to-the-Editor: these were channels or avenues through which members of the public expressed their views and opinions on issues bordering on Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria.

Cartoons: these were humorous drawings and illustrations that were basically meant to entertain readers, usually short and appealing, carried on issues in Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria.

Editorials: these were the official stands or positions taken by national newspapers on issues about issues in Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria.

Supplements: these were additional sections usually included in or sold with a newspaper, especially, additional sections that appear regularly and focused on issues in Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria.

Frequency of Coverage: this is the number of times which the newspapers reported the Police brutality and EndSars protest within the period under study (October, 2020-January, 2021). It is measured by percentages.

News-hole: this refers to the amount of space used up by stories on the in Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria as measured in column centimetres (col.cm). It helps in determining the extent (volume) of media coverage.

Placement: this refers to the page on which a news report is published in the press newspapers. The placement of reports in the newspapers is measured using the following ranking: front page, back page, centre page and inside page.

Pattern of Coverage: this refers to a regular form or sequence discernable in the way the press (Newspapers) covered or reported in the in Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria.

Portrayals: this measured the direction or tone of the reportage of the in Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria by the two newspapers under study. The template was as follows:

Favourable Portrayal – items were adjudged positive when the general tone of the article expressed or celebrated a particular issue of in Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria.

Unfavourable Portrayal – the tone was negative when the items in general were critical of or questioned the actions or inactions of in Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria.

Balanced Portrayal –the tone was considered balanced when the item had both negative and positive tones.

Neutral Portrayal – the tone was considered neutral when the item was neither negative nor positive. That is, it neither condemned nor commended.

Prominence: this is the significance which the press attached to the in Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria, using placement of stories as a parameter. This measured the level of importance that accorded coded contents. Here, page placement was the major element of consideration. The rating schemes were:

High – for stories on the front page;

Average – for stories on back and editorial pages; and

Low – for stories on all other inside pages.

Time Frame: this is the four-month calendar year from 1st October, 2020 to 30th January, 2021, from which the editions of the four newspapers were sampled for analysis.

Units of Analysis: these are straight news, features stories and editorial comments.

Content Categories: These refer to in Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria issues such as judiciary killings, abuse, harassments, extortion, increment of police salary, rebranding of police and Sars removal.

The researcher used coding sheets to analyse the prominence and frequency of newspaper publications on in Police brutality and EndSars protest issues. The study then used coding to place the units of analysis into the content categories. To achieve this, the contents of (messages in) the sampled issues of the newspapers were coded, using straight news reports, feature articles and editorials/opinion pages as units of analysis.

Reliability is the extent to which a measuring procedure yields the same result on repeated trials. To ensure reliability of the instrument used for this research as well as researcher non-bias, and also to reduce the margin of error, a professional coder was employed to assist the researcher in coding the content categories. This was followed by an inter-coder reliability test. The categories independently recorded (coded) by the two coders were compared. A total of ten (10) items were categorised. The two coders agreed on seven and disagreed on three (3). The difference in categories was correlated using the Holsti agreement formula:

$$r = \frac{2C1.2}{C1 + C2}$$

The correlation coefficient r was equal 0.87 which validated the coding categories and indicated that the instrument was reliable.

Data were collected with the help of four research assistants who also helped in coding the items. They were earlier trained on how to code the newspaper messages, using

units of analysis and content categories (coding sheet) as a guiding instrument. The units of analysis used were straight news reports, feature stories and opinion pages/editorials (op-ed). These were assigned to the categories and counted. The content categories were used to classify the newspaper contents and they formed the nucleus of content analysis. Content categories provide the structure for grouping recoding units. Formulating categories is the heart of content analysis. The following content categories were analysed in this study: judiciary killings, abuse, harassments, extortion, increment of Police salary, rebranding of police, Sars removal. The data obtained from coding of newspaper contents were arranged in tabular format. This format made presentation clear and calculation of percentage scores feasible. The data were then described and interpreted in the light of objectives and research questions set at the onset of the study.

Data Presentation

Research Question 1: What was the frequency of the reportage of Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria by *Vanguard* and *Guardian* newspaper?

Table 1: Frequency of Police brutality and EndSars protest in Nigeria in Newspapers

Newspapers	No. of Editions Coded	No. of Items on Police brutality and EndSars Issues	Percentage
<i>Vanguard</i>	74	68	53
<i>Guardian</i>	74	61	47
Total	148	129	100

The data presented in this table above indicated that *Vanguard* newspaper carried the most number of stories on the Police brutality and EndSars issues in Nigeria, compared to the *Guardian* newspapers.

Research Question 2: What prominence did *The Vanguard* and *Guardian* newspapers accord the Police and EndSars protest coverage in Nigeria?

Table 2: Prominence Accorded Police Brutality and EndSars Issues in Nigeria by *Vanguard*

Content/ prominence	Front pages		Back pages		Centre spread		Inside page		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Extra judiciary killings	2	1	-	-	6	5	5	4	13	10
Abuse	2	1	3	2	2	1	3	2	10	8
Harassment	2	1	2	1	4	3	3	2	11	9
Sars removal	-	-	4	3	-	-	4	3	8	6

Extortion	-	-	-	-	5	4	11	9	15	12
Increment of Police salary	-	-	-	-	2	1	4	3	6	5
Rebranding of police	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	4	5	4
Total	6	5	9	7	19	15	35	27	68	53

The data presented in the table above that the majority of the stories published by *Vanguard* newspaper about the Police brutality and EndSars issues in Nigeria were placed in sundry pages inside the newspaper. This was followed by stories placed on the centre spread pages.

Table 3: Prominence Accorded Police Brutality and EndSars Issues in Nigeria by *Guardian*

Content/ Prominence	Front pages		Back pages		Centre spread		Inside page		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Extra judiciary killings	2	1	2	1	-	-	6	5	10	8
Abuse	4	3	4	3	-	-	4	3	12	9
Harassment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sars removal	4	3	-	-	-	-	5	4	9	7
Extortion	3	2	2	1	3	2	7	5	15	12
Increment of police salary	3	2	-	-	2	1	3	2	8	6
Rebranding of poice	-	-	4	3	3	2	-	-	7	5
Total	14	11	12	8	8	5	25	19	61	47

The data presented in the table above, which pertained to the level of prominence accorded Police brutality and EndSars issues in Nigeria by *Guardian* indicated that the majority of the stories were placed in sundry pages inside the newspaper. This was followed by stories placed on the front pages.

Research Question 3: How did *Vanguard* and *Guardian* newspapers portrayed the reportage of Police brutality and EndSars protest issues in Nigeria?

Table 4: Portrayals of Police brutality and EndSars Protest Issues in Nigeria by *Vanguard*

Issues/Portrayals	Favourable	Unfavourable	Balanced	Neutral	Total
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		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Extra killings	Judiciary	6	5	3	2	4	3	3	2	16	12
Abuse		4	3	2	1	2	1	2	1	10	8
Harassment		4	3	-	-	-	-	2	1	6	5
Sars removal		6	5	3	2	4	3	-	-	13	10
Extortion		5	4	-	-	5	4	2	1	12	
Increment of police salary		3	2	-	-	-	-	2	1	5	4
Rebranding of Police		3	-	-	-	3	2	-	-	6	5
Total		31	24	8	6	18	14	11	9	68	53

The data presented in the table above show that the Police brutality and EndSars protest issues in Nigeria were mostly portrayed in a favourable way by *Vanguard* newspaper. This was followed by balanced and neutral respectively.

Table 5: Portrayals of Police Brutality and EndSars Protest Issues in Nigeria by Guardian

Issues/Portrayals	Favourable		Unfavourable		Balanced		Neutral		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Extra judiciary killing	5	4	2	1	3	2	4	3	14	11
Abuse	4	3	-	-	2	1	2	1	8	6
Harassment	4	3	-	-	3	2	-	-	7	5
Sars removal	4	3	2	1	2	1	2	1	10	8
Extortion	6	5	-	-	4	3	2	1	12	9
Increment of Police salary	4	3	-	-	-	-	2	1	6	5
Rebranding of Police	2	1	-	-	2	1	-	-	4	3
Total	29	22	4	3	16	12	12	9	61	47

The data presented in the table indicated that the Police brutality and EndSars protest issues in Nigeria were mostly portrayed in a favourable way by *The Guardian* newspaper. This was followed by balanced, neutral while unfavourable. However, data show that extra judiciary killing issues were the most favourable portrayed, extortion and Sars removal.

Discussion of Findings

The frequency of reportage of Police brutality and EndSars protest issues in Nigeria by *Vanguard* and *The Guardian* newspapers

Answer to this research question is presented in table 1. Data presented in this table revealed that *Vanguard* newspaper carried the most number of stories on the Police brutality and EndSars issues in Nigeria, compared to the *The Guardian* newspapers. This finding upheld the study of Nwachukwu et al., (2014) as stated that It was found out that the police activities during the period of study were presented mostly as straight news and the direction of stories were mostly negative. The implication is that news media serve as watchdogs to the society when people in government and other powerful institutions are held accountable by scrutinizing and reporting their statements, achievements, claimed accomplishments and failures. Also, the agenda setting theory upon which this study is anchored, gives backing to the findings of the study. Agenda setting theory proposes that the idea or information which people have about public issues tend to be proportionate to the amount of emphasis place on such issues by the media. This implies that the way the media see and regard issues is the same way the masses would regard such issues. Invariably, the frequency at which issues or stories of a particular person or institution are presented to the public goes a long way in making the public to see such individual or institution as being important and therefore worth thinking and discussing about.

Prominence did *Vanguard and The Guardian* newspapers accord the Police brutality and EndSars protest issues in Nigeria in their reportage

The answer to this research question is presented in tables 2 to 3. The information in table 2 had it that the majority Police brutality and EndSars protest issues covered in Nigeria by *Vanguard* newspaper were placed in sundry pages inside the newspaper. This was followed by front of the newspaper; the centre spread page of the newspaper, and the back and editorial pages of the newspaper. Also, The data presented in table 3 the level of prominence accorded the Police brutality and EndSars protest issues in Nigeria by *The Guardian* newspaper showed that the majority of the issues were also placed on sundry pages inside the newspaper. Followed by front pages, back and editorial pages, and the centre spread pages of the newspaper. From the above findings, it is evident clear that the two newspapers under study gave the Police brutality and EndSars protest issues in Nigeria low prominence. This position is taken following the finding that majority of the items on the health issues in the Nigeria were placed on pages other than front (high) or back/editorial pages (medium). These findings are in tandem with the study of Faruk (2019), when he found out that the Nigerian newspapers did not give much prominence to the farmers-herders conflict and the frames were not completely positive. The agenda setting theory upon which this study was anchored gives backing and validation to this finding. The theory proposes that in so much way a committee agenda ranks items to reflect their significance, with the least consequential matters receiving only scant attention or not being discussed at all, media agendas reflect a process of selection (prioritising) with certain issues enjoying sustained and prominent coverage in news reports while others are relatively marginalised or ignored. In this sense, agenda-setting theory has clear affinities with news framing and media effects.

How did *Vanguard and The Guardian* newspapers portray the reportage of Police brutality and EndSars protest issues in Nigeria

The answer to this research question was provided in tables 4 to 5. The data presented in this table 4 indicated that the Police brutality and EndSars protest issues in Nigeria were mostly portrayed in a favourable way by *Vanguard*. This was followed by balanced portrayal, Neutral

portrayal, and unfavourable portrayal. Interestingly also, extra judiciary killing issues were the most favourably portrayed issues, followed by extortion and Sars removal (respectively). Also, the findings showed that the *The Guardian* newspaper also accorded extra judiciary killing issues the most favourable portrayal. This was followed by balanced portrayal, neutral portrayal and unfavourable portrayal. The data presented in this table also showed that extra judiciary killing issues were the most favourably portrayed issues.

The findings corroborate the study of Normeshie (2018), when found out that the protesters were sometimes portrayed as violent, disruptive and lawless. They were also represented as people with ulterior motives who used the protests to pursue their hidden agendas. The findings also showed that the media employed both negative and positive tones during coverage of the events. In agreement with the view above, expanding on the social responsibility theory, Akpomera (2017) posits that the social responsibility of the mass media includes public discourse and enlightenment on events and issues, serving the political and economic engines of society through information and debates; as watchdog of government institutions and functionaries. This indicated that the press could either be positive or negative, depending on its internal dynamics or weaknesses or constraints. The imputation here is that individual humans tend to process choices best as binary choices and express preferences for having information related to them in binary terms. Thus, the tendency of news media to recast reality in terms of binary contrasts that may distort or at least limit the ability of the public to see the 'gray' of an issue are not rooted in media malice but in the attempt by the media to reach, keep and satisfy consumers.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study as summarised above, it is concluded here that the two newspapers gave the Police brutality and EndSars protest issues in Nigeria low prominence in their reportage, but projected the Police brutality and EndSars protest issues in a positive light. Also, since *Vanguard* newspaper carried more stories on Police brutality and EndSars protest issues in Nigeria than *The Guardian* newspaper, it would be safe to conclude that it is either their correspondents are the most active or effective among the correspondents of the *The Guardian* newspapers or that the newspaper is the most Nigeria-friendly among the newspaper under study.

The study also concludes that the two newspapers under study did not draw enough public attention to the causes and negative implications of the Police brutality and EndSars protest issues in Nigeria through the use of advocacy tools such as feature stories, opinion pages and editorial comments. From the findings, results showed that most of the newspaper reports on the Police brutality and EndSars protest issues in Nigeria lacked details and depth, due to inadequate editorials.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following suggestions or recommendations have been made:

- i) The media should be encouraged to continue to offer balanced and neutral reportage of issues in Nigeria or negatively portraying them unnecessarily and equally should

- be alive to their social responsibility and agenda setting functions by using their reports to bring public dialogue.
- ii) The Nigerian press should give prominence to reports on the negative implications of crises issues in terms of priority placement on the pages of newspapers.
 - iii) The Nigerian press should renew attention towards enriching its reports with depth while being proactively disposed towards advocacy journalism as the watchdog of the society.

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