

**Counterterrorism and Nigerian Media Reportage of the activities of Boko Haram
Terrorism Group: Perception of Newspapers' Readers**

By

GUANAH Seigha Jammy

Department of Theatre Arts and Mass Communication,
University of Benin (UNIBEN) Benin City, Nigeria.

E-mail: jammyguanah@yahoo.com

Tel: 08032133664,

&

OBI Ijeoma

Doctoral Candidate

Department of Mass Communication
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University
Igbariam Campus – Nigeria.

E-mail: obiijeoma14@yahoo.com

Tel: 08037099443

and

AKUMABOR Ngozi Theodora

Department of Mass Communication
Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku
Delta State, Nigeria

Email: doraakumabor@yahoo.com.

Tel: 08034826293.

Abstract

Terrorism is a global phenomenon that has led to enormous loss of lives and properties. In Nigeria, the terrorist activities of the Boko Haram sect have greatly affected the economy of the North-East and the people, and it is having a ripple effect on Nigeria as a country. The media, being the eyes through which people view the society, have been reporting these terrorist acts; are these reports in any way helping to counter terrorism? This paper, therefore, gauged the perception of newspapers' readers in Sapele, Delta State, Nigeria, with the objectives to determine if the reportage has helped the government to defeat Boko Haram, to inquire if respondents perceived newspapers to be involved in counter-terrorism with their reportage, and maybe it has helped to create awareness and educate the populace about terrorism. This paper, anchored on the Social Responsibility Theory, adopted the survey method of research. The study found that the Boko Haram sect still carries out attacks, and that

government is yet to completely defeat the sect. The study concluded that newspapers have significant role to play in counter terrorism, and recommended that newspapers should be more cautious in reporting terrorism stories so that the reports won't be cheap publicity for the terrorists. It further recommended that government and the armed forces should work in synergy with newspapers in the fight against the Boko Haram insurgents.

Key words: Boko Haram, Insurgency, Media, Newspaper, Reportage, Terrorism.

Introduction

Terrorism can be said to be the world's most lethal scourge. There have been reports of terrorist activities in countries like France, Britain, Russia Italy, America and Nigeria, and according to Abolade Adeniji and Wale Adeyemi-Suenu, contemporary international relations have had to contend with the crisis of terrorism (124). Nnamdi Ekeanyanwu and Olarenwaju Ajakaiye attest that very few nations on earth today will claim ignorance of the existence of terrorism in national and global politics. According to the 2017 Global Terrorism Index (GTI), Nigeria, for the third year running, remained the third most terrorised nation in the world, and Akham Papa (*Revealed: Nigeria is*) reports that the 2018 Global Terrorism Index (GTI) still shows Nigeria maintains this position the fourth time. Cletus Ukpung who says Nigeria ranked fourth in 2014, cites GTI as saying Nigeria ranked third also in 2015 and 2016.

Most terrorist acts come with intimidation, bombings, suicide attacks, sporadic shooting of unarmed, blameless and innocent citizens, burning of police stations and churches, kidnapping, raping of school girls and women, and other inhuman acts. There are different militant terrorist groups operating in different countries, like the Taliban in Iraq, Al-Shabbab in Somalia, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and the Fulani herdsmen (Fulani militant group) which the Independent.co.uk says the Global Terrorism Index described as "the fourth deadliest known terrorist group" in the world "operating in Nigeria and parts of the Central African Republic" (1). Albeit the Federal government of Nigeria has not declared this group as a terrorist group but its activities has all the trappings of a terrorist group. According to John Chuks Azu, this sect attacked Agatu community in Benue State and killed no fewer than 300 people, and razed seven villages during one of their invasions. Also, on Saturday 23rd to Monday 25th June, 2018, these Fulani militants attacked Gashish, Ropp, Bash, Heipang and Zawan districts in Barkin Ladi and Riyom Local Government Areas of Plateau State, Nigeria; Evelyn Okakwu quotes the media aid (Bayo Oladeji) of the President of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) to have said that 218 persons were killed. They have also carried out attacks in different parts of Nigeria where people were left to mourn their dead and the destruction of their farms. Akham Papa (*Revealed: Nigeria is*) reports that the 2018 Global Terrorism Index also put the blame of the increase of terrorism in Nigeria at the doorsteps of the Fulani extremists.

However, the group operating in North-East Nigeria, which is the focus of this paper, is the Boko Haram sect, also known as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Liadda'awati wal-jihad (people committed to the propagation of the prophet's teachings and Jihad). The group is known to

sustain its operations through diverse sources of funding (F. Onuoha 3). It has been carrying out wanton destruction of lives and property within and outside Nigeria. At will they bomb security formations, public facilities, ransack whole communities and villages, killing hundreds of people. At a time, these insurgents had territories in the Northeast under their control where they had deposed Emirs and killed recalcitrant ones, with their flags or insignia hosted in all the 24 local government areas they violently seized and occupied in the Northeast.

According to Cletus Ukpog, by 2014, the death toll caused by the Boko Haram had risen alarmingly, climbing to 6,644. According to the Global Terrorism Index (GTI), this is an increase of 317 per cent over the previous year, and considered “the largest increase in terrorist deaths ever recorded by any country. By 2015 it had reached an excess of 8,000 according to the Armed Conflict Location Data” (2). Punch reports that the Islamist insurgency has devastated the Northeast region of Nigeria since 2009, leaving at least 20,000 dead, displacing more than 2.6 million others and triggering a wider humanitarian crisis (1).

Comparing the number of deaths that took place in Nigeria and the war-torn Afghanistan, Jesusegun Alagbe quotes a former aide to ex-President Goodluck Jonathan, Reno Omokri, as having said that, in the first quarter of 2018, Afghanistan had 763 war-related deaths while Nigeria had 1,351 terror-related killings. Also, the 2017 United States Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices say that Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa recruited and forcefully conscripted child soldiers, carried out scores of suicide bombings--many by young women and girls forced into doing so--and other attacks on population centers in the Northeast and in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger; abducted women and girls are subjected to sexual and gender-based violence, including forced marriages and rape (1).

A survey by the United Nations (UN) released in December 2018, revealed that contrary to the 10.5 million figure hitherto given as Nigerian children that are out of school, the real figure is 13.2 million. UN says those kids are forced out of school due to the persistent activities of Boko Haram in the North Eastern part of Nigeria. It also said Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States have the highest number of the out of school kids in the world (Rahaman Abiola, *More than 13 million*).

The 2017 United States Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices reveal that the insurgency in the Northeast by the militant terrorist groups, Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa (ISIS-WA), has “resulted in thousands of deaths and injuries, widespread destruction, the internal displacement of approximately 1.8 million persons, and external displacement of an estimated 205, 000 Nigerian refugees to neighboring countries, principally Cameroon, Chad, and Niger” (1).

Terrorism reports are regular features in both local and international media, and in the conventional and social media. Based on the heinous activities of Boko Haram the media space is always filled with news about major kidnaps, or bomb attacks, and these reports sometime send fear down the spines of the media audience. The question that agitates one’s mind is that,

“are the media not supporting counter terrorism?”, taking into consideration the stand of Ifeoluwapo Odedere that the rate at which news keeps coming regarding the activities of Boko Haram has left the question on whether the role of the media is actually information dissemination or terror campaign spread (1).

M. J. Brain opines that the leading effects of terrorism are fear and alarm, and that terrorism may be employed to accomplish a variety of objectives, specific concessions, wide spread publicity for the terrorists and their cause...” (203). The Nigerian Chief of Army Staff, Lt.-Gen. Tukur Buratai laments that the major challenge in fighting Boko Haram is the group’s propaganda which wittingly or unwittingly is being spread by so many others, especially the social media (Vanguard, *Buratai cautions Nigerians*). Hence the cry against the role of the media in counter terrorism is typified with the narrative presented by Marshall McLuhan thus, “in 1962, when Minneapolis had been for months without a newspaper, the chief of police said: “Sure, I miss the news, but so far as my job goes, I hope the papers do not come back. There is less crime around without a newspaper to pass around the ideas” (205).

However, another school of thought is that if the media report the activities of terrorists, especially Boko Haram, extensively by keeping the citizens abreast of the prevailing facts on ground and enlightening the populace, they are accused of blowing their activities out of proportion and creating an atmosphere of panic and insecurity. Also, when the media do not report about insurgency and terrorism they are categorised as conscienceless, and not playing their assigned roles in the society. Hence Jonathan Nda-Isaiah declares “the media have been accused in some quarters as fuelling the Boko Haram crisis by the way they report activities of the sect” (9). This is unlike what is observable in some foreign media reports, where they keep repeating the death of the citizens of their nations as low as 8, but in Nigeria even when 100s are killed in any form of mishap, be it in accident, Fulani herdsmen attack etc., the media are expected not to report them “extensively.”

Comparing newspapers and local and national television news, Jared Rosenberger and Valerie Callanan assert that the former reports stories in their entirety with more detailed information. Such information could put some of the more “shocking” crimes in perspective, and explain offenders’ backgrounds and motives that may make the crime feel less random and horrific. Also, the newspapers, like all forms of media, need to attract consumers, which can be done by printing shocking and disturbing stories about crime (R. Surette). Studies (Oyokunyi Jon Ita, Abasifreke Idiong & Ekemini Ita) have shown that, apart from newspapers’ role of informing readers of happenings around them and the world, on a daily basis, they also go to great lengths to influence news readers’ perception of the issues they carry, by the way the frame their reports (219).

The foregoing is buttressed by the communique released after a two-day media conference held in Abuja between the Army and media practitioners cutting across the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Guild of Editors, Professional Bloggers Association, National

Institute of Public Relations and Online publishers; excerpt from the communique reads that “media reportage shapes perception about Nigeria and Nigerians internationally. Therefore, caution is required, considering the implications of such reports” (Ajogwu Jerry 2). Also, Jammy Guanah cites Barry et. al as saying that whether good or bad, newspapers reflect as well as influence their readers (106). This study, therefore, was to find out the perception of the residents of Sapele metropolis in Delta State Nigeria about how Nigerian newspapers report terrorism stories, especially the activities of Boko Haram.

Statement of the problem

Terrorism is a problem to the whole world, and governments, organisations, and individuals are looking for different means to counter the activities of terrorist groups. The media, whose primary role is to dissemination information, including about terrorist acts, are seen by some people as aiding and abetting terrorist activities by giving them cheap publicity through their reportage. These people feel that these reports have boomerang effects on the Nigerian space. Emanating from the foregoing, this paper looked at Sapele residents` perception of newspapers` reportage of the Boko Haram insurgency.

Objectives of the study

The main objectives were:

1. To find out maybe the reportage of the activities of Boko Haram by the newspapers has helped to create awareness and educate the populace about terrorism.
2. To determine if the reportage has helped the government to defeat Boko Haram.
3. To inquire if respondents perceive newspapers to be involved in counter-terrorism with their reportage.

Theoretical Consideration

The study is built on the Social Responsibility Theory. This theory was postulated by the trio of Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm in 1956 as cited by S. Anaeto and M. Solo-Anaeto. There are four normative press theories: Authoritarian, Soviet- Communist, Libertarian and Social Responsibility. The freedom the libertarian theory brought was abused by media practitioners; journalists were involved in cases of obscenity, invasion of people`s privacy, moonlighting, mudslinging, and other aberrations; this made the United States government to set up the Hutchins Commission. It was headed by Robert Maynard Hutchins, the Chancellor of University of Chicago. The Commission submitted its report on the review of the concept of a free press in 1947.

According to Dennis McQuail this initiative-commission on freedom of the press was because the free market had failed to fulfill the promise of the press and to deliver expected benefits to the society. After four years of deliberation, the Hutchins Commission came up with the following five guidelines for a social responsibly press.

The social responsibility press theory cautions journalists to always remember that press freedom is a moral right which journalists must exercise in the interest of the public. The media are to use their powerful position to ensure appropriate delivery of information to the audiences. Where this is not so, there must be regulations to enforce it. The Hutchins Commission recognised the significant role of the media in the society, and therefore saw the need for the commitment of social responsibility be exerted on the media. This is because journalists are expected to have the moral obligation to consider first the interest of the society when making editorial decisions on what to report about regarding the events that occurred in society (Godwin Oboh 2). The social responsibility theory emphasises the need for a free and responsible press, including the need for media practitioners to carry out their duties in a manner that that would not warrant government control

The social responsibility theory says that as much as the press should be free to operate in any society, that freedom should carry certain obligations (Chinenye Nwabueze 95). In other words, press freedom does not mean that the press should be lawless or irresponsible. The media must not be seen as only operating within the ambit of the law, they must operate according to the demands of the society they operate in.

Terrorism and the emergence of Boko Haram

There is no single definition that terrorism can be pinned to due to various definitions given by different people based on the angle they are viewing it from. T. Ende and A. Dzukogi declare that it was only in the 1900s that academic definitions started emerging about terrorism; they cite United States Department of Defence as saying that “terrorism is the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear, intended to coerce or intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological” (63). Ifeoluwapo Odedere quotes Bruce Hoffman as defining terrorism as ‘the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or threat of violence... in the pursuit of political change’ (2).

It is worthy to note that any given definition of terrorism agrees that it involves the use of violence, force and intimidation to achieve an objective(s) which may be by a government to control its people, or by some individuals to exact a particular religious belief on others; some may just carry out terrorist acts because they enjoy causing other people harm without any aim behind it. W. Enders and T. Sandler argue that terrorist acts are purposely brutal to create an atmosphere of fear while publicising the terrorists’ cause. It is unfortunate that this fear cannot be publicised and amplified successfully without the media directly or indirectly providing the platform.

Boko Haram was established in 2002 in Maiduguri, it spent 2002-2009 consolidating its base, spreading its disdain for western education and government corruption, culminating in the creation of alternative schools and attacking symbols of state power, most commonly police stations in northern Nigeria. Boko Haram literally means ‘western education is sinful’ (A. Adesoji 100). It stands for outright rejection of westernisation, but advocates the strict

adherence to Islam in its purest form (A. Ajayi 1). The group purportedly changed tactics and attacks intensified after its leader, Mohammed Yusuf, was killed in police custody in 2009 following a police raid. This resulted in reprisal attacks on police that spread to Adamawa, Yobe, Jigawa States. When the violence intensified in 2010, President Goodluck Jonathan on May 15, 2013 was forced to declare a state of emergency in these three States.

Having ravaged most parts of Nigeria's North East region for a long time a crack developed in the rank of the group. Okanga Agila accounts that Abu Musab Al Barnewi, the sect's publicity scribe, disagreed on ideology or principles with Shekau and pulled out his camp to form his army of insurgency fighters. Mamman Nur, son of Boko Haram's spiritual founder, Muhammed Yusuf, also pulled out of Shekau's camp and formed his own separate terrorists sect.

Many reasons have been advanced as the causes of terrorism in different climes, even though Nnamdi Ekeanyanwu (*Media, Politics of Change*) notes that "some powerful political forces within the northern part of Nigeria are using Boko Haram to negotiate their way back to power" and that "the economic conditions in Nigeria have helped the group recruit members and get some sympathy from a section of the public" (185). In Nigeria the causes of terrorism can be attributed to factors like poverty which makes some persons vulnerable to manipulations by people who promise them a means of livelihood; lack of education which make restive youths to take to fanaticism and extremism; bad parenting by parents who neglect their responsibilities over their children thereby exposing them to various hazards in the society including terrorist influence; religious extremism by some religious bigots and fundamentalists who feel their religion is better than others' hence must be practiced by all by force; poor socio-economic infrastructure, broken down industries, exclusion, unemployment, and corruption.

If majority of the citizens of any society are educated there are tendencies that they will be less prone to being willing tools in the hands of manipulators who exploit the various problems in the society to recruit uneducated willing hands to cause crises that are inimical to national unity and stability.

Mass media and terrorism reportage

The media are integral parts of the society because of the responsibilities they are saddled with, which include the surveillance of the environment on which they operate, and conscientising the society at every circumstance and situation based on the fact they act as the watchdog of the society. The media serve as the megaphones that magnify events that were known by only few people to reach a larger heterogeneous audience that are spread out in different locations depending on the means being used in disseminating the information.

The media report to the public information they gather from within and without the society they are located. It is important to add that the perception people eventually have about any issue is mostly influenced by how the media report such stories or events. For this reason

the media are expected to be circumspect in reporting sensitive issues and criminal acts, especially those that has do with a country`s national interest and national security, taking into consideration the resultant effects of such reports on the citizens. This is in line with a study by Jared Rosenberger and Valerie Callanan which suggests that crime-related media may have influence on viewers` opinions about crime depending on how the crime-related media usually frame representations of crime. These frames help viewers to interpret media representations of crime.

One sensitive area of news reportage is when it has to do with the security of lives and property, alongside national security, and media reportage about terrorism falls under this spectrum. At one time or the other, the media have been accused of giving more impetus to terrorists to continue in their tirades with the way they report their activities since publicity tends to be additional oxygen for terrorists to instill fear on the populace and to remain relevant. When terrorists carry out deadly attacks to give the impression that they are in charge, and the media report such attacks, they are indirectly manipulating the media to fan the ember of their propaganda therefore, Jammy Guanah and Ijeoma Obi observe P. Wilkinson as saying that “terrorist`s manipulation and exploitation of the media is shown to play critical role in propaganda war” (15). Hence, the Nigerian Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Tukur Buratai, says addressing the Boko Haram insurgents with titles like ISWAP, or JAS only glorifies and gives them “undue publicity” and further boosts “the image of the criminal gang thus assuming larger than life status” (Abdulkareem Haruna 1).

In the course of the Nigerian media carrying out their duties to the society by reporting the activities of Boko Haram to inform the world about the senseless killings and destructions they engage in, they have been alleged to inadvertently be supporting the idles of Boko Haram. According to V. F. Sacco, this suggests that crime-related media, especially news, is framed in such a manner that the threat and likelihood of random violent crime is elevated. On his part, Santas Tsegyu sees terrorist organisations as capitalising on the “symbiotic” relationship between terrorism and the mass media to promote their activities. He said while the mass media focused its search light on terrorist activities, terrorist organisations and groups take advantage of the media to propagate and carry out nefarious activities (66). According to J. Matusitz, when terrorist attacks are shown in the media to an audience much larger than what the audience would be at the place where the attack occurred, terrorists are said to benefit from an amplification effect (57).

Ifeoluwapo Odedere feels that the media have given too much undeserved and unnecessary publicity to Boko Haram that the nation, with fear, now subconsciously look forward to the next attack on some unsuspecting village, or expects the next big thing from the sect every day. This is like helping the terrorists in spreading their propaganda. Ifeoluwapo Odedere observes that the government and the Nigerian army have been indirectly portrayed by the media, as being weak and incapable of handling the ‘more organized’ Boko Haram, thus adding to “the general perception of helplessness among the populace as well as boosting the

confidence of the insurgent group(s)” (1). Consequently, Vanguard reports the Chief of Army Staff, Lt.-Gen. Tukur Buratai as soliciting the support of the media and other stakeholders against negative publicity which will help to drastically reduce the spread of Boko Haram propaganda. The media should be swift in reporting stories that has to do with the Nigeria`s security agencies successfully repel attacks by Boko-Haram insurgents and disarming them, and that they are firmly top of the situations. Such reports will go a long way to help the military in their fight against the terrorists.

Newspaper and counter terrorism

Fighting the war against terrorism should not be seen as only being between the security forces and the terrorists, rather it should be a war between Nigeria, its citizens, organisations, especially the media and terrorism. The media have enormous role to play in countering terrorism since they have the ability to set agenda that can influence the opinion and perception of their viewers, listeners, and readers alike. This can be achieved through the way they frame the Boko Haran stories they circulate. Terrorism is like a mind game which primary purpose is to instill fear in the minds of the people, so with the way stories are framed the media can reduce the palpable fear people entertain about terrorist activities, and deny the terrorists the type of cheap publicity they crave for when they carry out attacks.

Also, as Pat Utomi affirms, if the media do not exercise direct influence, they can have influence through their gatekeeper role. Since the editors determine what goes out as news, they can put policies in place not to report terrorists` elaborately any longer, or not to give them prominence in placements in the media. They should deny the terrorists the publicity of their atrocities because when terrorism is not communicated it cannot have effect (P. Seib & D. M. Janbek 11). The media should play down on the activities of the Boko Haram sect, and always counter false information on military operation against the Boko Haram terrorists in the North East part of the country. Media reports must never be seen as glorifying the terrorists` attacks, and thereby demoralising our soldiers and making some of them to be afraid, and are now avoiding going to the North-East like a disease, because “while the terrorists are doing theirs, so many media reports reaching soldiers in the North-East are disturbing and pulling down their morale” (Naijaloaded 4).

The way some media outlets report the activities of Boko Haram has made the Nigerian military to accuse “some journalists” of working for the terror group, after reports showed security forces had suffered heavy losses in recent months. The military said it was “known that some journalists work for Boko Haram and fraternise with terrorist commanders” (Premiumtimes 1). Hence the Coalition on Conflict Resolution and Human Rights in Nigeria (CCRHRN) named Reuters as one of the “news agencies marauding the truths and destabilising Nigeria through false, malicious and fabricated news reports concerning the efforts of the Nigerian military against Boko Haram terrorists in the northeast Nigeria” (Rahaman Abiola, *Group alleges plans* 1).

The media should show more patriotism in their reportage by giving maximum coverage to the activities of the armed forces that are confronting Boko Haram. To encourage the armed forces the media should celebrate their victories in the fight against terrorism and the superiority of their firepower over that of the terrorists with bold headlines that praise the valour of the troops. However, the military should see the media as a partner in the fight against terrorism by supplying them with necessary information so as to dispel speculations and misinformation. This will help the media to give balance report of events on the battle field. Hitherto, the media are said to be down playing the successes being made by the Nigerian armed forces while amplifying that of the terrorists.

The battle against terrorism is for the territorial integrity of Nigeria and the safety of her people, therefore media story lines, headlines, and analyses should reflect that overriding national interest. Beyond just reporting terrorist activities, through in-depth reporting derivable from intensive investigative journalism, the media should additionally feed their audience with information on the way forward in spite of the terrorist challenges. The media are expected to communicate to the public regularly the steps being taken by the government to tackle insurgency so as to boost the people's confidence. Nnenna Ibeh also advocates that the media should carry out thorough investigations to unmask the sponsors of terrorist groups, and the people/countries supplying the arms and ammunition, including military hardware they use. He adds that the news media in Nigeria must question the lack of external support for Nigeria in ending terrorism in the country.

Sunday Onyemaechi Eze therefore charges the media to up genuine sensitisation effort on safety precautions to apply in this perilous time by swaying the society to give undiluted support and reliable information to the government and security agencies in this fight. He emphasises that the advocacy role of the media in speaking out against societal ills and vices and recommending practical solutions to problems should be maintained, and this the media does this better through the pages of the newspapers, magazines, television and radio programmes and other social media networks which have the answers.

Research Method

Survey research method was used for this study. The method provides effective means of collecting the views of newspaper readers in Sapele metropolis concerning their perception of newspapers' reportage of the activities Boko Haram and counter terrorism in Nigeria. The population of this study comprised the residents of Sapele from 20 years and above. Albeit the Nigerian constitution (1999) as amended, provides that 18 years is the legal age for independent opinion to be recognised, yet, the researchers, through purposive sampling technique selected respondents from 20 years and above.

According to the National Population Commission (NPC), the population of residents of Sapele Local Government Area of Delta State, from 20 years and above, is 87,729. Since there would have been increase in the population between 2006 that the last population census

was conducted in Nigeria and 2019 that this study was done the population projection formula provided by Emman-Owums Owuamalam was used to determine the current population.

The formula:

$$P_p = G_p \times P_1 \times T$$

Where;

P_p = projected population.

G_p = Given Population as at last Census.

P_1 = Population increase Index.

T = Period between the given population and year of study.

$P_p = ?$

$G_p = 87,729$

$P_1 = 2.28\% = 0.0228 = 0.023$

$T = 2019 - 2006 = 13$

$P_p = 87,729 \times 0.023 \times 13$

$P_p = 26,230.971$, Approximately. 26,230

Therefore, the projected increase in population was 26,230, and this brings the current population to 113,959 (i.e. 87,729 + 26,230).

The actual samples were drawn using purposive sampling technique. That means that people who read or like reading newspapers were selected. Purpose sampling technique was used because it is only the people that have interest in newspaper readership who would care to comment on their perception about newspapers' reportage of the activities of Boko Haram that were selected.

Sample size was determined using the Meyer's sample size determination template. The template is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Meyer's Sample Size Template		
S\N	POPULATION SIZE	SAMPLE SIZE
1	Infinity	384
2	500,000	384
3	100,000	383
4	50,000	381
5	10,000	370
6	5,000	357

7	3,000	341
8	2,000	322
9	1,000	278

Source: D. W. Stacks

From the table above, the sample size for this study is 383 newspaper readers within Sapele metropolis. To ensure that every newspaper reader in Sapele was represented in the study, a multi-stage cluster sampling technique was adopted.

This technique enabled the researchers to divide Sapele metropolis into four zones. R. Babbie in this regard notes that to help control sampling errors, it is best to use small areas or clusters both to decrease the number elements in each cluster and to maximise the number of clusters selected. The breakdown of clusters is shown below:

Table 2: Research Clusters

Zones	Area
A	Amukpe and Okirigwe
B	Otton-Ghana
C	Urban Area and Ogodo
D	Yoruba road, Okpe road, Awolowo road

The measuring instrument used was the questionnaire. The questionnaire was sectionalised along the line of demographic and psychographic variables. It was a fifteen (15) item instrument- 12 closed-ended and 3 open-ended questions. Items 6-10 addressed Objectives 1 & 2 while items 11-13 addressed Objective 3. Face/Content validity was employed to ensure consistency and comprehensibility.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The mode of administration of copies of the questionnaire was systematic, adopting the street names and house numbers as the sampling frame. Using a diagonal approach on the table of random digits, the instrument was administered to households that fell within alternate lines on that diagonal stream. Administration however was only to newspaper readers. This was done by first asking the respondent if he/she reads newspapers regularly. Since the study was predominantly a coverage survey, ninety-five (95) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to zones C and D while ninety- six (96) copies were distributed to zones A and B because they have higher population.

Analysis was done using simple percentage and weighted mean score (WMS) based on a five- point Likert scale. The score of 3.00 was used as the criterion for decision. To this end, any mean response which is equal to or more than 3.00 was deemed positive while any mean response less than 3.00 was considered negative. Three hundred and eighty three (383) copies of questionnaire were distributed but only 350 copies were returned. The return rate of the questionnaire was 91.38% while the mortality rate was 8.62%. The mortality rate does not affect the study because it is insignificant compared to the return rate of 91.38%. Thus, the copies were considered adequate enough to represent the population. The presentation and analysis of data was, therefore, based on the 350 copies that were returned and found unusable.

Table 3: Reportage of the activities of Boko Haram by newspapers and the creation awareness and the education of the populace about terrorism.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	138	39.43
Strongly Agree	93	26.57
Disagree	42	12
Strongly Disagree	8	2.29
Can't Say	69	19.71
Total	350	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

The data above show that majority of the respondents agree that the reportage of the activities of Boko Haram by newspapers has helped to create awareness and educate them about terrorism,

Table 4: Maybe newspapers` reportage has helped the government to defeat Boko Haram.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	45	12.86
No	315	87.14
Total	386	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

The implication of the data in table 4 is that newspapers` reportage has not helped the government to defeat Boko Haram.

Table 5: Newspapers` involvement in counter-terrorism with their reportage.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	4	1.14
No	330	94.29
Can't Say	16	4.57
Total	350	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

Data in table 5 indicate that newspapers are not involved in

Discussion of Findings

The first objective of this study was to find out if the reportage of the activities of Boko Haram by the selected newspapers has helped to create awareness and educate the populace about terrorism. Data collated are in the affirmative because 66% respondents agree that they have got to know more about the Boko Haram sect and their activities since newspapers' reports are always detailed, and garnished with corresponding photographs. This is in line with the roles the media are expected to play in the society as attested by the triad of C. V. Ngige, A. F., and I. HammanJoda who assert that the media exists as an organ of information (sourcing and disseminating information) educational promotion, surveillance, social enlightenment and mobilization (59). Since the duty of the media include creating awareness about events and trending issues, as newspapers are doing by educating the populace about the activities and antecedents of the Boko Haram sect through their reportage, A. M. Hamid and I. M. Baba observe that the media are expected to bring to the consciousness of the public impending dangers, hence the onus is on the media not only to cover events, but to also analyse and report significant developments within and outside a given society.

However, in the process of informing the people about terrorist activities, the reports should not be in such a way for the media to benefit from the public's eagerness to obtain information about terrorist attacks (A. Bilgen). The media should ensure they do not instill fear in the citizens whereby they will not feel save, for as G. Gerbner and I. Gross state, "Ritualized displays of any violence (such as in crime and disaster news, as well as in mass-produced drama) may cultivate exaggerated assumptions about the extent of threat and danger in the world and lead to demands for protection" (193).

The second objective was to inquire if newspapers' reportage has helped the federal government of Nigeria to defeat Boko Haram. The data obtained from the field and analysed show that the sect has not been defeated, even though the Federal Government of Nigeria claims that Boko Haram has been "technically" defeated, and its capacity 'degraded'. However, the activities of the set have been restricted to the North-Eastern parts of Nigeria, unlike when it carried out attacks in places like Kano, Kaduna, Sokoto, Yola, and Abuja were easily; and it no longer occupy and control any part of Nigeria. Azeez Olaniyan declares that in spite of the

achievements of the Nigerian military, “Boko Haram has neither been completely defeated nor degraded, contrary to the government’s claims. Boko Haram still launches attacks on soft targets in cities, mostly through suicide missions, raids, and abductions” (1).

According to Mike Ebonugwo, it is still not yet Uhuru for people in the North East. There are still sporadic attacks on soft targets by the Boko Haram. In one of such attacks on Magumeri community in Borno State in March, 2018 no fewer than 20 persons were killed, including some soldiers and policemen (3). Boko Haram still attack Internally Displaced Persons’ camps in cities and civilians in public spaces; the set ambushes soldiers and overrun multiple barracks, “the fact that the terrorists can still invade cities and launch attacks shows that they are yet to be defeated” (Azeez Olaniyan 2).

Through the third objective, the study sought to know whether respondents perceive the newspapers to really be involved in the counter terrorism fight with the way they report the activities of Boko Haram. The verdict of respondents is that newspapers cannot be said to be fighting terrorism with their reportage. This may be based on the way they report the activities of the terrorist’s group which tend to encourage them to commit more atrocities. This view is supported by Ifeoluwapo Odedere who asserts that it “further adds to the general perception of helplessness among the populace as well as boosting the confidence of the insurgents group(s) (4). Ifeoluwapo Odedere laments that our media have unconsciously sided with the terrorist group, “giving them free-of-charge publicity while the government has been unable to counter (effectively) either with words or actions” (5).

The insurgents read newspapers, and they get to know the reactions of people to their activities, which they eventually work with. Nigeria’s Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt Gen Yusuf Tukur Buratai, notes that Boko Haram terrorist group is appearing to be very strong because it has instilled fear in Nigerians. In an interactive session with editors and executive members of the Nigerian Guild of Editors in Maiduguri, Borno State capital, Akham Papa (*Army Boss, Buratai Explains*) reports the COAS as appealing to the media not to give the group space that would help it to sustain its psychological warfare on Nigerians. Hence, newspapers must be mindful of their contents; they should publish stories that will make the insurgents feel unsafe anytime they intend to carry out attacks. They should not report it as entertainment news, thereby falling into the intention of Boko Haram that wants the news of the casualties they have caused to be reported lavishly.

It is in line with this that retired Lt.-Gen. Alani Akinrinade, former Chief of Army Staff (COAS), while urging the media to minimise false reportage of happenings in the war against insurgency in the country, persuaded the media to have some of their experienced field operators attached to some of the forward headquarters to enable such capable hands in the media “to bring us authentic information as to happenings in the frontlines, to reduce the mischief that is pervasive on the social media” (*Vanguard, Minimise false reportage* 3).

Conclusion

Terrorist acts are still being perpetrated by the Boko Haram sect, this is in spite of the actions being taken by the Nigerian military against this deadly group. The battle should not be left for the armed forces to fight alone hence the mass media must be adequately mobilised to use all their journalistic arsenals to also battle this terrorist group.

Hitherto the newspapers are assumed to be thriving in reporting carnages of Boko Haram attacks just to increase readership; they should change this negative impression about them by engaging in counter terrorism reports that will give hope to the common man on the street. The mass media, especially newspapers, must not be seen as taking undue advantage of the war on terrorism to engage in unnecessary publicity and sensational headlines to get more patronage from members of the public and rake in additional advertisements revenue at the expense of counter terrorism reports. The fact remains that newspapers have significant role to play in counter terrorism.

Recommendations

1. Newspapers should publish more positive stories of our military's activities on the battle field in the fight against Boko Haram
2. The failures of Boko Haram should be given prominence in newspapers to reduce the fear in readers.
3. The public relations arm of the military should work in synergy with journalists to map out the type of information that can be passed to the public, and how to work against terrorism propaganda in the interest of the country.
4. Newspapers should be more cautious in reporting terrorism stories so that the reports won't be cheap publicity for the terrorists.

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