ISSUES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEWSPAPER FRAMING ON ETHNIC CONFLICT: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF ETHNIC GROUP LEADERS' CONFLICT FRAMES

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Abstract

This paper attempts to explore the waves of media frames on ethnic group leaders' conflict frames. In general, the effects of what media frame as news on public behaviours to politics have been discussed extensively in scholarly works. However, the extent that newspapers framing stimulate conflict frame (behaviours) in ethnic leaders who rheostat the hearts and minds of ethnic groups, are still underexplored. Specifically, this study seeks to understand the extent that media frames about ethnic issues have become the driving force behind volatile ethnic groups in Nigeria. Therefore, series of in-depth interviews on 26 ethnic group leaders were conducted and data were analyzed thematically using NVIVO 10 software. The study found that the unswerving newspapers framing on ethnic issues, especially on interethnic relations and politics, culminated to inciting, double standard, name calling, all of which stemmed from the ownership interest, are some of the major factors that widen ethnic differences and eventually stimulated ethnic groups into conflict. Based on the lived experiences of the ethnic group leaders, newspapers are culpable in the emergence and escalation of ethnic conflict as a result of these stimulations. This study has significantly contributed to the understanding of potential influence of conflict frames (behaviors) of ethnic group leaders on ethno-political conflict.

Keywords: *Ethnic conflict, newspaper framing, media frames, audience frames, ethnic group leader.*

ISU DAN IMPLIKASI PEMBINGKAIAN SURATKHABAR TERHADAP KONFLIK ETNIK: SUATU KAJIAN KUALITATIF BINGKAIAN KONFLIK DALAM KALANGAN PEMIMPIN KUMPULAN ETNIK

Abstrak

Makalah ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji gelombang pembingkaian media terhadap rangka konflik pemimpin kumpulan etnik. Secara umumnya, kesan pembingkaian media ke atas sesuatu berita dan hubungannya dengan tingkahlaku publik serta politik telah dibincangkan secara meluas menerusi kajian-kajian ilmiah. Walau bagaimanapun, sejauhmana pembingkaian surat khabar merangsang rangka konflik (perilaku) dalam kalangan pemimpin etnik untuk mempengaruhi minda dan perasaan kumpulan ethnik tertentu masih terhad penerokaannya. Secara khusus, kajian ini bertujuan untuk memahami sejauhmana di sebalik pembingkaian media mengenai isu-

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isu etnik telah menjadi daya penggerak terhadap keadaan tidak menentu kumpulan etnik di Nigeria. Sehubungan itu, beberapa siri temu bual mendalam terhadap 26 pemimpin kumpulan etnik telah dijalankan dan data telah dianalisis mengikut tema menggunakan perisian NVivo 10. Kajian mendapati bahawa konsistennya pembingkaian terhadap isu-isu etnik, terutamanya mengenai hubungan etnik dan politik, memuncaknya hasutan, pilih kasih dan pelabelan yang berpunca daripada kepentingan pemilikan surat khabar, merupakan antara faktor utama meluasnya jurang perbezaan etnik dan akhirnya merangsang kumpulan etnik ke dalam kancah konflik. Berdasarkan pengalaman para pemimpin kumpulan etnik, didapati surat khabar tanpa disedari telah merangsang kemunculan dan peningkatan konflik etnik. Kajian ini telah menyumbang kepada pemahaman berhubung potensi pengaruh bingkaian konflik (perilaku) para pemimpin kumpulan etnik terhadap konflik etno-politik.

Kata kunci: *Konflik etnik, pembingkaian surat khabar, bingkaian media, bingkaian khalayak, pemimpin kumpulan etnik.*

INTRODUCTION

Human survival on this planet hinges on how we manage the various features of conflict that emerged through the seemingly incompatible interests, values and hostilities (Jeong, 2008) but which are stimulated by various helixes. Already, Structural Conflict Theory has established that what influences conflict in any society goes beyond what we see as the immediate cause (Harry, 2001) therefore, in every conflict, though usually unnoticed, there is a helix wrapped in conflict behaviors. Meanwhile, the springboard of some of these conflicts in most multiethnic societies has been linked to the media and ethnic leaders (McBeath, 1978; Straus, 2007; Wiegenstein, 2014) however, research attention to concretely establish these links are inadequate (Hutchison, 2013). In view of the steady interest of scholars across the globe on conflict studies generally, it is apparent that there is still a relative dearth of studies on the parts that ethnic group leaders in combination with the role that framing in newspaper play as the spring of these conflicts (Adisa, Rosli, & Ahmad, 2015a). Though, framing provides a fruitful way of understanding how media shape news and people's perceptions of it but the area lacks precision (Reese, Gandy Jr, & Grant, 2001). In relation to this, Dafrizal, Ibrahim and Ahmad (2011) indicated that it is appropriate to recognize the extent that the media is able to frame issues that can cause communication phenomenon across the globe. Therefore, the need for attention towards the examination of ethnic conflict has become imperative more so, that in most of the multiethnic societies, it has been cases of old conflicts worsen, new ones surfacing (Arbour, 2014).

In the context of Nigeria, a series of studies (Adisa & Abdulraheem, 2012; Bagaji, 2010; Ebegbulem, 2011; Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Olubomehin, 2012; Onwuzuruigbo, 2010; Ukiwo, 2003) have attempted to examine the motivating influence of conflict. Similarly, more scholars (Onwuzuruigbo, 2010; Osaghae & Suberu, 2005; Otite, 1990) have investigated reasons behind unrelenting ethnic conflicts but not much attention is directed at the ethnic group leaders' perspectives on the possible role of newspaper framing. Ethnic group leaders are the elite opinion leaders who got motivated by the media and in turn stimulate their members. Corroborating this, Khiang, Ahmad, Ibrahim and Peng Kee (2012) disclosed that it is thought-provoking to understand that ethnic media play the role of being the mouthpiece of the particular community. In line with this, the study looks further than the usual investigation around the immediate causes but focuses on how newspaper framing influences ethnic group leaders into ethnic conflict. That is exploring the perspectives of some of the principal actors about the way newspaper framing stimulates them. Given the importance of framing in opinion formation, Tankard (2001) disclosed that news framing can eliminate voices and wane arguments as much as framing some issues in ways that favor a particular side without showing an overt bias.

News frames are almost completely hidden and taken for granted. Gamson (1985) noted that to either journalists or audiences news frames do not appear as social construction but as primary attributes of events that reporters are merely reflecting. However, from a constructionist approach Entman (1993) noted that news frames are obvious and can be located in four places: the communicator, the text, the audience and the culture. This viewpoint identifies frames as part of culture which connects news production as well as consumption. Therefore, the constructionist approach underscores the need to give attention to audiences' frames given that they are active in processing media messages (Van Gorp, 2009). This becomes necessary because every framing is either directly or indirectly aimed at influencing opinion. According to Roach (1993) media framing plays a significant role in imparting a population as much as influencing public opinion about conflict, war and peace. This influence, Adeba (2010) stressed, is more pronounced in how the audiences react to news stories through concrete actions. In spite of this, not much attention has been directed at knowing how the opinion leaders have been

influenced by the media framing, more so that many of them are instrumental to the ethnic conflicts' emergence and escalation. This is why the main objective of this study goes beyond understanding the immediate motives for conflict behaviors in Nigeria but to know the extent that what media frame about ethnic issues stimulate the leaders into developing behavior that bring about this conflict? After all, in some countries, ethnic groups compete openly through ethnic parties for power and control and still there is no conflict but coexists peacefully. This then brings about the questions raised by (Caselli & Coleman, 2013; Sambanis & Shayo, 2013) that why do some countries experience ethnic conflict and others do not? Why does ethnic conflict wax and wane over time in the same country?

Contextual viewpoint of conflict in Nigeria

Since conflict prevention has not taken sufficient root in Nigeria according to Utsaha, Ugbah and Evuleocha (2007) ethnic conflicts have now become pervasive. Isa (2001) also notes that ethnic conflicts have reached a state of prevalent phenomenon, it has turned communities in Nigeria into battlefields and killing grounds. Similarly, Otite (1990) notes that the ethnic virus has been one of the most important causes of social conflict and political instability in Nigeria. However, Osaghae and Suberu (2005) ascribe this to the fact that ethnicity is generally regarded as the most basic and politically salient means of identification in Nigeria. However, what is the driving force behind volatile ethnic groups in Nigeria? To what extent do what media frame about ethnic issues, stimulate the leaders into developing behavior that bring about this conflict?

Then, Sambanis and Shayo (2013) conclude that the connection between social identification and ethnic conflict is multifaceted and complex and sometimes historically contingent. Meanwhile, buttressing the complexity claim in ethnic conflicts, Sambanis and Shayo (2013) disclose that countries like Angola, Burundi, Sudan, Chad, Burma and Indonesia have spent half or more of their histories as independent countries fighting civil wars comparatively along ethnic lines, whereas Benin, Gambia, Guinea, Eritrea, Niger, Zambia, and Malaysia have succeeded in avoiding the escalation of ethnic conflicts to civil war. Besides that all these countries have a comparatively high ethnic polarization index, yet still able to manage it

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indicates that ethnic divisions and cleavages do not all the time increase the threat of violent political conflict (Sambanis & Shayo, 2013).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: FRAMING, MEDIA FRAMES AND AUDIENCE FRAMES

The concept of framing has been one of the most abundant areas of recent research in communication, politics and sociology because framing can clarify and interpret the extent the media affect public's understanding of politics and issues (Lecheler & De Vreese, 2012). The same reason that Dafrizal, Ibrahim and Ahmad (2011) emphasized that till present, framing theory use and application is still widespread among researchers of media and communication. According to Tankard (2001), media framing presents alternative to the old objectivity and bias paradigm that was popular in mass communication research for years, in a way that it helps researchers to understand mass communication effects. Therefore, framing is about presentation of media contents which aims to guide the audiences' evaluative perception on a specific issue (Khiang, et. al, 2012). Framing is a way to understand conflict (Goffman, 1974). Frames play an important role in the creation of "us" and "them" in a conflict situation (Shinar, 2002). Frame analysis is a way to investigate the coverage of conflict (D'Angelo, 2002; McCombs & Ghanem, 2001). Since it is a useful tool, the theoretical framework of framing will be used to guide this study. This powerful and preventable action of the press has been blamed greatly for inciting the eventual 1994 genocide in Rwanda that claimed over 800,000 lives (Kalyango & Vultee, 2012; Mitchell, 2007). Similarly in several studies, mass media (and other forms of communication) were linked to the escalation of conflicts and later on in the potential de-escalation (Erni, 2009; Leung, 2009; Spencer, 2005).

Those mentioned above incidents confirm the framing postulation that how an issue is described in news story can sway how it is understood by audiences (Van Gorp, 2007). Clarifying the uniqueness of framing further, Entman (1993) maintains that framing has four core functions which are: describing problems, identifying causes, making proper judgments, and then proposing remedies. Framing theory offers the basis for understanding how conflict is reported in newspapers (Carpenter, 2007) because according to de Vreese (2005), de Vreese,

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Boomgaarden, and Semetko (2011), a frame is an emphasis in salience of various aspects of an issue such as conflict. Also, according to Zhou (2008) scholars use the concept of framing as an instrument to appreciate news as a social construction and social resource. To Shoemaker and Reese (1996) during the framing stages journalists have swaying power because they can focus their stories more on a particular issue while they tone down alternative viewpoints. However, this study was guided by the two concepts of framing: the media frames and dominantly, the audience frames. According to Scheufele (1999) frames need to be considered schemes for both how the media present news as well as how the audience comprehend and apply news. Therefore, it becomes important for researchers to distinguish between them in determining the best research methods (Colistra, 2012).

Research into audience frames investigates how and to what extent specific media frames influence readers' or viewers' perceptions of certain issues (Tankard, 2001). Goffman (1974) maintained that frames are central categorizing life experiences that give meanings to events that if not would be meaningless. In the same way, Edelman (1993) contended that what is recognized about the nature of the human relation hinges on how the cues received about the world are framed and interpreted. According to Reese (2001) "frames are organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world" (p. 11). However, Entman (1993) stressed that through framing, some aspects of reality are underscored and emphasized. Therefore, Van Gorp (2009) concluded that framing has serious effects in the field of communication. Therefore, Scheufele (2000) categorized two approaches to frame analysis as psychological or microscopic and sociological or macroscopic approaches. A psychological approach, he said typifies frames as a means of processing and organizing incoming information by individuals. Also refers to as audience frames, microscopic frames were defined by Entman (1993) as "mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals' processing of information" (p. 53). Similarly, a macroscopic approach can also apply to media frames (Scheufele, 2000). Organization of reality is the most important function of media frames (Tuchman, 1978). A media frame can be defined as "the central organizing idea or storyline that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events" (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, p. 143). Then, Gamson (1989) pointed out that the facts are "embedded in a

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frame or a storyline that organizes them and gives them coherence" (p. 157). Gitlin (1980) said that media frames, which are "largely unspoken and unacknowledged," sort out information both for media practitioners and to some extent for the audience (p. 7). Similarly, Entman (1993) noted that, from a constructionist approach, a frame can be located in four positions: the communicator, the text, the audience and the culture. This perspective mentions that a stock of frames, as part of culture, connects news production and consumption. As a result of this therefore, the constructionist approach emphasizes that the audiences should be considered active in processing media messages (Van Gorp, 2009).

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted qualitative research method with in-depth interview approach in other to adequately probe into the ethnic group leaders' catalyst for conflict frames on ethno-political conflict in Nigeria. The sampling design was based on the snowballing method due to the sensitivity of the issue and the difficulty of locating the participants (Creswell, 2012; Keyton, 2015). A series of in-depth interviews on 26 ethnic group leaders comprises of Ibo, Yoruba, Hausa and Fulani were conducted and data were codified and categorized in themes using NVIVO 10 software for the analysis and generation of models. In order to protect the confidentiality of informants the study used pseudonym to report the perceptions of the informants in line with the advice of (Creswell, 2009), consequently, Inf. IB was used to represent Ibo informants, Inf. Y for Yoruba, Inf. H for Hausa and Inf. F for Fulani respectively. Resulting from the interviews was the generation of coding frames, which consisted of conceptualizing elements that explained the perspectives and lived experiences of the ethnic group leaders on ethnic conflicts in Nigeria and the role of newspaper framing. The analysis commenced with open coding where data were examined line by line to label the informants perceptions within data. Next was the analysis of axial coding, which was intended to construct conceptual associations between a category and its sub-categories. Subsequently, concepts and sub-concepts were labelled more by selective coding, which is the assimilative method of choosing the foremost category, and systematically linking it to other categories for reliable findings to the question; how do newspaper frames of ethno-political issues stimulate ethnic group leaders' conflict frames?

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FINDINGS

Based on the research question set out for this study, the informants were probed about their perceptions on driving force behind volatile ethnic groups in Nigeria and the extent that media frames about ethnic issues stimulate the leaders into developing behavior that bring about this conflicts? To investigate these issues, 26 in-depth interviews were conducted between April and June, 2014 in the North Central Nigeria. Afterwards, the interview transcripts were codified and uploaded into the QSR NVivo data management program, and a comprehensive process of data coding and identification of themes, sub-themes and sub sub-themes were undertaken. The emerged themes are however described in a systematic and step-by-step process alongside appropriate models below.

Newspaper framing in ethnic Group leaders' conflict frames

Though some literature have expressly accused the media for its involvement as source of hatred (Kurspahic, 2003) and in the emergence and escalation of conflicts (Kalyango & Vultee, 2012; Reuben, 2009), but most of them did not clearly identify how this is done. According to Lecheler and de Vreese (2013) and Onwuzuruigbo (2013) the extent and scope that newspapers framing influence conflict behaviours in ethnic leaders who rheostat the hearts and minds of ethnic group members are still underexplored. Similarly, Schoemaker and Stremlau (2014) described as serious gaps in evidence, the dearth of indicators to directly accuse the media for conflict involvement. However, in a recent study by Adisa, Rosli, and Ahmad (2015b) the foremost promoter liable in ethnic group leaders' conflict actions is how newspaper frame issues in Nigeria. In corroboration of this fact, the evidence from this study's interviews showed that all the interviewees were of the view that newspaper framing play significant role, though along with other contexts, in the conflict behaviours that mostly culminate into ethnic conflict. Their responses highlighted five specific ways through which newspaper framing contributes as indicated in the NVivo output figure 1 below.

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Figure 1: Thematic mapping of how newspaper framing promotes conflict frames

Inciting reports

As identified by the informants, the first activity of Nigeria newspapers that carries great influence on what they think and how they feel about other ethnic groups is from the inciting reports they are exposed to almost on a daily basis. Confirming this, Frohardt and Temin (1997), Kalyango and Vultee (2012) have stressed that, aside the active use of media to stimulate conflict, the media also contribute to conflict involuntarily, most times through passive incitement to violence mostly because journalists have poor professional skills. At the same time, Yassin and Zanuddin (2012) stressed that conflict frames surface when there is a trace of conflict among the individuals, groups and institutions in a society.

According to Informant H21, "They (newspapers) poison the minds of ethnic groups against each other. Sometimes they incite people to conflict". This claim was also confirmed by Informants IB23 and IB6, who stressed that:

> *...newspapers set ethnic groups against each other. It's like poisoning the minds of one against the other through what we read on the pages of newspapers...Newspapers indirectly stimulate ethnic conflict through what they write (Informant IB23).*

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Newspapers who practically poisoned the minds and direct people through what they write ...they write all sorts of things that most time influence people to develop hatred to other groups of ethnic (Informant IB6).

Stating the fundamental trend of the incitement, Informant H11, said:

What we heard daily on the media, especially newspapers and from individual about the way some ethnic group treat others usually is also a pointer to conflict behavior...unguided talk from both the media, elite in the society, politicians, and ethnic leaders on matter relating to ethnic. They talk not minding the ripple effect and how the public will react to what they say (Informant H11).

Meanwhile, Informant F26, specifically revealed that, "Without finding out the fact they (newspapers) come out saying the Fulani have killed people and destroyed farm lands…all these influence people into taking harms against us and we against them". Corroborating the perspective above, Informant Y24 then observed thus, "the way newspapers report incidents of ethnic misunderstanding are one of the main motives behind our behaviours that responsible for ethnic conflicts in Nigeria".
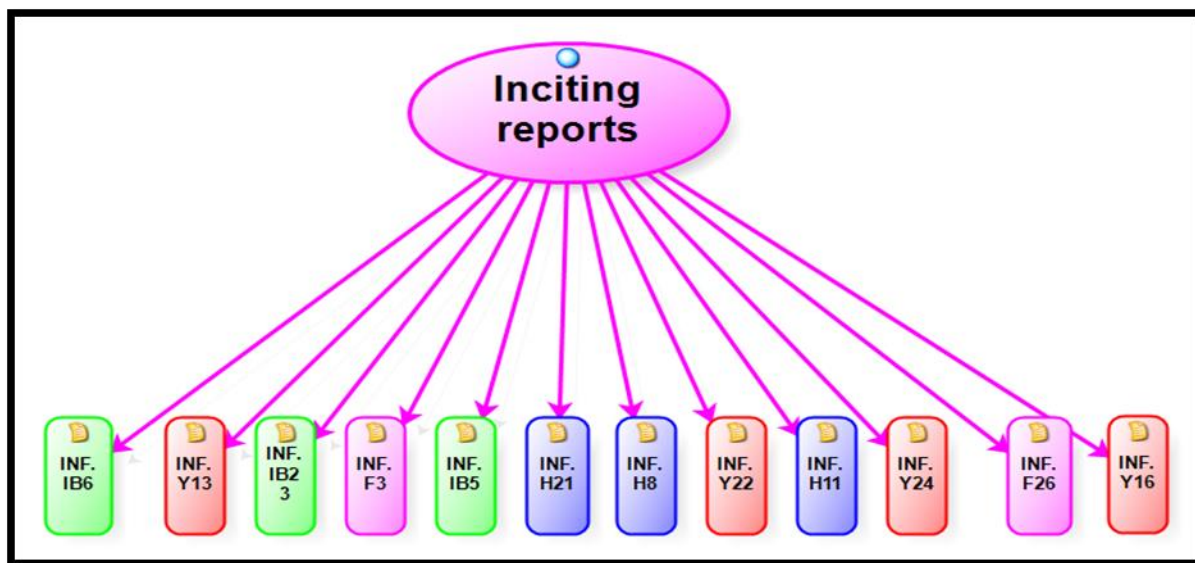

Figure 2: Ethnic group leaders' identification of inciting reports as a factor for audience frames

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The views expressed above were also evident in the Informant Y13, perception of the dangerous implication of inciting reports from the media. He concluded that "The media, especially newspapers are the main cause of some of these behaviors and even conflict escalation…Newspapers are so free that they publish all sorts of things both good and bad". Meanwhile, Informant IB5, blamed not just the media but also some of the ethnic leaders for what he described as, "unguided statement from both leaders of these groups and the media inform the usually negative behaviors of group towards each other".

Ownership interest

Ownership plays an important role in determining what is reported in the media. Though, in Nigeria, newspaper (including electronic) ownership pattern is dual ownership which is government ownership and private ownership. However, what is curiously interesting is that the ownership of some of the newspapers is shrouded in secrecy (Adesoji & Hahn, 2011; Okwuchukwu, 2014) in what many adduced to the ignoble role intended to play. Establishing the interest that Nigeria newspapers promote, Pate and Dauda (2013) disclosed that most of the newspapers concern themselves, mainly, with serving the interests of their proprietors.

This, no doubt has been stimulating discord among ethnic groups. One of the interviewees, informant 16, a Yoruba ethnic group leader, succinctly stated the key challenges and implication of ownership interest as a motive for conflict behaviors. He said:

> *Some people feel cheated and unjustly reported. And this happens mostly because of the ownership of these newspapers. This has even prompted all ethnic groups to have newspapers, radio and television for the purpose of promoting their ethnic interest (Informant 16).*

Also holding the same view, informant 10, a Hausa ethnic group leader, noted that, "everybody is trying to own a newspaper for the purpose of promoting their ethnic interest, political interest and economic interest". Another ethnic group leader with Yoruba interest, informant 22, also stressed that, "ownership impact is too much on the performances of newspapers… Somebody somewhere usually dictates the focus of the newspapers". Showing his grievances with the newspaper reportage of ethnic issues, informant 18, an Igbo ethnic leader, briefly captured the situation thus, "ownership influence still holds sway in the daily coverage of events".
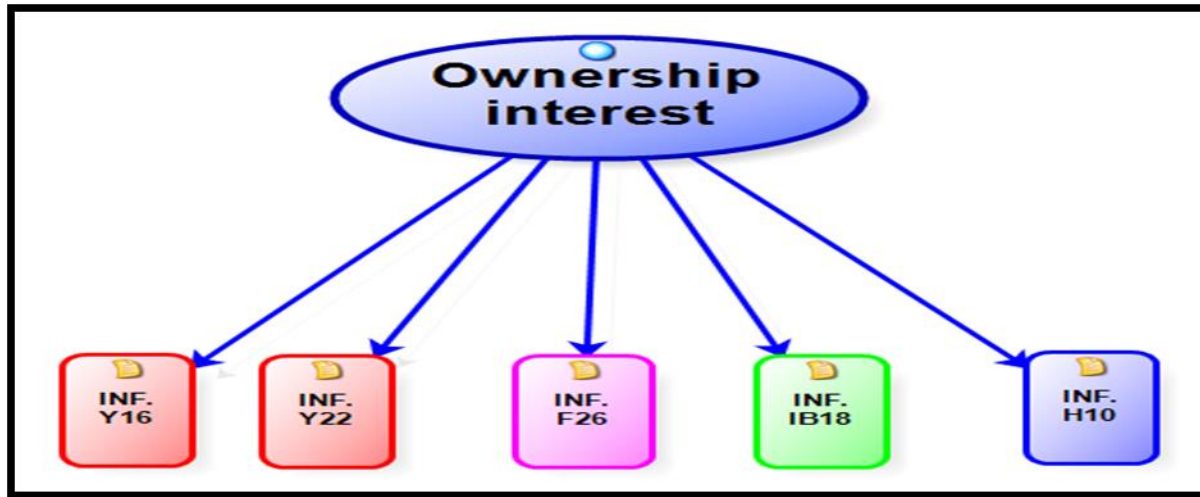
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Figure 3: Ownership interest as a factor for audience conflict frames

Double standard

The issue of double standard in media coverage of ethnic issues has been identified mostly as conflict oriented (Galtung, 2002), because it is the application of different level of attention, different tone and circumstance of coverage for similar situations and ethnic groups. This no doubt affects the relationship between ethnic groups in Nigeria. Significant numbers of the interviewees were of the view that double standard which is evident in newspapers news in Nigeria, has negative impact on the behaviours of some ethnic groups towards others. For instance, Informant H10, stated that:

> *Media also creates this behavior through the support they give to one group at the expense of the others…They protect, they cover up the mess of some ethnic groups and individual in the society. Whereas they quickly rush to the press to expose the atrocity of other groups and some individuals (Informant H10).*

Also reiterating the implication of this double standard practice of Nigeria newspapers, Informant IJ14, lamented that:

> *"...some newspapers through their imbalance coverage create problem among ethnic groups…Newspapers have tagged my group as terror and cult but failed to report all the good things we do in the society". In the same way, Informant F19 disclosed that "Whenever there is a conflict somewhere, they accused Fulani ethnic group. Even when*

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we are the victims of the attack, it is still Fulani they will mention on the pages of newspapers as the attackers".

Meanwhile, some informants stated the fundamental assumption that informed newspaper double standard. According to Informant Y17, "Newspapers sometimes take side with a group that is linked to the publisher. So, others feel cheated and decide to react". Also, Informant Y15, argued that:

> *Media do show open support to any ethnic group which is not too good where there are multi-ethnic groups…ethnic group that is not within the interest of newspapers is usually tagged negatively and exposed on every atrocity. While an ethnic group that is close to the newspapers is usually protected and cover up on any incident (Informant Y15).*

In what seems to be a new twist to the issue, some of the informants directly accused some national newspapers that are based in the South-West of double standard, which implies that the location of a newspaper has impact on its coverage and that one of the Yoruba ethnic group, Oodua People's Congress, based in the South-West, is being treated as a sacred cow. According to Informant IJ20:

> *…it is annoying to read most times on the pages of newspapers, all sort of negative adjectives to qualify the Niger Delta People who fight for their right whereas in the South West, the OPC commits havoc on regular basis and still the newspapers will not expose them (Informant IJ20).*
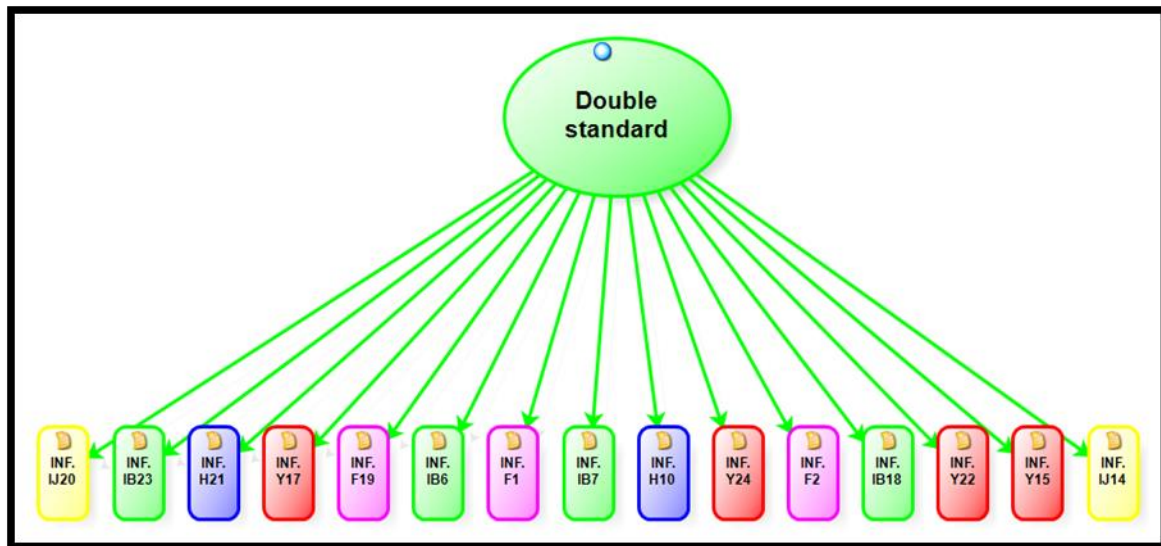

Figure 4: Double standard framing as a factor for audience conflict frames

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Name calling/ Labeling

Name calling which is equally referred to as labeling emerged from the interview analysis as one of the key to the formation of behavior that snowballs into conflict. Name calling or labeling is an incivility in newspaper framing that categorizes people involved in the news into either good or bad (Chandler, Clements & Combs, 2015; Coe, Kenski & Rains, 2014). This practice indirectly removes blames on one group and relatively passing it to other (Galtung, 1998; Tehranian, 2002). It is a newspaper negative representation and dichotomy that affects the behaviours of groups in conflict (Musa & Ferguson, 2012). Confirming the implication of this practice by newspapers, Informant IJ25 said,

> *"When newspapers tag us with different negative names, we tend to be irrational, and angry". Similarly, Informant H21 noted that "newspapers helped in widening the differences between the Berons and the Hausas by calling some settlers" (Informant 1J25)*

Describing how the infuriating name calling is done by newspapers and how it affects them, Informants IJ25 and F26 respectively, lamented that thus:

> *"Through series of attack and tags they give to us. For example, there were times that media named us terrorists, some called us militants, oil bunkers (sic), secessionists etc" (Informant IJ25). "Newspapers are used to the attitude of giving bad name tag to Fulani, such as "bandits, blood thirsty" (Informant F26).*
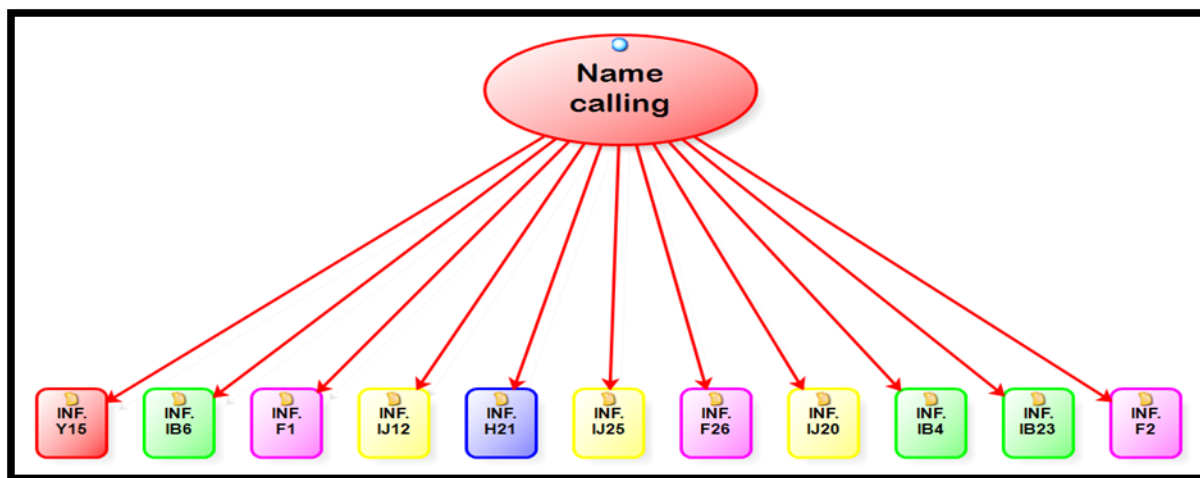

Figure 5: Name calling framing as a factor for audience conflict frames

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Another leader, Informant F2 also lamented that "Sometimes newspapers will tag us criminal who rob, attack and destroy other people's properties and farm then run into the bush". To Informant F1, while referring to one of the main contention that is continuously and currently fueling the Jos conflict between Beron and Hausa/Fulani ethnic groups, said "they tag us settlers". In what appeared to be a show of general unpleasant to and impact of name calling on the ethnic groups, another ethnic leader, Informant IB4, bared his mind thus "I don't like the way newspaper refers to the Boko Haram group as Islamic militants. It is a kind of bias against Muslims. Why not call them or refer to them in their name instead of that". However, Informant H21 summed-up this practice thus, "the newspapers tactic of calling a dog a bad name in order to hang it is repulsive to us".

DISCUSSION

This study has significantly contributed to the understanding of the potential influence of conflict frames (behaviors) of ethnic group leaders on ethno-political conflict. Because understanding these influences toward such behaviors could hold lessons for governments, media, and the ethnic leaders themselves. By so doing, the research questions established for this study have been used to achieve the objectives of the study which was to determine the driving force behind volatile ethnic groups in Nigeria and the extent that media frames about ethnic issues stimulate the leaders into developing behavior that trigger conflicts. This study found that the direct and indirect newspapers framing that culminated to incite, double standard, name calling all of which stemmed from the ownership interest are some of the major factors that widen ethnic differences and eventually stimulated ethnic groups into conflict.

Inciting role of media in conflict prone society has been acknowledged as dangerous trends that easily influence behavior of people involved in the early stage of conflict. For instance, Kalyango and Vultee (2012) reiterated that it was the inciting reports from the media in Rwanda that stimulated the hatred behavior which eventually led to ethnic cleansing of more than half a million Tutsi ethnic groups. Similarly, the inciting reports in Ethiopia media spread hate messages which facilitated political violence that claimed the lives of more than 300,000 people in a span of 20 years. Significant numbers of the ethnic group leaders interviewed,

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regardless of their ethnic groups' affinities, described the inciting reports on the pages of newspapers as unhelpful and dangerous to the co-existence of the ethnic groups in Nigeria. Based on the understanding and experiences of the ethnic group leaders interviewed and the statements of literature, newspapers are culpable in the emergence and escalation of ethnic conflict as a result of series of incitement reports. This revelation as it concerned ethnic conflict which is proven by the main and direct players in ethnic conflicts in Nigeria will serve as eye opener towards addressing the incessant conflicts.

Meanwhile, given these leaders' perceptions one important point that is understood in this perspective is the fact that the pattern of ownership of newspaper is crucial in determining the role that newspapers play on issues such as ethnic relations and conflicts. Similarly, from this point of views, it can be seen that name calling by newspapers contributes to what eventually become the conflict frames of ethnic group leaders. This is so because when newspapers address some ethnic group with bad names, they get angry, irritated and unhappy. On many occasions the affected groups always believe the newspapers that name tagged them were doing it to discredit them and promote others, therefore further widening the differences and level of the hostility.

CONCLUSION

In view of this study's findings therefore, the following recommendation is imperative: that the Nigerian government must also shed its insensitivity and confront the problem with sincerity and purpose. In fact, issues that are so loudly echoed by the numerous ethnic groups in the country should be subjected to dialogue and conference of ethnic nationalities; since it appears that the phenomenon of ethnic group militias will persist for a long time. There is an urgent need for constant monitoring, dialogue and informed public policy to minimize its negative impact on the country' budding democracy; in view of the this study's discovery that newspaper frames prompt ethnic leaders' conflict behavior, it is important that understanding of information flows in a conflict prone society like Nigeria is vital to conflict prevention and early warning. The government should be concerned about how and what people receive as news on ethno-political issues as well as objectives of newspapers being established. Echoing the importance of media monitoring as a way of preventing inciting news from the media, Setianto (2015) counselled that

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In order to be able to cope with this complex matter, any media regulation should remain open to current changes in both the sociocultural and technological environments. In order to be able to cope with this complicated matter, any media regulation should remain open to current changes in both the sociocultural and technological environments. Therefore, should all the findings and recommendations of this study consider for implementation, Nigeria will be listed among the countries that live in peace, even with ethnic diversities, such, the great potential for unfailing development. Meanwhile, in view of the emerging evidences and the need to verify the claims of the ethnic group leaders, it becomes obvious for a content analysis of the newspapers that have links one way or the order to regional and ethnic issues affairs. This will as well be in line with the two concepts of framing; the media frames and the audience frames (addressed by this study) which Scheufele (1999) cited in Colistra (2012) said needed to be considered schemes for both how media present news as well as how the audience comprehend and apply news. In other words, how the newspaper presents news of ethnic issues should be a direction for future research.

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