



## MEDIA FRAMES OF THE OPERATION OF JTF AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR CIVILIAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM IN NORTH-EAST, NIGERIA

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### Cite this article:

Don C. A., Nnanyelugo O., Innocent P. I., Udochukwu E. N. (2024), Media Frames of the Operation of JTF and the Implications for Civilian Involvement in the Fight Against Terrorism in North-East, Nigeria. Journal of Advanced Research and Multidisciplinary Studies 4(2), 31-47. DOI: 10.52589/JARMS-HVDL6DSH

### Manuscript History

Received: 22 Jan 2024

Accepted: 8 Mar 2024

Published: 3 Apr 2024

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**ABSTRACT:** *This research, which examined newspaper framing of the operations of Civilian JTF in combating terrorism in North-East Nigeria between January 1, 2017 and December 31, 2019, was aimed at filling the gap in existing literature on newspaper framing of civilian efforts in combating terrorism in Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to find out the dominant frames and sources of news frames used in reporting civilian JTF's involvement in fighting terrorism as well as the interpretations that media frames gave on the issue. Using framing theory, the work undertook a content analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (involving textual analysis) of four national newspapers: Vanguard, Punch, Daily Trust and Leadership. These newspapers were chosen because they have national spread and are regularly published over a period of time. Using simple random sampling, the study sampled a total of 432 issues of the selected newspapers and found that the reports from the selected newspapers on the involvement and operations of civilian JTF in combating terrorism in Nigeria were frequent. Out of the 432 issues of the selected newspapers, 309 (71.5%) issues were on the topic under study. It also found that the newspapers did not give prominence to the issue under investigation as the majority (68.2%) of the news items were hidden in inside pages. In addition, it was also found that the newspaper emphasized the military/government frame. Findings from the textual analysis revealed that the sampled newspapers all gave different manners of approach in their interpretation of the involvement of the Civilian JTF in the fight against terrorism, which resulted in emerging thematic frames such as: Victory frame, Fear frame, Relief frame and Strategy frame. Therefore, the work recommended that Nigerian newspapers should not only increase their reportage of governments/civilian efforts at combating terrorism but also place news items on terrorism prominently. It equally suggested that the press should improve their investigative reporting so as to help the government and civilian efforts in combating terrorism.*

**KEYWORDS:** Media frames, JTF Operation, Terrorism, North-East Nigeria, Civilians.



## INTRODUCTION

The increasing cases of terrorist attacks have raised serious security concerns regarding the socio-economic impact of terror on the society. This is particularly worrying because security is an essential requirement for doing business in a globally networked economy and for achieving organizational goals and mission (Ade, 2011). Nigeria has suffered severe deadly attacks by Boko Haram. For example, in 2018, Boko Haram and Fulani Militia were ranked among the first four deadliest terror groups around the globe which were responsible for over 59% deaths in 2016, 47% deaths in 2017 and 2018, and a global, economic decline and setback of 7% from 2015 to 2019 with a net worth of over 84 billion US dollars. Note that this calculation does not include the cost associated with countering terrorism (Global Terrorism Index, 2018).

In addition to the loss of lives and properties, terrorism has affected the local economy by dislodging existing businesses as well as discouraging potential investors. This is because it would be difficult, if not impossible, for investors to engage in business activities in areas that are perceived to be volatile. This makes the security threat from Boko Haram, ISWAP, and Fulani militias of great concern, not only to government and security personnel but also to civilians. Since the Boko Haram uprising in 2009, the Nigerian government has employed various strategies as counter-terrorism measures to stem the atrocities of the group. These strategies include amnesty negotiations, implementation of emergency law in the northeast, increase in security spending to the deployment of military force. In the midst of these security measures, the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) emerged in 2013, first as a community effort, and later as a joint effort with the security forces to help fight Boko Haram. It is such concern that led to the emergence of the civilian Joint Task Force (JTF).

The CJTF was formed in order to add more combatants in the already protracted war against terrorism. This decision to create and engage a civilian body in the fight was partly necessitated by the need for locals to lead the task force through very dangerous terrains of the affected areas. Initially, civilian members of the task force were not given sophisticated arms even while they were mobilized in the fight. They were only armed with their personal dane guns with which they hunted game. By 2018 and partly 2019 the civilian members of the task force were subjected to some military training, after which they were armed with sophisticated assault rifles (Punch, 2018). Issuance of modern rifles boosted not just the morale but also the offensive and defensive capacity of the civilian members of the taskforce.

The civilian members of the task force were equally useful in dictating planned ambush attacks. One of the reasons that terrorism attracts a lot of newspaper attention in the contemporary world is that terrorism has a corrosive and destructive effect on nations and their people. Terrorism has the capacity to pull down a government; it can lead to massive destruction of lives and properties; terrorism and its challenges can cause the economy to crumble. Any effort to either check or eliminate terrorism challenges becomes a great interest to the newspaper consumers because the public hardly get information directly from the frontline of conflicts. They rely on newspapers to guide them to have a proper understanding of terrorism.

Framing in the media means the manner the media define and construct any piece of communicated information. All communication arts are framed but what is of paramount importance is the pattern by which they are framed. Media framing of terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria has a corresponding effect on the status given to them. Framing is central



to media practice and thus, unavoidable. The most important consideration in framing is not the number of stories that the media carry about an issue but how the stories are reported.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Frames in media are key units in the study of direction and interpretation of news. When an issue is reported in the media, it gives credibility and credence to such issue and moves such issue from media agenda to public agenda (Nwabueze & Edegoh, 2010). Framing therefore affects how terrorist activities are reported, as the public lacks ample awareness of the operations of these terrorist groups and they rely heavily on the media for information; thus, media framing influences their perception of these operations. As a result, the media increase or reduce the eminence of the operations, which permits the public to exercise judgments on such operations.

As part of the solutions to end insurgency in North East Nigeria, young civilians have volunteered to join in the fight. They are commonly called the Civilian Joint Task Force (JTF). Although these civilians do not have military training, they have sustained their contributions in the fight against Boko Haram in North East Nigeria. Media framing of the operations of these civilian JTF will give the public a sense of recognition of the efforts put in to end the insurgency.

However, the manner in which the media frame their contribution is uncertain. This is important because media framing of Civilian Joint Task Force activities could have a corresponding impact as to whether its members should be supported in terms of training and logistics so as to make them more effective in the fight against insurgency.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study was to ascertain media framing of the involvement of civilian JTF in the fight against insurgency. The specific objectives were to:

- i. examine the dominant frames on the use of civilian JTF in the fight against terrorism.
- ii. ascertain how the media frame the contribution of Civilian JTF in the fight against terrorism.
- iii. determine the interpretations that media frames gave to the involvement of civilian JTF in the fight against terrorism in North East Nigeria.

### **Research Hypothesis**

**Ho:** There is no significant relationship between media organization and framing of the use of the Civilian Joint Task Force in the fight against terrorism.



## Framing and Terrorism

As is established by the agenda setting proposition, media are not only the purveyor of information, but are also the molder of public opinion (Baran & Davis, 2004). The convention of news gathering and reporting entails selection and giving salience to some aspect of our social reality; therefore, journalists have great power in influencing peoples' perception or understanding of social realities. To this end, the media does not only tell us what we think about, but also how to think about them.

Incidentally, "terrorism is the media's stepchild, a stepchild which the media, unfortunately, can neither ignore nor deny" (Miller 1982, p.1). So as the terrorists serve as the theatre for news media, so also the news media indirectly facilitate the achievement of terrorists' goal or penchant for publicity. In other words, "terrorists aimed at achieving maximum coverage and publicity by selecting soft targets and engaging in symbolic action that is usually dramatic" (Tunman, 2003, p.135), and which serves media with veritable events that could be reported. In this way, terrorists' acts are not an end in themselves, but a means to an end of gaining publicity and notoriety through media reports. This is to say that terrorists' acts are a part of a larger process of communicating a message and generating a response (Tunman, 2003). Thus, terrorist acts are reified in the presence of media who cover, and thus publicize them. It is unfortunate therefore that terrorist acts possess elements sympathetic with news values, such as drama, visuals, sound bites, relevance, and general newsworthiness. So, "in the contemporary era, terrorist groups display familiarity with news values and frequently are able to exploit media coverage to further their agendas" (Papacharissi & Maria Oliveira, 2008, p.5).

Thus, the way the media reports terrorists and their acts has the tendency to profoundly influence how people think and engage in discourse about terrorism. Invariably, in the narrative way media choose to give us information about terrorism and their acts, they influence our attitudes, our cognitive and effective feelings towards terrorists or terrorism. This they do through the patterns in which they frame their news on terrorists or terrorism and in the way they label terrorists. This is why Tunman again notes that "media prime our discourses and preconceptions of and about terrorism by their symbolic and narratives, their interpretations and depiction of terrorism" (Tunman, 2003, p.35).

## Frames Used in Reporting Terrorism

In framing research, there is no agreement on frame types to be used in discussing a particular topic. Over the years, frames have been developed and used relative to user-researchers, the topic and the environment. Okoro and Odoemelam (2013) agreed that the type of frames examined in a media content analysis is determined by the nature of the subject being investigated. Ndinojuo, Ihejirika and Okon (2019) also confirmed that there is no unitary classification of frames; however, what determines framing patterns for each study depends on research objectives. Therefore, the essential consideration in frame selection is the purpose of the research endeavour.

In a study, "Television webcast framing of the Nigerian government's response to Boko Haram insurgency in North-East Nigeria," Chioma and Ojomo (2015) used conflict frame, human interest frame, economic consequence frame, critical and distance frames. In another study, Ndinojuo *et al.* (2019) developed sixteen frames in their study of "prevalent news frames in news reports about military operations against Boko Haram frame, cooperation frame, rescue



frame, mobilization frame, encouragement frame, liberation frame, negotiation frame, clarification frame, loss frame, hopelessness frame, tribalism frame, arrest/capture/death of military frame and objective frame. To analyse the government's response to Boko Haram insurgency, Okoro and Odoemelam (2013) adopted the following frames: response frame, political frame, economic frame, religious frame, and ethnic frames. Similarly, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), Iyengar (1994) and De Vreese (2005) developed the following frames: powerlessness frame attribution of responsibility frame, labeling frame, human interest frame and conspiracy frame. These frames were not tailor-made for analyzing security challenges in countries. Researchers develop frames to satisfy research needs.

### **Factors Affecting Newspaper Framing of Terrorism**

According to Griffiths (2010), editors and reporters are faced with a number of considerations when selecting stories to publish. These include professional values, allegiance to the truth, journalistic independence, political system, social responsibility, professional competence, etc. Usually, journalists place before themselves the need to be socially responsible, retain their audience, attract advertising, and make profits and the overall need to build a dependable and self-sustaining enterprise. For a media outlet to survive, the connection between revenue and journalism should be of primary consideration although the two operate in parallel lines.

It is important to state that the effectiveness of the newspaper as an anti-insecurity arsenal relies on the nature of the socio-political system. This is because the socio-political culture of a state determines the extent of freedom granted to newspapers by the government, professional competence of journalists, availability of sound financial base, competition, credibility of media outfits, etc. Professional drive becomes stronger when journalists are aware that they can do their job without fear of intimidation and legal jam lock. Nwachukwu (1999) argued that there exists a symbiotic relationship between the philosophical and political ideologies of a nation and freedom of speech and of the media. Therefore, the capacity of the newspaper to perform the watchdog function is relative to the environment because the form of frame dictates what constitutes national interests and how it is protected. For example, there is a wide gap between the idea of press freedom in the United States of America or Russia and DR Congo. Even within the same country, the extent to which newspapers play their roles depend on the political system and the character of the political office holders.

### **Terrorism and Civilian Joint Task Force**

Ezeah and Emmanuel (2016); Nwagboso (2018); and Ngige, Badekale and Hamman (2016) explained that there are different accounts as to the origin of Boko Haram as a terrorist organization. Originally, Boko Haram means people committed to the propagation of the prophet's teachings and Jihad (Jama'atuahlisSunnaLidda'awatiwal-Jihad). The terrorist group was formed in Nigeria in 2002 by Utaz Mohammed Yusuf. 'Boko' was interpreted as western education while 'Haram' means forbidden. The group gradually expanded to other parts of the North East.

Boko Haram became a serious threat to Nigeria following the killing of its leader, Mohammed Yusuf, along with many of his followers by security forces in 2009. This triggered reprisal attacks against Nigerians. Although the number of people killed is not clear, it is estimated that over 10,000 Nigerians have been killed in these attacks. The attacks include



suicide bombings, shoot and run gunmen, coordinated attacks on military targets, abduction of school children and women, among others (Pearson, 2014). Akanji (2015) declared that the states mostly affected by the activities of Boko Haram were Yobe, Borno, Gombe, Adamawa, and Bauchi; others are Kaduna, Kano and Abuja. It is estimated that about 5,000 people lost their lives between 2009 and 2014. In 2014 alone, the figure of deaths is put at about 3,750 civilians. Millions of Nigerians were also displaced from their ancestral homes. It is also estimated that over 500 women and girls were kidnapped between 2009 and 2014. In April 2014, over two hundred secondary school girls were abducted by the sect; this led to international and national outrage from world leaders.

However, the intentions of this group are unclear to many Nigerians because its attacks are not limited to non-Muslims. The group assaults Muslims, Christians, politicians, public office leaders, traditional rulers, churches, public places, security agencies, individuals, etc. (Anyadike, 2013). Also, the group is said to have an anti-western agenda; it holds Western education responsible for the decay and immorality in public life in Nigeria (Pearson, 2014).

### **Civilian Military Relations**

Civil military relations is an expression that explains the extent of relationship between civil authorities, civilians and the military arm of a state. It is a measure of the extent to which the military takes responsibilities from the civil authority of a liberal democratic state or the extent to which the military government is responsive to the yearnings of the civilian masses. It is a measure of loyalty of the military arm of government to the civil administration of the state. But given that the military constitute governments at some points in human history, civil military relations can imply the military governments' relationship with the non-military populace.

Civil military relations have been a factor of contemporary debate in Africa. Its most debated aspects derive from the recent transition from military to democratic governance which is assumed to give rise to peculiar situations and issues that require methodical studies for proper understanding. To better understand this phenomenon, theoretical approaches are deployed for detailed and explanatory purposes.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The framing theory and social judgment theory were used as the framework for this study.

### **Framing Theory**

Framing theory was propounded by Erving Goffman in 1974 in his book *Framing analysis*. Framing is used here to explain how the mass media promote a particular definition of an issue through selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration (Scheufele & Iyengar, 2010).

Previous research has provided sufficient evidence that mass media have the power to select and "pack" the events and, thus, to influence the way audiences perceive the surrounding reality. Framing is one of the media effects theories largely used to analyze how the mass-media filters information and, thus, influences the public's reactions to a whole range of external stimuli (De Vreese, 2007). Azlan (2012) analysed how public attitudes are shaped as



a result of media framing of a subject. He noted further that there are two factors that facilitate the adoption of frames: “the accessibility of an issue, and the correlation between a subject and the audience’s pre-existing opinions” (Azlan, 2012, p. 320). In other words, framing effects are not independent. On the other hand, Chucks and De Vreese (2006) established that attitudes and knowledge that exist before media exposure play an important role in determining the framing effects. Also, Auerbach and Bloch-Elkon (2005) found correlations between low levels of political information, on one hand, and the predisposition to adopt frames, on the other hand. Interestingly, Adair (2007) showed that, in general, the public is more affected by negative frames than by the positive ones.

Similarly, Tankard *et al.* (1991), cited in Weaver (2007, p.143), defined framing as “the central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests the issues is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration.” Entman, Matthes and Pellicano (2009) defined it as “selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and constructing messages that highlight connections among them in a way that promotes a particular interpretation.” It is the selection of an aspect of fact or argument over another. It is to choose a part of perceived reality and report it as prominent at the neglect of other parts. This is borne out of the fact that there are not just sides to a news story but many sides to it. Summarily, framing is to select and to include a particular aspect of an event, highlight that aspect and exclude others. Therefore, framing theory is important because it provides a clear identification of patterns of presentation of news stories in order to influence the way the audience perceive and interpret the story. The media most times pigeon-holes the audience by determining the angle of news story to highlight, thereby making that particular angle salient. They then narrow down the views and context of the subject by emphasizing a particular aspect of the news, thereby forcing the audience to perceive that aspect as important; journalists have to choose from a mass of events and further decide which of the events to focus on.

Frames are often reflected in the presence or absence of certain key-words, stock phrases, and stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments. The receiver’s pattern of thinking, perspective and conclusion about an issue may or may not be influenced by the frames in the text and the framing intention of the communicator. The culture which is the norms and value frames of a social group affects the processing, interpretation and understanding of issues within the environment. Therefore, frames are situated in the source and the receiver, text and culture. In the words of Hires (2012, p.11)” These frames represent the complex interactions between media, communicators, society, and the receivers and interpreters of information.”

Framing theory is relevant to this research because the manner of presentation of news reflected in the linguistics devices used by journalists in writing and reporting news stories about government efforts at combating terrorism in Nigeria are the frames that govern the interpretation and possible understanding of the news. It is a complex process where the interface between journalists and news sources dictates the news items journalists portray as important and newsworthy, and the way they are presented in news reportage influence what and how the news consumers perceive them.

Therefore, media emphasis and selections of news frames on the activities of the Civilian JTF in the fight against terrorism could influence the perceptions and opinion of the residents’ and citizens of Nigeria. This is because the media have the potential of selecting and presenting news frames which can attract her audience.



## Social Judgment Theory

Social judgment theory was propounded by Muzafer Sherif, Carolyn Sherif and Carl Hovland in 1965. The theory explains how individuals judge media messages they receive. It predicts that individuals accept or reject specific attitudes and messages. The social judgment theory proposes the idea that persuasion or attitude change is a two-step process. The first step involves individuals hearing or reading a message and immediately evaluating where the message falls within their own position. The second step involves individuals adjusting their particular attitude either towards or away from the message they heard.

Theory reports that a moderate difference between the message and an individual position results in a larger attitude change than that caused by either a small or large difference. The social judgment theory states that you have a statement or message and you accept it or reject it based on your cognitive man. You accept or reject a message based on your own ego involvement and if it falls within your little latitude of acceptance. Individuals have three zones in which they accept or reject specific messages or attitudes. Muzafer describes the three zones as: latitude of acceptance, latitude of rejection and latitude of non-commitment.

Thus, social judgment theory is unavoidably part of human communication, cognitive process and message evaluation. We all bring our own judgments to our communications. In relation to this study, we focused on the individual judgment on media frames on JTF operations and the implications of the involvement of civilian JTF in the fight against terrorism in North-East Nigeria.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a combination of content analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (i.e., Textual Analysis) to examine how newspapers frame the involvement of civilian JTF in the fight against insurgency. The population of this study involved all the national newspapers in Nigeria. The International Media Newspapers (2016) revealed that there are a total of 28 national dailies in Nigeria. The target population of this study is made up of four newspapers. They are *Vanguard*, *Punch*, *Daily Trust* and *Leadership* newspapers. *Vanguard* and *Punch* newspapers were selected based on the 2016 newspapers web ranking which ranked these newspapers as the top two in Nigeria, while *Daily Trust* and *Leadership* newspapers were selected considering their reach and coverage amongst the northern states in Nigeria. The duration for the study was three years (2017–2019). Therefore, the population of the study is 4,380 being the total number of the entire issues of the four newspapers under study for three years. The sample size for the study is 432. To arrive at this sample size, the researcher used a multi-stage sampling technique to sample issues of the newspapers selected for the study. The first stage includes the sampling of four newspapers from a list of widely circulated newspapers in Nigeria using simple random sampling technique.

This gave a total of six issues per month for each of the newspapers and a total of 36 issues per year for each newspaper. This meant a total of 108 issues were sampled per a newspaper for the three years and this finally gave a sample size of 432 for all the newspapers. The unit of analysis includes news stories, features, editorials, and letters to the editor, columns, comments, advertorials, cartoons and photographs.



**Table 1: Population of Newspapers for the Study**

Newspaper	2017	2018	2019	Total
Vanguard	365	365	365	1095
Punch	365	365	365	1095
Daily Trust	365	365	365	1095
Leadership	365	365	365	1095
Grand Total	-	-	-	4380

## RESULTS

**Research Question One: What is the dominant frame used in reporting the involvement of Civilian JTF in the fight against terrorism in North-East Nigeria?**

**Table 2: Distribution of Data Showing the Dominant Frame Used in Reporting the Operations of Civilian JTF in Combating Terrorism in North East Nigeria**

Unit of Analysis	Vanguard	Punch	Daily Trust	Leadership	Total	Percentage
Government/ Military frame	51	49	46	60	206	66.6%
Improved security funding frame	8	6	5	9	28	9.1%
Kidnapping/ Abduction frame	6	7	4	5	22	7.2%
Payment of Ransom frame	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Violation of Human Right Frame	4	6	5	4	19	6.1%
Involvement of civilian JTF frame	10	8	5	11	34	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>79 (26%)</b>	<b>76 (25%)</b>	<b>65 (21%)</b>	<b>89 (28%)</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>100</b>

From the table above, the finding shows that the dominant frame used in report in the operation of the civilian JTF in combating terrorism in Nigerian newspapers was Government/Military frame with 206 (representing 66.6%), followed by the frame of the involvement of civilian JTF in combating terrorism with 34 frames (representing 11%), Improved security funding frame with 28 (representing 9.1%), Kidnapping/Abducting frame with 22 (representing 7.2%), Violation of Human Right frame with 19 (representing 6.1%), while payment of ransom frame had no frame in the four Nigerian newspapers under study from January 2017 to December 2019.

The results above show that the government/military frame ranked highest as the dominant frame that emerged in the study. The implication of this is that news reports framed around the government of the day and the military apparatus tend to attract more readership as earlier mentioned because people will want to know what threatens the government of their



country and, as a matter of concern, they will want to follow up on the stories in order to make informed decisions. This is what the newspaper wants to achieve because it will boost sales and in the long run increase turn over, which is an economic advantage to the newspapers.

### **Research Question Two: What is the media framing of the contribution of civilian JTF in the fight against terrorism?**

**Table 3: Distribution of Data Showing Media Frames on the Contributions of Civilian JTF**

Newspapers	Significant contribution		Negative contribution		Non contribution	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Vanguard	58	18.7	10	3.2	13	4.2
Punch	33	10.6	12	3.8	14	4.5
Daily Trust	52	16.9	19	6.1	16	5.1
Leadership	51	16.5	11	3.8	20	6.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>62.7</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>20.4</b>

The findings from the above table revealed that most of the stories, 194 (62.7%), reported by the selected newspaper on the involvement or operations of the Civilian JTF in the combating terrorism in North-East Nigeria during the period of the study were positive in direction. Thus, the contributions of the civilian JTF was reported. The negative contributions were also reported with figure 52 (16.9%), while the non-contribution reports of the civilian JTF in the fight against terrorism was 63 (20.4%).

The implication of this result is that there is a general impression in the mind of the readers that the Civilian JTF are making a lasting impact in their fight against terrorism in the country. What this implies is that Nigerians are given hope based on these reports that the end to insurgency is near. The interpretations given to these reports based on public opinion on the issues raised from the reports will further buttress the point suggested from the reports, hence the need to compare the result from this aspect of the study to that of interpretations of media frames on the issues for a better understanding of the implication of the findings to the study.

### **Research Question Three: What interpretations did the media frames give to the involvement of civilian JTF in the fight against terrorism in North East Nigeria?**

**Table 4: Types of Frames Used in the Coverage of the Operations of Civilian JTF in Combating Terrorism in North-East Nigeria**

Unit of Analysis	Vanguard	Punch	Daily Trust	Leadership	Total	Percentage
Episodic frame	69	66	60	74	269	88.3%
Thematic frame	10	10	5	11	36	11.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>79 (26%)</b>	<b>76 (25%)</b>	<b>65 (21%)</b>	<b>85 (28%)</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>100%</b>



From the table above, it was revealed that Nigeria's mainstream newspapers adopted episodic and thematic frames in their reports. However, episodic frame was used more in the reportage of newspaper framing on the use of civilian JTF in combating terrorism in North-East Nigeria with 278 (88.3%) issues, while thematic frame used had 36 (11.7%) issues. From the analysis, it was apparent that the Nigerian press reported issues on specific cases of events. This means that readers of newspapers read more single/individual events, ideas or meaning to the operations of civilian JTF in combating terrorism in North-East Nigeria.

### Test of Hypothesis

**Ho:** There is no significant relationship between media organisation and framing of the use of the Civilian Joint Task Force in the fight against terrorism.

**Table 5: Summary of Linear Regression Analysis of Significant Relationship Between Media Organization and Media Framing**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.2 (tailed)	Decision
1 Regression	.140	1	.140	.104	.748	Accepted
Residual	412.818	307	1.345			
Total	412.958	308				

- a. Predictor: (Constant), media organization
- b. Dependent Variable: Media Framing

The data presented shows the summary of linear regression analysis of no significant relationship between media organization and media framing. The table reveals that the probability value associated with the calculated value of F (.104) for the relationship between the variables is .748. Since the probability value of .748 is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is no significant relationship between media organizations and media framing on the use of civilian joint task forces in the fight against terrorism.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings revealed that the government/military frame dominated other frames used by the selected newspapers in reporting the involvement of civilian JTF in the fight against terrorism in Nigeria. This is evident as 206 (representing 66.6%) were identified in Table 6 of analysis. This finding is in line with the work conducted by Okoro and Odoemelam (2013) entitled, *Print, Media Framing of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: A content Analytical Study of Guardian, Daily Sun, Vanguard and This Day Newspaper*. The findings from the study revealed that the response frame was the dominant used out of the 10 frames used in the study among the selected newspapers, with 57 (26.3%) frequency. This implies that the selected newspapers presented light steps and measures taken by the government/military to win the war against terrorism without giving perspectives and interpretation to the news. This means



that the Nigerian press portrayed the involvement of civilian JTF in the fight against terrorism in a neutral direction. The neutral direction of issues reported by the selected newspaper implies that the newspapers were merely reporting the government's action in straight news format without any form of investigation. More also, the neutrality of the selected newspapers on terrorism issues questions the independence of the media in Nigeria. The Nigerian government has been accused of controlling and suppressing the media using obnoxious laws and policies. The media also have been fingered of romancing the government to gain one favour or the other, and this goes against media ethics.

The above finding corroborates the result of the hypothesis which shows that there is no significant relationship between media organisations and media framing on the use of Civilian JTF to fight against terrorism in North-East Nigeria. It is a clear fact that the dominant media frame found in the study is traced to Military/Government sources. They have no direct link with the media organisations themselves, hence the finding from the hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between media organisations and media framing of the issue under investigation.

Research has shown that people and situations make news and these news stories sources tend to determine to a large extent the direction of the frame which the stories will have. These framing patterns tend to dominate other frames on a particular issue if much of what people know about the issue comes from that particular source that dominates the general source of the entire news stories.

The findings further revealed and established in clear terms that civilian JTF are involved in the joint military operations in the fight against terrorism and, as such, was reported by four selected newspapers under review. This is in line with the data presented, that most of the stories, totaling about 194 (representing 62.7%), reported by the selected newspaper, identified the involvement of civilian JTF in the operations to combat terrorism in North-East Nigeria. Thus, the contributions of the civilian JTF were reported. However, negative contributions and non-contribution reports of the involvement of civilian JTF were also identified and revealed 52 reports (representing 16.9%) and non-contribution reports of civilian JTF in the fight against terrorism was 63 reports (representing 20.4%).

This reinforces the earlier research findings (Powell, 2018) which show that the media organization selects which news to include in their table of frames for presentation which can attract the public to the lens of media communication. These could include military, para-military and civilian alike. While it is commendable that the mass media have adopted different kinds of frame in reporting the operations of Civilian Joint Task Force related issues, the result of the finding still showed that the majority of the activities of civilian JTF were reported as straight news without interpretative and conversational approaches that can encourage proper or broader assimilation of information by the audience or residents. Meanwhile there was an observation in the relationship effect between the positions of media frames on the operations of civilian JTF in the fight against terrorism, as a result of the exposure of the audience to different frames concerning how the JTF operates in order to contend terror activities. Thus, the observed relationship may be explained by the perceived random character of terrorist attacks, which implies low ability to control the severe consequences and hence leads to judgments of greater personal fear or risk. This findings supports the results of framing effect studies carried out on news consumer behavior by (Vreese, 2006) and states that media



messages are constructed in a process of translating information for the purpose of public consumption and reactions.

The study found that Nigerian newspapers framed the involvement of civilian JTF in the fight against terrorism in North-East Nigeria episodically rather than thematically by paying more attention to specific incidents of terrorism. The Nigerian press used more of episodic frames in the reportage of newspaper framing of the use of civilian JTF in combating terrorism with 273 (representing 88.3%) reports while thematic frames was 36 (11.7%) reports. The implication is that each act of terrorism is treated as an isolated case thereby reducing the impact on the society. This implies also that there was no follow-up. Treating terrorism as if Boko Haram, ISWAP, Fulani Militia, etc were more weighty problems than the involvement of civilian JTF is like a half-hearted diagnosis of serious ailment. The reason is because terrorism challenges are intertwined. For instance, if a particular terrorism threat like an attempt to invade a community in Borno is left unchecked and unreported, it can breed other forms of terrorism like kidnapping or killings by terrorists.

Findings from the Textual Analysis (i.e., Critical Discourse Analysis) revealed that there were some emerging frames (i.e., thematic frames) from the interpretation of the text within the context of the study based on the headline and lead of most of the stories on the involvement of the Civilian JTF in the fight against terrorism in North East Nigeria. The following emerging frames were found in the textual analysis of the headlines and leads of most of the stories sampled in the study:

- i. Victory frame
- ii. Fear frame
- iii. Relief frame
- iv. Strategy frame

The implication of the findings from the Textual Analysis is that it corroborates the findings on the dominant media frame used by the sampled newspapers where government/military frames were found to be the dominant media frame used to report the involvement of the Civilian JTF in their fight against terrorism in Nigeria. This agreement comes with a little slant in the approach given to it by the newspapers. The general impression the reports had on the mind of readers on the involvement of the Civilian JTF in the fight against terrorism in North East Nigeria is that they are making significant contributions in their fight against insurgency and that most of those attacks affect government agencies and military apparatus, while these various newspapers gave a different approach in their reportage.

The study found that most reports from *Leadership Newspaper* centered on areas where the Civilian JTF killed or destroyed Boko Haram members, which informed the Victory frame. Also, most reports from *Punch Newspaper* focused on areas where Boko Haram members killed, injured and destroyed lives and properties, which informed the Fear frame. The *Vanguard Newspaper* on its own part focused most of its reports on areas where governments are making efforts at either hiring more hands to fight insurgency or encouraging the Civilian JTF by increasing their allowances so as to encourage them in their operations. Lastly, *Daily Trust Newspaper* focused most of its reports on new strategies adopted by the government to fortify the fight against insurgency in the study area. The implication of these findings is that



readers tend to have the impression that the editorial policy of these newspapers are affected by ownership interest as well as geographical bias in their reportage.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Most of the selected newspapers did not treat the use of civilian JTF handling of terrorism prominently. Many of the news stories were tucked in the inside pages, neglecting the front pages which would have highlighted the civilian JTF efforts and encouraged readers to read the news reports. Also, the space allocated to insecurity news in the selected newspaper was very small as majority of the issues reported were in medium and short stories. The study revealed that the dominant frame used by the selected newspapers was the government/military frame. The conclusion drawn from the textual analysis is that while newspapers approach issues of public interest with the interest of the public in mind, most times, their economic interest supersedes such interest. This study concluded that although Nigerian newspapers framed the involvement of civilians to combat terrorism frequently, the reports lacked depth and were lopsided in their approach to the issues based on textual analysis, which gave readers a different impression on what each of the newspapers stand for or what they tend to promote in their reportage. The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:

- i. Nigerian newspapers should sustain their reportage of government and civilian activities aimed at checking terrorism challenges. This is because the public rely mainly on the newspapers to keep them informed of the day-to-day happenings, especially of dangers, violence and general insecurity in the society.
- ii. Nigerian newspapers should give prominence to terrorism and security-related issues. Placing government responses to terrorism inside pages makes them secondary as many readers bother more about headlines and front page news. Therefore, the public may not read the efforts of the civilian Joint Task Force at combating terrorism.
- iii. Nigerian newspapers should give other perspectives when reporting news on government response on terrorism. Nigerian newspapers should uphold the principle of media independence by not allowing the government to cage and make them mouthpieces of the government. They should also not allow personal, political or economic interest to override the truth about government efforts to stem terrorism.
- iv. The Nigerian government should allow the press access to theatres of terrorism and extremism. Journalists can be embedded with the military JTF or allowed censored access to theatres of war. When journalists have improved first-hand access to what the government is doing to reduce terrorism challenges, their reports will have more credibility.



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