

AN ASSESSMENT OF NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF KIDNAPPING IN NIGERIA

(A Study of Punch and Guardian Newspaper)

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**A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS
COMMUNICATION, SCHOOL OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION
TECHNOLOGY, AUCHI POLYTECHNIC,
AUCHI, EDO STATE**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA (HND) IN MASS COMMUNICATION**

NOVEMBER, 2022

Declaration

I hereby declare that this project entitled **An Assessment of Newspaper Coverage of Kidnapping in Nigeria (A Study of Punch and the Guardian Newspapers)** was written by me and that it is the record of my own research. To the best of my knowledge it has not been presented in any previous application for an academic award. All sources of information have been acknowledged using references.

Osigah Juliet Rabbi

Date

Approval

This project is approved based on the student's declaration and its compliance with the requirements of the Department of Mass Communication, Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Higher National Diploma (HND) in Mass Communication.

Mr. Ekhorogue Sonny
(Project Supervisor)

Date

Mr. Joseph Ikerodah
(Ag. Head of Department)

Date

Dedication

I dedicated this project to God Almighty for seeming me thought. Also to my better half (Sister) Miss Glory U. Osigah for her hard work and effort.

Acknowledgments

I give special thanks to God Almighty who show me mercy, blessing upon blessings, favour upon favours, the great Jehovah who have show me grace and looked beyond me and grant me amnesty. For his infinite mercy, protection and favour throughout my course of study in Auchi Polytechnic and whose grace has brought me this far.

My profound gratitude goes to my wonderful mother for her moral support, prayers and encouragement. my special thanks goes to my lovely sister Miss Glory U. Osigah, my baby boy Victor Uka, to my wonderful twins Nene and Nena, my fiancé Mr. Innocent Nwishi Joseph, also to my second Mummy, My elder sister Mrs. Favour Bright.

My special thanks to my Cousin brothers and sisters, Abdulahi Ihamate Saluf, Osivue Odama, Monday Odama, Mr. Friday Dasaba, Mrs Queen Thomas, Mr Abdulrauji, Mrs. Afege, Mr. Nurudeen, Mr. Samuel Ayokhai, Mrs Love Ikechukwu, Hassan Umoru, Dada Thomas and Mr. Zekeri Yahaya..

My appreciation goes to my supervisor Mr. Sonny Ekhorugue for his assistance towards the success of this project work.

My special thanks to my school mummy Mrs. Abikwi Florance, to Glorious Baptist Church, to Mr. Isah Abdulazeez. My profound gratitude goes to my friends and lodgemates, Monday Blessing, Okeke Chineye, Mrs. Blessing (Adora), Ugwu Esther Chioma Oshodi Grace, Ekure Thomas, Ogba Faith Henry, Igbokwe Chiamaka, Emmylite, Frash, Nehimaya Ojochunu, Kate, Eugene, Lucky, Eberechi, Mummy Oshuwa and Esther Akugba. God bless you all

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Abstract

This study examined the coverage given to an assessment of Newspaper Coverage of kidnapping in Nigeria newspapers with specific focus on Punch and guardian newspapers. The objectives include: to examine the tone of reportage, the extent of coverage etc. The content analysis method was adopted while the coding sheet was used as instrument of data collection. The study found out that issues of kidnapping was adequately covered in Nigeria media. It was however found out that straight news was majorly used. It was recommended that editorials and other columns articles should be engaged in reporting news on kidnapping.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Kidnapping has become endemic in the Nigerian society. It is fast becoming a lucrative alternative to armed robbery offence. The gravity of kidnapping is so intense that it has virtually affected most persons in our society. The current dimension of kidnapping became alarmed in the Niger Delta region when militants in February 2006 abducted some oil workers, ostensibly to draw global attention to the dire situation in the oil rich Niger Delta region of the country, the victims were mostly foreigners. Since then the social problem of kidnapping has spread like wild-fire in most parts of the country, especially in the south-eastern region. The targets are no longer foreigners alone; practically every Nigerian is now a target. On the hind sight, however, it is observed that the former Governor of Anambra State Dr. D. Ngigi was kidnapped in July 10, 2003 by his fellow political party members who were in opposition with him (Emewu & Anyanwu, 2009). Arguably, therefore, kidnapping is not actually new in the area; but the current lucrative ransom demanding strategy has become a serious social problem for the Government and people of Nigeria.

For instance, in the year 2008 Nigeria was placed sixth on the global kidnap index by an online tourism site. This rating puts the country Nigeria among countries with serious kidnapping problems, behind Philippines, Venezuela, Columbia, Brazil, and Mexico (Ujumadu, 2008; Ekpe, 2009). Such report could serve as an assumption due to lack of accurate statistical data. Also Ekpe, (2009) reported that Nigeria recorded 512 cases of kidnapping and 30 dead persons in kidnappers' den that year as against 353 cases recorded throughout 2008. Similarly, Kyrian 2009 also reported that the former Inspector General of

Police in Nigeria had noted that, kidnappers and hostage takers got \$15 million in ransom (about ₦100 million) between 2006 and 2009. Kidnapping cases in southern Nigeria have been ravaging daily incidents. The safety of persons in Nigeria and their properties cannot be guaranteed. Kidnapping is an offence punishable by the law in Nigeria. Anybody caught involved in the act is expected to face a penalty of 10years imprisonment. Apart from the above observation some States like Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Ebonyi, and Rivers have passed into law a bill termed “Prohibition of Hostage Taking and Related Offences Law”, with death penalty as punishment for offenders(Inyang, 2009; Ekpe, 2009). Meanwhile, bills with capital punishment against kidnapping are awaiting subsequent readings for implementation by the National Assembly. Unfortunately despite all these stringent laws, no reported case of kidnapping has been successfully prosecuted to serve as deterrent to other potential kidnappers. Nigerians and non Nigerians residing in the country are living in fear as regards who will be the next victim, since kidnappers spare no one as far as their motives are achieved. Over the last few years, the wealthy and the income earners have been picked up by kidnappers who only free their victims after payments of ransom. Old people as well as children between the ages of two and five years have been taken hostage.

The incident of kidnapping has affected Nigeria’s image as a nation abroad. It has also affected Nigeria’s attempt to develop a viable tourism industry as visitors are regularly warned by their countries to be wary of coming to Nigeria. Many would-be investors have also stayed away for fears of being kidnapped (Ekpe, 2009). Apart from the above observable evidence, many more problems which are associated with the problem of kidnapping will be unraveled during the course of this research. This study further intends to examine the origin

and proliferation of kidnapping in Nigeria. This is necessary because despite measures meant to curb it, kidnapping still prevails and it is on the increase in recent times.

Asuquo (2009) noted that the term “kidnapping” is difficult to define with precision, because it varies from State to State and jurisdiction to jurisdiction. It is the forcible seizure, taking away and unlawful detention of a person against his/her will. It is a common law offence and the key part is that, it is unwanted act on the part of the victim. It is a restriction of someone else liberty which violates the provision of freedom of movement as enshrined in the constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, where every other law takes its cue from. For this reason, Siegel (1986) sees it as a serious offence. Abraham (2010), defined kidnapping as an act of seizing, taking away and keeping a person in custody either by force or fraud. However, it includes snatching and seizing of a person in order to collect a ransom in return or settle some scores of disagreement among people.

Walsh and Adrian (1983) also noted that, kidnapping varies from country to country; therefore the term is uncertain and devoid of any straight jacket definition. That is, it depends on who is defining it and from what perspective and for what purpose. They viewed kidnapping as unlawful seizure and detention of a person's by force against their will. Also, as an act of seizing a person and taking him/her to another country for involuntary servitude or the impressments of males into military or naval service by force or fraud. Furthermore, they cited the view of Robertson (1968), who saw kidnapping as a kidnapping of seizing, confirming abducting or carrying away of persons by force or fraud often subject him or her to involuntary servitude in an attempt to demand a ransom or in furtherance of another kidnapping.

Thomas and Nta (2009) defined kidnapping as robbery of the highest rank. According to them, it is an organized and systematic robbery which is not as deadly as armed-robbery, but more profitable than the former. The profitability has encouraged those that indulged in it to carry on with the act although there is a law prohibiting it. In criminal law, kidnapping is defined as taking away of a person by force, threat or deceit with intent to cause him/her to be detained against his or her will (Asuquo, 2009). Whereas Nwaorah (2009) viewed kidnapping as an act of an angry man who wants to take any person of value hostage, and who could be rescued by loved ones. In most cases, victims are often released after payment of ransom. According, to Ogabido (2009) “kidnapping” means to abduct, capture, carry off, remove or steal away a person(s).

The Chambers 21st Century Dictionary (1996) defined kidnapping as the seizing and holding of someone prisoner illegally, usually demanding for a ransom for his/her release. Dode (2007) saw kidnapping as a process of forcefully abducting a person or group of persons perceived to be the reasons behind the injustice suffered by another group. It is “a low-cost, high-yield terror tactics”. This was the initial case in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

The world woke up on the April 15 2014 to the shocking reality of one of the deadliest of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria. Over 230 school girls from the prestigious Government Girls Secondary School Chibok, Borno State in North East Nigeria, were kidnapped in the dead of the night. This abduction, no doubt, sent a strong signal to the international community that the Nigerian state is indeed at war with an Islamic fundamentalist group which started operations in 2002. Ever since this abduction, the entire world has been awash with heart rendering reports emanating from the news media. Unarguably, these reports are

put across to the news audience in different frames and journalistic colourations which ultimately may have a significant impact on the audience.

Media framing of terrorism is as old as terrorism. This explains why social scientists in the last three decades have been investigating the causal relationship between news media and terrorism. According to Spencer (2012, p.1) the relationship between terrorism and the news media is well researched and has been one of the central questions terrorism researchers have struggled with for decades. In fact, it is widely accepted that there is a causal relationship between terrorism and the media as terrorism provides for exciting and violent stories which help sell the news product and the media provide terrorist groups with a means of spreading their evil message and creating fear among the general public. Terrorists and news people share the common assumption that those whose names make the h name on the front page of a national daily or news is a better way of exercising real power (Dowling, 1986, p.45). This explains why the late British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, in an often mentioned quote, called media publicity the “oxygen” of terrorism. In her view, terrorism remains more terrorizing (Muller, Spaaij, and Ruitenberg, 2003).

To further establish the unholy but necessary matrimony between news media and terrorist, Gerbner and Gross (1979, p.368), opined that idea, a cause, or a group its sense of public identity, importance, and relevance. No movement can get going without terrorist, some like the deadly visibility Boko Haram sect. in” Mode Northern Nigeria, seek access to the media b definition(s) of news: timeliness, uniqueness and oddity. Communication experts have come to the conclusion that those who seek media access without bills have a history of properly responding to the requirements of newsworthiness, also known as elements of good news; (Ngwu, Efetobor, Ekwe and Chukwuma, 2012, p.166).

The implication of this is that the causal relationship between media and terrorism works in nexus with the way the media frame an act. The centrality of media frames is captured by Hallahan (1999, p.207) cited in Okoro, and Odoemelam, (2013, p.86). According to them, “In news media, it is tools through which journalists recount a story in a limited amount of space and place an event within its broader context”.

The news media are essentially seen by the kind of frames they bring to public domain. These frames create some sorts of pseudo-environments which when imagined, places pictures in our minds. That is why proponents of the second level of agenda setting hold tenaciously the belief that the media most times tell the public how to think about a subject or an issue. This issue, of course, is seen from the contact lenses of projected media frames. Lippmann (cited in Papacharissi and Oliveira, 2008, p.52) - aver “ environment” people upon rely to experience which and understand events they cannot observe directly and that news frames are important in how these events are reported since they reflect a process of recurring selection and emphasis, according to them are equally relied upon to interpret news items. And how these items are interpreted, determines the kind of pictures that will be placed in our minds. The obvious question is, what kind of frames did the news media use in reporting the abduction of over 230 secondary school girls on April 14 2014 in Chibok, Borno State (Leadership Newspaper, 2014, p.1).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Every society has ways and means of condemning criminal acts. Of course, the law is a major tool used to check criminal activities but it is pertinent to know that the media also do that, although, they act according to the dictates of the law. That is, in reporting a kidnapping kidnapping story, the media have rules of kidnapping reporting formulated based on what the

law provides. The print media, especially newspapers, have been identified as one of the most effective means of communication. This is due to its unique features of reader control, exposure and permanence. Apart from that, it is a reliable channel being used by policy makers, government and organizations to reach their audience in order to achieve their communication objectives. Kidnapping affects all, thus, it demands that it is treated justly and objectively. It would be unethical to try to give legal answers to particular circumstances without a foreknowledge of law and legal issues. Most journalists are aware of a 'Code of Conduct' that guides their profession. Professional ethics demand that journalists, especially those in the kidnapping beat, should be aware of sources of criminal law, what constitutes a kidnapping, why a particular type of conduct is made criminal, and why some forms of harmful activities are not criminal. They should also be knowledgeable about methods by which kidnappings are investigated and prosecuted including an outline of general court procedures. If any law enforcement agency violates this, journalists cry out and seek a redress of the situation.

Despite these facts, most media organizations in Nigeria appear not to follow the principles of kidnapping reporting while some project kidnapping the wrong way. Legal institutions do not adequately create awareness about what a kidnapping is and the punishment to be meted out until the media report such an act or castigate someone who has committed it. It is against this backdrop that this study sought to find out whether or not the print media, in their reportage of kidnapping: (i) adequately apprise the public of legal actions instituted against such kidnapping; (ii) allow favouritism in their reportage; (iii) take side with legal organizations; (iv) ensure that punishments meted out are commensurate with kidnapping committed.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are as follow:

1. To examine how often media report cases of kidnapping
2. To examine the slant of reported kidnapping stories
3. To examine the nature of media stories on kidnapping?

1.4 Research Questions

1. How often do the media report kidnapping stories?
2. What is the slant or frame of reported kidnapping stories?
3. What is the nature of media stories on kidnapping?

1.5 Scope of the study

The scope of this study is limited to the coverage given to kidnapping by the Punch and Guardian Newspapers between January 2019 and December 2019. That is, it will cover what the newspapers reported about the scourge of kidnapping, how they reported it and the slant of such report.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study exists in many folds. The study upon completion will help to unveil the roles of the print media in kidnapping reportage with specific focus on kidnapping. The study will point out what is expected of the mass media with regards to eliminating the kidnapping of kidnapping.

Similarly, the study will point out the social, economic and psychological impact of kidnapping to the Nigerian society. The recommendations in this light will assist the government in formulating policies that will help tackle the scourge.

Upon the completion, this study will serve reference material for researchers who will

be interested in carrying out studies on similar subject matter. This will mean that it will contribute to the body of literature that already exists on this subject matter.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Review of Relevant Literature

Every academic discourse requires an input from what is already in existence. This is usually in the form of citations, where particular emphasis has been on how relevant this is with what is currently being studied. Therefore, it becomes imperative to say that human knowledge is fundamental framework of the former. In this light, this study beams its light on the following subjects.

- **Causes of Kidnapping**
- **Kidnapping And The Theory Of Structural Functionalism**
- **News Representation And The Social Construction Of Kidnapping**

Causes of Kidnapping

Many reasons are given as probable causes of kidnapping in Nigeria. Inyang (2009) linked the problem of unemployment as one of such reasons why kidnapping in Nigeria is often associated with youth unemployment. He used the widely acknowledged adage, which says that “an idle man is the devil’s workshop” to present the situation of unemployment in Nigeria. He noted that there are uncountable able-bodied men and women in Nigeria roaming the streets in search of non existing job. Out of frustration together with mounting responsibilities to tackle many idle young persons have ventured into criminal activities of which kidnapping are not an exemption. Inyang further acknowledged that, a graduate who is unable to secure a job is psychologically bereft of other means of survival. Such situation the young person could develop a negative attitude towards society and attribute his failure to that society. Furthermore, Inyang (2009) also believed that, the proliferation of arms as a result of

political patronage of miscreant who were dumped after elections may indirectly encourage and enhanced kidnapping. Inyang likened today's kidnapping situation to the scourge of arm robbery in the early eighties where many young able-bodied men who fought during the Nigerian civil war were discharged and sent home with nothing. Meanwhile since the schools they left behind were destroyed and there were no jobs to engage them and keep them busy. Many of them consequently took to armed robbery, since as ex-soldiers they were armed with weapons, having acquired the skills and guns during the war. The story is almost the same today as politicians employ most idle youths as political thugs and later dumped them after elections. Therefore, the youths (thugs) who have been abandoned by their masters after winning elections are now busy kidnapping innocent persons and relatives of those persons they surged to be wealthy. Similarly, just as the oil boom in the 1970's increased the scale of armed robbery dramatically in the country, the stupendous empowerment of political office holders and their cronies have led many who are far away from these juicy government contracts to turn to kidnapping in order to have their share of the "national cake" as their reward.

The issue of "moral decadence" and the "quest to get rich quick" syndrome have been identified as some of the causative factors of kidnapping. Again Inyang (2009) confirmed these in his proposition that in Nigeria, nobody asks questions on how people make their wealth. According to him, a poor person today can shows up with an expensive car tomorrow and nobody dare to question the sudden wealth. Also, people who have donated money to develop their communities are rewarded with chieftaincy titles thereby creating a wrong impression in the minds of Nigerian youths who thereafter take to kidnapping. The inconsistency between economic transparency and accountability in the running of normal

government affairs and the desire to amass wealth among public office holders at different levels of government often also contribute to the leverage by kidnappers. They believe that, when those in government employment loot government treasury openly without fear, they too can as well take the laws into their hands by abducting people for ransom. An argument that easily turns into insignificant when it is considered that businessmen, foreigners and other wealthy people who are very far from government's purse have also fallen victim to this fraudulent acts.

Kidnapping has become endemic in the Nigerian society. It is fast becoming a lucrative alternative to armed robbery offence. The gravity of kidnapping is so intense that it has virtually affected most persons in our society. The current dimension of kidnapping became alarmed in the Niger Delta region when militants in February 2006 abducted some oil workers, ostensibly to draw global attention to the dire situation in the oil rich Niger Delta region of the country, the victims were mostly foreigners. Since then the social problem of kidnapping has spread like wild-fire in most parts of the country, especially in the south-eastern region. The targets are no longer foreigners alone; practically every Nigerian is now a target. On the hind sight, however, it is observed that the former Governor of Anambra State was kidnapped in July 10, 2003 by his fellow political party members who were in opposition with him (Emewu & Anyanwu, 2009). Arguably, therefore, kidnapping is not actually new in the area; but the current lucrative ransom demanding strategy has become a serious social problem for the Government and people of Nigeria.

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To further establish the unholy but necessary matrimony between news media and terrorism, Gerbner and Gross (1979, p.368), opined that idea, a cause, or a group its sense of public identity, importance, and relevance. No movement can get going without terrorism, some like the deadly visibility Boko Haram sect. in” Mode Northern Nigeria, seek access to the media by definition(s) of news: timeliness, uniqueness and oddity. Communication experts have come to the conclusion that those who seek media access without bills have a history of

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Problems with Law Enforcement

It is often noted that police force personnel lack resources to cope with criminal activities. In addition, corruption within the law enforcement agencies sometimes thwarts serious effort in kidnapping prevention. This was the view of the President of the Philippine

Senate, Blas Ople, who observed that 52% of kidnappings in the Philippines involve active and retired police and military men.

Also, many people today who are desperate in economic and social needs are often the ones who commit kidnappings. So where the gap between the rich and the poor is constantly widening and where the possibilities to earn money in an honest way are often difficult to attain kidnapping turns out be a lucrative means to fall back on and to draw attention to what is considered an intolerable situation. Nwaorah (2009) noted that, in a situation where government officials, especially top ranking persons in civil services who are custodian of government resources spend recklessly or loot, it could automatically encourage few of the dissatisfied persons to vent their anger on them and their relatives. Ogabido (2009, p.7) agreed that “the issue of poverty and unemployment of youths as well as social injustice and ‘unfair distribution of the nations resources are potent causes of kidnapping in Nigeria. These factors have caused the youths to engage in kidnapping and criminal activities as a way of getting their share of nation wealth”. He blamed the federal government for lack of equity and fairness in the business of governance as well as lack of responsible leadership that is not complacent or give incentives to people’s yearnings and aspirations.

Dode (2007) observed that this harsh reality has placed the Nigerian youth against the Federal Government and the oil producing companies, hence the incessant rate of kidnapping. Citing Ibeanu (1997), Dode further affirmed that the level of political imbalance in the country leads to marginalization and unfair federalism. The conventional wisdom and official position in Nigeria is that such kidnapping like kidnapping arises out of local dissatisfaction over material compensation, paid by oil companies and government for exploitation right and ecological damage. Inyang (2006) noted that his was the initial intention of the Niger Delta

militants who engaged in abducting expatriate workers of the oil exploring multinational cooperation in Port-Harcourt who were operating from a number of rig sites. Throughout history greed has caused many persons to take part in heinous criminal acts. And perhaps kidnapping is one kidnapping that promotes greed and despair on the human person. For many, it is greed that pushes perpetrators to brutalize and torture a stranger and put his family through a cruel ordeal for weeks, months sometimes years.

Influence of Hard Drug on Kidnapping

Okoli (2009) linked the upsurge of kidnapping in Nigeria to high consumption and trafficking on hard drugs. He used Abia State to illustrate the correlation between kidnapping and hard drug consumption and trafficking. According to him, Abia State on the one hand is admired for its commerce and flourishing entrepreneurs that have contributed significantly to the economy of the country. On the other hand, Abia State has acquired the notoriety as the highest hard drug consuming and trafficking state, East of the Niger. The barons have ensured the ready availability of drugs not only in Abia State but also in the five neighbouring states of Imo, Akwa-Ibom, Rivers, Cross River and Bayelsa. This has led to the upsurge in violent kidnappings such as kidnapping and armed robbery within the states. Cocaine and heroin have become common drugs of abuse with arrest and seizure recorded in most Local Government Areas of the State. Numerous drugs sale joints are springing up everyday where criminal activities are planned, perfected and executed. He further noted that, some streets in Aba such as York and Park have turned into no-go areas for law abiding residents of Aba metropolis as unscrupulous miscreant have turned them into ghettos and haven for their hard drugs operations. A similar observation was made in Uyo metropolis along Etuk and Nkamba Streets.

Kidnapping and the Theory of Structural Functionalism

The structural functionalism theory is associated with the works of Emile Durkheim (1917), Robert K. Merton (1968) and Talcott Parson (1979). The basic assumption of the theory sees the society as a living organism made up of components part, which functions harmoniously for the survival of the whole system. If any parts fails to contribute to identifiably useful function neither does it promote values consensus among members of the society – it will not be passed on from one generation to the next (Schaefer, 2002).

When applying the theory to explain the social problem of kidnapping in Nigeria, and its implication on the socioeconomic development; structural functionalism assumes that, the economy which is part of the social system is not functioning well. This is due to the mismanagement that occurs within the political sector. This dysfunction within the system causes high level of poverty, unemployment, deprivation as well as marginalization. The result is visualized in the high kidnapping rate of which kidnapping is at the fore front. The kidnapping of kidnapping has been identified as profitable and functional to its perpetrators. The lucrative nature of kidnapping makes it very attractive. Kidnapping as observed in some parts of Nigeria, is identified as a functional measure of politicians to fight their opponents. The money collected as ransoms are means to destabilize the opponents and as well force them to back-out of the political race. In the Niger Delta, kidnapping of foreign expatriates has drawn government attention to look into the plight of the region. This is visualized in the post-amnesty program initiated by Yar'adua/Goodluck administration in 2009, which is expected to restore the much needed peace in the region and the country at large so that socio-economic activities could be conducted without obstruction. However the structural functionalism theory is criticized for not being capable of explaining change and also for

addressing the issues of a system as “closed” concept (Charles, Ikoh, Iyamba & Charles, 2005). Despite these criticisms, the theory is justified for its ability to highlight on the functional aspect of kidnapping in our society.

News Representation and the Social Construction of Kidnapping

Understanding news representation and the social construction of news making requires an examination of the conscious and unconscious processes involved in the mass dissemination of symbolic consumer goods. These commodities of news production and the images of social reality that they invoke are inseparable from their cultural histories. Moreover, mediated characterizations of kidnapping and criminal justice, of criminals and social control, projected in news presentations are representations themselves of culturally shared visions accessed through commonly unfolding historical narratives, in which average people and most journalists come to know kidnapping and justice in developed societies. In other words, kidnapping and justice stories produced by news media for mass consumption reflect and reveal much about those societies’ views of themselves, “good” and “bad.” Dekeseredy and Dragewicz, (2011).

In brief, these “kidnapping news” stories are not objective or value-neutral. Regardless of the prominent theoretical orientation to media studies—Durkheimian, Marxian, or feminist—there is agreement that although kidnapping and justice representations are highly selective and unrepresentative of their subject matter, they are viewed as essential for unraveling the relationships between kidnapping, control, justice, and social order because these news stories respectively reproduce moral boundaries, legitimate law and order, and reinforce gender stereotypes—all of which help to reify unequal power relations as well as inequality throughout society. Nevertheless, within and without the news business there are

also all kinds of sources and values that shape the processes of news making in general and news making criminology in particular.

In the process of news kidnapping construction, whatever the distinctions, kidnapping and kidnapping control represents order through constituting an active discourse that “provide people with preferred versions and visions of social order, on the basis of which they take action” (Ericson, Baranek, and Chan, 1991, p.239).

At the end of the news - making day, the mediated construction of kidnapping and justice becomes the socially constructed reality when in reality this is the socially constructed subjective reality.

According to Surette (2007), there are four stages in the social construction of kidnapping and five contemporary kidnapping-and-justice frames that provide fully developed socially constructed templates that allow claims and claims makers to succeed in making their representations of kidnapping and justice stick to the media overload of information. Stage one consists of “the physical world” enveloped by conditions, events, and properties that establish the boundaries or background in which the other stages must frame their interactions. Stage two consists of the “competing social constructions” or differing descriptions of the physical world of kidnapping and justice offered up by various claims makers.

It is at stage three, “media as social construction competition arena” in which Surette (2007: 35, 40) argues that the media play their most powerful role filtering out competing constructions, typically favoring those positions that “are dramatic, sponsored by powerful groups, and are related to pre-established cultural themes” or to the five prevailing kidnapping and-justice frames described by Theodore Sasson in *Kidnapping Talk* (1995): “faulty

system,” “blocked opportunities,” “social breakdown,” “racist system,” and “violent media.” In news making practice, moreover, not all claims and claims makers are equal. For example, the claims and claims makers from law enforcement and criminal justice usually have more influence as both experts on kidnapping and justice and as sources of information for reported kidnapping and kidnapping control stories. In a similar fashion, kidnapping news reporters are more open to those already existing claims and to those claims makers who can connect their interests to those same claims or kidnapping-and-justice news frames.

Sasson (1995, pp.13-17) has identified the causes, policies, and symbols associated with each of the mediated dominant frames or themes of kidnapping and justice. The “faulty system” thematic argues that kidnapping stems from criminal justice leniency and inefficiency. Its policy is to “get tough” and “tighten up.” Symbols have included “handcuffed police” and “revolving door justice.” The “blocked opportunities” thematic argues that kidnapping stems from poverty and inequality. Its policy calls for addressing the “root causes” by creating jobs, community development, and reducing poverty. Symbols have included “dead-end, low paying jobs” and high unemployment rates. The “social breakdown” thematic argues that kidnapping stems from family and community breakdown. Its policy calls for citizen involvement and community efficacy/policing. Symbols include “family values” and “take back the streets.” The “racist system” argues that the problem of kidnapping stems from a criminal justice system that operates in a discriminatory fashion. Its policy calls for greater sensitivity to racial justice and to the empowerment of those groups discriminated against. Symbols include “profiling” and “differential application” of the criminal law.

Finally, the “violent media” thematic argues that kidnapping, particularly violent kidnapping, stems from the amount of extreme violence in the mass media. Its policy calls for more governmental regulation of the production and distribution of violent imagery. Its symbols include “life imitating art” and “copycat kidnappings.”

Stage four represents the emergence of dominant news themes or the “winning social construction” that often drives, if not, determines criminal justice and kidnapping control policies, trumping empirically based or driven policies. According to Surette (2007, p.36), those “social policies supported by the public and the solutions forwarded by the policy makers are tied to the successful construction(s). For kidnapping and justice, the socially constructed reality will define the conditions, trends, and factors accepted as the causes of kidnapping, the behaviors that are seen as criminal, and the criminal justice policies accepted as reasonable and likely to be successful.”

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This research was anchored on the principles of the Agenda-Setting theory. In explaining the Agenda- Setting theory in relation to kidnapping, Breen (2007) posits that the mass media play a role in the formation of public opinion. They are also selective in the messages transmitted. While there are clearly external forces at work in terms of what enters the news, it is abundantly evident that there is much left to the choices of the individual editor or journalist, as well as many influences that act from within media organizations. (White, 1950).

The import of this argument is that among all the criminal activities that occur in the society, the media select and supply kidnapping stories to the public and this form the basis of what the audience thinks about.

The central task confronting the media is to engage the attention of the public and then to activate that public without overwhelming it with information by distinguishing effectively between that which is important and that which is not.

In line with basic assumptions of agenda-setting that media concentration on a few issues and subjects lead the public to perceive those issues as more important than the others, the Cynthia case, just like the Farouk Lawan bribery scandal was glorified or exalted more than all other criminal acts that occurred at that particular time.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) explain that “agenda setting is considerably more than the classical assertion that the news tells us what to think about. The news also tells us how to think about it. Both the selection of objects for attention and the selection of frames for thinking about these objects are powerful.” This refers to the manner in which the media write the kidnapping stories or the angle in which they write from. The clear consequence of agenda setting theory is that it is the framers of the news who wield a vast amount of control over how the public views various events and personalities.

Agenda setting is not simply a function of journalistic choice. Becker (1980: 530) points out that “agenda setting is driven in part by a number of elements including individual desire to be informed, the needs that are met by the mass media, and the ability of the individual consumer to respond to media cues.” Therefore, the mass media reportage of kidnapping meets the information needs of the audience as the audience desire to be informed and the mass media also has to play their role of disseminating information to the public.

In addition, the media in reflecting the status quo (as well as in its capacity to lead, follow, or resist social change) have not only facilitated the targeting of certain offenders, such as junkies, sex offenders, the poor, or immigrants, but they have also omitted or given a

relative “free pass” to other offenders, such as the habitually law violating Fortune 500 corporations, or those Wall Street bankers, insurers and stockbrokers who engaged in derivative ponzi schemes and subprime mortgaging, or private security contractors who have thieved, raped, and killed. The representations of the former are typically portrayed as dangerous offenders who threaten the well being of otherwise lawful societies. The representations of the latter are less frequent and less scrutinized. They are obtainable as anomalies, exceptions, or glitches in the normative order—that is, sometimes “shit happens” in any case, these offenders and their offenses are not to be taken seriously or treated as real kidnapping or with any thought given to the systemic negative consequences for the well being of the rest of society (Surette, 2007).

In essence, the Agenda-Setting theory is significant in this study because the mass media, in reporting kidnapping, fulfils its surveillance and correlation mandate to the society but by the prominence it gives to certain kidnapping stories either through the frequency of reporting, headline display or the position of the story, makes certain kidnapping activities more pronounced than others.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The design is the plan adopted for the tackling or solving of an identified research problem. As noted by Obaze and Onosu (2009), the design is the plan or structure adopted for the purpose of solving an identified research problem.

Based on the above, this study utilized the content analysis method. Obaze and Onosu (2009) posited that content analysis is an objective and systematic analysis or study of the content of any document that are manifest.

3.2 Population of the Study

The populations of this study are all editions of Guardian and Punch Newspapers published between January, 2019 and December, 2019. The population is 730 editions.

3.3 Sample Size

Many a time, an entire population would not be easy to study due to time and resource constraints. The usual approach in this situation would therefore entail taking sample. Considering the fact that the population of the area would be too bogus, sample size of 400 respondents were selected for this research population. A sample of 400 was drawn from the population using the Taro Yamane Sample calculating formula. The formula is:

Where:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N (0.05)^2}$$

Where

n = Sample Size

N = Population

0.05 = allowable error

$$= \frac{730}{1 + 730 \times (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{730}{731 \times 0.025}$$

$$n = \frac{730}{1.83}$$

$$n = \underline{400}$$

3.4 Sampling Procedure

The purposive sampling technique was employed to determine the sample size of the study. According to Ikeagwu (1998, p.189), “the basic assumption behind purposive sampling method is that, with good judgment and appropriate strategy, one can hand– pick the cases to be included in the sample that is satisfactorily in relation to ones needs” Based on this, 200 editions were randomly selected from the two newspapers each.

3.5 Validity of the Instrument

According to Okoro (2001, p.12) “validity refers to the accuracy of an instrument i.e. how well it measures what it is supposed to measure.” In order to establish validity of the instruments the researcher used the expertise of some Mass Communication professionals who reviewed and made very useful imputes that helped to achieve high level of validity for the coding sheet.

3.6 Reliability of Instrument

Ogbazi and Okpala (1994, p.25) posits that “reliability of an instrument or test is the degree to which an instrument is consistent in measuring whatever it purports to measure”. In establishing the reliability of the instrument, the researcher applied the Pre-test technique. The Pre-test technique is a process whereby the researcher administered the constructed

questionnaire to the same sample group more than once with a view of discovering how consistent each element of the group is in the scoring of the instrument at such different times.

The researcher used the coding sheet to conduct a pretest analysis on a smaller sample to ascertain the reliability of the instrument, but was not used in the final analysis of the work.

3.7 Method of Data Collection

The data for this study were collected using two major methods: the primary data collection and the secondary data collection method.

The data for the literature reviewed were collected using the secondary data collection method. That is, journals, newspapers, internet etc. were consulted for the secondary data collection method. The primary data were collected using coding sheet.

Subject Categories

1. Slant of newspaper reports
2. Reaction of newspapers report

Unit of analysis	Code
Jailed	1
Convicted	2
Indicted	3
Acquitted	4
Under Investigation	5
Arrested	6
Killed	7
On trial	8
Escaped /Wanted	9
No action	10
Neutral	11

Biased	12
Not Provided	13
Seek redress	14
Commendatory	15
Not provided	16

3.8. Method of Data Analysis

The descriptive method of data analysis was adopted for this study. This implies that the simple percentage method and statistical tables were used to analyze the data for this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data collected for this study. In doing this, data are presented with statistical tables using the simple percentage method.

A total of 400 issues were content analyzed from both The Punch and The Guardian newspapers. Out of the editions, 400 items relating to kidnapping were reported by the two newspapers.

Research Question 1: How often do the media report kidnapping stories?

Table One: Extent of Coverage

Newspapers	No. of stories (%)
The Punch	150 (37.5%)
The Guardian	250 (62.5%)
Total	400 (100%)

Table one shows that out of the 400 items carried by the Punch and Guardian newspapers, the Punch reported 150 items or 37.5% while the Guardian newspaper reported 250 items or 62.5%. This means that the Guardian newspaper under the period of study gave more attention or reports to kidnapping than the Punch newspaper.

Research Question 2: What is the slant or angle framed around reported kidnapping stories?

Table Two: Overall Media Angle Framed Around Kidnapping Stories

Parameter	Frequency	Percentage
Neutral	72	18
Biased	8	2
Not Provided	320	80
Total	400	100.0

Source: Researcher's fieldwork

From the table above, 72(18%) kidnapping stories were neutral, 8 (2%) were biased while 320 (80%) were not provided.

Research Question 3: To examine the nature of media stories on kidnapping?

Table Three: Journalistic Genre

Parameter	Frequency	Percentage
Straight news	300	75%
Editorial	50	12%
Feature	20	5%
Opinion	10	2.5%
Letter-to-editor	20	5%
Total	400	100.0

Table three shows that straight news was mainly used to report kidnap cases.

This is because 75% of the stories on kidnapping were reported with straight news.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

As far as coverage of kidnapping stories in Nigeria is concerned, the findings in this study point out that the sampled print media (Punch and Guardian) were frequently and vigorously engaged in the reportage of kidnapping stories. For the period and the 400 editions

used, a total of 400 kidnapping stories were reported by the papers .The above discovery equally indicates that the level of awareness created by the print media about kidnapping is high.

Most of the reported kidnapping stories appeared in the inside pages as against fewer that were given front page treatment. This last finding further proves that the media indeed actively report kidnapping stories. It also means that the media are overwhelmed with cases of kidnapping to be reported which explains why most of the kidnapping stories were reported in the inside pages because there were too many kidnapping occurrences while other less common and more important issues were given front page treatment. The implication therefore is that kidnapping is common in the Nigerian society with murder occurring more often having 27.5% out of the total 400 stories covered.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study was undertaken to examine the coverage given to issues of kidnapping by the Nigerian newspapers with specific reference to the Punch and Guardian newspapers. The increasing threat of the menace of kidnapping to the Nigerian society is what spurred this study. It became pertinent to examine if the media through their reports have done enough to tame the scourge of kidnapping that is fast ravaging the image of the Nigerian society.

Against the above background, the content analysis method was employed to examine 400 editions of the Punch and Guardian Newspapers. The coding sheet was used in the collection of data while coders were trained to aid in the collection of the data.

Findings revealed that kidnapping rate in Nigeria is on the high side. The media accordingly give extensive reportage to the scourge of kidnapping.

In terms of editorial bias, a substantial portion of the stories (300/75%) did not go beyond reporting the fact as they were because the items that fell under this category were majorly straight news stories which require that news be reported in a factual and balanced manner without any form of favouritism.

Although, generally, the media were indifferent to actions taken against perpetrators of crime, there is a slight indication that they were not satisfied with these punishments since most stories with nil or indifferent reactions were actually news stories. Since the media were actively involved in reporting crime, they should not just create awareness about crime or be indifferent but act as a conscience of authority to encourage further investigation, educating

their readers, enlightening readers about the goings on in the legal processes thereby stimulating a change from both authorities and citizens.

5.2 Conclusion

The media recurrently and actively report on crime, with murder coming as the mostly reported crime story between January, 2019 and December, 2019. However, most of these crime stories were found in the inside pages because there were too many crime stories fighting for media attention. The most important and controversial ones were consequently placed in the front pages of the papers.

In terms of editorial bias, a substantial portion of the stories (300/75%) did not go beyond reporting the fact as they were because the items that fell under this category were majorly straight news stories which require that news be reported in a factual and balanced manner without any form of favouritism.

Since the media were actively involved in reporting crime, they should not just create awareness about crime or be indifferent but act as a conscience of authority to encourage further investigation, educating their readers, enlightening readers about the goings on in the legal processes thereby stimulating a change from both authorities and citizens.

5.3 Recommendations

1. In view of the fact that the agenda setting theory has bestowed on the media the power to influence people's opinion and invariably their decision, the media should advocate for appropriate punishments meted out to perpetrators of crime and they should conduct proper investigation before reporting.
2. In a case where they cannot single-handedly conduct the needed investigation, they should liaise with other anti-crime agencies in order to ensure that perpetrators of the

crime are not just arrested but are prosecuted and either found guilty or innocent of the charges brought against them.

3. Also, the media should take a firm stand while reporting through editorials, analysis, opinions and feature articles and more of this should be done on crime instead of mere reporting, creating awareness and elevating crimes.

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CODING GUIDE

SUBJECT CATEGORIES	UNIT OF ANALYSIS	CODE
Story position	Full page	1
	Half page	2
	Top half page	3
	Bottom side	4
	Left hand side	5
	Right hand side	6
	Full page	7
TONE OF REPORTAGE	Favourable	8
	Unfavourable	9
	Neutral	10
JOURNALISTIC GENRE	Straight News	11
	Feature	12
	Opinion	13
	Cartoon	14
PROMINENCE	Front Page	15
	Back Page	16
	Inside Front Page	17
	Inside Back Page	18
	Inside Page	19

CODING SHEET

[illegible]