

Framing the Bring Back Our Girls Campaign by Online Newspapers in Nigeria

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Abstract

In this study, attempt was made to determine the framing of Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) campaign by Nigerian online newspapers. Seventy-one editions of Daily Trust, the Punch, Sahara Reporters and Vanguard newspapers from April 2014–October 2014 were content analysed. The study examined how much coverage BBOG campaigns received in the sampled online newspapers, the nature of reporting BBOG campaigns and the dominant sources of stories and themes in the framing of stories on the campaign in the newspapers studied. The study employed qualitative and quantitative content analysis and found that the newspapers provided mostly favourable coverage of the campaign with a total of 59 (83.1%) out of 71 total stories. The study also found that the campaigners and their sympathisers were the dominant sources of stories during the study period. The study concluded that the newspapers made concerted efforts to cover the campaign positively, unlike what usually obtains in Western media framing of social movements where status quo biases are often maintained. The study also found that the newspapers focused more on straight news than other story types in reporting the campaigns.

Keywords: Bring Back Our Girls, Social movement, Online newspaper, Framing

Introduction

Coming from the backdrop of its chequered political history, Nigeria's democratic experience in the fourth republic has been characterised by a myriad of emotive mass mediated discourses. Volatile among such media controversies is the current "Bring Back Our Girls" campaign, which has generated tension in the nation's public sphere. The tension was principally caused by the abduction of Chibok schoolgirls by the members of Boko Haram.

On the night of April 14, 2014, a terrorist group known as Boko Haram abducted about 276 secondary school girls from their dormitories at the Government Girls Secondary School in the remote town of Chibok, Borno State, in north-eastern Nigeria. Fifty-seven of the 276 girls escaped and Boko Haram threatened to sell the rest as slave brides if their captured members were not released from jail. Six months of the girls' captivity and a month of negotiations raised hopes that the remaining girls might soon be released after a truce with the sect. A girl was later rescued by the military while 21 were released following the negotiations with the sect in October 2016. After further negotiations in May 2017, another 82 girls were released in exchange for some of the captured suspected members of the sect, bringing the number of the freed girls to 161.

The girls' initial weeks in captivity sparked a fury of media coverage and interest online, where the hash-tag #BringBackOurGirls trended on Twitter the world over. Nigeria Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) campaigners had a worldwide appeal and have since held regular marches in Nigerian cities and other places. The kidnap is considered as unfortunate, inhuman, and barbaric by the global community (Olutokunbo et al., 2015).

The incidence has become a big dent to Nigeria's reputation and history as it led to the global outrage campaign for BBOG which attracted not only passionate individuals but also organisations, agencies, and governments of several nations.

However, the problem is much bigger than Chibok girls. Young men and boys were also kidnapped, forced to join the sect or killed for rebelling. It is estimated that about fifteen thousand people have died in violence related to the group's insurgency since 2009, including a reported massacre of thousands near the Nigerian border with Chad in January 2015. Chandler (2015) said UNICEF report released in April 2015 also revealed that 800,000 children have had to flee Boko Haram's campaign, a displacement that will have generational reverberations. According to BBC, Amnesty International (2014) said, the group has abducted 2,000 girls and women since the beginning of 2014, forcing many into sexual slavery, cooks, fighters or suicide bombers.

Accordingly, this paper examines how Nigerian online newspapers cover the Bring Back Our Girls campaign by bringing to public attention their interpretations of the desires and aspirations of protesters, and the manner in which they frame the movement. Specifically, the study examines the dominant themes in framing the campaign and the nature of coverage of the campaign. Mostly social movements or protests rely on the mass media to bring to public attention their objectives and objections. Media on the other hand are very selective about the stories they cover and the degree of coverage they give to such stories. The manner in which the media frame stories affects audience views, which can also determine subsequent supports and contributions from the public. Therefore, the mandate of this paper is to find out how online newspapers framed the BBOG campaign within the first six months of the girls' abduction. The insights this study provides may serve as vital tools for assessing the role of online newspapers in social movements and also how they frame effective public campaign.

Context

In July 2009, series of clashes occurred in Northern Nigeria between security forces and members of the militant Boko Haram. The security forces initially appeared to have overpowered the group, captured and killed its leader Muhammad Yusuf and many of his followers (*Daily Trust*, 2009; Herskovits, 2009; Newstime Africa, 2009). An estimated 1,000 people, mostly sect members, were reportedly killed in the first main clashes that lasted for about a week (Bello-Barkindo, 2009). The government's view about the group was that it was an anti-modernity sect [they oppose Western education and science (Boyle, 2009; Gorman, 2009)] that sought for a violent overthrow of the secular government in the country.

Opinions differ on the reasons for the 2009 clampdown, but one dominating version traced it to a motorcycle incident. That "some members of the sect were shot dead on June 11, 2009" following a clash with the police over the refusal of the members to wear helmets in the city of Maiduguri. Three days after the incident, Yusuf vowed to avenge the death of his followers, and this led to arrest of some of the sect members by the Borno State police command. According to this version, the apparently coordinated attacks on the police in various states in the north after this incident were reprisal attacks for the police humiliation and arrest of their members (Adibe, 2013).

After the government hurled a clampdown on the group, they regrouped in 2011 and responded with killing of government officials and police officers, including political and religious leaders who opposed to what they were doing. They hit Maiduguri and its environs with unprecedented violence and ruthlessness. The sect's list of bombings, killings, and maiming forced the Federal Government to deploy the Joint Military Taskforce to restore order in the beleaguered state (Ekwueme and Akpan, 2012).

In what was apparently seen as retaliation for the extrajudicial killing of the leader and some other members, the group launched its first terrorist attack in January 2010 killing four people in Maiduguri, Borno State (Adibe, 2013). Since then, the sect has intensified its terrorist activities. Later, they came out openly to admit that they were now at war with the government after series of bomb attacks on police stations, bars and buildings.

Their most audacious operation was the suicide car bomb attack at the national headquarters of the Nigerian Police Force in Abuja, not very far away from the presidential palace, killing several people (Campbell, 2011). It was considered to be the first case of using a suicide bomber in Nigeria to carry out a terrorism act. Another suicide bomber, on August 26, 2011 blew up the United Nations Headquarters in Abuja, leaving dead, 21 people and dozens more were injured (Adibe, 2013). Again, on January 20, 2012, it attacked Kano city, leaving more than 185 people dead.

According to Onuoha (2013), the sect's attacks had focused on security establishment and personnel, religious and community leaders, worship centres, politicians and other civilian targets; and overtime, it added hospitals, media houses, tertiary institutions, public schools, markets and critical infrastructure of telecommunication to the list of its targets and attacks.

Indisputably, these crises have caused the deaths of tens of thousands people; led to the maiming and displacement of millions others; resulted in the damaging and poisoning of established relationships plus the destruction of property of incalculable costs (Abubakar, 2011).

The sect has intensified its attacks in 2014, where in February, it killed more than 100 men in the villages of Doron Baga and Izghe, Borno State, killed 59 boys in the Federal Government College Buni Yadi, Yobe State (Dorell, 2014 and Nigerian *Guardian*, 2014). In March, they attacked Giwa Military Barracks and freed some captured militants (Dorell, 2014). This occurred on the same day as a bomb was detonated killing at least 88 people (Perkins, 2014). And in April, they abducted the Chibok girls. In 2014 alone, Boko Haram was blamed for the deaths of nearly 4,000 people. (Dorell, 2014 and Wikipedia.com, 2015).

Framing

Framing assumes that how an issue is characterised in news reports can have an influence over how it is comprehended by audiences (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). It posits that media transfers the salience of specific attributes to issues or events (Dimitrova et al. 2005).

Benford and Snow (2000) define a frame as "an interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the 'world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present or past environment." According to Dimitrova and Connolly-Ahern (2007), media frames can be seen as an organising mechanism for media content that provides immediate context to the recipient of such frame, through selection, emphasis or exclusion of some specific facts or ideas.

Entman (1993) offered a more detailed explanation of how media provide audiences with schemas for interpreting events. According to him, framing essentially involves "selection and salience: to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication context, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (p. 52).

The concept of framing according to Tilly (2003) cited by Tusa (2013) has much in common with the study

of what some scholars describe as “political identity” (the experience of a social transaction coupled with public representation of that experience). Tilly claims that organisers or leaders of social movements construct political identities and mobilise people with these identities to engage in collective action. Invariably, a political identity relies on some sort of shared history, whether created, exaggerated, or real. When viewed in this light, “political identity” and “framing” are addressing the same phenomenon. In both cases, scholars examine the “politics of signification” (Hall, 2006) of how movement actors are engaged in the “production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers” (Benford and Snow, 2000 and Tusa, 2013).

According to Dimitrova and Connolly-Ahern (2007), one of the devices that influence news framing of events is the choice of sources. They cited Baden’s (2003) pre-war study that compares the *Guardian* of UK and the *New York Times* (US). According to Barden, even though the two newspapers belong to the two countries that were an integral part of the ‘Coalition of the Willing’¹, the study found differences between them. While the *Guardian* framed its coverage through the use of more foreign official sources, the *New York Times* concentrated on official government sources. Another study comparing *Al Ahrām* and *The New York Times*’ pre-war coverage, Ghanem (2005) found that *The Times* relied more heavily on U.S sources whereas *Al Ahrām* used more Arabic sources (Dimitrova and Connolly-Ahern (2007).

It has also been established that news framing determines to a great extent, public opinion and decision making on an issue. This was particularly expressed in initial public support for the US led war on terror and subsequent invasion of Iraq. According to Entman (2005:254), “many US citizens supported the war on the grounds it made the USA safer from 9/11-style terrorism, based on dominant news framing that emphasised Saddam Hussein’s possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and active assistance to al-Qaida.”

In doing their work, journalists refer to certain knowledge or cultural maps that, in some way, influence the way they conceptualise events and issues (Oso, 2006:68). The journalists use these frames in treating news items thereby creating interpretations of the events being covered.

The process of framing in modern social movements is increasingly relevant in the age of the Internet and social media. The new dynamic these technologies bring to the study of social movements should not be underestimated (Tusa, 2013).

“Media framing infers that media has a powerful effect in giving certain issues legitimacy by altering public opinion” (Skonieczny and Morse, 2013). Protests and social movements are continually the subject of media framing research.

The above theoretical analysis of framing shows that news presentation is a function of certain knowledge structure and sociocultural maps of journalists covering protest movements. The analysis has been able to justify the theoretical basis as it provided the reason for the use of mass media in shaping public opinion towards social movements.

Media Framing of Social Movement

Scholars reveal that media coverage has impact on how protests are represented to the public and on many occasions limits protesters’ ability to represent their own message as it has to be sieved through “already existing, dominant, ‘status quo’ frames” (Skonieczny and Morse, 2013).

Skonieczny and Morse (2013) said the Occupy Wall Street Protest Movement of September 2011 in response to the “global economic crisis and the rise of inequality and corporate influence on democracy” dubbed “we are the 99 percent” had broad appeal based on the unequal distribution of wealth between the top ‘1’ percent and everyone else.

According to Skonieczny and Morse (2013), despite the broad appeal of the initial Occupy movement that attracted the attention of the wider public and raised popular awareness of the economic inequality alarms, stoking the moral outrage of ordinary citizens and transforming the national political conversation, by the end of November, most of the US Occupy encampments had been shut down by police and city officials. A movement that had a worldwide appeal suddenly shifted out of the global spotlight. Why did the movement rise and fall so quickly from public view? While the issues that gave birth to the movement had not changed or improved, the overall US public image of the movement had shifted from supportive and sympathetic to inconvenienced, concerned about public safety and/or disinterested. They found out that the shift was as a result of the dominant portrayal of the protest by the conventional media sources such as CNN. They also found out that the media framing of the protests mirrored near-identical media framing of past economic protests of neoliberal globalisation.

To examine the effect of media framing of the movement, Skonieczny and Morse, (2013) conducted a study of CNN coverage of the eight weeks Occupy movement using videos from CNN.org, and examined the dominant, largely negative, frames CNN used to portray the movement to the public. To support their findings, the authors utilised an online programme “Statnews,” which analyses large newspaper databases for key words

¹ A joined force of US and its allied countries in a military intervention in the Iraq War

and co-occurring terms in order to include a larger sample of media coverage of the Occupy movement.

Skonieczny and Morse (2013:33) conclude that, although social media played an important role in the movement, the influence of the mainstream media on the public was still significant and reflected CNN's pattern of 'status quo biases' in its protest movements' coverage. They added that the way CNN framed the Occupy Movement closely resembled conventional media framing of the WTO Seattle protests and the protests that followed it against the World Bank and IMF challenging aspects of neoliberal globalisation.

Their study inductively found four dominant frames characterising CNN's coverage: "Police/Security," "Illegitimate," "Protest," and "Socio-Economic Critique." They further quantified how much coverage each frame was given on each given date to demonstrate not only the most dominant frames, but also how the frames changed over the two months period as utilised by the CNN.

Findings in Skonieczny and Morse (2013) research show consistent use of similar negative media frames between the Occupy Wall Street movement and the global justice protests of the late 1990s, early 2000s.

Comparatively, Skonieczny and Morse's media framing of Occupy movement of economic and globalisation protests and Jules Boykoff's (2006) media framing analysis of the Global Justice Movement depict similar results. Both show media framing of protest movements as predominantly "violent" and "illegitimate." The similarity among media frames of the two different and varied movements, despite the different categorisations by distinct authors, reveal a recycling of framing by media to depict social movements. It also shows a notable consistency in media portrayal of protests in support of the status quo to the detriment of the various causes.

Findings in Boykoff's (2006) study on media framing analysis of the protests by the Global Justice Movement in Seattle and Washington, D. C., reveal near-identical frames to that of Skonieczny and Morse (2013). Boykoff examined a two-week period surrounding the World Trade Organisation (WTO) protests in Seattle in 1999 and the World Bank/IMF protests in Washington, D.C in 2000. Boykoff used "Lexus/Nexus" to analyse six major newspapers (*New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, and *the Boston Globe*) and five major network television stations (ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, and Fox) for the dominant frames used in the protests portrayal.

Boykoff (2006:211) identified five dominant frames as portrayed by the media: "violence frame," "disruption frame," "freak frame," "ignorance frame," and "Amalgam of Grievances frame."

Boykoff concludes that because mass media play an important role in the construction of social issues and problems, its "discourse is not only vital in terms of framing social issues and problems for the attentive public, but it is also a place of ideological and ideational struggle for various social movements, state actors and institutions." He avers that mass media attention is crucial to social movement development, though sometimes media coverage could do more harm than good to social movements.

In their study comparing how online news sites in Coalition Countries and the Arab World framed the 2003 Iraq War, Dimitrova and Connolly-Ahern (2007) employed quantitative content analysis to examine the frames used in the home pages of selected online news media in the US, the UK, Egypt and Qatar.

According to them, audiences of American and British television were shown "a gripping made-for-TV show starring brave U.S and British troops putting their lives on the line to bring freedom to oppressed Iraqis" whereas viewers of Arabic news coverage were shown "wounded and screaming Iraqi women and children, captured or terrified Iraqi, and yes, U.S. and British soldiers." Research indicates that such differences in media metaphors, or frames, can have consequences for viewers' reasoning and beliefs about events (Dimitrova and Connolly-Ahern, 2007).

Dimitrova and Connolly-Ahern's (2007) finding revealed differences in the tone of coverage and use of sources by the four news media studied. They concluded that while the "tale of war" in the Egypt and Qatar media was one of violence and destruction, the tale of war in the US and the UK media was one of military conflict leading to rebuilding for the people of Iraq.

In a study by Oso, Odunlami, Adaja, Rufai, and Atewolara-Odule (2009) on press coverage of the protests against former Nigerian President Obasanjo's Third Term Agenda, five national dailies, namely the *Guardian*, the *Punch*, *Nigerian Tribune*, the *Sun* and *Vanguard* were purposively selected and content analysed. The study sought to find out the views of the social movement group that predominate in the media, how sources engage the media to get their views across, the specific means used to transmit views to the media during the Third Term protests and the words or concepts that provide the context for the views, as captured by the press and expressed by the various protagonists in the controversy. Findings revealed that the press was overwhelmingly against the attempt to prolong Obasanjo's tenure as the President and more or less demonised the pro-Third Term as anti-democratic and compared them to other sit-tight African leaders. The debate was heightened by the vehement public disagreement of the initiative and the press criticism among other things, which forced the National Assembly to reject it. One interesting aspect of the finding is that both pro and anti-Third Term employed the same words or concepts national unity, national interest, peace, rule of law, constitutionalism and democracy to justify their claims and positions.

The researchers concluded that the ambiguity in the meanings of these concepts made them quite useful as ideological tools to mobilise public sentiment and influence public opinion. The researchers' position was that though both sides in the controversy mobilised the same "condensational symbols as ideological frames," the prevailing public mood must have encouraged the National Assembly to reject the proposal.

While the studies above by Tusa (2013) and Oso et al. (2009) saw media in protest movements as a tool in the hands of protesters to achieve their goals, Skonieczny and Morse (2013) and Boykoff (2006) revealed consistent use of negative media frames, in support of the status quo, to depict protest movements as predominantly illegitimate and violent.

Corrigan-Brown and Wilkes (2012) studied the visual framing of First Nations' protest in Canada. All stories about Oka and related protests from 1990-2008 were gathered and analysed from *Globe and Mail*, *Montreal Gazette*, and *Vancouver Sun* newspapers. Three hypotheses were coded as "Representation," "Power," and "Legitimacy" to guide the study.

The "Representation" hypothesis said government officials will be presented in more images often than challengers and findings confirmed so. The "Power" hypothesis stated that it will appear that people are looking up at officials more often than challengers and finding also revealed the same. Which means authorities are seen as powerful, while challengers as weak. The third hypothesis termed "Legitimacy" said government officials will be shown as rational and challengers will be shown as emotional. Findings reveals like the two above that authorities were seen as rational, and challengers as irrational (emotional). This study also corresponds with majority of the literatures above that status quo biases are maintained and sustained.

METHOD

This study employed content analysis to analyse the online stories on BBOG campaign from the four selected online newspapers, focusing on the frames and tone of coverage. To analyse the frames, the researcher used coding to develop the dominant themes/frames and adopts predefined frames also, as applied by various scholars who wrote on media framing of social movements.

The four Nigerian online newspapers selected- *Sahara Reporters*, *Vanguard*, *Daily Trust* and the *Punch*- published within the first six months of the abduction of the girls. The selection was based on their wide readership, consistency, and strong online presence.

Sampling frame was obtained from the four selected online newspapers published within April 14 - October 14, 2014. A total of 713 editions of the four newspapers, 194 for *Daily Trust*, 128 for the *Punch*, 217 for *Sahara Reporters*, and 174 for *Vanguard* were obtained through keyword search of stories that have 'bring back our girls' in them. The researcher studied one-tenth (1/10) of each of the newspapers, thus resulting to a sample of 71 editions, 19 stories for *Daily Trust*, 13 for the *Punch*, 22 for *Sahara Reporters*, and 17 for *Vanguard* respectively. Home pages of each of the four online newspapers were studied.

RESULTS

Of the total number of stories coded, more than half (60.6%) were straight news stories, less than one-fifth (18.3%) were features while only 2.8% of editorials were coded. In all, *Daily Trust* had the highest number of straight news stories (14), followed by *Sahara Reporters* (13), the *Punch* had 11 and *Vanguard* recorded five. *Sahara Reporters* had the most feature articles (5) followed by the *Daily Trust* (4), *Vanguard* (3) and the *Punch* (1). Of the total number of coded stories, nine were opinion stories, seven of which came from the *Vanguard*, while *Sahara Reporters* and the *Punch* had one each. There were only two editorials, one from *Daily Trust* and the other from *Sahara Reporters*. 'Other' category of the story type had four press statements which *Vanguard* and *Sahara Reporters* had two each.

Nature of Coverage of the BBOG Campaigns by Newspapers

The researcher compared the nature of coverage of bring back our girls campaigns between the four news sites. Finding reveals that, of the total stories (71), 59(83.1%) were coded as favourable, seven (9.9%) as unfavourable, and five (7.0%) as neutral. Majority of the stories for each news site was coded as favourable. *Sahara Reporters* had 18 of the favourable stories, followed by the *Daily Trust* with 17, and then the *Punch* and *Vanguard* had 12 each.

Out of the seven unfavourable stories, five were from the *Vanguard* while one each from the *Punch* and *Daily Trust*. Four stories from the *Sahara Reporters* and one from the *Daily Trust* maintained a neutral ground. None of the stories fall under the "mixed" category, where stories were expected to reflect a mixture of favourable and unfavourable content.

Dominant Themes of Bring back Our Girls Stories across the Four News Sites

For this study, the researcher read and coded 71 stories from the four news sites. Three news frames were inductively found to have dominated the four news sites' coverage of the BBOG campaigns: the Protest frame,

the Ineptitude frame, and the Abduction frame. However, three other predefined frames were deductively adopted from the reviewed literature on media framing of social movements and were found to have also dominated alongside the three above. These are: the Violence frame, the Prognostic frame, and the Marginalisation frame. These frames are not mutually exclusive, as they frequently appeared within the same stories, echoing and strengthening one another. The study identified the central themes that were adopted by the newspapers using a key word search for recurring concepts in the phrases and sentences throughout the 71 stories by going through, and writing down, the recurring concepts manually. At the end of which, the researcher grouped the identified concepts, phrases and words into six dominant themes based on what they mean in the stories. The researcher then quantified how much coverage was dedicated to each frame on each given online newspaper to demonstrate the most dominant frame within the study period.

Protest Frame

Agitations by the BBOG protesters and other organised civic activism or campaigns on BBOG that provoked rage and action in both Nigeria and the international community, constituted the predominant theme through which stories on the Bring Back Our Girls campaigns were presented. Activities such as candle light vigils, special sit out ceremonies, advocacy campaigns, organised protests and rallies, including public outcries were captured under the protest frame. Also, words like “rally,” “agitation,” “dissent,” “protest,” “campaign,” etc. were identified as the protest themes. More than one-quarter of the stories on BBOG campaigns featured the protest frame, with almost one-third of the total themes from the *Sahara Reporters* focusing on the protesters’ agitations. More than one-quarter of the themes from *Vanguard* stories and almost one-third of *Daily Trust* stories featured the protest frame.

The result also reveals the protest frame as captured by the four newspapers. It shows that almost half (46.3%) of the coded protest frame across all the four news sites came from *Sahara Reporters*, while more than one-quarter (28%) of the protest frame was by *Daily Trust* and *Vanguard* covered slightly above one-fifth (20.6%) of it. The table also reveals that the *Punch* had the least number of stories (5.1%) indicating the protest frame.

Ineptitude Frame

The Ineptitude Frame, which demonstrates lack of commitment in the government’s efforts to rescue the kidnapped Chibok girls, and the show of incompetency and other efforts by the government to suppress, mock and even ban the protesters from campaigning through detention of the campaign leaders, appeared regularly in the stories. In fact, it was the second highest frame through which stories on the BBOG campaigns were told. A total of 187 coded concepts demonstrated ineptitude frame in the stories. Incompetence and display of lack of intelligence by the Nigerian security in their approaches to rescuing the kidnapped girls as covered by the newspapers, the use of police to dislodge the campaigners from where they mounted a permanent sit-in, also formed part of the Ineptitude Frame.

Findings show that more than two in five (43.3%) stories indicating the ineptitude frame were found in *Sahara Reporters*, and a little less than one-third (31.0%) were found in *Daily Trust*. *Vanguard* covered slightly above one-fifth (20.3) of the ineptitude frame, and the *Punch* had least of the ineptitude frame with just 5.4% represented.

Abduction Frame

Another recurrent frame found in the online newspapers accounts of the BBOG campaigns focused on the abduction of the girls. This frame also appeared regularly in the online sites where in all the stories, issues about the kidnap, continued detainment of the abducted girls, how they were abducted and the condition that led to the abduction were coded for abduction. Phrases and words like “carted away,” “captivity,” “continued detention,” “abduction,” “kidnap,” and even “kidnappers,” “abductors,” and “captors” were coded for Abduction Frame. A little less than one-fifth of all coverage was coded under the Abduction Frame.

Finding indicates that more than one-third (37.7%) of the abduction frame was coded from *Sahara Reporters*, and more than one-quarter (26.4%) was from *Daily Trust*. Less than one-fifth each (18.9% and 17.0%) of the Abduction Frame came from *Vanguard* and the *Punch*.

Prognostic Frame

Prognostic Frame is a predefined frame often used by the media to frame stories on social movements and war and this frame was adopted for this research. It addresses the question of what is to be done and suggests remedies. Although the prognostic frame did not emerge as the dominant frame in the stories coded, however, about one-sixth (16.3%) of all the coverage on the BBOG campaigns demonstrated the Prognostic Frame. All efforts to negotiate the release of the girls or other demands that focused on calling on the government to secure the return of the girls either by the protesters, sympathisers or victims’ parents or any other authority were coded under the Prognostic Frame.

One hundred and fifty two themes were coded for under Prognostic frame, one-third (33.6%) of which were from *Sahara Reporters*. More than one-quarter each (28.9% and 28.3%) were coded from *Daily Trust* and *Vanguard*, and just 9.2% were coded from the *Punch*.

Violence Frame

This is another predefined frame identified from the reviewed studies on media framing of social movements and coded for in this study. But unlike in the reviewed studies where the protesters were seen and recorded as exhibiting violent tendencies, in this study, the protesters were viewed as the victims of violence from the government through the security personnel. Also, violence towards the kidnapped girls and the rest of the people in the region by the Boko Haram sects, as cited in the BBOG campaigns stories, were coded under the violence frame. Phrases and words like “bomb attack,” “blast,” “female bomber,” “horrendous massacre and destruction,” “residents killed,” etc. were considered and incorporated under the Violence Frame. Out of the total coded stories, 14.6% appeared under the Violence Frame.

A total of 137 themes were coded as Violence frame, less than one-third (30.7%) of which came from *Sahara Reporters* while more than one-quarter (27.7%) of it came from *Daily Trust* and *Vanguard* each, and only one in seven (13.9%) came from the *Punch*.

Marginalisation Frame

The Marginalisation Frame focused on the manner in which the protesters as well as the victims were thought to have been marginalised and ignored because of their gender by the government and the society in general. This was cited in the stories as making the campaigners unrepresentative of the general public; and making other issues perceived to be less important as more important than rescuing the girls.

This frame was least represented with just 43 themes coded as Marginalisation. Here, more than two in every five (44.2%) of the coded stories that fall under the Marginalisation Frame came from *Sahara Reporters* and slightly above one-quarter (25.6%) of the stories came from *Daily Trust*, while less than one-fifth (16.3%) came from *Vanguard* and one-seventh (13.9%) came from the *Punch*.

Dominant Themes of BBOG Stories across the Four News Sites

All the coded stories for the various themes across the four news sites were cross tabulated and summarised. Results from the research indicate that *Sahara Reporters* had the highest number of stories (39.8%) coded for the six dominant frames put together with 372 themes, followed by *Daily Trust* (28.3%) with 265 themes, *Vanguard* (22.4%) with 209 themes and the *Punch* had the least (9.5%) with 89 themes respectively. Among the dominant themes, the Protest Frame featured highest with 257 themes representing 27.5%. This is followed by the Ineptitude Frame which has 187 themes representing 20%, the Abduction Frame with 159 themes representing 17%, the Prognostic Frame with 152 themes representing 16.3%, the Violence Frame with 137 themes representing 14.6% and the Marginalisation Frame with 43 themes representing 4.6% respectively.

DISCUSSION

This study has presented information concerning the Bring Back Our Girls campaigns as reported by the *Daily Trust*, the *Punch*, *Sahara Reporters* and the *Vanguard* online newspapers. First the four newspapers: *Daily Trust*, the *Punch*, *Sahara Reporters*, and *Vanguard* differ in their coverage of the BBOG campaigns. From the total stories counted on the news sites of the four online newspapers within the same six months period, it can be deduced that *Daily Trust*, which is north-based and *Sahara Reporters*, which predominantly reports about the northern Nigeria, showed more commitment to the coverage of the activities of the Bring Back Our Girls campaigners as should be expected.

The *Punch* and *Vanguard* on the other hand operate from, and mostly report more about the southern Nigeria, paid a little less attention to the activities of the campaigners. This is evident in the frequency of their coverage of the BBOG campaigns as accessed from their sites. The reason may simply be because the girls were abducted in the north and the operations of the abductors are majorly in the north.

Generally, the findings reveal that the BBOG campaigns received considerable amount of coverage during the period under study. Seven hundred and thirteen stories related to the campaigns were counted throughout the period of the study. Second, though there was a high level of consistency across the four news sites in the presentation of the story types where news predominated, *Vanguard* had more opinion stories than the rest and concentrated more on opinions rather than news. While *Daily Trust* had more news than all the other three, *Sahara Reporters* had more features than the rest, and more news than features. This result shows that the newspapers presented the BBOG campaigns stories more from straight news angle paying less attention to the other forms, especially editorial which is supposed to project the position of the newspapers as regards the BBOG campaigners and their activities and evaluating the degree of attention they received from government and the international community.

However, in examining the nature of reporting, finding reveals that all the newspapers favoured the campaigners in their reports on the BBOG campaign with a higher percentage of 83.1. This can be explained by the fact that it is their social responsibility to hold government responsible for its role in securing the release of the kidnapped girls, hence the need to project the campaign positively. The unfavourable coverage which came second has just 9.9% and the neutral received the least coverage with 7.0%. Deductions from this study strongly

suggest that contrary to the early media research findings' view that protesters were reported negatively (see Skonieczny and Morse, 2013, and Boykoff, 2006), the protesters were rather viewed positively.

A look at the implication of this study for theory and practice regarding the online newspaper coverage of BBOG campaigns is necessary. Framing theory assumes that the mass media give specific interpretations in news representation, using certain words or phrases, choosing certain films or pictures, making certain contextual references, referring to certain sources, giving examples as typical, and so on such that audience do not just read about an issue but view it from a particular perspective.

When viewed from the stand point of this theory, it will be safe to sum up from the result of the study that, between April 14 to October 14, 2014, which marked the first six months of the abduction of 276 secondary school girls, the newspapers studied gave prominence to the issue by projecting positively the various activities of the Bring Back Our Girls campaigners. Their reportage was in demonstration towards safe and fast rescue of the girls. Besides that, when considered against the background of the doctrine of the people's right to know, these newspapers did more to give people their rights as they should. So the study confirms the assumptions of the theory.

Also, the findings reveal a shift in the framing trends over time, where news are presented through identified lenses called "protest paradigm" to frame campaign movement stories. The dominant and most frequent negative frames that present movements as disruptive, violent, illegitimate, freak, etc., as captured by various media have shifted to presenting them as victims of incompetent governance and violence.

Three dominant frames emerged inductively from the data and were complemented by three predefined frames adopted by the researcher. Generally, the protest frame was the most predominant of the six, as it appeared in more than one-quarter (27.5%) of all the news sites stories. In other words, bring back our girls protest was vehemently supported by the online sites in more than one of every four. This frame was followed in frequency by the ineptitude frame, which appeared in one-fifth (20%) of all the BBOG campaigns stories. This statistic is more explicable given the fact that the agitations by the protesters was as a result of the government's inept attitude towards ensuring safe return of the abducted girls. The third most frequent frame overall was the Abduction Frame, which appeared in a little less than one-fifth (17%) of all the coded stories of the news sites. The fourth most frequent frame was the Prognostic Frame, which appeared in one-sixth (16.3%) of all the accounts. The fifth most frequent frame was the Violence Frame, which appeared in slightly more than one in every seven (14.6%) coded stories. Finally, nearly one in every 21 (4.6%) coded stories presented Bring Back Our Girls campaigners and the victims of the abduction as being marginalised via the Marginalisation Frame.

Conclusion

This study indicated that all the four newspapers paid serious attention to the coverage of Bring Back Our Girls campaigns and they considered the campaigns as important by bringing to the attention of the public the desires and aspirations of the protesters. It also showed that, the nature of the news reports favoured the campaigners rather than officialdom such as government and other actors. It is also interesting to note that coverage of BBOG movement was favourable when such movements are often portrayed negatively. The findings of this study were contrary to other studies on social media movements which found that social movement protests and protesters were considered illegitimate, irrational and ignorant, while governments were seen as powerful, rational, and legitimate. Rather, the study established in Nigeria, the social media movement BBOG was found to be one with a legitimate course, which gained national recognition and acceptance through lots of coverage in online newspapers.

Further research on media framing of protests would be useful. The trend of media concentration on officialdom and its impact on media diversity and freedom, though refuted by this research, needs further investigation to either retain or invalidate the trend. This can best be achieved by studying both print and other online newspapers different from the ones used in this study.

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