



**THE INFLUENCE OF ETHNICITY IN  
NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF THE PLATEAU  
STATE CONFLICT IN NORTH-CENTRAL  
NIGERIA  
(2010-2012)**

**By**

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The Influence of Ethnicity in Newspaper Coverage of the  
Plateau State Conflict in North-Central Nigeria  
(2010-2012)

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# Table of Contents

List of Figures .....	vi
List of Tables .....	vii
List of abbreviations .....	viii
Abstract .....	ix
Acknowledgements.....	x
Chapter One: Introduction .....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Rationale for the Study .....	3
1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study .....	4
1.4 Research Questions .....	4
1.5 Research Methodology .....	4
1.6 Background to the Study.....	5
1.7 Statement of the Problem.....	9
1.8 Scope of the Research.....	9
1.9 Operational Definition of Terms.....	10
1.9.1 Newspaper Coverage .....	10
1.9.2 News Media Professionals .....	10
1.9.3 Conflict .....	11
1.9.4 Conflict Journalist.....	11
1.9.5 Indigenes/Settlers .....	12
1.9.7 Influence .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
1.9.8 Ethnicity.....	12
1.10 Description of Thesis Chapters .....	13
1.11 Conclusion.....	14
Chapter Two: Research Methodology .....	16
4.1 Introduction.....	16
4.2 Research Epistemology.....	16
4.2.1 Positivism.....	17
4.2.2 Constructivism .....	17
4.3 Theoretical Perspectives .....	20
4.4 Research Methodology: Qualitative .....	22
4.5 Critical Discourse Analysis as a Method for the Analysis of the Two Chosen Newspapers .....	26
4.6 Research Methods.....	28

4.6.1 Semi-Structured Interviews .....	28
4.6.2 Sampling Procedures .....	28
4.6.3 Interview Respondents' Classification .....	29
4.7 Framework for Analyzing the two Chosen Newspapers (The Nigeria Standard and the Daily Trust).....	31
4.8 Notes from Fieldwork .....	35
4.9 Ethical Issues .....	38
4.10 Conclusion .....	39
Chapter Three: Agenda Setting, News Framing and Human Rights Orientated Journalism...	41
3.1 Introduction.....	41
3.2 The Social Responsibility Model.....	42
3.3 Primordial Theory of Ethnicity .....	44
3.4 Gate Keeping Theory .....	45
3.5 The Agenda Setting.....	47
3.5.1 Who sets the Media Agenda? .....	47
3.6 News Framing Theory .....	49
3.6.1 Origin of Frames on Conflicts .....	50
3.7 Human Rights Orientated Journalism Theory .....	53
3.8 Media Approaches to the Coverage of Conflicts.....	55
3.8.1 The mainstream media.....	55
3.8.2 Reporting Human Rights .....	56
3.8.3 Peace Journalism.....	57
3.9 Conclusion .....	58
Chapter Four: Newspapers and the Emergence of Conflicts in Plateau State .....	61
2.1 Introduction.....	61
2.2 A History of the Press (Newspaper) in Nigeria .....	61
2.3. Ownership Influence of Newspapers in Nigeria.....	66
2.4. The Nigeria Standard Newspaper .....	70
2.5 The Daily/Weekly/Sunday Trust.....	71
2.6 The Origin of Plateau State .....	74
2.7 Ethnic Majorities and Minorities in Nigeria: A Colonial Legacy.....	78
2.8 Ethnic Majorities and Minorities in Plateau State.....	85
2.9 Ethnic Conflict in Plateau State .....	86
2.10 The Press, Ethnicity and Identity Politics in Nigeria.....	92
2.11 The Press in Colonial and Post-Colonial Times .....	93

2.12 Examples of Media Coverage of Conflicts .....	95
2.12.1 Media Coverage of the Rwandan Conflict.....	95
2.12. 2 Media Coverage of the 2007 Post-Election Conflicts in Kenya .....	97
2.12. 3 Media Coverage of Rohingya/Rakhine Buddhists Conflict.....	98
2.13 Conclusion .....	100
Chapter Five: Mapping, Presentation and Analysis of Newspaper Reports .....	102
5.1 Introduction.....	102
5.2 Plateau State Conflict: A Brief Context.....	102
5.3 Mapping and Analysis of the Daily Trust’s Reports .....	106
5.3.1 Accusations and Counter Accusations.....	106
5.3.2 Distrust of the Media .....	111
5.3.3 Stereotype/Divisive Frames .....	115
5.3.4 Exaggeration/Hyperbole/Rhetoric .....	117
5.3.5 Pursuit of Dialogue-Solution-Peace.....	120
5.4 Mapping and Analysis of <i>The Nigeria Standard</i> Reports.....	122
5.4.1 Accusations and counter Accusations.....	122
5.4.2 Distrust of the Media .....	124
5.4.3 Exaggeration/Hyperbole/Rhetoric .....	128
5.4.4 Stereotypes/Labelling .....	130
5.4.5 Pursuit of Dialogue-Solution-Peace.....	132
5.5 Key Findings.....	133
Chapter Six: Analysis and Presentation of Semi-Structured Interview Data .....	137
6. 1 Introduction.....	137
6.3 RQ 1: In What Ways has Ethnicity been Manifested in Newspaper Coverage of the Plateau State Conflict?.....	137
6.3.1 Ownership Influence.....	138
6.4 RQ 2: How has Journalists’ Ethnic Background Influenced Reporting of the Plateau State Conflict?.....	143
6.4.1 In What Ways has Ethnicity Influenced your Reporting of the Plateau State Conflict? .....	143
6.11.2 Are you Satisfied with the Current State of Journalism Practice in Platea State, if not, what Recommendations would you Proffer toward Better Practice? .....	146
6.5 RQ 3: What are the Practice-based Implications of the Coverage of the Plateau State Conflict from an Ethnic Perspective? .....	150
6.5.1: What has been your Experience of Reporting the Plateau State Conflict?.....	150
6.5.2: How Conscious are you as a Reporter Reporting Conflict? .....	152

6.5.3: How Aware are you of the Possible Effects of your Reports/Articles on Readers?	155
6.5.4: How do Wages determined Objectivity of your Reports?	159
6.5.5: To What Extent do you agree with the suggestion that the Way Newspaper Headlines were Framed Contributed to the Conflict?	163
6.5.6: Are you Satisfied with the Current State of Journalism Practice in Plateau State?	169
6.6.1 How can Human Rights Journalism Prevent or Douse the Situation of Conflict?	175
6.7. Summary of Analysis	178
Chapter Seven: Discussion of Findings	181
7.1. Introduction	181
7.2. RQ1: In what Way(s) has Ethnicity been Manifested in the Newspaper Coverage of the Plateau State Conflict?	181
7.3. RQ2: How has Journalists' Ethnic Background Influenced the Reporting of the Plateau State Conflict?	191
7.4. RQ 3: What are the Practice-Based Implications of the Coverage of the Plateau State Conflict from an Ethnic Perspective?	196
7.5 Toward a Human Rights Consciousness Journalism Model	204
7.6 Human Rights Consciousness Journalism	205
7.6.1 Knowledge of the Environment	206
7.6.2 Consciousness and Sensitivity to Ethnic Diversities	207
7.6.3 Framing based on evidence	208
7.6.4 Conflict-prevention	209
7.7 Conclusion	210
Chapter Eight: Conclusions and Recommendations	212
8.1 Introduction	212
8.2 Contribution to Knowledge	216
8.2.1 Conceptual Contributions to Knowledge	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
8.3 Recommendations	217
8.3.1 Training	217
8.3. 2 Ownership and Control of the Press	218
8.3.3 Poor/Lack of Equipment for Journalists	219
8.3.4 Salaries/Entitlements	219
8.3.5 Newspaper Organizations and Staff Recruitment Processes	220
8.3.6 Regulatory Framework	221
8.4 Limitations and Future Research	222

Appendix One .....	223
Appendix Two .....	224
Appendix Three .....	225
References.....	226

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Gate-way to Jos, the Plateau State Capital (www.africanresearchinstitute.org). ....	7
Figure 4: Photo of the Plateau State Publishing Company Head Office, Jos. Publishers of The Sunday & Nigeria Standard newspapers (Researcher). ....	40
Figure 5: Photo of Trust Media Group Head Office Head Office, Abuja. Publishers of Weekly/Daily Trust newspapers (Researcher).....	40
Figure 6: Map of Plateau State showing the Three Senatorial Zones of the State (www.africanresearchinstitute.org).....	74
Figure 7: Photo of youths as foot soldiers of Conflict in Plateau State (www.nytime.com)...	78
Figure 8: Map of Nigeria depicting the Six Geo-Political Zones of the country (www.nytime.com) .....	82
Figure 9: Photo depicting one of the many conflict scenes in Plateau State (www.nytime.com). .....	87
Figure 10: Security personnel keeping the peace after one of the conflicts in Plateau State (www.nytime.com). .....	91
Figure 11: Photo showing some Fulani herdsmen with their cattle (www.dailypost.ng).....	108
Figure 12: Photo showing a Fulani man with his cows (www.guardian.ng).....	108
Figure 13: Picture of some of Plateau State's indigenes at a conflict scene (www.crisisgroup.org). .....	135
Figure 14: Picture of some of Plateau State's indigenes (www.viewpoint.com). .....	136
Figure 15: Word Clouds showing Ways in which Ownership of Newspaper Influences Journalists' Coverage of the Plateau State Conflict (Researcher).....	139
Figure 16: Word Tree depicting Ways in which Ownership of Newspaper Influences Journalists' Coverage of the Plateau State's Conflict (Researcher).....	139
Figure 17: Word Cloud showing Ways in which Ethnicity Influenced Journalists' Coverage of the Plateau State Conflict (Researcher). .....	143
Figure 18: Word Tree showing Ways in which Ethnicity Influenced Journalists' Coverage of the Plateau State's Conflict (Researcher). .....	144
Figure 19: Word Tree showing if Journalists were aware of the Effects of their Articles on their Readers (Researcher).....	156
Figure 20: Word Tree showing how Payment of Salaries Influenced Journalists' Objectivity/Balance in their Coverage of the Plateau State Conflict (Researcher). ....	161
Figure 21: Word Tree depicting the Extent to which Headline Frames Contributed to the Conflict (Researcher). .....	165
Figure 22: Word Cloud depicting the Extent to which Headline Frames Contributed to the Conflict (Researcher). .....	165
Figure 23: Word Tree showing the State of Journalism Practice in Plateau State (Researcher). .....	170
Figure 24: Word Cloud showing the State of Journalism Practice in Plateau State (Researcher). .....	171
Figure 25: Word Cloud showing Human Rights Orientated Journalism as a Conflict-Prevention Tool (Researcher). .....	175
Figure 26: A Human Rights Consciousness Journalism Model for Conflict-Prevention in Plateau State (Dewan, 2018).....	205



## List of Tables

Table 1: Contrasting Epistemological Positions of Positivism and Constructivism ( Adopted from Easterby-Smith et al., 2002, & modified by the researcher). .....	20
Table 2: Differences between Deductive and Inductive Approaches to Research (Adopted from Saunders et al., 2012, pp., & modified by the researcher). .....	21
Table 3: A comparison between Monothetic and Ideographic Methods (Adopted from Gill & Johnson, 2010). .....	23
Table 4: Interview Respondents' Classification: Codes, Assignment & Medium (Researcher). .....	31
Table 5: Galtung's Model adopted and modified from Lynch and McGoldrick (2005, p.6)...58	
Table 6: List of Nigerian Newspapers and their Ownership Patterns by mid 1970s (Uche, 1977). .....	68
Table 7: List of some Current Nigeria National Newspapers, Ownership Patterns, Locations and Ethnic Backgrounds (Musa, 2011). .....	73
Table 8: Shows Six of the Eleven Steps of Foucauldian Genealogical Discourse used for Mapping Discourses in The Nigeria Standard and Daily Trust Newspapers (Adopted from Carabine, 2001, p. and modified by the researcher). .....	105
Table 9: Van Dijk's (2001) Analytical Categories in his Discourse Cognitive-Society Triangle (CDA) Method used for both Analysis & Discussion of Findings (Adopted from Van Dijk, 2001, p. and modified by the researcher). .....	106

## List of abbreviations

AC	Action Congress
ATM	Automated Teller Machine
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CNN	Cable Network News
CP	Commissioner of Police
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crime Commission
FG	Federal Government
FULDA	Fula Development Association of Nigeria
GM	General Manager
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GRA	Government Residential Area
HRJ	Human Rights Journalism
ICC	International Criminal Court
IEL	Interview Ethnic Leader
IR	Interview Respondent
NCNC	National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisation
NPC	Northern People's Congress
NPRC	Nigeria Press and Regulatory Council
NUJ	Nigeria Union of Journalists
NYSC	National Youth Service Corps
PRTVC	Plateau Radio and Television Corporation
SSS	State Security Services
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
VOA	Voice of America
VP	Vice President

## Abstract

This research project surveyed the influence of ethnicity in newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict in north-central Nigeria. It analyses how conflict journalists reported this violent episode that has spanned nearly twenty years and the significance of this coverage. The conflict has been between the Plateau State's indigenous ethnic communities (indigenes), on the one hand, and the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group (settlers), on the other. Scholars have examined this violent conflict from economic, political, ethno-religious and social perspectives aimed at understanding the causative factors and ameliorate the conflict's problems. Despite these efforts, no study to this point has been done on how ethnicity influenced newspaper journalists' coverage of this violent phenomenon. This, therefore, is the gap in knowledge which this study attempts to close. The research deployed agenda setting, news framing and human rights orientated journalism as conceptual explanatory frameworks for this enquiry. Through them, this research attempted to understand how conflict journalists constructed and framed the news and reports they produced, by analysing two sets of primary data gathered in the project: semi-structured interviews with some key journalists (reporters and editors) and newspaper texts of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*.

Findings from the literature, textual and interview data obtained over the period of this research (three years) evidenced that conflict journalists of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*, in constructing their news frames, were influenced more by their ethnic affiliations than by the ethics of the journalism profession of which they were supposed to be bound by. The news framing, which they used revealed how, in some instances, reporters amplified issues, while in some others, de-emphasised them either to aggravate or downplay the conflict. The discursive strategies reporters and editors employed (propaganda, exaggeration, litotes, and negative stereotyping, among others) led to the inclusion and exclusion of certain frames, facts, opinions, and value judgements. Through these strategies the journalists of the two selected newspapers set agenda for the reading audience. Thus, the study avows that *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* journalists' coverage of the Plateau State conflict was influenced more by ethnicity than by the ethics of journalism and consequently led to the intensification of the conflict.

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# Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

This research project attempts to provide an in-depth of understanding on how ethnicity influenced newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict in north-central Nigeria. Explaining the concept ‘ethnicity’ and its dynamics are important to knowing how it shaped the news construction and production processes of the journalists of the two selected newspapers, namely, *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* who covered this protracted conflict which has lasted nearly twenty years. Although ethnicity explains the state of belonging to a group which shares similar cultural and traditional attributes, such as ‘values, myths, symbols and memories’ (Smith, 1986, p. 15). For Smith ethnicity is linked to identities of the members of a sizeable community who work not only to protect, but indeed to advance their collective interest in the political sphere. Chabal and Daloz (1999) see ethnicity as a function of circumstance; they argue that ethnicity like other variables, such as nationality can take different forms. For example, it can become politically salient at times, because under different situations other variables, such as profession, religion, race, or locality could become politically more significant for the person or the community. Thus, taking the ethnically diverse conflict environment of Plateau State, which is home to over 370 ethnic groups into consideration (Alubo, 2006), the tendency to fall back to one’s ethnic community, especially during conflict is a strong one. However, it needs to be stressed that ethnicity *per se* is not often the cause of conflict. Rather, it is, as Aapengnuo (2010, p. 1) argues, ‘a lever used by politicians to mobilise support across a wide political, racial and religious spectrum in pursuit of power, wealth and resources.’

Plateau State’s descent into orgies of conflict which has resulted in the losses of lives and property has been a subject of several academic studies (Danfulani, 2006; Ishaku, 2012). Several scholars have analysed the conflict (Galadima, 2010; Katu, 2016; Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Sule, 2015). No studies, to date, investigated how ethnicity has influenced newspaper coverage of the conflict, thus, this makes this study important. This thesis analyses the discursive strategies employed by conflict journalists, such as their news framing, rhetoric, propaganda, exaggeration, litotes, in their news construction and production, and how these

techniques might have led to the escalation of the conflict. This researcher had been concerned by the kind of language used in the newspapers in the coverage of the conflict (the use of negative stereotype, rhetoric to demonize the other ethnic group, and so on). He was equally aware of the capacity of language to further aggravate the conflict. Thus, it is essential to note that language is at the centre of any journalistic discourse, especially newspapers. It is used especially by writers in their construction of meaning (Carvalho, 2008). While language is good for the transmission of messages, language on its own is ineffective about how, for example, discourses are constructed. Van Dijk (2001) avows how language acquires power is contingent upon how powerful people make use of it.

Since the outbreak of the Plateau State conflict in September 2001, the media, especially the newspapers have been accused of its intensification (Danaan, 2017; Galadima, 2010; Ishaku, 2012; Katu, 2016; Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Segun & Ebenezer, 2013). Based on this, this researcher saw the need to critically examine the newspaper texts of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* (the two selected newspapers for this study). The study analyses headlines, editorials, opinion columns, new reports/articles, representation and categorisation of ethnic communities by journalists and how all this contributed to shaping the attitudes of readers. This is important especially against the backdrop of the striking newspaper reports produced by *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*, such as ‘Sons of the soil,’ ‘indigenes/settlers,’ ‘Berom militia,’ ‘Fulani mercenaries,’ among other negative, divisive stereotypes. Thus, understanding a discourse, as Fairclough (1995) asserted, is essential to the understanding of the meaning of the news and information that people read daily in the newspapers and in other news outlets. Writers use language creatively not only to foster ideology and exercise political power, but also to promote economic influence (Yusha’u, 2012).

Therefore, using the constructivist research paradigm, the conflict journalists of the two selected newspapers are studied to share their experiences on how they constructed and produced their news stories. The goal of this analysis is to find out the types of frames reporters and editors of the two newspapers selected in their news construction and production processes and to see if these frames are capable of fuelling conflict. Understanding this is crucial because, journalism like most other professions, such as law, medicine, accounting, among others, are guided by its code of ethics. This is necessary bearing in mind the plethora of complaints that trailed the media coverage of the conflict. Equally significant for this exploration is understanding the issue of the ownership and control of the newspapers, because ownership and control patterns of the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard* would determine the extent

to which the proprietors brought pressure to bear on their news staff and how that in turn influenced their news production.

## **1.2 Rationale for the Study**

A body of literature has established that the Highland Areas' (later became known as Plateau State) conflict dates to pre-colonial period (Ishaku, 2012; Mangvwat, 2013; Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010; Plotnicov, 1972). However, for over fifty years the state enjoyed peace and stability. Thus, it has been variously referred to as home of Peace and tourism, Plateau the beautiful, among several other epithets (Alubo, 2006; Danfulani, 2006; Ishaku, 2012; Kaigama, 2012). This long period of peace was disturbed by an outbreak of violence on September 7, 2001 which lingered on to when it worsened between 2010 and 2012 (Segun & Ebenezer, 2013). Although this researcher had not been engaged in its coverage or linked to any of the news media organisations that covered the conflict (including the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard*) he nonetheless was able to read and watch media reports on same with concern from 2001-2014. The conflict became a media event which attracted both local and international coverage. In the process of covering it, the media were accused by members of the public, especially ethnic communities engaged in the conflict, not just of bias but of intensifying the conflict through their coverage (Ishaku, 2012; Kaigama, 2012; Musa, 2011; Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010). Based on these catalogue of accusations and counter accusations about the media's unevenly reports or sometimes not at all, this researcher began to contemplate the possibility of doing a research to evaluate news media reports on the conflict with a view to finding out the media's role in its escalation, especially within the period under study (2010-2012). This became more necessary because this researcher had read with great concern how journalists constructed and produced their stories on the conflict (the use of exaggeration, propaganda, gory pictures of fatalities, among others). Having described earlier ethnic influence as a tool for rallying ethnic communities for a cause in Plateau State, to date, there has not been any study on how ethnicity influenced the newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict.

This researcher was privileged to have been part of an Inter-Religious Dialogue Committee (of the Catholic Church in Nigeria) that seeks to bring Christians and the practitioners of other religions, especially Muslims to dialogue towards mutual understanding and acceptance of one another. Similarly, the Church had another committee on Ecumenical Dialogue, which also seeks to foster understanding between the Catholic Church and Christians of other



denominations. The twin issues of religion and ethnicity at these fora often take the centre stage of discussion, especially after every episode of violent conflict in Plateau State or in nearby states. This researcher was therefore motivated by these privileged experiences to consider the possibility of doing a research on the role of ethnicity in the conflict since so much had been written on the religious dimension of the conflict.

### **1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study**

This research seeks to obtain and analyse data which will help provide a better understanding of how ethnicity influenced newspaper journalists' coverage of the Plateau State conflict. To achieve its aim, the research sets out the following key objectives:

- To undertake a critical evaluation of academic work in newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict.
- To determine ways in which ethnicity is articulated in newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict.
- To ascertain the extent to which ethnicity influenced the objectivity (balance) of journalists reporting conflict.
- To develop a conceptual/theoretical framework that contributes to knowledge on the influence of ethnicity in newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict.
- To provide a set of policy recommendations to the Nigeria Union of Journalist in Plateau State.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The following research questions arose from the need to close the gap in literature:

1. In what ways has ethnicity been manifested in the newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict?
2. How has journalists' ethnic background influenced the reporting of the Plateau State conflict?
3. What are the practice-based implications of the coverage of the Plateau State conflict from an ethnic perspective?

### **1.5 Research Methodology**

Taking into consideration the study's aim, objectives and research questions, qualitative research methodology is considered suitable and utilised because of the opportunities it offers

in understanding social actors and their lived experiences in terms of their feelings, attitudes and emotions, among others (Wener & Woodgate, 2013). The utility of the qualitative methodology in this thesis is rooted in its plausibility to elicit rich primary data from those being studied (reporters, editors and ethnic leaders). To obtain the necessary data for this study, literature, semi-structured in-depth interviews and textual analysis of the two selected newspapers (the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard*) were sought. The constructivist epistemology whose main interest is the construction and interpretation of meanings is applied in the research (Gunter, 2000). Human beings are social beings who have the capacity to make and interpret meanings based on their encounter or experience of the social world (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). Thus, the need to understand the complex ways in which reporters and editors selected for the study constructed and produced their news stories informed the choice of the constructivist epistemology and qualitative methodology aimed at sharing their views and experiences in the process (Creswell, 2014). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) which is both a theory and a method which aims to uncover how language is used as a social practice and how language also promotes the comprehension of social inequality (Van Dijk, 1993). However, in this research CDA is used only as a method to analyse newspaper content of the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard* with focus on such features as: headline news, editorials, news reports, and opinion columns. Three conceptual explanatory frameworks, namely, agenda setting, news framing and human rights orientated journalism (HRJ) are deployed. Specifically, news framing will be applied in the thematised analysis of the semi-structured interview data generated through some key journalists (reporters and editors) of the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard* newspapers and ethnic leaders of the communities who were engaged in the conflict. By employing the news framing model in the interview analysis, this researcher aims to highlight how journalists used certain discursive strategies, such as the news framing in their news construction and production and so to achieve their agenda or those of their ethnic communities. These three frameworks (agenda setting, news framing and human rights orientated journalism) are deployed in the discussion chapter which triangulates literature, textual and interview data.

## **1.6 Background to the Study**

The task of this research is to provide a better understanding on the influence of ethnicity in newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict. Although the conflict has been widely covered by both the Nigerian local and the international media (Danaan, 2017; Katu, 2016;

Musa & Ferguson, 2013), this thesis focuses on the roles played by newspaper conflict journalists of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* (the two newspapers selected for this study). Frere (2007), for example, has catalogued the alleged roles of the news media allegedly fuelling ethnic-based conflicts, particularly in eastern Europe and Africa. The Rwanda genocide of 1994 was because of the manipulation of historical myths and grievances by the Hutu extremists and broadcast on the radio that led to the massacre of Tutsis and moderate Hutus. In Kenya, the political elite, using the media, disseminated ethnic hate contents that were largely targeted at ethnic communities (Beyene, 2012; M'Bayo, 2005; Mwakigagile, 2001). Many scholars, such as Galadima (2010) and Musa (2011), have described how Plateau State had been enmeshed in violent episodes of conflict that have left in its wake trails of destruction of lives and property. Efforts over the years at federal, state and local government levels, as well as by nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and religious bodies at finding solutions to the conflict, in one of Nigeria's more ethnically plural states, have not yielded substantial results. Plateau State, which is one of the 36 states in Nigeria, is home to over 40 ethnic communities (Alubo, 2006; Best, 2007). As at the 2006 census, Plateau State's population was 3, 206, 531 million (National Population Commission, 2006) (to date, no census had been conducted). With a population of over 3 million, it makes the state the 26<sup>th</sup> most populous (out of 36) in Nigeria. The state is strategically located in the central Nigerian area known as the Middle Belt (see Figure 1). The discovery of tin on the Jos Plateau around 1900 in commercial quantities and the construction of the eastern railway from Kaduna junction to Jos in 1927, in addition to its attractive cold weather led to a mass influx of diverse ethnic groups into the state (International Crisis Group, 2012; Ishaku, 2012; Mangvwat, 2013; Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010).



Figure 1: *Gate-way to Jos, the Plateau State Capital* ([www.africanresearchinstitute.org](http://www.africanresearchinstitute.org)).

Extant research literature on the Plateau State conflict discussed the conflict from different viewpoints: political, economic, ethno-religious, and social, including the role of the media system (Galadima, 2010; Gofwen & Ishaku, 2006; Higazi, 2011; Katu, 2016; Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Segun & Ebenezer, 2013). Yet, to date, none had discussed the conflict based on the influence of ethnicity in newspaper journalists' coverage of the conflict. The need to close this gap in knowledge formed the basis of this research project. Nigeria is a country with a long history of conflicts. Alubo (2006) listed some of the major conflicts in Nigeria including: the Ijaw and Itsekiri communal conflicts in Delta State (1999); indigenes/Settlers in Kafanchan, Kaduna State (1999); cattle Fulani and farmers in Karin Lamido (1999); Hausa settlers versus Yoruba indigenes (1999); Ijaw and the Ilaje in Ondo State (1999); the Aguleri Umuleri over land in Anambra State (1999); Eleme and Okrika communities in Rivers State (2000); protests over kerosene pump price increase in Lagos State (2000); clash between police and market crowds in Katsina State (2002); and clashes between supporters of two political parties

(Peoples' Democratic Party and All Nigeria's Peoples' Party) (PDP), the Niger Delta militants against the Nigerian state over greater access to the oil wealth (1997-2010); Boko Haram Islamic militants against the Nigerian state (2009-to date); Fulani herdsmen against various ethnic farming communities in the country (Kaduna, Benue, Taraba, Adamawa, Plateau States), among others.

As the three levels of government in Nigeria (federal, state and local governments) began to fall apart and the Nigerian leadership became increasingly distant from the ordinary citizen, political institutions, such as the police, judiciary, and civil service, literally fell apart in the 1980s, citizens became more than ever disillusioned and began to vent their frustrations on one another. It is the failure of the Nigerian political leadership to address these issues that often degenerate into full blown conflict. Echoing similar concern on the Sierra Leone conflict of 2000, Alao (2001) declared that due to negligence by the political administration to quickly reconcile the country and to address grievances, particularly within the armed forces further fighting erupted between 1998 and April 1999. It was, therefore, to be expected that the unattended struggle over scarce arable land (because some portion had been destroyed due to tin mining activities); the long-standing animosities over ethnic differences; fear of domination; rising unemployment; perceived injustice in policy formulation by the British colonial government between 1900 and 1960; grazing rights; political positions and uneasy relationships between the many diverse ethnic communities in the state would deepen, especially with the return to democratic rule in 1999 (Boucher, Landis, & Clark, 1987; International Crisis Group, 2012).

Although these were factors that were either responsible for sparking off the conflict or their escalation, as stated above, this thesis only examined the influence of ethnicity in newspaper journalists' coverage and asserted that it was a major force in the conflict in Plateau State. This is because, ethnicity, more than any other form of identity, is the strongest in Plateau State (Galadima, 2010; Samuel, 2012). This study further draws attention to the ethnic compositions that make up the political entity Plateau State. Among the indigenous ethnic communities are: Amo, Afizere, Anaguta, Buji, Berom, Ngas, Taroh, Mwaghavul, Pengana, Piem, Youm, Gamai, Pan, Mirniang, Kwalla, Ganawuri, Ron, Mushere, Kulere, among others. Among the settler groups in the state are: Tiv, Yoruba, Idoma, Igala, Ishekiri, Jukun, Hausa, Fulani, Gwari, Kanuri, Kagoro, Bajju, Igbo, and some nationals from Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Ghana (Mangvwat, 2013; Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010; Segun & Ebenezer, 2013).

## **1.7 Statement of the Problem**

Scholarly discourses on the Plateau State conflict and its multi-dimensional nature have been well documented (Alubo, 2006; Galadima, 2010; Gofwen & Ishaku, 2006; Higazi, 2011; International Crisis Group, 2012; Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010; Segun & Ebenezer, 2013). Their perspectives on the conflict ranged from political, economic, ethno-religious, and social analysis. Despite these efforts, there is still a serious lack of knowledge regarding the influence of ethnicity on the reporting decisions of the newspaper journalists on the Plateau State conflict. Indeed, studies that have been undertaken on the role of the media in conflicts in Plateau State have tended to generalize the conflicts. For example, Galadima's (2010) work on the press, identity politics and conflict management in northern Nigeria focuses on how these identities (ethnic, political, religious), among other identity forms were used by the media to galvanise support for a cause. Musa's (2011) study is based on the religious dimension of the conflict and the patterns of newspaper coverage based on the north/south divide. The implication of this is that since most of the reporters and editors the researcher (Musa) selected may not have been exposed to the conflict they reported long enough, nor all resided in Plateau State (the theatre of conflict), since journalists are routinely posted to other states on assignments. For this reason, they may lack the requisite knowledge of the state in terms of their politics, religions, cultures, histories, traditions and so on. While the work of Katu (2016) surveys the synergy between the media and conflict audiences in information dissemination in the Plateau State conflict and not on journalists as content creators/producers.

## **1.8 Scope of the Research**

This thesis concerns itself only with how ethnicity has influenced newspaper journalists' coverage of the conflict in Plateau State in north-central Nigeria. The study has been delimited to cover only the period 2010-2012 and it selected two newspapers (*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*) from a pool of other Nigerian general interest newspapers for the following reasons:

Firstly, the period of study (2010-2012) was deliberately selected as it is believed that it was at this period that the conflict escalated significantly (Ishaku, 2012; Segun & Ebenezer, 2013).

Secondly, although there are many general interest newspapers in Nigeria, but *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* were selected from the pool of those newspapers, since they are

among the widely read papers in the region and are nearest to the conflict environment. This researcher wanted to find out the extent to which ethnicity influenced newspaper coverage of the conflict and the implications of this.

## **1.9 Operational Definition of Terms**

The terms and concepts listed below were used in the thesis.

### **1.9.1 Newspaper Coverage**

News by definition, is first-hand information about recent happenings, events or issues published in print (newspaper or magazine), broadcast (radio or television) or online media in any given location in a country or the world (Asemah, 2011). News is, as Akinfeleye (2011, p. 95) puts it, ‘an account of what the public wants to know, what they must know, what they ought to know, and as a public service or commercial proposition.’ However, newspaper is any paper printed or a collection of printed sheet of paper produced at regular intervals, usually daily or weekly that contains public news or intelligence or the occurrences of any statement principally to be distributed for sale and made available to the reading audience, primarily advertise for the society (Asemah, 2011; Coker, 1962; Sambe, 2008). The term, as Sambe (2008) avows, covers a wide range of publications, for example, small weekly to a large metropolitan daily where it involves a large workforce and a daily circulation of over a hundred thousand copies. In this research it describes the way in which a subjective phenomenon, event, issue or occurrence is reported or treated in the newspaper. In this context, it refers to the coverage of conflict by the two selected newspapers (the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard*) for this study of the Plateau State conflict.

### **1.9.2 News Media Professionals**

The term ‘media’ is used in different senses. However, two utilisations are particularly important here. First, media could be used to refer to the different instruments of mass communication, for instance, newspaper, radio and television. Second, media could mean not the actual types of communication, but in the words of Mitchell (2007, pp. 5-6), ‘describe the institutions and communities of journalists, editor and other professionals who make the communication industry.’ However, in this thesis media refer to the first, that is, the different forms of communications (newspaper, radio, and television), thus used in its plural form rather than in its singular. The notion ‘Media Professionals’ describes journalists (reporters, correspondents, editors and other news professionals) who are engaged in various acts of news

production and distribution of reports on recent information to the reading or viewing public. The notion news media professionals are synonymous with news media journalists. Journalists are referred to as news media professionals because they give expert and professional views on issues and events through their editorials, opinion columns, features, and commentaries. Thus, the conception as used in this thesis refers to reporters, correspondence, and editors in general, but especially of the two selected newspapers (*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*) who are also referred to as content creators and developers.

### **1.9.3 Conflict**

Conflict, according to the Oxford Dictionary, is a disagreement, battle, war, or collision that results in negative consequences. It is an escalated competition that results in some form of armed fighting, war or a struggle that distorts the natural order of things between contrasting interests, aims or principles of two or more groups that can even destroy a society or a system (Meyers, 1993). Thus, conflict is a part of human existence whose objective is to gain advantage in the pursuit of such variables as power, interest, resource, and needs and at least one of the groups believes that the dimension of the relationships is mutually irreconcilable. When such disagreements occur between two or more parties it could lead to hostile actions that can be detrimental to other party or parties in the conflict. Therefore, conflict in the context of this research is used to denote the violent confrontations, state of opposition or hostilities against adversaries which involves the use of forces directed against another (Feliks, 1966; Wright, 1990). Here, the conflict often occurs violently between the Plateau State indigenous ethnic communities and the settler ethnic group (Hausa/Fulani) within a certain geographical location, which in this case is Plateau State in north-central Nigerian.

### **1.9.4 Conflict Journalist**

The concept 'Journalist' generally refers to reporters, writers, editors and columnists who work for the mainstream or online media such as newspaper, television, radio, magazines, or news websites (Sambe, 2008). A journalist gathers information and presents the information in a logical, coherent and interesting sequence. The journalists understands the peculiarity of the different types of writings within the journalism profession in his/her reports (Sambe, 2008). However, the term conflict journalist is used here to distinguish reporters and editors whose beat is conflict-reporting, that is, specialised reporting (which is a genre of journalism that can be described as the job of in-depth reporting on an issue over a period) is the reporting of the Plateau State conflict in north-central Nigeria which has spanned nearly twenty years. Thus,



this differentiates the conflict journalist from other categories of journalists of both *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* newspapers, such as health, education, political, religious, current affairs, and agriculture journalists. The conflict journalists were those reporters and editors whose views and perspectives on the conflict this researcher sought on the Plateau State conflict within the period this thesis (2010-2012).

### **1.9.5 Indigenes/Settlers**

Indigeneity is not only a Nigerian or African problem, but it is a global one. The last five hundred years have witnessed large movements of people and cattle, especially on the African continent. This large movement of people which has led to the dichotomisation of people either as indigenes or settlers has caused, principally, by the quest for a better living or are a creation of colonial powers (Britain, French, Belgium and Portuguese) (Rothchild, 1997). Danfulani (2006) has argued that the indigene/settler phenomenon is a common feature in Nigeria. To buttress this, he cites examples of some of the indigenes/settlers' conflicts in Nigeria to include: Modakeke/Ife, Sabon Gari/Kano, Sabo/Ibadan, Zango/Kataf, Urhobo/Itsekiri, Jukun/Tiv, Kuteb/Jukun-Chamba and Hausa/Shagamu. Indigenes are the first to have settled permanently in an area and who are often considered as 'natives'. Based on this definition, such ethnic groups have rights to lands, culture and tradition. [...] settlers, on the other hand, are those whose parents or grandparents left their native home to, in this case Plateau State as a fixed home, domiciled there as of choice for life, or who is ignorant about from where his family moved to Plateau State permanently in search of a better life or in the process of his or her business' (Fiberesima, 1994, p. 25). The contestation to assert supremacy over a place by an ethnic group over the others is precisely what has led to the dichotomisation (indigenes/settlers) syndrome (Alubo, 2006; Nnoli, 2008). Therefore, within the context of this study, indigenes here refer to Plateau State ethnic communities, such as Anaguta, Afizere, Berom Buji, Ngas, Ron, Taroh, Gamai, Mwaghavul and Mirnyang. While the settler ethnic groups, especially the ones which sometime are in conflict are the Hausa/Fulani group.

### **1.9.8 Ethnicity**

The term ethnicity, in the views of Nnoli (2008), is a complex concept, because, as Mano (2008) has explained, the notion overlaps with race. Based on its complex nature, ethnicity is seen in Africanist circles as a problem. But Chabal and Daloz (1999, p. 56), see ethnicity 'as a dynamic, multi-faceted and interactive cluster of changeable self-validated attributes of individual-cum-collective identities.' Ethnicity is a social issue connected with the identity of members of the

largest possible competing communities (ethnic groups) striving to protect and promote their interest within a political context. The common relevant features may be variables such as: language, culture, race, religion and/or shared history (Nnoli, 2008). Ethnicity serves as a rallying pole around which groups can assemble and compete effectively for state-controlled economic resources, power, positions, contracts, awards, and constitutional protections (Rothchild, 1997). However, this study conceptualises ethnicity as the characteristic features of a group of people who consider themselves distinct from other groups, idiosyncrasies based on tradition, culture, language, food, dress and way of life, and a collective cultural tradition, such as ‘myths, memories, values and symbols.’ It is the intuitive perception of shared origins, historical memories, ties, and aspirations (Mano, 2015; Rothchild, 1997; Smith, 1986, p. 15). In this research, it is applied to the ‘indigenes’ (Afizere, Anaguta, Buji, Berom, Mwachavul, Ngas, Gamai, Pan, Taroh, and other ethnic communities in the state), and to the ‘settler’ ethnic communities, such as the Hausa/Fulani which are sometimes in conflict.

## **1.10 Description of Thesis Chapters**

In the light of the need to close the gap in literature the thesis has the following chapters:

**Chapter Two** reviews relevant literature on the Plateau State conflict by providing an historical account of the evolution of the press, tracing its missionary, colonial, foreign, government and private ownerships and the pivotal roles they played in both the fight for independence and post-independence political development of Nigeria. The emergence of Plateau State, the conflict environment for this study, its ethnic compositions and complexities, how British colonial policies accentuated and stratified ethnicity in Nigeria and how these policies were instrumental in the violent spate of conflicts in Plateau State are outlined in the chapter. This hopes to provide a better understanding in the thesis of how colonial policies set the ethnic tone that would later affect every facet of life in Nigeria, especially the media system.

**Chapter Three** details the three conceptual explanatory frameworks which this thesis deployed: agenda setting, news framing and human rights orientated journalism. These models are considered suitable for this exploration on the influence of ethnicity in newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict in north-central Nigeria. The application of these explanatory frameworks in the thesis aims to contribute to a new conceptual understanding of the role of ethnicity in newspaper coverage of the conflict.

**Chapter Four** outlines the methodological approaches utilised for the study. The research employed the constructivist worldview that enabled the researcher to understand how journalists through their interaction with the social world constructed their news reports. Critical Discourse Analysis as a method only is used for the analysis of the selected newspapers texts. Semi-structured interviews were used to elicit primary data from some key journalists (reporters and editors), while news framing model was used to analyse the semi-structured interview data organised based on themes. This chapter, therefore, explains the research methodology and designs used to achieve the thesis' aim and objectives, as well as help to answer the research questions.

**Chapter Five** maps out and presents analyses of textual content. In mapping out the texts of the selected newspapers, six of the eleven-steps guide to doing Foucauldian genealogical discourse analysis were selected and used to create themes. Van Dijk's (2001) discourse-cognition-society triangle methodology was then used to analyse the newspaper content. The chapter explains how the themes were identified, analysed and presented and how the findings would help to answer the research questions of the thesis emerged from the texts.

**Chapter Six** analyses data obtained from some key journalists (reporters and editors) and some ethnic leaders via semi-structured interviews using the news framing model. Interview questions are used as themes for the analysis. Findings from the analysis of the interview data will be important in answering the aim and the research questions of the thesis.

**Chapter Seven** discusses findings from newspaper content, literature and interview data. The news framing, agenda setting, and human rights orientated journalism models are used to complement, triangulate and reinforce evidence in the discussion. Discussions in this chapter led to some important findings in the thesis, leading to the presentation of the Human Rights Consciousness Journalism model. The findings also help to answer the thesis' research questions, aim and objectives.

**Chapter Eight** provides conclusions on the thesis on the influence of ethnicity in newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict in north-central Nigeria. It also highlights the study's contribution to knowledge and areas where future investigation may consider.

## **1.11 Conclusion**

In the last two decades, Plateau State has witnessed avalanches of ethnic-based conflicts that have resulted in monumental losses of lives and property. A body of literature on the state's

conflict has investigated this phenomenon from political, economic, ethno-religious to media and conflict audiences (Alubo, 2006; Danaan, 2017; Danfulani, 2006; Galadima, 2010; Ishaku, 2012; Kaigama, 2012; Katu, 2016; Musa, 2011; Musa & Ferguson, 2013), but, to date, no literature has analysed the conflict based on how ethnicity influenced newspaper conflict journalists' of the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard* coverage of it. The demand to close this gap in knowledge has precipitated this enquiry. To achieve this goal, therefore, the study has outlined its aim, objectives and research questions which it hopes to provide answers to. The thesis is guided by three conceptual explanatory frameworks, namely, agenda setting, news framing and human rights orientated journalism. Consistent with the exploratory nature of the research, the constructivist research epistemology and qualitative methodology are noted and utilised to understand how conflict journalists framed, produced and interpreted their meanings based on their own experience of the social world. Literature, textual content and semi-structured interview data are elicited and analysed using critical discourse analysis, agenda setting, news framing and human rights orientated journalism as tools. This thesis is, therefore, significant because it will potentially contribute to the literature on war, peace and conflict in Plateau State and in Nigeria.

# Chapter Two: Research Methodology

There are only two forces that can carry light to all the corners of the globe...the sun in the heavens and the Associated Press down here.

Mark Twain.

## 2.1 Introduction

This methodology chapter appraises the approach this research utilised for the enquiry on the influence of ethnicity in newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict. It describes the epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods that underpin this thesis. It details the processes that led to their selection, their rationale and how they are used to answer the study's research questions.

## 2.2 Research Epistemology

Scientific studies are generally rooted on different epistemologies (that is the theory of knowledge) as they seek ways to acquire knowledge, such as constructivism, positivism, objectivism, subjectivism (Wener & Woodgate, 2013). However, this enquiry on the influence of ethnicity in newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict is underpinned by the constructivist epistemology because for this researcher, knowledge is gained through the construction of meaning. Selecting a suitable epistemological position in any research, especially one that is exploratory in nature, such as this, is important, because it determines its methodology. For example, Creswell (2014) suggests that researchers planning a proposal should, first of all, make explicit the larger philosophical ideas they adopt. This is because the choice of an epistemological view determines also the suitable research approach to utilise. In describing the philosophical basis of any research, Pathirage, Amaratunga, and Haigh (2008) contend that there are three levels to consider: epistemology, ontology and axiology. First, epistemology details the researcher's knowledge about the reality and assumptions about the way knowledge should be obtained and accepted. Second, ontology describes what knowledge is and assumption about reality. Third, axiology illustrates the quality or values that are ascribed to knowledge.

Therefore, following the advice of Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Lowe (2002), which is that, although neglecting to consider philosophical issues may not prove catastrophic, it may,

however, affect the integrity and the quality of the enquiry, which is essential to the idea of research design. Thus, the two opposing epistemological positions, that is, positivism and constructivism are discussed here.

### **2.2.1 Positivism**

Research underpinned by positivism has long been the source of data for the natural sciences (Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2007a; Pathirage et al., 2008; Silverman, 2006). Therefore, this perspective is connected directly to quantitative research methodologies. The positivist position is, essentially rooted in the notion that the social world exists externally to the researcher and that its core properties can and should be measured mainly through observations or by objective approach. In other words, this approach to research believes that knowledge is not constructed but discovered. Gray (2014) captures its tenets thus: reality is made up of what is known to the senses; enquiries should be based on science and not on speculations (philosophy); and both natural and human sciences agree when dealing with facts and not with values. The positivist assumption, in the views of Creswell (2014), very much aligns itself more with the quantitative than with the qualitative research. Creswell further posits that the positivist assumption is synonymous with the scientific method. Thus, this method, which the positivist holds as the accepted approach to research, begins with a theory, data generation that either supports or refutes the theory, may lead to revision or conduct of more tests until a satisfactory outcome is achieved. Laing (1967), a fierce critic of the positivist viewpoint argues that human beings are differentiated from non-humans through their experience of the social world, because humans construct meanings through their social interactions with it, while non-humans do not. This position, in Laing's view, marks the epistemological foundations of research. Therefore, this study found the positivist epistemological view to be incompatible with this study because it saw knowledge as independent of the social actor, hence, not suitable for exploring how journalists constructed and interpreted meanings based on their experiences of the Plateau State conflict.

### **2.2.2 Constructivism**

Constructivism, otherwise known as social constructivism is the position that informs the epistemological perspective of this study. Bryman (2004, p. 17) defined constructivism as 'an ontological position which asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors.' In other words, for the constructivist, meanings are socially constructed by social actors based on their experience of the world. The constructivists'

epistemology is oriented towards qualitative research methodologies. The constructivist perspective contrast sharply to the philosophical view of the positivist, which asserts that truth and meaning reside in objects independent of the social actor (Creswell, 2007a; Crotty, 2003). The constructivist argues that reality is not objective, but socially constructed and it is given meaning by social actors (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). This notion also reflects the views of those scholars from the intellectual tradition, who dislike the use of scientific method to the study of the social world (Bryman, 2008). Enquiry of the social world requires a different methodology, which in Bryman's view, reflects the uniqueness of social actors as opposed to the natural order. It follows, therefore, as Bryman contends, social phenomena are not only produced, but are constantly being corrected. In other words, people create and interpret meanings based on their lived experiences or contact with the social world (Crotty, 2003).

The constructivist believes that people generally seek understanding of the social world in which they operate (Creswell, 2013). It is against this backdrop that this researcher sought to share from the interviewees' (newspaper reporters and editors) unique experiences in their coverage of the Plateau State conflict. Based on this, therefore, positivism was not a suitable research tool for this study because it separates the social world and the researcher. Constructivism, on the other hand, emphasised that social actors interact and interpret their social world and reality. In the views of Crotty (2003), this epistemological view avows that, although objects may exist independent of the social actor, meaning does not. Thus, this researcher's choice of the constructivist epistemology, essentially, was to make sense of or interpret the meanings the interview participants have constructed about the Plateau State conflict (Creswell, 2014). Constructivism has three main assumptions as outlined by Crotty (2003): social actors construct meanings and interpret them based on their own experience with the social world; social actors also engage with the social world and attempt to make sense of it based on their historical contexts; the process of generating meaning is always social based on interaction, that is, the researcher generates meaning from the field based on their contact with social actors. Therefore, qualitative researchers often seek to understand the setting of the participants through visiting them in their respective environments. In other words, constructivist epistemological position is based on the notion that the strategy that is needed respects the differences between humans and objects of natural sciences, which requires social scientists to, of necessity, have a profound knowledge of the subjective meaning of social actor (Bryman, 2004). The primary goal of constructivism is to understand how people construct meanings based on their experiences: culturally, historically and institutionally, which, Crotty

(2003) and Creswell (2007b) believe are crucial for the researcher to gain an understanding of the phenomenon that is being studied.

From the above, the two schools of thought (positivist and constructivist) and their epistemological positions are clear; the positivist researcher, who asserts that meanings are discovered is oriented towards the quantitative research methodologies, and deductive reasoning (proceeds from theory, method, data, findings), is linked to the natural sciences. This study was aimed primarily at eliciting rich data from newspaper reporters and editors of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* who covered the Plateau State conflict. This researcher chose the social constructivist epistemology for this research, because, as it has already been noted, meaning is not objective, but socially constructed (Crotty, 2003). The constructivist epistemology is oriented towards qualitative research methodology, aligned to the inductive reasoning (proceeds from method, data, findings, theory). Following the suggestion of Creswell (2007b) that a qualitative researcher should create a close rapport with the subjects that s/he studies, this researcher was able to establish relationships with the interview participants in their natural settings (homes, offices and field through doing interviews with them). Through this process the researcher could see things from their (interview participants') own perspectives; how they created and interpreted meanings based on their experiences of social reality (Robson & McCartan, 2016) (see Table 1). From this discussion as detailed in this section which concerns conflict journalists' knowledge and the reports they produced could then lead to theory (inductive research).



	<b>Positivism</b>	<b>Constructionism</b>
The Observer	Must be independent	Is part of what is being observed
Human interest	Should be irrelevant	Are main drivers of the science
Explanations	Must demonstrate causality	Aim to increase general understanding of the situation
Research progress through	Hypotheses and deduction	Gathering rich data from which ideas are induced
Concepts	Need to be operationalised so that they can be measured	Should incorporate participant perspectives
Unity of analysis	Should be reduced to the simplest terms	May include the complexity of 'whole' situation
Generalisation through	Statistical probability	Theoretical abstraction
Sampling requires	Large numbers selected randomly	Small numbers of cases chosen purposively for specific reason

Table 1: *Contrasting Epistemological Positions of Positivism and Constructivism* ( Adopted from Easterby-Smith et al., 2002, & modified by the researcher).

### **2.3 Theoretical Perspectives**

A major feature of a research, in the opinions of Betts and lansley (1993), is the presence of a strong theory. Theory is described as a complex web of hypotheses aimed at conceptualising and clarifying a specific social or natural phenomena (Gill & Johnson, 2010). Gill and Johnson claim that each hypothesis highlights a declaration between two or more terms in an explanatory way. Krausz and Miller (1974, p. 4), on their part, explained that notions or concepts are building blocks of theories and hypothesis, such as 'abstract, ideas which are used to clarify together things one or more common properties.' Thus, theory is detailed as the following: model, framework and collection of propositions or hypotheses, for explanation and for the comprehension of an event. It is, therefore, essential to note that framework is a pre-theory which could be used as a replacement for a theory. Theoretical perspectives are different from research epistemology; whereas theoretical perspectives, as already explained by Gill and Johnson, is a network of hypotheses put forward to explain a social or natural occurrence,

research epistemology, on the other hand, describes knowledge in its varied forms, which are crucial to determining the choice of research approach.

Remenyi, Williams, Money, and Swartz (1998), for example, in their work made two contrasting distinctions between empirical and theoretical research. For them, empiricism is premised on the idea that proof, as opposed to discourse, is required to make a valid claim to add to the body of knowledge. Thus, empiricists venture into the social world (real life situations) and collect related proof or evidence and on that basis they will make a judgement that something of value has been added to the body of knowledge. While the theorist, in contrast, will work on writings of other scholars through discourse using intellectual abilities, construct a new view of situation which may be regarded as a new theory. Remenyi and his colleagues posited that at the end the theorist’s enquiry conclusions are drawn and claim that the study has contributed to the body of knowledge. The reality is that there are theoretical premises associated with the collection of data and there is always proof that underpins theory. This, Pathirage et al. (2008) argued, provides an understanding of the processes by which social and natural science theories are constructed, evaluated and justified. This processes distinguishes between two research approaches, that is, research methods that are deductive and those that are inductive (see Table 2). This study on the influence of ethnicity in newspaper journalists’ coverage of the Plateau State conflict is guided by inductive reasoning.

<b>Deduction</b>	<b>Induction</b>
Moving from theory to data	Moving from data to theory
Common with natural sciences	Common with social sciences
A highly-structured approach	Flexible structure to permit changes
Explain causal relationships between variables	Understanding of meanings humans attach to events
Select samples of sufficient size to generalise conclusions	Less concern with the need to generalise

Table 2: *Differences between Deductive and Inductive Approaches to Research* (Adopted from Saunders et al., 2012, pp., & modified by the researcher).

This researcher believes that the influence of ethnicity in newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict is a multidimensional construct understood through the development of ideas from the three conceptual explanatory frameworks noted and utilised in this research, namely, agenda setting, news framing and human rights orientated journalism respectively. These explanatory frameworks provide this researcher with the necessary complementary theoretical tools for the understanding of how conflict journalists constructed news reports and contextualised media discourses regarding the conflict. Although these conceptual explanatory frameworks have been discussed in chapter three in detail, they will be explained briefly here. The inherent power of the media enables them to influence the members of the audience. Through their conscious and deliberate selections of news frames the media set agenda for their readers or viewers by the prominence and emphasis they put on issues via commentaries, editorials, headline news, opinion columns, among others. Framing is the process by which journalists as content developers consciously and deliberately select some aspects of a perceived reality and exclude some others that become the story of their real world. As journalists are engaged in these well-thought-out decisions of selecting and exclude frames in their news construction and production, they set agenda(s) for their would-be readers. Human rights orientated journalism has as its focus the prevention of conflict before they erupt. It does this, primarily, by exploring the underlying causative factors that could potentially become triggers of conflict. Since this approach to journalism challenges rather than reinforce the status quo it can give early warnings of conflicts and other security threats. Overall, human rights orientated journalism is mindful of the kinds of frames it selects in order not to create or escalate conflicts.

## **2.4 Research Methodology: Qualitative**

Considering this study's research questions, objectives, epistemology (social constructivism) and theoretical perspectives (inductive), conceptual explanatory frameworks (agenda setting, news framing and human rights orientated journalism), ideographic methodology (idealist), it adopts the qualitative research methodology as a suitable tool for this enquiry (Crotty, 2003). Qualitative methodology is the adopted research methodology for the exploration of newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict, because qualitative methodology is exploratory in nature. In addition, qualitative methodologies have gained popularity and respectability among social science scholars because of the opportunities they offer in understanding social actors in their lived experiences, in terms of their attitudes, feelings, and emotions (Wener & Woodgate,

2013). Both social and natural science researches are founded on two major research categories: qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Each of these two methodologies is tailored toward answering a different type of research question (Polkinghorne, 2005; Walker, 1987). Scholars, like Gill and Johnson (2010) have argued that research methods can either take nomothetic (realist) or ideographic (idealist) ontologies (see Figure 6). In their views, Gill and Johnson reasoned that the nomothetic approach to research uses quantitative methods for data analysis, while the ideographic approach, on the other hand, which is qualitative deals with the analysis of subjective accounts, got through the researcher’s interaction with lived experiences. Based on this description, therefore, the nomothetic research approach is oriented towards the natural sciences, while the ideographic is used in the social sciences. Furthermore, it follows also that the nomothetic research approach is aligned towards deductive reasoning, while the ideographic approach is aligned towards the inductive reasoning (see Table 3). Easterby-Smith et al. (2002) explained that understanding the relationship that exist between research philosophy and methods is important for three reasons: it helps the researcher to make a more concrete choice about the research design; it is also important in determining, which research design best suits what work; understanding the various research positions helps the researcher to adopt research designs based on the limitations of the different knowledge structures.

<b>Nomothetic Methods Emphasise</b>	<b>Ideographic Methods Emphasise</b>
Deduction	Induction
Explanation via analysis of causal relationship	Explanation of subjective meaning systems
Generation and use of quantitative data	Generation and use of qualitative data
Testing of hypothesis	Commitment to research in everyday setting
Highly structured	Minimum structure

Table 3: *A comparison between Monothetic and Ideographic Methods* (Adopted from Gill & Johnson, 2010).

The main preoccupation of qualitative research lies in its ability to record everyday life experiences of social actors, such as their attitudes, feelings, actions and thoughts. To achieve this, Ezeifika (2010) contends that qualitative researchers generally use field research procedures to record what people say or do. The qualitative research methodology will be used to understand the complex strategies which conflict journalists employed in their news construction and production in Plateau State.

Seeking an understanding of the complex ways in which journalists produced news and the methods they used in their coverage of the Plateau State conflict informed the choice of the qualitative research methodology. This approach is particularly appropriate in providing depth of understanding and interpretation of the news produced by the journalists, especially on an intricate issue such as the influence of ethnicity in newspaper coverage of the conflict. Based on this, the qualitative research methodology was employed to elicit the perspectives of interview participants. Thus, by eliciting the perspectives of those being researched (reporters and editors), qualitative research methods enhanced the validity of the information being collected by the researcher to compare their own perceptions of reality with the perceptions of others who are being researched (Palinkas, 2014; Sofaer, 1999). This researcher employed semi-structured in-depth interviews in qualitative research to obtain primary data from the reporters and editors who covered the conflict for the purposes of examining their meanings and perceptions aimed at gaining better insights into the processes of their news construction, since semi-structured interviews are the most popular in qualitative research (DiCco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). However, the actual interpretation and making sense of the data from the reporters was left to the researcher. This approach is in keeping with the suggestion of Warren and Karner (2005, cited in DiCco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006) that research in general requires some form of qualitative interviewing which motivates the interviewee to share rich descriptions of incidents while leaving the interpretation to the researcher. Hence, this researcher used the agenda setting, news framing and human rights orientated journalism conceptual frameworks to analyse, interpret and make sense of the primary data generated through semi-structured interviews. The researcher makes an interpretation of the information s/he generates for detailed descriptions as well as specific contexts from the participant's point of views, rather than from the researcher's point of view (Creswell, 2013). This is because the interview participant is the expert whose experience of the phenomenon is being sought by the researcher, and it is important that the interpretation and ascribing of meanings be done bearing this in mind.

This also affords this researcher another opportunity to observe their behaviour, attitudes, and mannerism of the participants within a face-to-face situation (Silverman, 2007). Thus, this researcher used the qualitative research methodology and engaged reporters, editors and ethnic leaders in Plateau State selected for this enquiry. Through this methodology, the researcher hopes to gain insights into the experiences of the participants, especially as it pertained to their methods of news construction, production and consumption. Hence, the interview sessions, not only generated the rich data the researcher got, but also provided opportunity for the researcher to compare the data of all the interview participants and their experiences of covering the phenomenon studied. This interview data will be used to complement the newspaper contents of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* already selected for this study and see how the data will allow this researcher to understand the thesis' aim and objectives.

The qualitative research methodologies seeks to discover and explore phenomenon that is either new or little is known about (Walker, 1987). In other words, as Walker asserts, there is no a priori hypotheses, unlike the quantitative research methodologies where the phenomenon is already known, or something is known about it and the research being undertaken is only aimed at verifying the hypothesised relationship between the variables. For example, the Plateau State conflict is by no means a new phenomenon; studies have been done by various scholars (Alubo, 2006; Danfulani, 2006; Fwatshak, 2005a; Galadima, 2010; Ishaku, 2012; Kaigama, 2012; Katu, 2016; Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010) which viewed the phenomenon from ethno-religious, political, social to media audience assessment. But none has enquired on the issue of ethnicity in newspaper coverage of the conflict, which is the focus of this study.

From the above, there are benefits inherent in the use of qualitative research methodologies, especially as they seek to explore lived experiences of people (Denscombe, 2010; Traudt, 2005). However, it is imperative to state that the qualitative research methodologies, like others, are not flawless. In other words, they, too, have their shortcomings. Among the limitations of the qualitative research methodologies, as observed by quantitative researchers, are that, it is 'too impressionistic and subjective' (Bryman, 2008); they are difficult to replicate, because it is unstructured and often depends on the creativity of the qualitative researcher; the scope of the findings of qualitative enquiry is restricted; quantitative researchers have accused qualitative researchers of lack of transparency in their study's conclusion, because research reports are often unclear about how participant's or respondents were chosen for the interview (Bryman, 2008). Despite some of these criticisms against the qualitative research

methodologies, it has continued to be popular, especially within the domains of the social sciences and the humanities. In the views of Grbich (2007), qualitative methodologies are quite appropriate for the exploration of phenomenon and their data tend to take the form of a narrative. In addition, one of the benefits of the qualitative methodologies also lie in the fact that the views of participants, who are experts in the research are sought for and shared (Grbich, 2007). Therefore, the opportunities the qualitative research methodologies offer are well-suited for this study. Through the qualitative methodologies, this researcher probed as well as gained an understanding of the strategies which the journalists used in their news framing of their reports.

## **2.5 Critical Discourse Analysis as a Method for the Analysis of the Two Chosen Newspapers**

This section discusses what critical discourse analysis (CDA) is and its role in this thesis. Wodak (2001b, p. 1) explained that the notions ‘Critical Linguistics’ (CL) and ‘Critical Discourse Analysis’ (CDA) are used interchangeably. By its orientation, CDA is an approach whose main interest is in the relationship between language and power (Yusha’u, 2012). CDA is rooted in the domain of linguistics and sociolinguistics (Wooffitt, 2005). There is no single way of using critical discourse analysis (CDA) in research (Wodak & Meyer, 2001; Yusha’u, 2012). However, due to its interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary approaches, scholars (Chouliaraki, 2000; Richardson, 2007; Wodak, 2001a) have adjudged CDA to be both a theory and a method for the empirical research of the relationship between discourse and social, and cultural and development in different study fields (Fernandez Martinez, 2007). But in this study, CDA is used as a method only to analyse the textual contents of the two newspapers that have been selected, namely, *The Nigerian Standard* and the *Daily Trust* on the coverage of the Plateau State conflict to answer the three research questions. CDA is a technique of study whose main concern is to discover the structures used in messages (verbal, textual or conversational). The deployment of CDA as one of the methodological techniques for this thesis is based on the fact that is rooted in linguistic categories, such as the use of metaphors, idioms, clichés, vocabularies, hyperboles which is different from other techniques to discourse analyses, such as text and talk analysis (Meyer, 2001a). By its nature, ‘CDA does not constitute a well-defined empirical method, but rather, a cluster of approaches with a similar theoretical base’ (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 23). As a method, CDA does not have a clear procedure of data collection. Hence, different scholars use different methods within CDA for their research (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 2001b). Indeed, some CDA scholars, Wodak avows, do not even mention data

generation method. However, others who require it look within the cluster on the suitable tool to use. This explains why this researcher chose and used semi-structured interviews for the generation of the rich primary data. Worthy of note is the fact that CDA, as a method is interested, among other things, in discovering the relationship between dominance, power and ideology. It seeks to find out how language contributes to understanding social inequality. In the words of Chouliaraki (2000, cited in Yusha'u, 2012, p. 97), 'the methodological advantage of critical discourse analysis is its ability to bring together the discursive with the textual, through a conjunction of analysis of both text and its intertextual context.' CDA is a methodological technique, Ezeifika (2010) argued, in studies, such as systematic functional linguistics, argumentation theory, syntactic analysis using Chomskyan transformational generative grammar, rhetorical analysis, text linguistics, conceptual metaphor, among others. As a method, CDA is oriented towards the qualitative methodology as opposed to the quantitative, because the qualitative method, as noted earlier, seeks to interact with the social actor. Ezeifika further contended that when, for example, quantitative methodology was applied to the study of CDA its shortcomings were obvious because social practices, discursive formations and encyclopaedic cognition could not be described attaching numerical values to a substantial corpus of linguistic information.

Since CDA enjoys the distinction of having a cluster of approaches with similar methods, this researcher decided, for the analysis of textual reports to use Van Dijk's (2001) discourse-cognitive-society triangle CDA as the main framework, while agenda setting, news framing and human rights journalism as complimentary conceptual explanatory frameworks. CDA is considered highly important for the textual analyses of reports because it helps in the deconstruction of media discourses (texts), such as the negative stereotypical portrayals of some ethnic communities and their embedded meanings. The units of analysis are newspaper reports from the coverage of the Plateau State conflict by *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* (editorial, headline news, opinion columns, articles, and so on). The logic behind the choice of these two newspapers is because they are among the mostly widely read newspapers in the region (Middle Belt and core north) and their nearness to the conflict environment. The two papers also represent the interests of the ethnic communities in the conflict (the Plateau State's indigenous ethnic communities and the Hausa/Fulani group). This, therefore, is important because it enabled the researcher to observe the extent to which ethnicity influenced the framing of the conflict by the two newspapers.



Based on the research questions, epistemology (social constructivism), theoretical perspective (inductive), ideographic methods (idealist), methodology (qualitative) and Van Dijk's (2001) discourse-cognitive-society triangle methodological framework for the analyses of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* newspapers outlined here are going to help this researcher achieve the study's aim and objectives.

## **2.6 Research Methods**

For this enquiry on the influence of ethnicity in newspaper journalists' coverage of conflict in Plateau State, three sets of data were used: semi-structured interviews, textual content and literature. However, in this section the focus is on semi-structured interviews since the literature and textual contents have been discussed earlier.

### **2.6.1 Semi-Structured Interviews**

There are different kinds of qualitative interviews, depending on what the researcher sets out to achieve, such as structured, semi-structured, informal, and exploratory interviews. Among all these, the most commonly used methods are individual interviews (Denscombe, 2010; Patton, 2002). An interview is meant to generate information (or data) from the participants to gain knowledge on the issue being studied through verbal exchange (Gray, 2014). Interviews are usually conducted in a face-to-face situation that allows the investigator to ask questions and expects responses from the investigated (Walker, 1987). This research method allowed this researcher to observe the feelings, behaviours and attitudes of newspaper reporters and editors who covered and edited the reports on the conflict and probed them further for clarity (Gray, 2014).

### **2.6.2 Sampling Procedures**

In line with sampling procedures in research, interview participants for this research were purposively selected from a wider population of journalists and ethnic leaders in Plateau State (see Table 4). This is because there were many journalists who belonged to different newspaper organisations based in Plateau State but were not selected because the primary focus of this research is on *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*. Furthermore, it was not all the journalists of the two selected newspapers that were interviewed, only those whose beat were the coverage of the Plateau State conflict within the period studied (2010-2012) were interviewed for the purposes of data collection to help this researcher understand the conflict. In other words, the selection of the participants was not a product of chance; the researcher

carefully chose conflict reporters and editors of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* newspapers who covered the phenomenon, as opposed to other categories of journalists. These reporters, based on the advice of Merriam (2002), were chosen not only because the researcher believed he could understand the conflict from their perspectives, but learn significantly about their experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005). This, therefore, explains the reason the procedure is called purposeful sampling. Although the participants chosen were a sample of a population and the reason for their selection was to enable findings to be applied, it is worth noting that they were not selected because they fulfilled the representative requirements of statistical inference, but, because they were providing substantial contributions by their experience to the study (Polkinghorne, 2005). The sampling procedure allowed the researcher to ‘probe’ for more detailed responses on what the respondents have said and this also gave the researcher the flexibility to talk on the broad topic of the interview (Gray, 2014; Robson & McCartan, 2016). Thus, this procedure, enabled this researcher to some insights and to understand the lived experiences of the selected participants and the meanings they made of their experiences having been exposed adequately to the Plateau State conflict (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayfer, 2014; Seidman, 2013).

*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* newspapers were the two sources of data analysed. While *The Nigeria Standard* is a weekly paper, the *Daily Trust* is daily. The choice of the two papers, as earlier stated, was because they were among the most widely read in the region, they covered the conflict extensively based on their interests and nearness to the scene of the conflict. They also represent the Middle Belt and core north divide and they set the agenda for discourse in the region. The newspapers were analysed using the structure of Van Dijk’s (2001) discourse-cognition-society-triangle. It analysed the following: newspaper headlines, news, articles, features, opinion columns and editorials, to site the use of discursive strategies, such as framing, propaganda, hyperbole, litotes, and rhetoric, among others. The selection of content analysed was done purposively, that is, only those contents that helped the researcher understand the Plateau State conflict better within the period of the study.

### 2.6.3 Interview Respondents’ Classification

RESPONDENT	CODE	ASSIGNMENT	MEDIUM
Interview Respondent 1	IR 1	Editor	The Nigeria Standard

Interview Respondent 2	IR 2	Editor	The Nigeria Standard
Interview Respondent 3	IR 3	Reporter	The Nigeria Standard
Interview Respondent 4	IR 4	Reporter	The Nigeria Standard
Interview Respondent 5	IR 5	Reporter	The Nigeria Standard
Interview Respondent 6	IR 6	Editor	Daily Trust
Interview Respondent 7	IR 7	Editor	Daily Trust
Interview Respondent 8	IR 8	Reporter	Daily Trust
Interview Respondent 9	IR 9	Reporter	Daily Trust
Interview Respondent 10	IR 10	Reporter	Daily Trust
Interview Respondent 11	IEL 11	Hausa Leader	
Interview Respondent 12	IEL 12	Fulani Leader	
Interview Respondent 13	IEL 13	Taroh Leader	
Interview Respondent 14	IEL 14	Ron Leader	

Interview Respondent 15	IEL 15	Berom Leader	
Interview Respondent=IR	Interview Ethnic Leader=IEL		

Table 4: *Interview Respondents' Classification: Codes, Assignment & Medium (Researcher).*

## **2.7 Framework for Analyzing the two Chosen Newspapers (*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*)**

There is a consensus among scholars that there is no single way of using critical discourse analysis in research; the approach one chooses would depend on whether one is interested in studying the nature of a text or one is interested in a theoretically focused discourse (Fairclough, 1995; Fowler, 1991; Richardson, 2007; Wodak, 2001a; Wodak & Meyer, 2001; Wood & Kroger, 2000; Yusha'u, 2012). Hence, Van Dijk (1998) recommends an integrated approach to the analysis of text and talk that incorporates the work of other scholars in the field. This integration should be without prejudice to the status of scholars, and should cut across a wide spectrum of disciplines, fields, countries, cultures, traditions and directions of research for a satisfactory outcome (Van Dijk, 2001). Based on this suggestion, therefore, this researcher integrated Van Dijk's (2001) discourse-cognition triangle CDA with Carabine's (2001, p. 268) Foucauldian genealogical discourse analysis. Foucault's guidelines will help with the mapping out of the newspaper texts before Van Dijk's CDA is applied for the analyses of the two sets of newspaper texts (*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*). Carabine went further to explain the Foucauldian genealogical discourse thus:

There are no 'hard and fast' rules which set out, step by step, what a genealogical analysis is. What Foucault's genealogy offers us is a lens through which to undertake discourse analysis and with which we can read discourses [...]. Because Foucault didn't provide us with a 'how to' guide genealogy, the method adopted by individual researchers varies. What is common to all, however, is the application of Foucault's concepts of discourse/power/knowledge and therefore the lens through which they read their data.

Although Foucauldian genealogical discourse analysis by Carabine has 11 steps, only the first 6 of the steps were selected and applied by this researcher in this presentation and analysis. The reason for selecting the first 6 steps is that they will help this researcher to achieve his goal of analyses and so answer the research questions. The steps are as follows: ‘*select your topic-identify possible sources of data; know your data-read and re-read and read your data again; identify themes-categorise objects of discourse; look for evidence of an inter-relationship between discourse; identify the discursive strategies and techniques that are employed; look for absences and silences.*

With these 6 steps, the researcher began the task of reading and re-reading of the newspaper copies obtained from both *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* in keeping with Carabine’s (2001) suggestions above, since the two newspapers were the sources of data (the 6 steps are all part of mapping out of the data thematically before the analysis). After the process of reading and re-reading of the newspapers and making some notations on the margins of the newspaper copies, which took several weeks, the researcher identified possible themes/categories that would guide the analysis, although he had to merge some of the themes in the end because of their similarities. For example, reading through the two newspapers (*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*), this researcher noted the use of divisive frames aimed at disparaging the other party in the Plateau State conflict. Thus, the researcher came up with the theme-Stereotype/Labelling. The second theme emerged after going through the same process of reading and re-reading of the newspaper texts-Distrust of the media. The picture that emerged from reading of the newspaper texts was that of a divided society (indigenes/settlers) along ethnic lines. For example, an attack on an ethnic community by an unidentified attacker(s) is immediately blamed on another ethnic community, and this was a recurrent theme during the conflict. From this, the third theme was-accusations and counter accusations emerged. In their (reporters, editors and proprietors) efforts to justify the actions of their ethnic communities during the Plateau State conflict, reports were hyperbolised in their news constructions, thus theme four was-Exaggeration/Hyperboles. Finally, amidst the deluge of news reports during the conflict there were concerns raised by the federal and Plateau state governments, groups, organisations and citizens on how to contain the conflict. There were clamours for solutions to the conflict. In view of this, the researcher came up with theme five- Pursuit of Dialogue-Solution-Peace.

It was through this process of reading and re-reading of the newspaper reports that the researcher got a sense of what the news reports were about and established instances,

occurrences and ways the Plateau State conflict was reported by the newspapers. It is important to note that the researcher allowed the data to direct the emergence of the themes/categories. The importance of Van Dijk's (2001) CDA is rooted on its treatment of written text to reveal how language is used in media discourse. Van Dijk (1985) and Meyer (2001b, p. 26) suggested the utilisation of the following steps in textual analysis: analysis of semantic macrostructures: topics and macro propositions; analysis of local meanings, for instance, implications, presuppositions, allusions, vagueness, omissions and polarisations are especially interesting; analysis of 'subtle' formal structures: here most of the linguistic markers mentioned are analysed; analysis of global and local discourse forms or formats; analysis of specific linguistic realisations, for example, hyperboles, litotes; analysis of context.

Van Dijk's (2001) topics of discourse plays a significant part in communication and interaction. He describes topics as 'semantic macrostructures' which is derived from the local (micro) structures of meaning. Essentially, topics delineate what a discourse 'is about' globally speaking, it encapsulates the key information of a discourse, and it explains general coherence of text and talk (Van Dijk, 1980 ). Although topics, such as global meaning, are embedded, however, they are inferred from or assigned in discourse, such as in titles, headlines, summaries, abstracts, thematic sentences or conclusions. Van Dijk further suggested that since topics play such crucial role, and since topical (macro-structural) analysis can be used also in large corpora of textual data, it is useful to start with such analysis. This is because it provides an idea on what the corpus of texts is all about and serves as a compass in directing other aspects of discourse and its analysis. Local meanings, in the views of Van Dijk (2001), are lexical in nature, that is, they embody the meaning of words, the structures of propositions, and coherence. Local meanings are the kind of information which generally influences the mental models, and therefore the opinions and attitudes of recipients. Van Dijk (2001) argued that both local meanings and topics are best recalled and easily reproduced by beneficiaries therefore may have obvious social consequences.

It is important to understand that CDA by its very nature is focused in the study of ideologically biased texts and its polarising representation of 'us' (in-groups) and 'them' (out-groups). Here, we see an overall technique of 'positive self-representation and negative other representation,' which is contrasted with 'our good things and their bad things are emphasised, and conversely, our bad things and their good things are de-emphasised' (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 103). Furthermore, CDA, Van Dijk contends, is particularly interested in the study of many formats of implicit or indirect meanings, such as the following: implications, presuppositions, allusions, and

vagueness. Data is said to be implicit when it may be inferred from (the meaning) a discourse, without being explicitly expressed by the text. Accordingly, implicit meanings are interrelated to imbedded beliefs, but are not completely or directly stated for a range of reasons, including ideological objective to de-emphasise ‘our bad things and their good things’ (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 104).

Again, beyond CDA’s interest in semantic structures, it may be more interested in the following structures of text or talk that are much less consciously controlled or controllable such as: Intonation, syntactic structures, propositional structures, rhetorical figures, in addition to repairs, pauses, and hesitation (ibid). Nevertheless, these do not directly address the embedded meanings and beliefs, but rather show ‘pragmatic’ elements of a communicative event, for example, the intention, current mood or emotions of speakers, their views on perspectives talked about, and opinions expressed. Earlier, a contrast was made between global and local meanings. Here, too, Van Dijk (2001) distinguishes between global and local discourse, forms or format. In his views, global forms or superstructure, as it is otherwise known, overall canonical and conventional schemata that are made up of stories or news articles. Local forms, on the other hand, are those of (syntax of) sentences and formal relations between clauses, such as: ordering, primacy, promotional relations, active-passive voice, and nominalisations. Writers, especially, while their writings ‘may emphasize our good things by topicalizing positive meanings, by using positive lexical items in self-descriptions’, by stressing the many positive actions, and narrating few details about bad actions, using hyperbole and positive metaphors and by ignoring negative actions either through passive sentences or nominalizations.

Just as Van Dijk (2001) made distinctions between local and global structures within discourse, he also distinguishes between local and global contexts. He defines global contexts as those predicated on social, political, cultural, and historical structures in which a communicative event takes place. Local context, conversely, is defined in terms of properties of the immediate, interactional situation in which a communicative event takes place, such as politics and business. It is essential to note that context models are the mental representations that direct many of the properties of discourse, such as genre, topic choice, local meanings and coherence, on the one hand, and speech act, style and rhetoric, on the other.

With the above descriptions of Van Dijk’s (2001) discourse-cognition triangle, this researcher, therefore adopted his theoretical framework for the analyses of the two sets of newspaper texts

(*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*). This model is used to analyse the following: Headline news, editorials, reports, articles, opinion columns and features to see how Van Dijk's analytical categories manifested in the newspaper reports. Following Carabine's (2001) guidelines for doing Foucauldian genealogical discourse analysis, this researcher came up with five themes. These themes followed one of Carabine's steps, which suggests that the researcher should familiarise himself with the data through the process of reading and re-reading and reading again of the data: stereotype/labelling; Divisive frames; Distrust of media; Accusations and counter accusations; Exaggeration/hyperbole/rhetoric and lastly-Pursuit of dialogue-solution-peace.

## **2.8 Notes from Fieldwork**

The fieldwork began after a period of careful planning and preparations from May to June 2016. Soon after the ethical approval was obtained from the University of Salford this researcher proceeded on his fieldwork in Plateau State, Nigeria. The researcher got in touch with those that had been identified for the interviews through phone calls as reminders since they had been given formal letters of invitation already. Although the area of study was the whole of Plateau State, the period of study was 2010-2012 because of its significance (Ishaku, 2012). The implication of this for the researcher was that the conflict reporters whose views he had sought to get, had either been posted out of Plateau State or had retired, although a good number was still in the state. It, therefore, meant that the researcher had to embark on the onerous task of locating where those reporters and correspondents were and travel to interview them.

As has already indicated in the consent form, the researcher gave the interviewees the latitude to choose the venues where the interviews would be conducted, because it was essential that the interviews were conducted in locations where the interviewees would feel sufficiently secure and safe. For example, IRs1, 3, 4 and 5 agreed to be interviewed in their newsroom, but the newsroom was shared with ten other staff members, including students who were on their internship with *The Nigeria Standard* in Jos. The atmosphere during the interview sessions was chaotic as people were coming and going freely. Another interviewer (IR2), a senior source with one of the newspapers selected for the study, agreed to be interviewed after several phone calls and text messages in a restaurant. In the end, the interview was worth the wait. IR6 who covered the conflict in the heat of the conflict for the newspaper had since left Jos for Kaduna State, which was about 350 km away. S/he was happy to be interviewed in



his office, except that the atmosphere in the office (which s/he shared with other colleagues), was not only noisy but rowdy. During the interview, the interviewee had to twice plead with his colleagues to tone down a bit. The situation was the same when the researcher went to interview IR7, a senior source of the paper in his/her office in Abuja. The element of noise was so unbearable that the editor and the researcher had to move to their board room. Although the interview was successful, driving back to Plateau State from Abuja (about 300 km), the researcher had a car accident. Luckily, neither the researcher nor other motorists were hurt. However, the car, which was not even the researcher's, was dented. Interviewing IR8 was challenging because prior to the interview s/he was resident in Jos, the Plateau State capital as a reporter, but weeks to the scheduled interview s/he was posted to Lafiya, the Nasarawa State capital by 'his/her' newspaper organisation. I called him/her several times on her/his mobile phone, including text messages, but there was no response. When 's/he' did eventually respond, 's/he' complained of poor telephone network. I was prepared to travel to see him in Lafiya, but 's/he' said to me not to bother as 's/he' was already approaching Jos. On the day, the interview was scheduled, I called him/her, at least four times, but as usual, 's/he' did not answer 'his/her' phone. Finally, when the researcher was almost giving up, then, 's/he' called back and apologised saying 's/he' was on an assignment. 'S/he' eventually came and the interview was held in 'his/her' former office. Although the interview lasted well over an hour, it was worth the wait. Although IRs 9 and 10 were both resident in Jos, meeting IR9 proved to be the most challenging of all. After this researcher, had planned to meet with the reporter, 's/he' suddenly had to travel out of Jos for some training. Two weeks after 's/he' got back 's/he' had to go on some assignments. Eventually, the interview got underway in the respondent's office. IR10 shared the same office facility with IR9, therefore, there was no problem interviewing him, except that the researcher had to wait for him to round up the report he was writing.

Interviewing non-journalists (ethnic leaders) followed similar pattern. Four of the five interviewees were interviewed in Jos. Out of this; Interview Ethnic Leaders (IELs) 1 and 2 were interviewed in their residences. What was significant about the private residences of both interviewees was the areas where they lived (which though at different locations) were considered no-go areas during the conflict for people who were not of their ethnic group. Although the conflict within Jos City was over, there was still atmosphere of mutual suspicion and distrust which made some of those areas unsafe for, especially Plateau ethnic groups to enter. What is also noteworthy about these interviewees was that their (interviews) lasted nearly

one and half hours. It was as if the leaders were waiting for an opportunity of this nature to ventilate their pent-up anger and frustrations. IEL 4 was interviewed in a mechanic workshop where he had gone to repair his car. IELs 3 and 5, on the other hand, were interviewed in their respective offices. Overall, the interview sessions went hitch-free. Most of the interviews lasted up to an hour or more, contrary to the 30-40 minutes the researcher had planned. The interview respondents had so much to talk about, although some of what they had to talk about were very much outside the scope of the interview, but in order not to discourage them, the researcher allowed them to talk, knowing that the not-so relevant parts of the interviews would be edited out. The recorded interviews were transcribed into texts soon after the interviews were conducted in word form and stored on the computer and other devices. The researcher had to read through the manuscript repeatedly to make sense of the data. In the process of reading through the text, the researcher made some notes on the margins of the data with a view to identifying some possible themes in keeping with the advice of Sacks (1992) and Rowley (2012). Having painstakingly read through the themes and noted that some of the themes were related, the researcher decided to merge the related themes together to come up with the ten themes for the analysis: ownership influence; ethnic influence on report; ethnicity and journalism practice; experience of reporting conflict; effects of reports on readers; news framing and conflict; recommendations and Human Rights Journalism.

After the analysis of the semi-structured interview data, what followed next was the gathering of the newspaper reports. The actual gathering of the relevant reports of the two newspapers (*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*) was in 2016. When the time came for the gathering of the titles, the researcher realised that the process was not going to be as straight forward as previously thought. The major challenge that the researcher faced was that the two newspapers did not have online copies, hence the resort to hard copies. This researcher contacted some of his colleagues (lecturers) who visited the state and national libraries, as well as the national archives within Jos, the Plateau State capital, on his behalf, for the newspaper titles. Their visits to those organisations and institutions were disappointing, because they could only find a few editions. The situation was similar when they went to the head office of *The Nigeria Standard* in Jos. This researcher had hoped his colleagues would find all the relevant copies of the newspapers at *The Nigeria Standard* office (see Figure 4), but they could only find a few editions to photocopy. The situation at the *Daily Trust* office (see Figure 5), like most other offices earlier visited, was much the same. In the end, when this researcher arrived for his fieldwork in Plateau State, he had to send a friend to the Centre for Democratic Research and

Training (CEDART), Zaria, Kaduna State (about two hundred kilometres) to check. Fortunately, the centre had filed copies of the *Daily Trust*. This researcher paid for his friend to travel to Zaria and together with some staff of the centre, they painstakingly went through the filed copies based on the guidelines this researcher gave them. They mapped out relevant sections and pages of the newspapers, which they later photocopied. This process of obtaining, mapping and photocopying the newspaper titles took over a month at Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria. It needs to be stressed here that, although this researcher did not personally collect all the newspaper copies/titles of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*, he relied on his friends and colleagues to do, this, however, did not in any way affect the integrity of the data nor the validity of its conclusions. This is because the data were handled in strict conformity with the ethical standards of the University of Salford.

Overall, these experiences exposed the researcher to a much deeper problem that tended to characterise the reality of life in Nigeria, which is the problem of record-keeping. It's inconceivable that some newspaper organisations, in the contemporary times, not have records of copies of their own productions. What otherwise could have been a straightforward work became rather complicated and expensive. The entire process of gathering the relevant newspaper copies/titles took nearly three months, because aside from locating the relevant copies and painstakingly going through to get reports on the Plateau State conflict, there was also the challenge of poor or lack of electricity to make copies. Therefore, power generators were used for the most part to photocopy the newspapers, which often doubled the cost.

## **2. 9 Ethical Issues**

In keeping with the ethics guiding this study (University of Salford, ethical guidelines: [www.salford.ac.uk/ethics](http://www.salford.ac.uk/ethics)), the researcher, ab initio took the issue of ethics in general and interviewing of participants seriously. The welfare of interview participants was foremost on the mind of this researcher in tandem with the production of qualitative data (Polkinghorne, 2005). Thus, concrete steps were taken to safeguard as well as anonymise the identities of all the interviewees as contained in the consent and other relevant forms sent by the researcher to the participants. This, therefore, informed the decision to write letters to the participants outlining the content of the interview project for them to go through beforehand, after which their informed consent was sought and agreed upon (by signing the forms) before the actual interviews. This researcher thought it right and appropriate 'that participants should have full and unfettered access to information regarding the research purposes, in order that any possible

physical or psychological harm they may experience be removed altogether or even minimised' (Grbich, 2004, p. 88). Furthermore, the researcher assured participants that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without necessarily giving a reason. The consent forms contained, among others, the time frame for the interview, which was between 30-45 minutes, but the participants did not adhere to the time because they had so much to talk about. Although most of the interviews lasted more than an hour, it was still within the acceptable time frame of between 30 minutes to several hours (DiCco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Hence, the researcher had to use codes for the interview participants, thus: Interview Respondents (IR 1-10) for reporters and editors, while the ethnic leaders are coded as Interview Ethnic Leaders (IEL 1-5). Still, in keeping with the data protection policy of the University of Salford, Manchester, United Kingdom, the data will be safeguarded electronically for the stipulated period.

## **2.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed in detail the reasons and rationale for the study's adoption of the social constructivist research paradigm, inductive theoretical perspective, the ideographic methodology (idealist) and qualitative methodology for the enquiry on the influence of ethnicity in newspaper journalists' coverage of the Plateau State conflict. The chapter explains the procedures used for the collection of rich primary data by means of semi-structured interviews from the selected ten conflict journalists who covered the conflict and five community leaders who represented the communities in conflict within the period under review, as well as newspaper copies/titles. While agenda setting and news framing conceptual explanatory frameworks were identified for the analysis of semi-structured interviews, Van Dijk's (2001) discourse-cognition society was chosen for the analysis of the newspaper content of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*. The chapter problematized the sampling procedure utilised to reduce the issue of biases that could undermine the integrity or validity of the study's outcome. The research design is intended at achieving the set aim, objectives and answering the research questions of the thesis. The next chapter is the search for conceptual explanatory framework for the thesis.



Figure 2: *Photo of the Plateau State Publishing Company Head Office, Jos. Publishers of The Sunday & Nigeria Standard newspapers (Researcher).*



Figure 3: *Photo of Trust Media Group Head Office Head Office, Abuja. Publishers of Weekly/Daily Trust newspapers (Researcher).*

# Chapter Three: Agenda Setting, News Framing and Human Rights Orientated Journalism

We don't go into journalism to be popular. It is our job to seek the truth and put constant pressure on our leaders until we get answers.

Helen Thomas  
Randall (2016)

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores potential conceptual explanatory frameworks aimed at gaining insights into journalists' news production strategies, such as social responsibility, source and credibility and primordial theory of ethnicity. Having explored these conceptual explanatory frameworks, their flaws were apparent because they were inadequate for the analyses of linguistic, ideological and discursive, among other strategies used in newspaper production. Thus, alternative conceptual explanatory frameworks, such as agenda setting, news framing and human rights orientated journalism (HRJ) were explored and adopted as they provided better understanding into the ways conflict journalists of *The Nigerian Standard* and the *Daily Trust* constructed and produced their stories. Scholars like Hallin and Mancini (2004) have strongly argued that no medium is ever neutral, a medium always has an interest to protect or to project. Going by this, therefore, journalists always have an agenda(s) to achieve through the news they produce. To fulfil their agenda, news media professionals carefully choose or exclude certain frames; would emphasize some frames, but would de-emphasize certain others, depending on which would enable them to achieve their goals. Their goals or interests are often skewed. This is in sharp contrast to human rights orientated journalism whose main objective is to ensure justice for all, without prejudice to ethnicity, religion, political leaning, among others, as conceptualized by Shaw (2012).

### 3.2 The Social Responsibility Model

The social responsibility theory of the media is rooted in the principle of ‘freedom’ or free speech (Anaeto, Onabajo, & Osifeso, 2008; McQuail, 2010). One of the important contributions of this model, developed in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century by Siebert Peterson and Schramm (1956), is that it places a great burden of responsibility on journalists and news media service providers to discharge their work responsibly (McQuail, 1987). The theory came as a replacement to the authoritarian and libertarian models whose weaknesses were apparent. The Hutchins-led commission of 1947 on the freedom of the press outlines the following principles for the media: freedom carries with it concomitant responsibility; the model reconciles somewhat divergent principles; individual freedom and choice, media freedom, and media’s obligation to society (McQuail, 1987). Besides the self-regulatory function which this model imposes on journalists, it also emphasizes some key principles, as articulated by McQuail thus:

That the media should accept and fulfil certain obligations to society; the obligations are to be achieved by establishing professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance, these obligations to society can be met; that the media should regulate itself within the confines of established laws and institutions, to be able to carry out its responsibilities; the media must avoid what could lead to crime, conflict, violence, or civil disorder or give offence to minority groups; that the media should be pluralistic and reflect the diversity of the society, giving access to various points of view and right to reply; journalists and news media professionals should be accountable to society (pp. 117-118).

Among the catalogue of accusations that have been levelled against the media, especially the press in the coverage of the Plateau State conflict was their perceived lack of objectivity (Ishaku, 2012; Kaigama, 2012; Katu, 2016; Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010). The media’s alleged skewed reporting of the conflict has been blamed for the escalation that led to the loss of lives and property. Disturbed by the alleged negative reporting of the Plateau State conflict by the press, which has allegedly resulted in anarchy and chaos, the Catholic Archbishop of Jos, Most Rev. Ignatius Ayau Kaigama blamed both the local and international media for the escalation of the conflict thus:

We are tired of crises aggravated by mindless reporting by foreign media whose sources are often biased persons or groups with hidden agenda. [...], some Nigerian media, such as the *Sunday Trust* of November 30, 2008 and the *Daily Trust* of December 2008. The reports are highly suggestive [...] the casualty figures of the

Yelwa crises were highly exaggerated for political and religious reasons to depict Plateau State [...] negatively (Kaigama, 2012, p. 74).

Equally, the Hausa/Fulani group under the aegis of Jasawa, accused the Plateau State-owned television station and the state-owned newspaper, *The Nigeria Standard*, for running a negative propaganda against them (Galadima, 2010). These allegations against journalists and their media organizations (if substantiated) go against the extant tenets of social responsibility theory, which demands that journalists and their organizations fulfil their obligations to the society by working within the boundary of their professional ethics and should regulate itself, among others.

This theory has some inherent benefits that if well implemented could serve to regulate journalism practice in Plateau State, especially in the coverage of conflict and it forbids any government interference. Although the principles, which the social responsibility theory outlines, are good, there is a great difference between theory and practice. As it has been established earlier, Plateau State is home to over 370 ethnic communities, with their distinctive cultural, religious values and traditions. While the potentials of this model are not in doubt, its application and effectiveness in Plateau State based on its multicultural and pluralistic nature is problematic (Alubo, 2006). Given the fact that journalists and their news organizations have been accused of bias in reporting the conflict (Galadima, 2010; Katu, 2016; Musa & Ferguson, 2013), it will be difficult (though not impossible) for them to provide a truthful, balanced, accurate, and objective accounts of the conflict in Plateau State that will be acceptable to all, taking the ethnic composition of the state into consideration (Okafor, Ebenezer, Chukuemeka, & Patience, 2013). Another challenge is that conflicts in Nigeria are always analyzed through the prisms of ethnicity and religion, thus, it is difficult to find a group or institution that would set clear principles and standards that would be acceptable to all the communities. This view was reinforced by Alozieuwa (2011, p. 82) when he remarked that ‘The Nigerian media content on the conflict between the Hausa/Fulani ‘settlers’ and the Plateau State’s indigenous people have clearly exposed a national media polarized along ethnic lines.’

Based on the above, the social responsibility theory of the media is not well-suited for this exploration on the influence of ethnicity in newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict. Although scholars such as Al-Ahmed (1987) have indexed the benefits of this model to include its effort to limit private ownership and control of the media by encouraging some forms of public ownership; to foster professionalism among news media professionals and news content creators/producers to the media which in turn would encourage media audiences to seek



journalism ethics (accuracy, truth telling, fairness, decency, objectivity and balance), the theory still lacks the resources to examine how news reports are constructed and produced.

### **3.3 Primordial Theory of Ethnicity**

Ethnicity is a rather fluid concept that tends to overlap with race. However, the notion ethnicity describes the state of belonging to a group or a community that shares common cultural tradition such as symbols, values and myths (Smith, 1986). The proponents of the primordial model hold that ethnicity is rooted in people's historical or biological experiences. For Nnoli (2008), although there are several theories of ethnicity that attempt to explain its origin, attributes, dynamics, mode of oppression, among others, he contends that in Africa, for example, the earliest of these theories is associated with colonialism. Nnoli avows that the colonial conception of ethnicity was based on primordialism and biogenetic understanding of African social life. According to this term, from primeval times, peoples and races around the world were identified based on some of these features: language, custom, tradition, beliefs, land, arts, to list just a few. These 'identifiers' show the intrinsic primordial and profoundly entrenched sentiments of the people. Thus, ethnic communities are primordial groups. Based on the primordialists belief, past histories and origins of Africans are crucial to explaining their current political salience (Nnoli, 2008). The primordialist' theory contends that the current rise in ethnicity and ethnic strife are all by products of colonialism and not just some intrinsic ethnic disagreement among communities. They, therefore, conclude that were it not for colonial intervention, ethnicity and ethnic conflicts, as being witnessed globally, especially in Africa, would not have arisen.

Looking at the primordialist theory of ethnicity within the context of the Plateau State conflict, the dispossession of some of the state's indigenous ethnic communities, such as Afizere, Anaguta and Berom from their ancestral lands by the British colonial government policy of Land and Native Ordinance Act of 1910 to foreigners and 'settlers,' especially the Hausa/Fulani, made conflict, in the views of Higazi (2011) and Mangyvat (2013) unavoidable. Although, in pre-colonial times and right through the colonial period in Nigeria, the Plateau State's ethnic groups migrated to various places within the area, especially because of wars and search for a better life, after the initial wars, there were efforts toward integration through organic or mechanical solidarity (Nnoli, 2008). However, this same colonial policy of Land and Native Ordinance Act of 1910, not only stratified and accentuated groups based on their ethnicities, but emphasized ethnic differences, which made integration difficult.

From the above argument, the primordialist theory dismisses the notion that ethnic conflicts are an intrinsic part of social life. Their argument is that if ethnic groups are recognized and accommodated within the society and their grievances are addressed by government, conflicts would be minimized if not altogether prevented (Melsen & Wolpe, 1970; Whitaker, 1967). Having examined the primordialist theory and their position, this researcher did not only find it unsuitable for this study on the influence of ethnicity in newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict, but indeed, grossly inadequate for comprehending ethnicity. Ethnicity is such a complex web that no national institutions would be able to address all the needs of the people. Although this theoretical perspective attempts to show the role of colonialism in bringing about ethnicity and ethnic conflicts, it is, however, ineffective in explaining how conflict journalists constructed and produced their news stories on the Plateau State conflict.

### **3.4 Gate Keeping Theory**

The gate keeping theory is an offshoot of the agenda-setting theory of the media. The thrust of this theory is that frames and all the other elements that constitute news stories are products of a deliberate and conscious decision by primarily editors who occupy important positions in deciding which frames to use or leave out. This theory was first propounded by Polish social psychologist Kurt Lewin in 1947. The gate-keeping theory refers to a process whereby information is controlled as it pass through the gate (Shoemaker & Vost, 2009). These gatekeepers, White (1950) explained, are reporters, correspondents and editors. They make value judgments on the newsworthiness of issues, events and phenomena to be reported. Based on the strategic positions they occupy within their news organization, these gatekeepers determine, not just what the audience know, but also think about by carefully selecting, shaping and packaging news contents they publish for consumption (Schwalbe, Silcok, & Candello, 2015). Thus, gatekeeping is not a product of chance or arbitrariness, rather, it is a result of a deliberate decision (Shoemaker & Vost, 2009). This process begins when a reporter or an editor is exposed to an event, and selects, in what s/he judges to be newsworthy and presents to the audience as news (Shoemaker & Vost, 2009). Shoemaker and Vost argue that gatekeeping does not just stop with the reporters, correspondents and editors, but with the public. The public decide on what news to consume and which not to consume.

In their model of gatekeeping, Shoemaker and Vost (2009) contend that information passes through three gatekeeping channels: source, media and audience: (i) for them, information enters the source channel through experts, specialists, commentators, anchors, observers,

among others. These people, based on their expert knowledge on issues and events give their views and opinions on them; (ii) information enters the media channels through the staff of the news organization, such as reporters, correspondents, editors and production staff. These categories of staff present the audience with news and commentaries based on their value judgments. In the views of Shoemaker and Vost (2009), the binary of source and media channels together form news content; (iii), information to the public passes through, especially, such media outlets as WhatsApp, Twitter feeds, Smart phones, Facebook, among others. Based on their gatekeeping model, Shoemaker and Vost believe that the audience is not passive, because is able to act as a gatekeeper of sort. Although the audiences are daily being inundated by a plethora of news, however, the audiences permit only the attention-catching information to pass through the channel instead of newsworthiness of the information.

Based on their position as gatekeepers, editors determine what story is used, delayed, modified or even deleted altogether. In other words, their value judgments on issues create the news, which the audience consumes. Reporters, correspondents and editors in Plateau State recognize and exercise their positions as gatekeepers to frame the news they produce. Thus, their roles as gatekeepers put them in positions of influence. Although some scholars, such as Williams and Carpini, 2000, have since declared the near-end of the gatekeeping function of the mainstream media, especially with the introduction of the internet, the reality is that the gatekeeping functions of the mainstream media, especially the newspapers are still very much relevant. Since editors are the final gatekeepers in the news production chain, it implies that they will continue to be important catalysts towards the attainment of peace in Plateau State through their news selections and framing. This is because their decisions or judgments about the kind of photos they use, for example, can reflect their ethnic bias, political orientation or religious stereotypes (Perlmutter, 1998). Whatever be the case, the debate on the future roles of the mainstream media, especially newspapers, as gatekeepers vis-à-vis the challenges being posed by the internet frontiers will continue in media studies.

The above discussion on the gatekeeping theory provides a better understanding of who the gatekeepers are and their roles. Gatekeeping is more about the elements of news that are left out by news editors, while agenda setting, by contrast, is about those frames that are included in newspapers, for example, and therefore set an agenda for their readers. Thus, this researcher had to discard the gate-keeping theory in favor of the agenda setting model, because as it has been pointed out earlier, the interest of this enquiry is to find out how ethnicity influenced newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict and how that might have contributed to the

escalation of the conflict. Overall, the above conceptual explanatory frameworks (social responsibility, primordial theory of ethnicity and gatekeeping) discussed were not well-suited for this research on the influence of ethnicity in newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict for the reasons already adduced above. Hence, this researcher noted and utilized other alternative explanatory frameworks (the agenda setting, news framing and human rights orientated journalism), which are considered appropriate for this study as seen below.

### **3.5 The Agenda Setting**

The power of the media to influence members of the audience has been the subject of academic work for decades. Through careful selection of news frames, the news media set the agenda for the public. The agenda setting theory of the mass media was propounded by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972. They first applied this theory in their study of the United States elections in 1968. Their experiment with this theory produce an important result, namely, it showed a link between the issues that were dear to the voters and the coverage of these issues in the newspapers (Udoakah, 2015). McCombs and Shaw described the strong influence of the media on the public when they posited that editors and newsroom staff occupy a very important position in the news production process. This is because the mass media set the agenda by determining what issues are important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Scholars such as Lang and Lang (1959) are not only in agreement on the powerful influence of the media in setting the agenda, but are also of the view that the audience acquire factual information about issues and events from the media. They contended that readers and viewers of media content learn how much prominence to attach to an issue base on the emphasis put on it in the news. Furthermore, newspapers, for example, provide cues about the salience of the issues in the daily news, such as lead story on the front page, large headlines, editorials, commentaries, feature write-ups and opinion columns (Sambe, 2008). Thus, the media have strong influence on the audience and Sambe argues that they help the public to form their opinion based on the issues raised in the media. The next section discusses those who sets the media agenda.

#### **3.5.1 Who sets the Media Agenda?**

From the above discussion, the media set the agenda for the audience and through this process they shape public opinion. However, it is essential to ask who sets the agenda for the media? Rather than ask who sets the agenda for the media, Berkowitz (1994) opines that the question should be ‘how does the news agenda take shape?’ In Berkowitz’s views, policymakers, and

not journalists, set the media agenda. This is because, as Entman (1989) claims, journalists and other content creators ironically rely on the same political elite they are supposed to hold accountable for news. Therefore, what the political elite say regarding issues in society set the journalist's news agenda. Thus, journalists rely on what the political elite say and from the myriads of their comments, statements and speeches; they prioritize what should be news. The political and dominant elite in society, Shaw (2012) argues, are important catalysts in the agenda-setting process, and by extension framing. Based on their position in society, their views dominate the news media discourse, while by contrast, the poor and the weak are consigned to the margins of society, which Shaw believes is critical to the agenda-setting process. Entman (1989) submits that journalists work under stressful economic pressures to turn profits, policymakers, too face political market stress to secure their own political interests. While policymakers strive to manage news, journalists, on the other hand, seek their low-cost news to minimize cost and maximize profits.

Thus, the agenda-setting role of the media enables journalists to influence the audience. This they do through news commentaries, editorials, features, headline news, among others. Indeed, media agenda is a product of daily discussion and decision-making by reporters, editors and their owners. By giving prominence to some issues, the media help to influence public opinion by giving the report a 'spin.' The reader, audience and the public, in the views of Tuchman (1978), can use the frame of reference to make sense of, and discuss issues of importance set up by the news media discourse. Although, the media are powerful tools for setting the agenda for the audience, the discussion has noted that policymakers and the power elite too do set the agenda for the media. For example, the president of the United States of America, Donald Trump's controversial recognition of Jerusalem, and not Tel Aviv, as the capital of the State of Israel by moving its embassy there is dominating news headlines around the world. This policy decision by President Trump set the agenda for global discourse. The world media have been busy running editorials and commentaries on the issue. Bodies, such as the United Nations, Arab League, European Union and entire international community have been discussing the implications of this decision for the Israeli-Palestinian peace effort and world peace, at large. Within the Nigerian context, there exist a plethora of pressure groups whose interests cut across ethnic, political, religious and regional divides. So, what politicians and other special interest groups say could set the mass media agenda. But ultimately, the mass media set the agenda for the audience by carefully selecting and emphasizing what people should think about. Given their potential to influence the public, the media if properly utilized can, therefore, set the

agenda for peace and conflict-resolution in Plateau State (Asemah & Edegoh, 2012). Since the agenda setting theory is about the news elements editors include in their news construction and production towards achieving their agenda, the utilization of this model in this research would emphasize how it helps news producers to achieve their goal. Furthermore, since there is a body of opinion (Danaan, 2017; Galadima, 2010; Ishaku, 2012; Kaigama, 2012; Musa & Ferguson, 2013) that believes newspaper reports, especially of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*, led to the escalation of the Plateau State conflict, this researcher will carefully examine some of the news frames the papers used to verify this claim.

### **3.6 News Framing Theory**

Journalists and content creators/developers are always engaged in the business of reconstruction of and mediation of their perceived reality to the public. This, they do through the application of discursive techniques/strategies in their news production processes aimed at achieving certain goals. Thus, journalism in its entirety is predicated on the use of frames. The news framing theory was advanced by social psychologist Erving Goffman when he found out that the perception of the audience about social reality was influenced by media frames (Falkheimer & Olsson, 2015). Scholars such as Entman (1993) describes framing as a process whereby writers, especially journalists deliberately select and exclude other elements of the news story.

In his acclaimed description of framing, Entman (1993, p. 52) explained that to frame is to:

Select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote specific problem, definition, causal interpretation, moral education, and/or treatment recommendation.

Indeed, frames are the main organising idea of a story, which are underlying, sometimes only implicit ideas through which an explanation of the world is constructed that provides meaning for an unfolding chain of episodes. Framing, as Entman (1993) argues, is a situation when journalists choose an aspect of a perceived reality to the exclusion of others and make it more salient in the text by promoting a particular interpretation. Viewed against the backdrop of news production, Hong (2013, p. 89) describes frames as ‘conscious or unconscious sets of journalists’ perceived opinions on issues.’ Reporters and editors do this through interpretation, careful selection of frames, and exclusion of texts. In other words, news framing is the main idea for news content providers that supplies a context and further suggests what the issue is through the process of judgment that involves decisions to include, exclude, and elaborate on

some aspects of a news report. Frames, as noted earlier, are discursive strategies employed by news media professionals, such as editors who consciously select, emphasise and exclude elements of every news narratives that they construct (Giltin, 1980). News media professionals routinely foreground some aspects of a news report to draw the attention of the readers to some elements of an issue, thus making them meaningful or noticeable. This process is aimed primarily at making their public to think in their own (news media professionals') way (Entman, 1993; Frame, 2013).

Discursive strategies by their nature are tools used by news media professionals (journalists) to manipulate reality with a view to achieving a certain goal. Hence, it is almost impossible for journalists and other content creators to be completely objective when it comes to the issue of framing, because as Frame (2013) avows, each decision, judgement or choice made by the journalist is always aimed at achieving both selfish and altruistic ends. A decision taken by a reporter may not, in the views of some people, be sound; the reality is that often most decisions taken are based on limited information. Every decision the journalist takes in the process of news production amounts to framing. Thus, Carvalho (2008, p. 169) argues that 'framing is not something that you choose to do or not, but a necessary operation in talking about reality.' In other words, in the construction of texts, framing is not an optional intervention; it is an integral part, therefore, at the centre of any news production (Carvalho, 2008; Danaan, 2017; Durham, 1998). The decision, for example, to select a photo and position it in the front page and not in the inside page of a newspaper shows the editors' prioritization of alternatives to please their audience. Given the inevitability of frames in any journalistic discourse, it is no wonder then that reporters and editors would draw upon conflict frames deliberately to draw their readers' attention to their own perceived reality (Mitchell, 2007). Therefore, news framing featured prominently in this study.

### **3.6.1 Origin of Frames on Conflicts**

From earlier discussions on agenda setting theory, the dominant narrative is that the media set the agenda for the public. However, the discussion also noted that the policymakers in the society also set the agenda for the media. While these positions are true, the question is where do the frames about news conflict come from? The common assumption is that frames about conflict do emanate from the newsroom, as Danaan (2017) stated. For him, reporters, correspondents and editors try to achieve the agendas set by their ethnic and religious communities by projecting their interests and being silent about those of other ethnic or

religious communities. However, Cohen's (1963) famous quote that the press 'may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about, according to Mitchell (2007) has punctured this claim. Mitchell pointed to a recent study by some researchers who questioned the idea that frames originate from newsrooms and editing sites, using the American-led coalition invasion of Iraq in 2003 under President George Walker Bush junior as an example. Information regarding the war was tightly controlled by the coalition's media centre in Doha, Qatar. The information centre decided on the amount of information they would give to the journalists. However, the impression was that the journalists had unfettered access to the theatre of war. Information to journalists in general was limited. This was a deliberate effort by the coalition forces' media centre to minimise criticisms by the Western public regarding the war (Mitchell, 2007; Richardson, 2007). Thus, correspondents and reporters of the various media outlets in Doha, Qatar, became known as 'embedded journalists,' meaning, they lived with the soldiers and therefore could not give a critical and balanced account of the war. The point here, as McCune (1996) has noted, is that framing is not an exclusive preserve of news media professionals, but as the reality of the media controlled apparatus of the coalition media centre in Doha, Qatar has shown, is opened to all those involved. The implication of this, as Tumber and Palmer (2004) have observed, is that the 'embedded journalist' can be led to believe the frames presented to him by the soldiers. The identification of the journalists who covered the war with the coalition soldiers was part of a deliberate strategy by the Pentagon to ensure that the journalists did not investigate the reason for the war or its rationale. Rather, it was meant to get the journalists to report the war from the perspectives of the American-led forces to keep public opinion on their side (Lewis, Threadgold, Roderick, & Mosdell, 2004).

In his discourse on the framing of violent news, Mitchell (2007) outlined four implications of this: (i) framing by journalists is always aimed at achieving an objective, hence they focus the attention of the audience on an aspect of their perceived reality, thus either limit or distort understanding of reality. This is even more so since 'framing not only includes, but also excludes' (p. 72); (ii) the angle or perspective from which one considers a frame can influence the audience's perception of news stories. Due to the biases associated with framing, factors, such as geographical location, ethnicity, religion, social standing, among others, can play a key role on how the members of the public could create and recreate frames for themselves; (iii) from the experience of the Western media coverage of the war in Iraq, there is a plurality of the origin of frames as opposed to the dominant view that the media were the only sources. Some



studies have dismissed this position and argued that the news media are not now, if they ever were the main effect on the way events are framed. This position, Mitchell considers debatable; (iv) there is no unanimity among scholars regarding the issue of reframing as some consider it to be controversial. The reason is that if it is applied strictly it suggests replacing the original with another.

This discussion of the news framing theory of the media, clearly shows that frames are not value free or neutral as it is sometimes imagined since they are consciously and deliberately selected to achieve ends set by the editor (Danaan, 2017; Lecheler & de Vreese, 2012; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Melki, 2014). Due to the biases associated with the selection of news frames by editors and news media professionals, they often change their frames depending on their geographical location. Scholars (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Wallensteen & Sollenberg, 1997) have observed that the Western media pattern of coverage of events in Developing Countries, especially in Africa and the Middle East, are usually characterised by the use of negative stereotypical frames. In Galtung and Ruge's views, factors, such as cultural similarity, wealth and proximity to the scene of conflict are what determine the quality of their (Western media) coverage. The Western media would exclude some important contextual facts regarding events in some of those Developing Countries and would stress on the negative elements of the news, such as wars, conflicts, coups, famine, starvation, hunger, refugees, and disease to the exclusion of other wholesome values that exist on the continents (Beaudoin & Thorson, 2002).

The news framing theory of the media is quite appropriate for this study on the influence of ethnicity in newspaper journalists' coverage of the Plateau State conflict. Given the strong capacity of frames to influence the behaviour, attitudes and beliefs of people, this research examines conflict reporters and editor's choice of frames in their news production. This is because, as Katu (2016) has argued, understanding the way conflict journalists use their frames to construct news and how conflict audiences in turn interpret the news would offer some important insights into their behaviour, attitudes and beliefs. Thus, reporters and editors employ certain discursive strategies like news framing, absences, silences, and opaqueness, to significantly influence their readers negatively or positively (Carabine, 2001). Therefore, the use of the news framing theory in this thesis is inevitable because framing is not a matter of either or, as Carvalho (2008) argues, they are crucial to conflict reporting, as Danaan (2017) affirmed. The way conflict journalists construct news, for example, and the role each communication plays in the process are crucial to conflict reporting which describes journalistic role conception and performance. Thus, how reporters, editors and content producers put

together and publish ‘facts’ about the conflict they present to their readers amounts to news framing. So, identifying and analysing the kind of frames journalists of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* used in their news reports would confirm or disprove the belief that the reports played critical roles in the intensification of the Plateau State conflict.

### **3.4.7 Human Rights Orientated Journalism Theory**

Any discussion on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) will be incomplete without putting it in its proper context. The Second World War and the accompanying litany of atrocities, and indeed the failure of minority-rights regime under the League of Nations necessitated this declaration (Sloane, 2001). Sloane argued that, this declaration in 1948 represented a new hope for humanity and putting in place a standard for civilised conduct with human rights as its flagship. This declaration represented also an important milestone in human civilisation and there was a lesson to be learned from the experiences of the two World Wars. It is important to note that for the first time in the history of humankind an unambiguous statement was made on the inherent rights of all human beings, without prejudice to colour, religion or race (Shaw, 2012). But if this universal declaration of human rights was the much-sought-after remedy that was to prevent a recurrence of human tragedy, such as the Second World War, it has been a huge disappointment. The litany of wars, conflicts and strife (Vietnam, Falkland, Serbia, Kosovo, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone, Sudan, Republic of the Congo, Boko Haram in Nigeria) that have raged and are still raging on the global landscape and the attendant consequences are colossal (Dunne, 1999; Shaw, 2012). Yet, despite the seeming failure of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to prevent these myriads carnages that dot the global landscape, human rights violations (ethnic, religious, and farmers/herdsmen conflicts, torture, genocide, ethnic cleansing, forced labour, modern day slavery, forced migration, xenophobia); the global community cannot contemplate a world without this international body, even though it is fraught with a long list of shortcomings, because the situations would have been much worst.

However, its establishment has set a benchmark that falling short of its standard a criminal undertaking. Hence, the UDHR set up mechanisms whereby perpetrators of human rights abuses are held to account for their actions (and sometimes inactions) at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, Netherlands. The establishment of ICC in The Hague, for example, underscores the importance and the commitment of the civilised world to the protection of human rights today. Although the international community and especially human

rights advocates welcome the setting up of this court, it is nonetheless bedevilled by crisis of confidence and alleged biases. Critics are against it because the court appears to focus its attention more on developing countries, especially in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe. There are criminal cases against 25 people before the court in, at least, five African countries: Kenya, Sudan, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic (Arief, Margesson, Browne, & Weed, 2011). Arieff et al argued that, the prosecutor has initiated preliminary investigations in places such as Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Kenya and Nigeria along with other countries outside Africa, such as Afghanistan, Colombia, Venezuela, Georgia, Honduras and the Republic of North Korea. However, a court of any kind is never completely without limitations and the ICC is no exception. Such complaints of biases must be taken seriously to engender more confidence and credibility. Hence, such allegations should be investigated with a view to ensuring justice for all. Complaints have been aired in respect of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict; the coalition forces invasion of Iraq over the alleged issue of Weapons of Mass Destruction, the invasion of Libya by the international coalition forces and their intervention in Syria and Afghanistan, which have resulted in the killing of thousands of innocent civilians; and Saudi Arabia's alleged human rights violations in its backyard, Yemen.

Human rights journalism (HRJ) is a diagnostic approach to reporting which provides a critical reflection of the experiences of the needs of both the victims and culprits of human rights violations (physical, cultural and structural) to understand the reasons for these abuses and so to prevent or solve them (Shaw, 2012). This type of journalism, as Shaw argues, is founded on the principles of human rights and global justice, that is, if journalism is to play a significant part in society, it should centre on deconstructing the latent structural causes of political violence such as ethnic exclusion, poverty, marginalisation of minorities and the like, rather than reporting attitudes of the political elite. Thus, deconstructing these structures in Shaw's view would prevent or solve these human rights violations.

The plausibility of HRJ lies in its ability to pro-actively prevent the outbreak of violent conflict and to ameliorate its effects. Its usefulness also lies in the fact that if it is effectively imbibed and applied by journalists it can not only ensure equal opportunities for both victims and perpetrators of human rights abuses, but justice for all. Thus, the model is deployed in this research to elicit information from reporters and editors interviewed on their knowledge of the model. If this model was effectively adopted by journalists in Plateau State, they will be more careful in their choice of news frames (by avoiding negative stereotypical frames, divisive, among others) and could potentially help towards conflict-prevention.

### **3.8 Media Approaches to the Coverage of Conflicts**

There is no denying the dominant position human rights issues have continued to occupy in global discourses today. The preponderance of the media today and their investigations into issues of human rights violations such as ethnic, religious and political conflicts in Plateau State, for example, are as a result of the opening up of the frontiers of media coverage which have brought about increased awareness of multiplicity of views on such phenomena (Shaw, 2012). This situation is due largely also to the decentralisation of the patterns of media ownership and control in Nigeria which has allowed more private media to be established (Okidu, 2011). Although this situation has allowed for the pluralism of opinions on issues, especially conflicts by the media, often the way journalists cover conflicts tend to escalate rather than deescalate them. This section discusses some of approaches to the coverage of conflict by the media.

#### **3.8.1 The mainstream media**

Mainstream media, broadly speaking, refer to dominant media, such as the print and broadcast media-newspapers, radio and television, among others. Although the mainstream media have been in the forefront of efforts in reporting various conflicts, including human rights violations, they have not been without their shortcomings. Considering the complex nature of the mainstream media, often times, they ‘expose and hide violence, presenting, commodifying and trivialising it’ by not placing some of these conflicts in their proper contexts (Mitchell, 2007). As Shaw (2012) has argued, the mainstream media often take sides with the official rhetoric and policy stance of the political and dominant elite. The reporting of the Plateau State conflict, as has been noted earlier, has exposed the skewed way journalists framed their stories, which has attracted a lot of criticisms. The mainstream media fuelled the conflict by promoting what Musa (2012) described as ‘us’ and ‘them’ syndrome by taking sides. Musa further argues that part of the reason why the Plateau State conflict, has lingered for so long was the media’s failure to do a proper diagnosis of the causative factors fuelled the conflict. These views, as expressed by Musa, resonates with those of Shaw (2012) when he said that where human rights abuses make the news they hardly go beyond the manifest violence. The media do not properly investigate to ascertain whether the violations are products of a system or structures that construct and sustain long term relations in conflict; instead, they report them as actions of individual perpetrators.

Mainstream media reporting, which is synonymous with war reporting, very often portrays a certain preference for physical violent conflict characterised by sensationalism (Carter, Thomas, & Ross, 2011). Shaw further explained that the failure of the mainstream media in reporting human rights violations centres on failure to communicate peace and failure also:

To focus on the potential for positive peace building and on positive human rights to match the dominant negative peace and negative rights emphasised within the cosmopolitan context of global justice' (pp. 97-98).

Another scathing criticism that has been levelled against the mainstream journalism by Galtung (1992) is premised on the fact that the mainstream media focused more on problems rather than on proffering a solution, on propaganda rather than truth, on its elite rather the masses. Furthermore, the mainstream media are so overwhelmed by the plethora of competing interests and thus susceptible to manipulation by political, economic, cultural and power elite. Although these types of scenarios are not exclusive to developing countries, they are however, more common in them. For example, during the Rwandan conflict, the mainstream media were pressured by the pro Hutu government and served as its propaganda machines (Shaw, 2012) and the aftermath of this was the Rwandan genocide that shocked the world. Therefore, the combined forces of these structures diminish the mainstream media's efforts for both local and global justice. Thus, the mainstream media would, in the final analysis, succumb to selective justice (Dunne & Wheeler, 1999).

### **3.8.2 Reporting Human Rights**

Reporting human rights is an important concept in journalism. Even though reporting human rights is related to the concepts of mainstream journalism, peace journalism and human rights journalism, it is still distinct (Shaw, 2012). The sphere of coverage of reporting human rights is limited to human rights violations and facilitate meeting of warring parties. But for journalists, especially those who are orientated toward human rights reporting, most of the atrocities that are being committed in the world today would not have been known. Through their journalistic reportage, not only are horrific cases of human rights violations exposed, but in recent times, prosecutors have made recourse to media reports as evidence against alleged war crime suspects such as in Yugoslavia, Liberia, Rwanda, Kenya, and Sierra Leone (Shaw, 2012). The issue of the over two hundred Chibok girls kidnapped by the notorious Boko Haram sect in Borno State, Nigeria in 2014 is another case in point. As it is with other strands of journalism, reporting human rights emphasises the issue of accuracy in reporting human rights

violations. Based on this discourse on reporting human rights violations, this type of reportage has an inherent limitation, because its scope of what constitutes human rights violations such as physical violence.

### **3.8.3 Peace Journalism**

Peace journalism, variously named as conflict sensitive or solution journalism is both conceptually and practically designed towards equipping and changing, not just the attitudes of journalists (reporters, editors, media owners and professionals), but also the attitudes of the members of the public to become conscientious and responsible in their reportage of conflicts in order to contribute to the process of making and keeping peace (Hanitzsch, 2007; Lynch & MacGoldrick, 2005; Shinar, 2003). Peace journalism aims to assist, especially media professionals to make informed decisions about, not just how stories are to be published, but crucially, how they are to be framed (see Table 5). This is aimed at assisting society at large with opportunities to consider as well as to value nonviolent responses to conflict (Shaw, 2012). Shaw asserts that Lynch and Goldrick (2005, p. 5) see peace journalism as playing the following key roles:

- It uses the insights of conflict analysis and transformation to update the concepts of balance, fairness and accuracy in reporting;
- It provides a new route map tracing the connections between journalists, their sources, the stories they cover and the consequences of their journalism—the ethics of journalistic intervention;
- It builds an awareness of nonviolence and creativity into the practical job of everyday editing and reporting.

The essence of Peace Journalism (PJ) is to help people or conflict actors actively participate in the resolution of violent conflicts. Although Human Rights Journalism (HRJ) is an offshoot of Peace Journalism, they differ in their *modus operandi* (See Table 5). PJ is limited in its scope in that it seeks to bring conflict actors together to resolve their differences. HRJ, on the other hand, provides a broad-based approach to reporting by being pro-active and more global and sustainable in just peacebuilding (Shaw, 2012).

### The Galtung Peace Journalism Model

Peace Journalism	Human Rights Journalism
Peace/conflict oriented: prevention/win-win	Non-violent/structural/cultural violence oriented: proactively/preventing direct violence/triple win.
Truth oriented: exposes all untruths	Human wrongs orientated: expose all human wrongs
People orientated: names all victims	People/human-face/orientated: cares for and empowers all but is biased in favour of vulnerable people.
Solution oriented	Holistic problem-solving: now/tomorrow, and surface/hidden problems.

*Table 5: Galtung's Model adopted and modified from Lynch and McGoldrick (2005, p.6).*

Peace journalism, in the views of Lynch (2008), takes the approach of advocacy, which is different from the approach of the mainstream media whose focus is intended toward the reportage of the physical conflict. While the mainstream media are preoccupied with reporting facts, truth and people, peace journalism, on the other hand, is concerned with conflict resolution and the promotion of peace initiatives (Sule, 2015). Despite the great opportunities peace journalism offers towards peace initiatives and conflict resolution, it lacks the sophistication to diagnose and so to proactively prevent conflicts before they erupt violently.

### 3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed some conceptual explanatory frameworks, namely, social responsibility, the primordial theory of ethnicity and gatekeeping for this study. These frameworks were found to be grossly inadequate for this enquiry on the influence of ethnicity in newspaper journalists' coverage of the Plateau State conflict. Thus, other alternative conceptual explanatory frameworks were introduced and utilised, namely, agenda setting, news framing and human orientated journalism. Discussion, so far, on the agenda setting theory of the media has evidenced strong ability of the media to impact on their readers or viewers (Hill,

1985; Lang & Lang, 1959; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; McQuail & Windahl, 1993; Sambe, 2008). An agenda is put forward by editors and newsroom staff by the kind of prominence they give to issues or emphasis they give in their news production. News media professionals carefully provide cues about salience of the issue in news, such as front page, large headlines, editorials, opinion columns, among others (Sambe, 2008). Based on the above, this researcher explores how conflict journalists of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* set agendas for their readers by the prominence they gave to issues and how such issues might have influenced them to conflict or played a part in its escalation.

News framing, as it has been noted earlier, is central to any journalistic discourse. Journalists and content creators, by their discursive strategies, especially news framing, can achieve their agendas or goals. This, they do, as Entman (1993) argues, when they consciously select certain frames and exclude others in their news production processes. Editors routinely foreground some aspects of their news to attract the attention of the reading public. Therefore, the utility of news framing as an explanatory framework in this research is in helping to deconstruct news reports of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* newspapers. Since frames are not value neutral, how editors weave frames and are used as headlines news, editorials, commentaries, opinion columns and so on, will determine how editors, especially tried to achieve the agenda(s) set by their ethnic groups by emphasising their interests and de-emphasizing the interests of other 'enemy' community.

Human rights issues in general have continued to occupy the front burner of public discourse since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (Sloane, 2001). This declaration was meant to stem the tide of the rising cases of human rights violations that has continued to dot the global landscape. Human rights journalism, therefore, as conceived by Shaw (2012), is an offshoot of the UNHR. This approach to journalism, in the opinions of Shaw, is aimed at preventing violent conflicts before they become violent. HRJ is a journalism with a human face whose objective is justice for both victims and perpetrators of human rights violations. The utility of human rights orientated journalism in this research is intended to probe and see if the selected journalists were guided by human rights considerations in their news construction and production. This HRJ approach, based on the analysis of the other approaches to the coverage of conflict (mainstream media, reporting human rights, and peace journalism is more profitable, because of their apparent shortcomings to preventing conflicts. Although HRJ is used to elicit data from interviewees for this study, it is also used in the discussion chapter to see if journalists in their news production processes used frames that might have led to the exacerbation of the



Plateau State conflict. These conceptual explanatory frameworks can address the aim, objectives and research questions of this research. Newspapers and the emergence conflict in Plateau State will take the centre stage of discussion in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Four: Newspapers and the Emergence of Conflicts in Plateau State**

Nationalism and ethnic pride, in the long run, delay human development, and the misery the cause must be recognised. If enough people saw that, maybe we wouldn't have so many wars

Harvey Pekar, Not the Israel my Parents Promised Me

### **4.1 Introduction**

The newspaper predates any other medium in Nigeria. Its history is linked to the arrival and subsequent evangelising activities of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) at Abeokuta in south-western Nigeria in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This chapter attempts to situate its evolution from the missionary, colonial, European and African immigrants to its establishment by the early Nigerian nationalists. The chapter also sketches the emergence of Plateau State within the Nigerian nation and how some historical events, such as the establishment of British colonial administration in 1900, the discovery of mineral resources, especially tin, and the construction of railway that linked Kaduna and Maiduguri attracted a large influx of ethnic groups both from across the country and beyond, made Plateau State a melting pot of ethnic diversities. The chapter argues that the introduction of some policies, such as the final amalgamation of 1914, Indirect Rule, Land and Native Ordinance Act of 1910, fostered ethnic tensions and divisions in Nigeria and how these tensions snowballed into violent episodes of conflict between the Plateau State's indigenous ethnic communities (indigenes) and the Hausa/Fulani group (settlers). It further argued that the British colonial policy of divide and rule is one of the major factors that characterises social relations among the state's diverse ethnic communities today. This policy together with other policies were to be responsible for the entrenchment of ethnic identity which the newspapers later became enmeshed in.

### **4.2 A History of the Press (Newspaper) in Nigeria**

The advent of the press (newspaper) in Nigeria will be incomplete without putting it in its proper historical context by the pioneering efforts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Anglican missionaries who came to Nigeria. This effort was spearheaded in Abeokuta, south-west Nigeria in 1859 by the renowned Rev. Henry Townsend of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) (Okidu, 2011;

Okwuchukwu, 2014). Specifically, the newspaper was a vernacular church paper named *Iwe Irohin* (Yoruba, the dominant ethnic group in south-western Nigeria) for the promotion of literacy, propagation of the Christian faith, and for the building of the elite among the Egba (a dialect within the Yoruba). This humble beginning of *Iwe Irohin* newspaper in Nigeria was to set the foundation for a media system that would later become the central point of media activities, in not just West Africa, but indeed the continent. Explaining the underlying reason for the establishment of the *Iwe Irohin*, in the first instance, Sobowale (1985, p. 28) opined thus:

In what amounted to an attempt to atone for the sins of Europe during the dark days of the slave trade, missionaries set out to evangelise the freed slaves. They also educated them so that they would not only be helpful in spreading the gospel among their kinsmen but also useful to the Europeans in their business.

Unfortunately, the life of the newspaper was short-lived, because, as Omu (1978) noted, the paper dabbled into the murky and infested waters of politics, which put it on a collision course with the British colonial administration in Lagos. However, the demise of *Iwe Irohin* in 1867 was not the end of the story. Rather, its demise paved the way for the emergence of other newspapers such as *The Anglo African*, *Lagos Times*, and *Gold Coast Colony Advertiser* (Okwuchukwu, 2014).

Among the many instruments of influence, which the British colonial administration brought to one of its newly created states, Nigeria, was the media. It is worthy of note that the colonial era witnessed an influx of both European and African settlers, mainly of Sierra- Leonean and Liberian extractions who owned and operated the media (Dimkpa, 1997; Okidu, 2011). The exclusive advantage this gave the European media owners during the colonial period, due to their closeness to the administration, was their negative portrayal of Nigeria and Nigerians, and their unflinching support the government, in the views of Akinfeleye (2003), set the ethnic/sectional tone. This situation further aggravated the *growing* anti-colonial sentiments among Nigerians. This increasing dissatisfaction of the local population with the colonial administration and the agitation among the elite for self-determination, thus, led to the emergence of so many other newspapers at the time, such as: *Lagos Observer* (1882), *The Eagle* and *Lagos Critic* (1883), *The Mirror* (1887), *Lagos Echo* (1890), *Lagos Weekly Record* (1890), *The Chronicles* (1908), *The Pioneer* (1914), *Lagos Daily News* (1925) and *The Nigerian Daily Times* (1926) (Abati, 1988; Babalola, 2002; Okidu, 2011; Olayiwola, 1991). As it has been noted earlier, almost all those newspapers were established either by the freed slaves

themselves, or their descendants, and either way, it explained why they were so fired up and were united in their opposition to colonial rule. This stance of the nationalists was a departure from *Iwe Irohin*, which, even though, in the end ventured into political waters, its primary focus was evangelization and social mobilization against human slavery (Babalola, 2002). The anti-colonial stance of the newspapers continued despite the stiff opposition from the colonial administrators up to the 1930s. The 1930s were very interesting times in Nigeria's political history, because it was at this time that some Nigerians who trained in Britain and the United States of America, such as Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe returned with what Ellis (2016, p. 44) referred to as 'nationalist and pan-Africanist ideas' and set up *The West African Pilot*. Okidu (2011) opined that the setting up of *The West African Pilot* contributed to the development of political consciousness of Nigerians and professionalism within the journalism community. As the tempo of political activities increased and the agitation for political independence was getting louder, other Nigerians, such as Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a leading political figure from south-western Nigeria, set up his own newspaper, *The Nigerian Tribune* in 1957.

The emergence of newspapers that were owned and operated by some of the best brains among Nigeria's politically educated elite at this stage served to mobilize as well as galvanize anti-colonial forces, which gradually culminated in Nigeria's Independence in 1960. Among the frontline figures in this struggle were Herbert Macaulay, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Ernest Ikoli, Obafemi Awolowo, Anthony Enahoro, Dutse Mohammed Ali Mokwugo Okoye, some of whom were themselves veteran journalists and editors (Babalola, 2002). It is important to note that up to this point, the leading nationalists' newspapers were the leading fight for independence, hence they were able to maintain their professionalism by informing and educating the Nigerian public about the colonialists and later on their successors (Ismail, 2011). However, both Okidu (2011) and Ismail (2011) asserted that soon after independence, the newspapers, such as *The Nigerian Pilot* and *The Nigerian Tribune*, started to show signs of ethnic affiliations as avenues for negotiating power. Hence, these papers became enmeshed in ethnic politics by supporting one candidate over the other the political parties' newspapers. This is because, as Ellis (2016) argued, the political parties formed by the country's emerging political apprentices were based on the materials available, especially the ethnic and cultural organisations structures left by the colonial administration. Okidu further maintained that the media structure in the early 1960s showed that the northern, western and eastern regions, each had a dominant political party with a dedicated newspaper that served their particular interests (the northern region under the Northern People's Congress (NPC), publishers of *The Nigerian Citizen*, which later changed

into *The New Nigerian*, the Action Group (AC) in the western region had *The Nigerian Tribune* and *The Daily Service* as their official mouthpieces, while in the Eastern Region the Igbo ethnic group had National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) had *The West African Pilot*, *Defender*, *Daily Comet* and *The Outlook* (Babalola, 2002; Ismail, 2011; Mohammed, 2013; Okidu, 2011; Okwuchukwu, 2014). Consequently, the papers lost one of their important hallmarks, which was their nationalistic outlook.

It is significant to note that both the media structure, and the political tradition, which Nigeria itself had inherited from the British colonial administration is rooted in ethnic prejudice (Udoakah, 2015). This explains why the sectional-ethnic politics were prevalent, which *The West African Pilot*, *The Nigerian Tribune* and *Gaskiya Ta fi Kwabo* became enmeshed in shortly after independence in 1960 got to an intolerable level; allegedly fighting ethnic causes led to the banning from circulating in the eastern and western regions respectively of *The Nigerian Tribune* and *The West African Pilot* by the governments of those regions in 1965 (Galadima & Soola, 2012; Mgbejume, 1991). Galadima and Soola contended that the ethnic tensions that *resulted* into full scale conflict shortly after independence and, ‘in the first decade of independence’ (Somerville, 2017, p. 61), were fuelled and exacerbated by the regional newspapers that saw it as a patriotic duty to promote regional interest over the corporate interest of the country, set the stage for the eventual seasons of military coups that the country was to later witness.

Military incursions into the Nigerian politics in 1966 that shutdown the First Republic (1960-1966) under the government of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa introduced some draconian policies that were inimical to the operations of newspapers in Nigeria. Explaining about these, Ismail (2011) argued that General Yakubu Gowon who succeeded General Aguiyi-Ironsi continued the Emergency Decree of 1966 which legitimized the arrest and detention of citizens without lawful warrant and empowered the police to search any newspaper office. Under this Decree, *Daily Times* office (*Weekend Times*) was searched in 1968. No sooner had this Decree been promulgated than another one followed the following year titled Newspaper Prohibition of Circulation Decree 1967 (Ismail, 2011; Mgbejume, 1991; Pate, 2011b) as seen in Figure 2.

This Decree empowered the Head of the federal military government to prohibit the circulation of any newspaper which he considered detrimental to any part of the country (Iredia, 2015, p. 31).

It was during this period that the then Military Governor of Plateau State, Joseph Dechi Gomwalk, felt that *The New Nigerian*, which Plateau State was a part owner was not giving

adequate coverage of events in the state and the Middle Belt areas set up *The Nigerian Standard* in 1972 (Goyol, 1999). By the time the country returned to democratic governance in the Second Republic (1979-1983) there were only two privately owned newspapers-*The Nigerian Tribune* and *The Punch*. This period also witnessed the birth of another two privately owned newspapers (*The Guardian* and *The Concord*) by two notable Nigerian business moguls (Chief Alex Ibru and Moshood Kashimawo Abiola). *The Guardian* brought with it some levels of professionalism and intellectual appeal that was aimed at capturing the middle ground of the Nigerian political landscape with a liberal editorial policy (Okidu, 2011). What is remarkable about this period was the change in the ownership pattern, that is, private individuals; as opposed to governments were the new sets of newspaper proprietors. This change in ownership and control pattern of the newspapers engendered plurality of opinions by the reading public. The dominance of government in the ownership of newspapers, which was a major feature, had begun to tone down because of the dwindling economic climate of the time. Despite this development, it is imperative to note that these newspapers were still somewhat inclined towards sectional and ethnic politics.

The Second Republic was short lived because of the military coup of General Muhammadu Buhari. It is essential to note that the military governments of both Generals Buhari and Babangida (who staged a palace coup on Buhari in less than two years of his (Buhari) being in office) would be remembered in the history of the press in Nigeria as the most hostile. In keeping with military tradition, the administration General Buhari introduced a series of draconian Decrees to curtail the operations of the press. In 1984, he enacted Decree No 4 known as the Public Officers (Protection against False Accusation) (Pate, 2011b). General Babangida took his draconian measures against the press to an extreme when he repealed Decree No 2 of 1984 and re-introduced the State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree 2 1984. Under this Decree newspaper establishments were not only proscribed, but journalists were even assassinated. For example, newspapers and magazines, such as *Newswatch*, *Concord*, *The Punch*, *The Sketch*, *The Nigeria Observer*, were *banned* and Dele Giwa, Editor-in-Chief of *Newswatch*, was allegedly assassinated by the regime (Oso, Odunlami, & Adaja, 2011; Pate, 2011b). In general, the press did not fare well under the military due to the stringent Decrees they enacted that stifled their operations. Despite this, the 1990s and 2000s witnessed the proliferation of more newspapers in Nigeria: *The Vanguard*, *ThisDay*, *The Nation*, the *Daily Trust*, *The Sun*, *The Champion*, *Leadership*, among others. With the return of the country to full democratic rule in 1999, there emerged more privately-owned newspapers that further

sharpened and emboldened the people's demand for a qualitative leadership from its ruling elite, because of the plurality of views that they offered. Although Nigeria is in its 18th year of democratic practice since the Fourth Republic was inaugurated in 1999, the situation of the press has not changed significantly, especially in the public service media. Various civilian administrations in Nigeria have continued to, through their policies, harass journalists and their news organizations, as well as curtail press freedom (Ismail, 2011).

### **4.3 Ownership Influence of Newspapers in Nigeria**

From the historical context in which the Nigerian press has emerged, there is no disputing the changes the ownership patterns of the newspapers have undergone since its humble evolution (from missionary, individuals, groups and to government) (Okwuchukwu, 2014). The ownership and control of the newspapers is a wholly complex issue. Commending the efforts of the Nigerian press, especially the newspapers in the struggle for independence and in the fight against both military and civilian dictatorships and the eventual enthronement of good governance, Adesoji and Hahn (2011) argued that democratic development in Nigeria would be incomplete without acknowledging the important role the newspapers have played. The ownership patterns and control of newspapers in emerging democracies, such as Nigeria, is fraught with all kinds of challenges, because of the fluid political environment they operate. From its colonial heritage, the trajectory is a familiar one, because nothing seems to have changed substantially from that period right through the First Republic (1960-1966) and to the military era. The press during the colonial period served as important tools for public debate, political protests and other discourses. Therefore, controlling the newspapers at this period was important because it controlled the flow of information that went out into the public domain. The various regional governments had their newspapers that served to protect their interests, as stated earlier (see Table 6). For example, the regional governments, namely, the northern had *The Citizen*, the eastern, *Nigerian Outlook*, while the western owned *The Tribune* and *Daily Service* (Omu, 1978). However, as democracy began to take root in the Nigerian nation so did the ownership and control of the press; the liberalization of media laws that enabled groups and individuals to own and operate the media, especially the newspapers, was no doubt, a welcome development. Curiously, with the coming of the Fourth Republic, Adesoji and Hahn (2011) contended that politicians, mostly serving or former governors, retired military officers, and former newspaper editors became involved in newspaper ownership and control. These are the new set of rich politicians that could finance the newspapers as opposed to governments at the

different levels (Federal, state and local governments). One cannot agree more with Herman and Chomsky (1994) when they assert that ownership is an important catalyst in determining the type and quality of news that the newspaper organisations produced.



### Patterns of National Newspaper Ownership in Nigeria

<b>Newspaper Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Type of Ownership</b>
The Daily Times	Lagos	Federal Government (60%) & Private (40%)
The Daily Star	Lagos	Anambra & Imo State Governments
The Daily Sketch	Ibadan	Ogun, Oyo & Ondo State Governments
The New Nigerian	Kaduna	Federal Government
The Nigerian Observer	Benin City	Bendal State Government
Nigerian Herald	Ilorin	Kwara State Government
Nigerian Chronicle	Calabar	Cross River State Government
Nigerian Tide	Port Harcourt	River State Government
The Nigeria Standard	Jos	Plateau State Government
The Punch	Lagos	Private
The West African Pilot	Lagos	Private
The Nigerian Tribune	Ibadan	Private
Daily Express	Lagos	Private
Evening Times	Lagos	Federal Government & Private

Table 6: *List of Nigerian Newspapers and their Ownership Patterns by mid 1970s* (Uche, 1977).

Propaganda is a major concern in the ownership and control of newspapers in Nigeria just as it is also in the propaganda model of Herman and Chomsky (Herman & Chomsky, 1994). Adesoji and Hahn (2011) argued that newspapers in Nigeria by interest groups are used as propaganda tools through the manipulation of significant symbols of the body, particularly the domains of the mind and emotion to rally the support, either for the cause propagated by the proprietors or their persons. They argued further that the hidden public persuasion often used by newspapers resulting in the discreet imposition of their ideology and position enabled them to project the values the proprietor cherishes, while still giving the impression that they are outlets for the

dissemination of seemingly harmless news commentaries. Graham (2002 cited in Adesoji and Hahn, 2012) believed that in Nigeria, the funding of newspapers often goes beyond the economic benefits the owner hopes to get. To buttress this position, Graham cited the pioneer newspapers set up by two of Nigeria's nationalists, *The West African Pilot* established by Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1937 and *The Nigerian Tribune* set up by Chief Obafemi Awolowo 1949 as examples in the exercise of power and influence. Within the Nigerian context, for example, the potency of the newspapers and their manipulative tendency to serve an end notwithstanding, the influence of owners on journalists working for the newspaper could be assessed from two perspectives: first, journalists, regardless of the newspaper's ideology or editorial policy, are sometimes allowed freedom to express their independent opinions in columns, viewpoints or general features which over time could become that of the newspaper's. Second, internal censorship of the material that would eventually form the content of the paper could sometimes conflict with the ethical values of the journalist. This therefore could constitute a burden to the journalist who refuses to comply and consequently it could lead to either outright dismissal by the organization or resignation.

As it has been noted earlier, there is a disparity between government and private ownership of newspapers in Nigeria. Although, the government newspapers are supposed to be public newspapers serving public interest, the reality is that they mostly serve government's and the interest of the political elite (Adesoji & Hahn, 2011). In addition, despite their poor quality both in content and in print, the government owned newspapers do receive some subventions from government. The private newspapers, on the other hand, must struggle to make ends meet through adverts and other commercials. However, at the end of the day, both the government and private newspapers were established to serve as propaganda tools. Another notable feature of the ownerships of the newspapers is not only that they are shrouded in secrecy, but they are often fraught with all kinds of complexities. Most of the Nigerian newspapers, before 1990s were owned and controlled by either the regional government or the central governments, only a few were in the strict sense of the word were owned by individuals or groups (see Table 2 for the list of current Nigerian newspapers). The major reason for the setting up of newspapers then was largely to maximize profit as stated by Azikiwe (2004). In the next section, the two newspapers selected for this study (*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*) will be discussed.

#### **4.4. *The Nigeria Standard Newspaper***

The circumstances that led to the establishment of *The Nigeria Standard Newspaper* by Joseph Dechi Gomwalk, the then Military governor of Benue-Plateau State, in 1972 followed a similar trajectory as the others before it, especially *The New Nigerian* (Goyol, 1999). As Kukah (1993) explained, the establishment of *The New Nigerian* was a political act. What this meant was that northern Nigeria regional government felt gouged in the propaganda war in Nigeria to their counterparts in the south; news from the north was hardly reported in what was and still known today as the ‘Lagos-Ibadan media’ media (Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Yusha’u, 2015). *The New Nigerian* was a joint project of the six states that constituted the northern part of Nigeria at the time and was financed by them. Ironically, newsworthy activities and events within Plateau State were never given adequate coverage in *The New Nigerian*. A case in point was the state visit by the governor of Brigadier Samuel Ogbemudia, Military Governor of the mid-west State, who paid a state visit to Benue-Plateau State, Goyol (1999) posited. Driven by the desire to give Benue-Plateau State a voice by projecting its goals and objectives against the backdrop of the alleged maltreatment from *The New Nigerian* Governor Gomwalk, with the support of his friend, Ogbemudia ensured the launch of *The Nigeria Standard* newspaper. The first edition of the newspaper was published in 1972 in faraway Benin City in the mid-west, despite the financial crunch until when eventually the state could muster the finances that enabled it set up its own publishing company named Plateau Printing and Publishing Corporation. After overcoming the initial challenges that are normally associated with such undertakings, the first copy of *The Nigeria Standard* newspaper hit the newsstand (Goyol, 1999). The editorial of the first edition of the paper captured the mood of the government and the public thus:

Today, we join the growing family of the nation’s news media. And we dedicate ourselves to the service of helping to build a strong and virile press that will enhance the enlightenment of our people, promote better understanding and ethnic harmony among the various groups that make up this great country and contribute to the economic advancement and political stability of our country [...] for the benefit of the government and the governed. We will always offer constructive criticisms and maintain a virile editorial policy within the limits of the law. We will advise, implore, exhort, explain and criticize whenever necessary, without fear or favour [...] (Goyol, 1999).

*The Nigeria Standard*, having got off to a good start, especially with the steady cash injection and staff training by the Plateau State government, became a daily newspaper. Within a comparatively short period the Sunday edition of the paper (*Sunday Standard*) was introduced

in 1976. With this feat, there was no dispute that it became the authoritative voice of the people and government of the state. With this development and bearing in mind also the circumstances that led to the papers' establishment, there was a feeling in some quarters that since *The New Nigerian* was pro Hausa/Fulani, *The Nigeria Standard* could well be the mouth piece of Plateau State's indigenous ethnic communities. This insinuation, Goyol (1999) noted, was immediately debunked in keeping with its original mission and editorial policy of being a platform for the people without prejudice to ethnicity or religion.

*The Nigeria Standard* newspaper is organized based on the following structures: the editorial board of the newspaper is chaired by the editor in chief. In terms of circulation, the Plateau Printing and Publishing Corporation, the managers of *The Nigeria Standard* newspaper circulate about 5,000 copies mainly in Plateau State and some parts of Nasarawa, Bauchi, Kaduna states and Abuja. The paper is a general interest tabloid newspaper. The establishment of *The Nigeria Standard* has as one of its unstated objectives the enlightenment of the public about government's activities and the public defense of same. Much as the proprietor of the newspaper, the government of Plateau State would like the public to believe the paper enjoys editorial independence, the reality is that its independence has been compromised. Like other papers, *The Nigeria Standard* depends on advertising and sales as sources of revenue. However, since the paper is owned and operated by the Plateau State Government, it does receive some subvention from the government. Based on this ownership pattern, the government appoints and pays all the staff of the corporation from the general manager, members of the executive, journalists and other categories of staff.

#### **4.5 The Daily/Weekly/Sunday Trust**

The *Daily/Weekly Trust* newspapers, which make up the Trust Media Group, were established in 1999 by Kabiru Abdullahi Yusuf (see Table 7). From its comparatively short history, the papers have firmly established their presence, not just among the northern market, but also in the southern part of the country. It has also today, supplanted the ageing and ailing *The New Nigerian* as the authoritative voice of the north. Since the appearance of these newspapers on the newsstands across Nigerian, nearly nineteen years ago, they have made their impact in so many ways, not least in enhancing the quality of Nigeria's political discourse. Despite the papers history, there appears to be no written history of the paper. This situation validates the views of Adesoji and Hahn (2011) when they said that the ownership of some newspapers in

Nigeria, including the *Daily/Weekly Trust*, are shrouded in secrecy. This therefore explains the rather scanty literature that is available regarding the paper.

The *Weekly/Daily Trust* newspapers pride themselves as general interest newspapers, which uphold the libertarian principle. This implies that it has editorial independence and it is guided by the social responsibility in its editorial. The editorial board is chaired by the editor in chief. The newspaper claims that editors have complete independence for running their various titles with no interference from either the board or management. The current print run is between 25,000 copies daily from the four presses in Abuja, Kano, Maiduguri and Lagos. The *Daily Trust* is the only media house in Nigeria that prints in four presses simultaneously. According to Musa and Ferguson (2013) this makes the paper the most widely read in northern Nigeria. The newspaper organization is run professionally in keeping with accounting standards. Advertising and sales are the major sources of funding for the Media Trust Group.

<b>Newspaper Name</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>
Sunday Champion	Emmanuel Iwuayanwu	Lagos	Igbo
Daily Independent	James Ibori	Lagos	Urhobo
The Punch	Aboderin Family	Lagos	Yoruba
The Sun	Urji Uzo Kalu	Lagos	Igbo
The Nation	Bola Ahmed Tinubu	Lagos	Yoruba
Daily Trust	Media Trust Group	Abuja	Hausa/Fulani
ThisDay	Nduka Obiegbuna	Lagos	Igbo

Triumph	Triumph Publishing Company	Kano	Hausa
The New Nigerian	Northern State Governors	Kaduna	Hausa/Fulani
Vanguard	Vanguard Media Ltd	Lagos	Sam Amuka
People's Daily	People's Daily Media Ltd	Abuja	
The Nigeria Standard	Plateau State Government	Jos	Plateau Publishing Company
Leadership	Leadership Company	Abuja	Nupe
The Guardian	The Guardian Group Ltd	Lagos	Urhobo
National Mirror		Lagos	Ibrahim Jimoh

Table 7: List of some Current Nigeria National Newspapers, Ownership Patterns, Locations and Ethnic Backgrounds (Musa, 2011).



Figure 4: *Map of Plateau State showing the Three Senatorial Zones of the State* (www.africanresearchinstitute.org).

#### 4.6 The Origin of Plateau State

So far, discussion had been on how the press came to be established in Nigeria from its missionary heritage, European, African returnee slaves, Nigerian nationalists, regional governments to private ownerships. In this section, the focus of the discussion will be on the historical accounts of the emergence of what is today known as Plateau State (Bingel, 1978; Fwatshak, 2005b; Higazi, 2011; International Crisis Group, 2012; Mangwvat, 2013; Plotnicov, 1972; Segun & Ebenezer, 2013) (see Figure 6). The Plateau, which is approximately located in the centre of Nigeria, constitutes the area sometimes called the Middle Belt areas with a picturesque landscape formed by a massive tableland ranging from 1200 to 1800 feet above sea level (Plateau State Government, 2001). The state is one of the thirty-six that make up the state called Nigeria. It derived its name from the mountainous terrains that characterises its landscape (Best, 2007; Higazi, 2011). Plateau State occupies 30, 913 square kilometres and it sits at crossroads between the southern and the northern part of the country. Plateau State is a miniature Nigeria because it is home to about forty (40) ethnic communities, among which are:

Amo, Afizere, Anaguta, Buji, Berom, Ngas, Taroh, Mwaghavul, Pengana, Piem, Youm, Gamai, Pan, Mirniang, Kwalla, Ganawuri, Ron, Mushere, Kulere, Boghom, Mupun, Fier, Rukuba, Montol, Doemak, (Alubo, 2006; Fwatshak, 2005b; Ishaku, 2012; Mangvwat, 2013). The settler groups, on the other hand, are: Tiv, Yoruba, Idoma, Igala, Ishekiri, Jukun, Hausa, Fulani, Gwari, Kanuri, Kagoro, Bajju, Ikulu, Igbo, and some nationals from Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Ghana (Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010; Segun & Ebenezer, 2013).

The state is made up of higher and lower Plateau: The higher Plateau constitutes much of north and central Senatorial Districts of the state, except for Kanke and Dengi, while the lower part of the state is in the Southern District; it is bordered by Bauchi State to the north-east, Kaduna to the north-west, Nasarawa to the south-west and Taraba to the south-west (Best, 2007; Bingel, 1978). Before the creation of states by the military government of Gen. Yakubu Gowon in 1967, the Plateau consisted of groups, communities, confederations and chiefdoms. The people of the central Nigeria areas who were not hitherto conquered by the Fulani Jihadists were mistakenly subordinated to the Bauchi Emirate Province under the British Native Authority system (Mangvwat, 2013; Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010). It is imperative to note that before the arrival of the British colonialists, the European missionaries and companies, most of the inhabitants of the Plateau high and lowlands were practitioners of African belief systems. Indeed, the same was also true of the people of the central Nigerian area, which also covered Plateau State, were independent, autonomous communities before the advent of the British (Mangvwat, 2013; Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010). However, the minority status of the inhabitants of the central Nigeria areas, especially the Jos Plateau, was because of its incorporation into the system of British colonial rule that, as Gofwen (2004) and Mangvwat (2013) had observed. Jos was a comparatively new city, which emerged at the formal establishment of British colonial rule in 1910 as a metropolis and later became a political division in 1927 (International Crisis Group, 2012). Egwu (2004) further noted that, apart from Jos serving as the administrative headquarters of Jos Division at this period it has remained the seat of government since the creation of Benue-Plateau State in 1967 by the military-led government of General Yakubu Gowon up to the present moment. It is equally important to note that the then Plateau Province had the option of merging with either Bauchi or Benue Province, but the Plateau elders chose Benue against Bauchi. The reason for this was because of the strained relationship between them. In addition, Bauchi Province was in the majority of the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group and feared another round of domination,



something they had earlier fought against (Goyol, 1999). Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network (Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010), noted that the vast mountainous areas of the central Nigeria highlands, which was wrongly called 'Dar al Jabal' by the Hausa was administered from 1920 to 1926 by Bauchi Province.

Mangvwat (2013) avows that the history of the peopling and formation of ethnic communities on the Jos Plateau area were in five stages. However, the concern of this study is with the fourth and fifth stages (the Fulani herders and Hausa traders in ca.1800 to 1907, which culminated in the Sokoto Jihad; and the colonial period, from 1907 to 1960). The Jos Plateau area was richly endowed with natural mineral resources. The geology of the Plateau made for a rich endowment of natural resources, especially solid mineral deposits and this was why in 1900, due to the inordinate economic ambition of the Royal Niger Company, it ventured into the uncharted field of exploring and prospecting of the area, which was said to have been rich in tin deposits. This as Egwu (2004) and Ishaku (2012) have declared, followed the successful expedition mounted by the British on Bauchi province by Sir William Wallace who led the expeditionary force that toured the Plateau area; took with him samples of tin ore concentrate found there which he presented to the Directors of the Royal Niger Company. With the discovery of tin and the subsequent boom of the industry in the first half of the twentieth century, the Jos Plateau area witnessed a massive influx of immigrant ethnic groups and other nationalities from within and outside Nigeria. Among these immigrant populations were: Yoruba, Igbo, Urhobo, Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri, Ijaw and Bini; those who came from beyond the boundaries of Nigeria included Chadians, Cameroonians, Ghanaians, and Nigeriens, who were largely labourers and artisans (Ishaku, 2012; Mangvwat, 2013; Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010). The flourishing tin mining business, which spread right across the Plateau at this period, coincided with the extension of the eastern railway line in 1927, from Kaduna Junction to Jos, which rapidly stimulated its industrial scale; and further saw the successive waves of people from various ethnic extractions into the area, thus causing its (tin) further growth and expansion.

The discovery of tin in significant quantity around Jos was to be the beginning of many of such discoveries and as businesses began to boom so did more exploration in other towns and villages within the highlands, such as Gyel, Zawan, Shen, Naraguta, Kuru, Vwang, Du, Foron, Gashis and Rop districts and other settlements across the state (Mangvwat, 2013). Although the mining business attracted beehives of activity from far and near, unfortunately, as Higazi (2011) and Mangvwat (2013) noted, some of the indigenous communities of the Plateau, such

as the Amo, Anaguta and Berom triad, as a result of colonial policies, were dispossessed from large areas of their customary and ancestral lands and their crops destroyed without compensation paid them by the government until the Berom uprising of 1941 (International Crisis Group, 2012). However, Mangvwat (2013) contends that the colonial government was forced to go back on its earlier decision not to pay compensation when the Berom rose against them. In addition, rapid social and economic transformation also ensued that a substantial indigenous population of the Plateau were marginalized in the colonial economy and social order. Among the major triggers of conflict, which if left unchecked could lead to radicalisation are deprivation and exclusion of ethnic communities (Gow, Olonisakin, & Dijkhoorn, 2013).

As Plateau State continued to develop so, too did the recurrent issue of domination and alleged marginalization, even among the indigenous ethnic communities, continue to dominate public discourse. Goyol (1999) contended that disaffection started looming in the old Benue-Plateau State as political actors of both Plateau and Benue origins started accusing each other of marginalization and injustice on several fronts. The clamour for the separation of this marriage of convenience, to enable the two states go their separate ways, was fulfilled on February 3rd, 1976. Nigerian then head of state, General Murtala Ramat Mohammed, announced the creation of more states, thus Benue and Plateau were separated. Nearly twenty years later, the state boundary was, once again, altered in 1996 when Nasarawa State was carved out of Plateau State. At present, Plateau State is made up of seventeen local government areas: Jos north, Jos east, Jos south, Riyom, Barkin Ladi, Bassa, Mangu, Pankshin, Bokkos, Kanam, Kanke, Shendam, Langtang north, Langtang south, Mikang, Wase, and Qua'an Pan.

The ethnic tension that had characterized inter group relations within the state for a long time exploded in 1994 (see Figure 7) nearly fifty years after the clash of the Hausa and Igbo traders in 1945 in Jos (Ishaku, 2012). It was because of this long period of peace on the Plateau that the state earned the enviable epithet home of peace and tourism and it has elsewhere been referred to as Plateau, the beautiful, (Asemah & Edegoh, 2012; Danfulani, 2006; International Crisis Group, 2012; Kaigama, 2012).



Figure 5: *Photo of youths as foot soldiers of Conflict in Plateau State* (www.nytime.com).

#### **4.7 Ethnic Majorities and Minorities in Nigeria: A Colonial Legacy**

Conflict between ethnic groups of various sizes is widespread with a long and often problematic history, as evidenced in the Palestinian-Israeli, Turkish-Kurds, Arab versus Black Africans in the Sudan, the Berbers and the Saharawi in Morocco cases, to name but a few (Dzeka, 2014). Ethnicity-based conflicts are also common occurrences in Nigeria's often fraught political history. Several scholars (Dewan, 2014; Gofwen, 2004; Mangwat, 2013; Okidu, 2011; Onwubiko, 1985; Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010; Suberu, 1996; Usman, 2015) have argued that before the British conquest and establishment of the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria, the problems of ethnic majorities/minorities scarcely exist and because most of the ethnic groups were independent, autonomous communities, polities, chiefdoms, sovereign kingdoms, city-states and village confederations. Indigenous communities, especially in the Central Nigeria areas, had existed in pre-colonial times without being annexed or subjected to external control (Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010; Turaki, 1993). Plateau indigenes, like most other ethnic communities, were forcefully brought under the hegemony of the Bauchi Native Authority by the British (Gofwen, 2004). Thus, in the views of Mazrui (2000), Gofwen (2004) and Ellis (2016), the cornerstone of British colonial policy in Africa became Lord Lugard's doctrine of Indirect Rule in Nigeria.

The colonial administration tapped into the existing structure known as the emirates and the Sultanate of Sokoto in northern Nigeria, which came about because of the Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio in 1804, as the basis for the Indirect Rule administration. Alao (2013, p. 129) reinforced this point thus:

After the establishment of colonial rule, numerous structures created after the Jihad were retained and recognised by the British colonial government.

Thus, the British deliberately enhanced the power of the Hausa/Fulani elite over a huge territory, which in Somerville's (2017) estimation, had over 250 ethnic communities and over 300 languages or dialects. Somerville avows that the British colonial powers saw the Emirates system of administration in the north as having ruling hierarchies and entrenched systems of rule by the Hausa/Fulani elite as an important opportunity that could serve their purpose and quickly seized it. However, the lack of such ruling system in the eastern part and the western region having a system close to the Emirates in the north, they (the British colonialists) had 'to bring together a variety of communities sharing similar languages and customs to create [...] ethnic and tribal communities' (Somerville, 2017, p. 28). This strategy, therefore, of ruling subject people primarily through their own indigenous authorities and institutions under their (British) strict supervision was cheap and convenient for the colonial officials (Mangyvat, 2013). This was because it was not economically possible for the administration to pay its large European workforce, which consisted of teachers, civil servants, professionals across a vast territory. The implication of this therefore was the sacking of native and indigenous institutions and the introduction of an alien system (Indirect Rule), especially in areas where the indigenous ethnic communities had loose confederations (such as, the eastern and western regions). Chiefs were appointed for the ease of tax collection, administration of justice and the arrangement of local labour to build roads and bridges, among others, for the administration. However, in some areas such as eastern and central Nigeria (Tiv land), as Somerville (2017) noted, such a policy was fiercely resisted, largely because, such imposition ran counter to the spirit of pre-colonial democratic system. Thus, for administrative convenience, the British colonial administration created chiefs in places such as Tiv areas and Igboland (since such institutions did not exist), thereby expanding the sphere of authority and powers of the selected chiefs in their areas.

It is important to note that the British were by no means the only colonial powers whose policies in their former colonies, such as Africa were, not only discriminatory, but divisive. Other colonial powers, too, such as Belgium had similar policies in Rwanda. Their policies did much to foster a sense of ethnic differentiation (between the Hutu and Tutsi), which later led

to a sense of separate consciousness that eventually snowballed to conflict-sometimes even violent conflict. The Belgian policy in Rwanda discriminated against their citizens based on ethnicity. Thus, the Hutus who constituted nearly 85% of the population were deliberately discriminated against in matters such as education, land ownership and positions in government in favour of the Tutsi who bore the physical features of white men, but made up just 15% of the Rwandan population (White, 2009).

The introduction of the Indirect Rule system by the British colonialists in Nigeria then changed the atmosphere of freedom, which these kingdoms, city-states, village confederations and ethnic communities had been used to especially with the amalgamation of the protectorates of southern and northern Nigeria in 1914 (Onwubiko, 1985; Usman, 2015). This process did not consider especially the ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural, historical differences of the communities they conquered (Alubo, 2006). Rindap and Mari Idris (2014) blamed the colonial decision to merge the two protectorates, without due consultation among the locals, as largely responsible for altering inter group relations. Thus, the resolution by Lugard to create a unified entity named Nigeria on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1914 did not result from the pressure of Nigerian local political groups, but, essentially, for the British administrative convenience. It is worthy of note that the kingdoms, city-states, and village confederations the British conquered to create the entity called Nigeria, in the views of Usman (2015), were not ethnic entities. The colonial division of the Nigerian area into blocs of tribes, Mohammed (2011) argued, was a mistake. Mohammed contended that in describing the Nigerian ethnic groups, colonial anthropologists had often created the myth of distinct, monolithic and isolated group of people occupying an area brought together under the British jurisdiction. Indeed, Mohammed further posited that, although linguistically, homogenous communities existed, in most cases the diverse ethnic communities overlapped in a kind of symbiotic relationship. Hence, there were no fixed and lineal boundaries, prior to the colonial conquest; most of the groups did not identify themselves by their language or ethnicity. As Usman (2015) explained, communities were known more, for example, by the name of their villages, city-states than by their ethnicities, such as Katsinawa (people from Katsina), Kanawa (people from Kano), Gobirawa (people from Gobir), Shirawa (people from Shira), and so on, but all spoke dialects of the Hausa language. Similarly, the Berom of the Jos Plateau never saw themselves as Berom, but as Zawan, Vom, Kurum, Riyom, Foron, Du, Fan, Kwi, Pomwol, and so on. The same policy also applied in the eastern and western parts of the country.

Thus, these political arrangements, among other instruments of influence, by the British administrators, officially marked the start of ethnic minorities' grievances in Nigeria, such as the Kanuri, Nupe, Berom, Ngas, Bajju, Kagoro in the north, the Edo, Urhobo, Ijaw, Isekiri and the western region and the Ibibio-Annang, Efik and Ijaw in the East (Suberu, 1996). These ethnic groups, based on their minority statuses were subordinated to the majority ethnic groups in their respective regions (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba are the majority ethnic groups). It needs to be stressed that the British colonial city environment constituted the seed of contemporary ethnicity, because what is known today as ethnic groups first acquired a common consciousness later. This is because before the establishment of the colonial administration in Nigeria, ethnic communities lived not as conquered people, but through mutual and non-aggression pacts with the Hausa/Fulani majority group in the north, for example (Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010). The colonial government's actions, therefore, awakened this ethnic identity which until now was latent. This colonial policy of the final amalgamation, especially, was later to trigger off a plethora of intractable ethnic problems that Nigeria and Plateau State would become enmeshed in for decades. The ethnic majorities and minorities in Nigeria became even more apparent after Nigeria achieved its political independence from Britain in 1960 (Kukah, 2011). It is, therefore imperative to note that at the vortex of the ethnic majorities and minorities is the general disenchantment with the structure of the Nigerian federation perceived by the ethnic minorities to be skewed in favour of the three dominant ethnic groups, namely, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.

This is because, as Somerville (2017, p. 29) explained:

The institutional structure adopted under the British direction was built around three regions (north-Hausa; east-Igbo and west-Yoruba) dominated respectively by each of these powerful groups, and it gave strong central power and control over export revenues and other income to whoever controlled the federal government. This set up the struggle for central and regional power that was to become and remain a central characteristic of Nigeria, and its most intractable problem.

It is equally worth noting that efforts by the Nigerian federal authorities over the decades at addressing this vexing issue through state creation (see Figure 8), as it has been noted earlier, have not been effective (Borok & Mohammed, 2015; Rindap & Mari Idris, 2014; Samuel, 2012).



Figure 6: *Map of Nigeria depicting the Six Geo-Political Zones of the country ([www.nytime.com](http://www.nytime.com))*

The dynamics of the ethnic majorities and minorities in Nigeria, although it is basically the same across the country but do differ in contexts and nuances, as it is the case in northern Nigeria. Beyond the clamour for greater economic and political access, the problem in the north is further fraught by the introduction of religion into its politics (Dewan, 2014). Turaki (1993) argued that the rise and the reassertion of the dominance of the Hausa/Fulani in the north naturally made the minority ethnic communities in the Middle Belt, of which Plateau State is one of its strongholds, to be apprehensive about their political future. Apart from the Igbo versus Hausa traders' crisis of 1945, Turaki also pointed to a similar conflict that ensued between the Berom and Hausa around the same period when the latter rose against the Sarkin Hausa of Jos (Chief of Hausa in Jos). This historical injustice against ethnic minority communities appeared to have had the tacit endorsement of the British colonial administration as reflected in this statement:

Colonial prejudice and discrimination against the non-Hausa/Fulani ethnic groups was practical at two levels: The demeaning of the worth and dignity of their human personality; and the devaluation of their socio-political values and institutions. Colonial racial view held that the human personality of the non-Hausa/Fulani groups was inferior to that of the Fulani/Hausa. This very social assumption was used by the colonialists to justify Hausa/Fulani rule over the non-Hausa/Fulani groups and consequently their subordination in the colonial system (Turaki, 1993, p. 64).

This feeling was to be further given a boost, when the so many Nigerians who fought in the Second World War (1939-1945), among which were Plateau indigenes, returned. These returnees had a high feeling of nationalism and patriotism to their fatherland from their experiences abroad. It rekindled their passion for self-rule and a dislike for the majority ethnic communities, especially the Hausa/Fulani, which was not unconnected with the bad experiences they have had due to incessant Jihadists' invasion which heightened tension in the area (Falola, Doron, & Okpe, 2013). It is, therefore within this context also that one can appreciate the tidal waves of ethnic-cultural revivalism in Plateau State of recent times. For example, the Angas tribe of Pankshin and Kanke local government areas, for centuries were known and called as such, but today they have changed their name to Ngas. This cultural resurgence is, not just limited to the Ngas alone, but cuts across most ethnic communities in the state, such as the Ankwai who are today known as Gamai; Sura are now called Mwaghavul; Yargam are now Taroh and so on. As more and more ethnic communities become educationally aware as well as feeling of patriotism increased in contemporary times, so also the need to redefine themselves. Names of towns, villages and streets that were hitherto named after Hausa/Fulani personalities are changing, too. For example, Dawaki is now known as Pwel; Mangun Hausawa is today Mangu Hale; Barkin Ladi is Gwol; Ibrahim Taiwo is Davou B. Zang, to name just a few. This, of course, is because of the feeling of marginalization by the other majority ethnic communities which have brought about the sense of 'us and them' phraseology, which has become a popular theme today.

The struggle for self-determination by the minority ethnic communities of Plateau State was to be given yet another boost by the Solomon Daushep Lar's government in the early 1980s. His populist political philosophy of 'emancipation' struck a chord with the tribe of the marginalized minorities of the state, because it encouraged the self determination of smaller ethnic groups. True to his populist philosophy, Lar created new districts, local governments and chiefdoms (Falola et al., 2013). This initiative was good because it liberated the smaller ethnic



communities that were hitherto marginalized by the ethnic majorities. One of such beneficiaries of the Lar's government local government creation was the Kofyar ethnic group with the creation of Pan local government. Before the creation of the local government, the Kofyar ethnic group was under Shendam local government. The Gamai, the majority ethnic group of Shendam regarded Lar's creation of Pan as an attempt to rob them of land they believe was theirs from time immemorial.

Nearly twenty years after the creation of Qua'an Pan local government by the Solomon Daushep Lar's government, a similar scenario was re-enacted in Namu in 2005. The civilian government of Joshua Chibi Dariye, in its quest for political patronage created Development Areas across the state. The idea, as it has been noted, was to bring development closer to the people, but it sparked off a wave of crisis in Namu (a sprawling commercial town). Whereas the ethnic tension that eventually led to a full violent conflict at Namu and the surrounding villages of Shendam and Qua'an Pan local government areas were between two indigenous ethnic groups (Gamai majority and Kofyar minority ethnic communities), the situations in Wase and Langtang local government areas (also of southern Plateau) were different. The relationship of the Gamai, Kofyar and Tarok in both pre-and post-colonial era were largely peaceful. The Taroh of Wase, Langtang north and south were affected by the Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio of 1804 (Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010). The Fulani Jihadists succeeded in establishing two emirates in the area (Kannam and Wase). Since the establishment of these two emirates in the area there have been constant conflicts between the Hausa/Fulani and Boghom ethnic communities, on the one hand, and Taroh, on the other. The crux of the conflict in Wase as, indeed other areas in conflict could be traced to political and resource competition between the majority ethnic communities: Taroh and the Hausa/Fulani. The Taroh ethnic group was perceived by the Hausa/Fulani and other supporting ethnic communities with suspicion because of their expansionist tendencies, as well as for their material and educational advancement in the area (Best, 2007). Best maintained that this created an atmosphere of competition in the local government as well as Taroh's political gains and their desire to have a local government and chieftaincy institution were some of the key factors that snowballed into crisis in the area.

The above scenarios of ethnic configuration have significantly affected and changed the power dynamics of inter-groups relations among the various ethnic communities within Plateau State. These scenarios also were to become combustible and would subsequently explode into full scale violent conflict with devastating consequences. These colonial policies, as has been

argued (Mangvwat, 2013; Okidu, 2011; Samuel, 2012) were responsible for creating ethnic majorities and minorities dichotomy and for altering inter-group relations among the diverse ethnic communities in Nigeria. Due to these colonial policies, boundaries were drawn that did not consider historical, traditional, linguistic, ethnic/cultural and religious differences, as well as the ancestral heritages of the people (Gofwen, 2004). In addition, the structure laid down by the colonialists has enabled the Nigerian political elite, who have held power, to instrumentalise ethnicity into political tribalism for their selfish ends (Chabal & Daloz, 1999). Thus, this has precipitated conflicts in states in northern Nigeria, such as Kaduna, Kano, Bauchi and Plateau State, among a host of others (Ochonu, 2008).

#### **4.8 Ethnic Majorities and Minorities in Plateau State**

The discussion so far has centred on the genesis of ethnic majorities/minorities problems in Nigeria. It has argued that the British colonial policy of the final amalgamation of 1914 and the subsequent imposition of Indirect Rule gave ethnicity an official stamp of recognition (Azaigba & Yio, 2014; Gofwen, 2004; Usman, 2015). Here, the research attempts to show how these policies were responsible for the tidal waves of violent conflict witnessed across Plateau State.

The British colonial administrators evolved several divisive policies that accentuated and perpetuated ethnicity, especially in northern Nigeria, such as the Final Amalgamation of 1914, Indirect Rule and Land and Native Ordinance Act of 1910 (Azaigba & Yio, 2014; Mangvwat, 2013). Within the Jos, the Plateau State capital, for example, the city was divided into three main clusters for different ethnic communities: the first category was the Government Residential Area (GRA), where Europeans and other foreigners, and the colonial elite resided. Second, was Native Town, which was inhabited by the Hausa ethnic group. Third, was the Township, which comprised of other Nigerians and foreigners (Best, 2007). This divisive colonial structure exists in Plateau State to date, although not in its strict form. But it still characterises inter-ethnic relations in Plateau State. In almost all the seventeen local government areas of Plateau State, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, natives and foreigners still live in their separate quarters (Ochonu, 2008). It is the same British colonial policies of ethnic segregation of north and south that was a major cause of the first Sudanese civil war of 1955-1972, (Mazrui, 2000). Scholars such as Mustapha (1998); Egwu (2004); Kalejauye and Alliyu (2013); Nnoli (2008) have blamed this colonial policy of dividing ethnic communities. Kukah (2015, p. 3) aptly summed up these British colonial legacies, thus:

Legacies of colonialism differed from one empire builder's philosophy to the other. For example, French colonies have managed ethnic diversities better because of their philosophy of incorporation, which enabled citizens of the colony to share common citizenship and values of their coloniser. This contrast sharply with the British system, which bordered on clear racial separation even in social life.

The Indirect Rule system also reinforced the differences of the ethnic communities, which was aimed at thwarting any attempt by the colonized to embark on an uprising. Scholars (Kukah, 1993; Lohor, 2012; Mangvwat, 2013) have argued that, although there were conflict and skirmishes among these diverse ethnic communities on such issues as land, territorial expansion, boundaries, hunting, wife snatching and kidnapping, and so on, before the advent of the British colonialists in Nigeria, they had mechanisms for conflict resolution. This was the situation of these ethnic groups for centuries until the Middle Belt areas came under colonial administration. Indeed, as Salamone (cited in Kukah, 1993) noted, ethnic boundaries were permeable. Borok and Mohammed (2015) and Turaki (1993) concurred with this position that the social relations between, especially the Hausa/Fulani migrants with their host communities, were cordial before the introduction of this policy. What happened with the dichotomization of ethnic communities in other places such as Kaduna and Kano States, as Mustapha (1998) and International Crisis Group (2012) observed, was that in the 1950s, the Hausa/Fulani (indigenes) moved to Tudun Wada and the southerners (settlers) to Sabon Gari. The Arab and Lebanese citizens, who had lived in Nigerian cities such as Kano for centuries, were absurdly declared foreigners. Of course, the social lifestyle in these parts of the city was different from what the Hausa were used to. With urbanization, the *Sabon Gari* became haven to other non-Hausa ethnic communities from the Middle Belt and the south (Kukah, 2015). It was clear then that the British favoured an ethnic conception of citizenship. Regrettably, successive governments since independence, have done little or nothing to change this divisive policy (International Crisis Group, 2012). Azaigba and Yio (2014). Furthermore, Turaki contended that based on the colonial mistaken notion of the Hausa/Fulani ethnic superiority, the indigenous ethnic communities were often not consulted since they were considered inferior and under the authority of the Hausa/Fulani. Thus, for decades, this legacy of separation and stratified ethnic inequality based on colonial policies is what still characterizes social life in Plateau State.

#### **4.9 Ethnic Conflict in Plateau State**

It is rather ironic that Plateau State, once touted as the 'Home of Peace and Tourism' has, for nearly two decades now, become a catchphrase for crises and conflict (Alubo, 2006; Egwu,

2004; Ishaku, 2012). Based on the above, it was clear that the ethnic tensions building up across the state since the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) would spiral, because new identities had been formed and new boundaries were being drawn which had serious implications for ethnic relations. The migration of various ethnic communities and nationalities from diverse ethnic extractions into Plateau State, as earlier noted, was largely due to the discovery of tin by British explorers in commercial quantities. The shortage of facilities to accommodate the teeming migrant population created tension and discontentment (Danfulani, 2006; International Crisis Group, 2012). But despite this, Segun and Ebenezer (2013) observed that, although the cosmopolitan nature of Plateau State had become somewhat combustible and a hotbed of conflict, the violent conflict that had been witnessed was mostly limited to the indigenous ethnic communities and the Hausa/Fulani population (see Figure 9).



Figure 7: *Photo depicting one of the many conflict scenes in Plateau State* (www.nytime.com).

Ishaku (2012) postulated that the relative peace that Plateau State had enjoyed for nearly fifty years was interrupted by the creation of the Jos north local government area out of the old Jos local government by the General Ibrahim Babangida's government in 1991. Ishaku also claimed that the reason for the creation of the local government by the Babangida's administration was to accommodate the Hausa/Fulani settlers. This alleged decision of the Babangida government, unsurprisingly, was not welcomed by the indigenous ethnic population, especially the Afezere, Anaguta and the Berom triad. This situation was believed

to have sown the seed of disharmony that pitched the Plateau indigenous ethnic communities, on the one hand, and the Hausa/Fulani, on the other. As Ishaku (2012) further asserted, and for a better understanding of the opposition and the reactions of the indigenous ethnic communities to the creation of this local government, it is important to look beyond the skewed perspective of the local government creation to the wider historical context. Ishaku maintained that the history of fighting the invading forces of Hausa/Fulani driven Islamic Jihad since 1804 is still very fresh in the minds of Middle Belters, especially in Plateau State. The Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network (2010) noted that uneasy relations between these ethnic communities date back to 1873 when the people of the highlands (Plateau) were subjugated by Fulani emirate of Bauchi. This, therefore, sets the tone, for the violent conflicts that would subsequently follow.

The creation of Jos north local government was seen by the Plateau State indigenous communities as giving the ‘settlers’, especially the Hausa/Fulani their own space where they could, in the views of Ishaku (2012), exercise their own authority as indigenes of the state. It was alleged that some elements within the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group had begun to make highly provocative statements to the effect that the Gbong Gwom (the paramount ruler of Jos and the chief of the Berom) be moved to Bukuru or Barkin Ladi as the Berom had ceased to be part of Jos north where the palace was located. As if to make good this threat, on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1994, the military administrator of Plateau State, Colonel Mohammed Mana announced the formation of a five-member local government council Care-taker Committee for each of the then 23 local government areas. The composition of the five-member committee of Jos north local government was lopsided as it was made up largely non-indigene ethnic communities: Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, Afizere, Berom and headed by one Alhaji Aminu Mato (a Hausa man). This decision of the military administrator did not go down well with the indigenes, particularly of the Afizere, Berom and Anaguta ethnic stocks (Egwu, 2004). With so much latent frustration and pent-up anger under the military, the inauguration of the Fourth Republic (1999), which so many citizens had hoped would usher in a peaceful era did not turn out to be the ‘Eldorado’ they had envisaged. Rather, the Fourth Republic has been replete with tales of frequent civil strife, violent episodes of ethnic conflicts of varying kinds right across the country’s landscapes (Alubo, 2006; Ishaku, 2012). For example, in Plateau State, the victory of one of the leading political parties in Nigeria, the People’s Democratic Party (PDP), comprising of the indigenous political elite, released a spirit of success over decades-old oppression and discrimination by the northern-controlled military and the settler Hausa/Fulani. This naturally generated a lot of

bad blood between the Hausa ethnic group and their host communities (Afizere, Anaguta and Berom triad). There were tensions, threats and counter threats and allegations and counter allegations involving ethnic organizations representing the two contending groups that finally resulted in the orgy of violence, which broke out on September 7, 2008 (Egwu, 2004).

The notion that the Plateau State conflict was externally manipulated by some forces who did not mean the state well is, no doubt, a popular one (Ishaku, 2012). It is, however imperative to note that there was another factor that further fuelled the conflict. The implementation of the controversial Sharia Islamic law in Zamfara State in 1999 triggered conflicts in Zamfara itself and other states in the north, such as Kaduna, Kano, Gombe, Bauchi, which witnessed the avalanche of immigrants and new settlers who poured into the state (Danfulani & Fwatshak, 2002). Hausa/Fulani Muslims at this period clamoured for the full implementation of the controversial Sharia Law in a predominantly Christian state like Plateau. Again, tempers were high on Friday, 7 September 2001 when a young Christian girl trying to cross the road to her house at Ungwar Congo Russia was ill-treated by some Hausa/Fulani Muslim youths who had blocked the access road for their prayers. This encounter that once could be referred to as minor turned violent and the state descended into ethnic conflict that left destruction of lives and property in its wake (Human Rights Watch, 2001, cited in Egwu, 2004). While the 2001 Jos City conflict captured world imagination and attention, the conflict that had spilled over from neighbouring Nasarawa State to southern Plateau was overshadowed by it. Alubo (2006) noted that the southern and central parts of Plateau State (Pan, Shendam, Langtang north and south, Mikang, Kanke, Pankshin, Mangu and Bokkos) are particularly fertile and attracted settler farmers from Nasarawa State to these local governments of Plateau, especially the Tiv ethnic group for farming purposes. Alubo said that this mass migration of settler farmers both within and outside the state and the contestation for space for farming and grazing led to clashes that resulted in deaths. This situation led to the conflict between the Kwalla of Qua'an Pan local government and Tiv from neighbouring Nasarawa State. The judicial Commission of enquiry, set up by the Plateau State government, revealed that, in addition to the Tiv settlers and their conflict with the Kwalla ethnic community in Namu, there were reports that Fulani and Jukun attackers from neighbouring Taraba State, were among the parties in the conflict.

Jos continued to remain in the eye of the storm after the September 2001 conflict. One of the first mishaps to befall Plateau State was the orchestrated burning down of the Jos ultra-modern market in February 2002. In no time, the 22 May 2002 conflict had expanded to Naraguta B ward at the outskirts of Jos city. Equally, on July 4 of the same year, four Taroh elders were

gruesomely murdered in Wase local government when the elders left a peace meeting at the palace of the Emir (Best, 2007; Ishaku, 2012). The killings of these four Taroh elders were followed by a persistent invasion of villages in Wase, Langtang north and Langtang south local governments, which Ishaku estimated 500 people lost their lives. The ferocity of the conflict reached an intolerable level that even the then governor of the state; Chief Joshua Chibi Dariye narrowly escaped an ambush at Wase in 2003. There was no respite in the southern zone of the state throughout 2003-2004; lamenting the intensity of the crisis and the loss of lives and property, Ignatius Ayau Kaigama, the Catholic Archbishop of Jos, explained that several villages in Langtang north and south, Wase and Yelwa-Nshar in Shendam were all under siege by the invaders. This same militia, in 2004 descended on Yelwa-Nshar during which about 71 worshippers were trapped and massacred in a church, while attending morning service and a total number of about 150 houses were set ablaze (Ishaku, 2012; Kaigama, 2012).

While the state was consumed in conflict on all fronts, efforts were being made towards seeking lasting solutions at local, State, and Federal levels, as well as nongovernmental organisations. The state government in its effort to bring governance closer to the people decided to create Development Areas across the state by the signing into law of the Development Areas Bill by the Plateau State Government on 11 November 2005. Accordingly, this bill effectively brought into existence Namu Development Area, among others, with town Namu as its headquarters. This initiative of the state government, though welcomed, the location of the headquarters of these Development Areas did not only generate tension but led to conflict in some places within the area. One of such places was Namu in Qua'an Pan local government and thus, a full blown ethnic conflict between the Pan Kofyar and Gamai rocked the settlement over the ownership of the area (Best, 2007; Kaigama, 2012). Just when it was thought that the conflict in Jos north local government had been overcome, it resumed on 28 November, 2008 following the local government (council) elections in Jos north local government (Musa & Ferguson, 2013). The elections, though adjudged peaceful, the next day when the results were being brought to the collation centre at the Roman Catholic Primary School, Kabong, Jos, some youths snatched the election boxes and claimed that the elections were rigged. This led to blockades of roads and protests that finally resulted in attacks that led to the destruction of lives and property. From all indications, this conflict was politically motivated, but again rioters used ethnicity to justify their criminal attacks on innocent citizens (International Crisis Group, 2012; Kaigama, 2012; Musa & Ferguson, 2013).

The year 2010 witnessed yet another dangerous escalation of the conflict when residents of Dogo Nahauwa, a suburb of Jos south local government, where about 500 people: women, children and men were allegedly massacred by some Fulani herders (Segun & Ebenezer, 2013). In the December of the same year, who worshippers had gathered for the Christmas Eve Mass at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Kabong in Jos became the target of series of bomb blasts, which killed scores of worshippers. After these major incidents of relentless attacks and killings, the situation abated somewhat, at least within the cities, but silent and extrajudicial killings continued unabated in towns and villages across the state. Thus, the military had to be drafted in to try to keep the peace (see Figure 10).



Figure 8: *Security personnel keeping the peace after one of the conflicts in Plateau State* (www.nytime.com).

Nigeria's experience as a multi ethnic society, as Kukah (2015) observed, has been characterized by stories of endless conflicts and tensions. The ethnic conflicts in Nigeria has been blamed on the final amalgamation of 1914 (which brought together the protectorates of north, west and south to form the Nigerian nation) for all these orgies of conflict that has dogged the country and retarded its growth and development. However, Mohammed (2015) argued that that was not the case but was rather a contrived defence mechanism by some sections of the



Nigerian elite who wanted to perpetuate the colonial policy of ‘divide and rule.’ This is because, as she further argued, before the advent of colonialism there was the domination of ethnic minorities by the majorities. Assessing some of the contending issues in the Plateau State conflict (land, chieftaincy and political issues) between the Hausa/Fulani and the Plateau State’s indigenous ethnic communities, Alao (2013) averred around the broader issue of indigenes/settlers, which only became an issue with the advent of the British rule. Most ethnic communities within Plateau territory fought and resisted the Hausa/Fulani invaders until the colonial conquest and administration of the territories that would later become known as Nigeria in 1900.

#### **4.10 The Press, Ethnicity and Identity Politics in Nigeria**

The British colonial policies in Nigeria, such as the final amalgamation of 1914, laid the foundation for ethnic and identity politics. This is because the final amalgamation, as noted earlier, forcefully brought together different ethnic nationalities into the entity called Nigeria, without due consideration for their historical, cultural, religious, linguistic, and social differences. Prior to the final amalgamation in 1914, Okidu (2011) argued that most of the ethnic communities were independent entities, such as the Sokoto caliphate and emirates in the north-west; Kanem-Bornu Empire in the north-east; Benin Kingdom in the south; Oyo Kingdom in west; Igala kingdom in the Middle Belt; among others. Samuel (2012) posited that because of the heterogeneous nature of the Nigerian state brought about by the final amalgamation, the concern of the various ethnic nationalities within the country was towards ethnic/sectional consciousness rather than to national consciousness. Thus, it was within this context that ethnic communities sought and created for themselves identities within the amalgam. The notion ‘identity politics,’ which, in the words of Jega (2003, p. 15), are ‘the mutually reinforcing interplay between identities and the pursuit of material benefits within the area of competitive politics’ in Nigeria is often used as a bargaining power by ethnic communities. Galadima (2010) avowed that, in a multi-cultural society, such as Nigeria, it is possible for a person to have multiple identities, depending on which identity would gain him/her the best possible deal within the polity. Hence, the different regions (north, east and west) resorted to identity politics, largely, because these identities have more enduring values. Indeed, as Kukah (2011) postulated, prior to the formation of political parties, ethnic communities negotiated with the colonialists under the aegis of tribal associations in the 1950s. He contended that these ethnic associations became avenues for the pursuit of their own

interests. While dominant ethnic communities, such as the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo were in the forefront of this self-assertion, minority ethnic communities within the Middle Belt region were not left out in their quest for political recognition (Turaki, 1993). As Orngu (2014) noted, identity politics have a link with ethnicity, solidarity driven by ethnic affinity in a political process. Orngu further argued that among the features of identity politics are exclusion, primordialism and parochialism which are vigorously pursued by the different ethnic groups. These features essentially fuelled the agitation for ethnic recognition among the diverse populations. Politics of exclusion have evolved and thus become one of the key features of political discourse in Nigeria today and one of the major triggers of conflict. Most of the conflicts that have dogged the Nigerian state were because of exclusion by the majority ethnic groups. For example, the major cause of the Jos conflict of 2008, was over the control of Jos north local government area, which is the economic nerve centre of the state between the Hausa/Fulani settlers and some of Plateau State's indigenous ethnic communities (Amo, Afizere, Anaguta and Berom) (Ishaku, 2012). The Hausa/Fulani ethnic group was determined to gain both political and economic access and control of the Jos area. In the views of Nnoli (2008), what colonialism did was to unleash deep-seated socio-economic and political upheavals, which called into question pre-colonial ethnic identities. Thus, this eventually gave rise to a re-definition of the identities created during the pre-colonial periods. Considering that the Nigerian post-colonial political order, like most of Africa, is essentially patrimonial and given the strong ethnic quality of Nigerian identity, the Nigerian political elite found it expedient to reduce ethnic politics to the lowest tribal denominator (Chabal & Daloz, 1999). For Ndlela (2015), the notion that the press played a crucial role in inter-ethnic relations, accentuating (mis)understandings among diverse communities cannot be truer. Hence, ethnic communities, in seeking to carve for themselves identities, resorted to using the press that already had come into being in Nigeria during the colonial era, as instruments for the actualisation of their political, economic and social ambitions. Hence, the resort of the press to ethno-regional grievances was inevitable as later events would affirm.

#### **4.11 The Press in Colonial and Post-Colonial Times**

As it has already noted, the history of the press in Nigeria shows that they were first owned and operated by European and other settler communities. Akinfeleye (2003 cited in Okidu, 2011) noted that the concern of the media at this period was the protection and projection of the colonial economic interests. Akinfeleye contended that the press hardly reported on Nigeria in

the true sense of it, even if they did at all, it was more for propaganda. Although the Nigerian press were, not just vibrant but united in their anti-colonial stance and rhetoric, they inevitably became entangled in ethnic politics. The press, in the views of Akinfeleye (2003 cited in Okidu, 2011), set the ethnic/sectional tone that was to later dog the country. This situation was inevitable in view of the colonial policies that divided groups along ethnic lines. For example, by the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the press began to lose their focus (Okidu, 2011). As the political climate in the country was becoming charged, Nnoli (1978) claimed that the use of negative epithets, and wild allegations to cast aspersions on political opponents to win elections, became common. Nnoli maintained that one of those who was in the forefront of this ethnically driven politics was Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe of the Igbo ethnic extraction in his newspaper, *The West African Pilot*. Yoruba leaders, on the other hand, who saw their portrayal in such bad light as unacceptable resorted to diatribes in *The Daily Service* (their newspaper). However, Jose's (1987) accounts blamed Yoruba leaders as being responsible for the promotion of ethnic politics in Nigeria when they ganged up against Azikiwe and denied him a place in the House of Representatives as a member in Lagos. Whatever the truth of this debate, the fact of the matter was that these dominant ethnic groups were more determined with diffusing information of awakening their ethnic consciousness than the project Nigeria. It is within this simmering political context that one can better understand the circumstances that led to the establishment of *The New Nigerian* newspaper by the Northern Regional Government. It came about because of the feeling of the northerners being marginalised in the trending propaganda media war at the time. The sentiments of the north were aptly captured thus:

The creation of *The New Nigerian* was a political act. By 1963, the old regional government of Northern Nigeria was aware that it was losing a propaganda war in Nigeria [...] Northern politicians had acquired a political awareness every bit as keen as their opponents in the South. But they lack the means to communicate their political philosophy [...] (Kukah, 1993, pp. 67-68).

Okidu (2011, p. 59), further affirmed that 'the patterns of reporting and commenting on these issues and conflicts often betrayed the biases of the media of their ethnic and regional orientations.' As these three regions: north, east and west, represented by the three dominant ethnic communities (Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba) established their political parties (Action Group; Northern People's Congress and National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon). Although base these three political parties, in the views of Ellis (2016), has generally been seen by,

especially historians as a step towards political transformation, the establishment of the three newspapers (*The West African Pilot* representing the Igbo, *The Nigeria Tribune*, the Yoruba and *The New Nigerian*, the Hausa/Fulani as their mouthpieces became their Achilles heel. The Yoruba political party was Action Group (AG), the Hausa/Fulani had the Northern People's Congress (NPC), while the Igbo had National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon (NCNC). Galadima and Soola (2012) noted that these newspapers were used to rally support for their political parties in other regions. Amongst the strategies political leaders used included, the appeal to ethnic sentiments, publication of intemperate utterances and prominence was given to such speeches, and the banning of some newspapers from some regions. This situation got so bad that Mohammed (2003, cited in Ige, 1995, p. 249) stated thus:

In the populous eastern region, whose political power are aligned with the opposition Action Group in the west, key city councils adopted ordinances banning papers that stayed neutral or actively back the western government's return to power. This group includes the federal government-owned *Morning Post*, and the western Government *Daily Times* and *Daily Sketch*. The net effect of the ordinances has been to block the entrance of these newspapers into the eastern region by either road or air. In retaliation, city councils in the west have made it a crime not only to read pro-opposition *Pilot*, *Telegraph*, and *The Nigerian Tribune*, but also to tune in the eastern radio [...].

In the next section, discussions will be on media coverage of conflicts in some conflict zones of the world. Specifically, the focus will be on the media coverage of the Rwandan genocide, 2007 Kenyan post-elections conflicts and the Rohingya/Myanmar.

## **4.12 Examples of Media Coverage of Conflicts**

### **4.12.1 Media Coverage of the Rwandan Conflict**

What has become known as the Rwandan genocide of 1994 is one of the darkest chapters in the history of mankind. *Kangura* newspaper and Radio Television Libre des Collines (RTLNC) began publishing and broadcasting inciting statements in their reports from March 1992 to 1993 (Grunfeld & Huijboom, 2007). The Tutsis were the object of this media propaganda, which portrayed them as enemies and their women (some of which were Hutus) as agents. Specifically, *Kangura* newspaper targeted Tutsi women whom they (Hutus) believed were more beautiful than their Hutu counterparts. The aim of the newspaper was to discourage Tutsi women from marrying Hutu men in order not to contaminate the Hutu race (Zimbardo, 2009). Zimbardo (2009) claimed that about 70% of Rwanda who were Hutus believed this negative

media reports and acted by killing their alleged enemies the Tutsis whom they referred to as ‘cockroaches.’

The failure of the African Union and the global community to prevent the massacre of about 800,000 people during the 100 days of (April 6 and July 19, 1994) is one of the greatest tragedies in the contemporary times (Barnett, 2002; Kent, 2006; Potter, 2002). Furthermore, the political revolt caused by harsh economic challenges in Rwanda led some Tutsis and moderate Hutus forces to seek to overthrow the government of Juvenil Habyarimana and his government. This led to the rounding up of thousands of Tutsis and elements from the Hutus who then were massacred (Des Forges, 1994). Efforts afterwards were made at achieving peace between the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and the Rwandan government in Arusha, Tanzania in August 1993 by the United Nations. This peace initiative only angered the Hutu extremists as they felt excluded from it. Thus, the plane carrying the Rwandan President Habyarimana was shot down and all those on board died on the evening of 6 April 1994.

The Rwandan genocide became a media event which attracted local and international media, but this came after the killings had taken place. Prior to the genocide, Rwanda attracted little media attention, but with the genocide it became the center of intense media coverage (Lock, 1995). Two key reasons have been given for the near media blackout prior to the international media coverage of the conflict. Firstly, during the conflict in Rwanda in 1994, there were about fifty conflicts globally that took the media attention (Myers, Klak, & Koehl, 1996). Secondly, based on the magnitude of the conflict, media coverage was considered too dangerous for journalists to enter the country. Even the few western journalists that dared to cover the conflict had to be evacuated by the UN because it became extremely unsafe. Whatever be the case, generally, the media coverage of the Rwandan genocide portrayed a misconception of the conflict and the general believe, especially the international community, that Africa is perpetually in a vortex of endless conflict. This notion squares with Mitchell’s (2007, p. 41) when he avows that ‘if this number of casualties had occurred in Europe or in north America then the conflict could have received far more global media attention.’ Mitchell further echoed the sentiments of some of the western journalists when he declared that African conflicts are routinely left outside the western news media frame.

Although, as already state above, there was limited media coverage of the genocide, not only by the western media, but indeed by African media also, however, in Belgium where it was

well-covered by newspapers such as *De Standard*, *Le Soir*, *La Libre Belgique* and *Knack* provided adequate reports and commentaries on who assassinated President Juvenal Habyarimana and who the alleged masterminds were (Harrison, 2009). Rather than dissipate effort on the coverage of the gruesome killings in the country, Jonathan and Wetherell (1994) accused some leading members of the International Community such as Great Britain, France, the United States of America and the Netherlands of focusing on only the humanitarian aspect. Jonathan and Wetherell argued that, at first, the Dutch public knew little about Rwanda prior to the conflict, however, their interests grew as the conflict worsened. This was due to the efforts of the Dutch media's journalists and social commentators. However, the media's information on the conflict, in the views of Jonathan and Wetherell, were flawed because they did not cross-check their facts. Furthermore, Jonathan and Wetherell found out that, although *Liberation* newspaper by Stephen Smith did a good job of analyzing and giving some perspectival views on the genocide, unfortunately, he was a lone voice on this issue, because his colleagues journalists were more concerned with intervention issues (Operation Turquoise and Goma refugees).

#### **4.12. 2 Media Coverage of the 2007 Post-Election Conflicts in Kenya**

Kenya had been held as one of the countries in Africa that had enjoyed relative peace and stability. However, this reputation was punctured when the elections of December 30, 2007 turned violent soon after Mwai Kibaki was announced winner of the presidential elections over his rival Raila Odinga of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) by the Kenyan Election Commission. The violence that ensued in the aftermath of the elections left over 1,000 people dead and 500, 000 displaced (Kivuitu, 2007). Several international reports on the conflict alleged that the media, especially vernacular radio stations took sides by reporting the post-elections conflicts along ethnic lines. Ethnic tensions in Kenya, as indeed most of Africa, are common occurrences (Helander, 2015). Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga, the two main contenders in the 2007 Kenyan presidential elections belonged to two different ethnic groups. Kibaki hails from the Kikuyu ethnic stock while Odinga comes from the Luo. Focusing on the aftermath of the elections without a critical look at the media coverage in the months and weeks leading up to the elections does not tell the full story about the conflicts. Kenya as already stated above is ethnically inclined and before the elections there were propaganda by some vernacular media organizations that ab initio that the elections would be rigged in favor of Kibaki, who at the time was the incumbent president (Human Rights Watch, 2008). Media propaganda such as this raised the possibility and increased ethnic tensions, especially between

the Kikuyus and the Luos, thus, raising the likelihood of violent conflicts even before the official results were announced by the Kenyan Election Commission (BBC World Service, 2008).

Kenya is among the few African countries that the media space has been liberalized and opened up to more independent voices (Helander, 2015). Helander claims that there are about forty radio stations and thirteen television channels in Kenya. The two largest newspapers in the country are *The Daily Nation* and *The East African Standard*. Waki Commission of Inquiry (2008) reported that politicians from the Kalenjin ethnic community incited their people to chase out non-Kalenjin ethnic groups, particularly the Kikuyu from their region (Rift Valley). The Kalenjin used such derogatory language such as ‘we have a snake, we have to get rid of it’ to describe the Kikuyus. Kikuyus, as a counter measure, through the media implored their kinsmen to defend themselves. With these scenarios, it is obvious that the Kenyan media is animated by negative ethnic stereotypical frames, cultural chauvinism that do not only create ethnic tensions but indeed incite violent conflict. It is no wonder then that Abdi and Deane (2008) averred that given the extent of conflicts caused by the post-elections violence in Kenya, the media needed to examine their role and responsibility in the conflict.

#### **4.12. 3 Media Coverage of Rohingya/Rakhine Buddhists Conflict**

Myanmar which was formerly known as Burma is a multi-ethnic/multi-religious country located in the mainland of part of south-east Asia (Steinberg, Aung-Thwin, & Aung-Thwin, 2008). It is imperative to note that Myanmar has had a long history of being ruled by dictators until three years ago. The country’s diverse ethnic and religious compositions have always posed problems between ethnic minorities/religious groups and the Buddhists majority. Specifically, the conflict has been largely between the Buddhists and Muslims since 2012 ‘particularly with the rise of the 969 movement and MaBaTha Organization for the protection of Race and Religion (Walton & Hayward, 2014, p. ix). It is essential to note that there has been a growing resentment in the Buddhists’ communities in Rakhine state against the Rohingya Muslims who are threats because of the influence of Islam on Myanmar’s society. These anger and anxieties within the Buddhists’ community led to communal tensions that eventually turned to violent conflict (Nyein & Nyein, 2013).

When the simmering anxieties and anger in both the stateless Rohingya Muslims and Buddhists’ communities turned violent in June 2012, the world media reported the episode (Brooten, Ashraf, & Akinro, 2015). The conflict was covered in both social and mainstream

media, locally and internationally. The media coverage differs due to their interests. The different media reports on the conflict helped shape both the domestic and international perception and response to the conflict (International Crisis Group, 2017). The anti-Muslims (Islamophobia) that characterized especially the Rohingya Muslims were only brought to light through the social media networks such as Facebook, because they had no access to the mainstream media. Rakhine Buddhists and their collaborators used inflammatory epithets and ethnic slurs to describe the Rohingyas as ‘dogs’ and vermin who were a threat to the country, thus they have no place in Myanmar (Davis, 2017). Journalists and content creators are routinely involved in the production of frames as part of their discursive strategies intended to achieve their set objectives. Editors, especially would consciously select and exclude other frames in their news construction process to achieve an end (Entman, 1993). Thus, the news media framed the Rohingya conflict by endorsing its various aspects by consciously or unconsciously keep the report in the headline news.

The coverage of the Rohingya conflict, expectedly was mirrored from the perspective of ethno-religious. For example, *The Nation newspaper* of Pakistan accused the Nobel Laureate Aung Sa Suu Kyi, who at the time was the state councilor for Myanmar for legitimizing racism when she allegedly expresses her opposition at giving a Rakhine Muslim interview (Afzal, 2016). The way *The Nation* framed the report portrayed Suu Kyi as being indifferent to the sad state of the Rohingya Muslims. This attitude also implied that she did so because by ethnicity she belongs to the same ethnic group as the Buddhist Monks who were the arrow heads of the conflict of Myanmar. In a study on the coverage of the Rohingya conflict that involved three newspapers-*The Nation* (Pakistan), *The Guardian* (Britain) and *The New York Times* showed ‘pro Rohingya Muslims minority, anti-Buddhist majority and anti-Myanmar elite’ (Afzal, 2016, p. 96).

Discussions on media coverage of conflicts in this section have highlighted how journalists and other content developers reported these violent episodes. The section sampled three media coverages of conflicts, namely Rwanda, Kenya and the Rohingya/Myanmar to illustrate how journalists framed their reports and how these reports in turned influenced the reading and viewing publics of those countries. News framing is always at the center of any journalistic reporting (Carvalho, 2008; Danaan, 2017; Scheufele, 1999). The news coverages showed how media organizations mobilized their ethnic communities through emotional appeal and engaged in conflicts. The process whereby journalists deliberately take decisions to include or exclude certain frames in their news production processes is only aimed at achieving an aim. Studies



have shown that there is a connection between the negative portrayal of an ethnic group in the media and the negative perception of others (Schemer, 2011). Similarly, Beyene (2012) pointed out how the news media, based on their powerful influence, created a monster of people who were once friends or neighbors. He cited some examples of the media's roles in the conflicts in Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Kenya. In the Rwandan genocide, *Kangura* newspaper described the Tutsis as 'cockroaches;' in the 2007 Kenya post-elections violence some of their radio stations referred to the Kikuyus as weeds, thus 'if you fail to eliminate the weeds, the weeds will eliminate the harvest' (Beyene, 2012); while the Myanmar media called the Rohingya Muslims as dogs and vermin (Davis, 2017). The negative stereotypical portrayal of an entire ethnic community by the media can only serve to aggravate tension that can assuredly turn violent. As Danaan (2017) has argued, the coverage of an ethnic-based conflict is a highly complex issue especially when the reporters are of the same ethnicity with the parties in conflict. Thus, conflict journalists need to exhibit high degree of caution when reporting especially conflicts, by eschewing the use of derogatory epithets that could aggravate passions and consequently lead to conflict. But beyond this, it is imperative to note that the quality of news report of any kind is contingent upon the quality of journalists' access to the story. In situations, such as the Rwandan genocide and Rohingya/Myanmar conflicts which journalist could not access the stories because the situations of conflict were thought to be dangerous not only to investigate, but to interview sources, and to take photographs, clearly, the quality of the reporting is compromised (Richardson, 2007).

#### **4.13 Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the emergence of newspapers in Nigeria through various periods of ownerships and in the context of a changing and often highly turbulent political evolution. It described the roles played by the various indigenous newspapers in the struggle for political independence from the British. It also discussed the circumstances that led to the newspapers getting entangled in ethnic politics soon after independence in 1960 and how these newspapers became platforms that not only undermined peaceful coexistence among the diverse ethnic communities, within the Nigerian state, but were used to accentuate and exacerbate conflicts. The chapter further sketched the history of Plateau State and how its natural and other endowments, such as the discovery of tin, its clement weather favouring the production and growth of vegetables and fruits, railway construction from Kaduna to Maiduguri attracted large immigrant populations both from within and outside the country. These opportunities were later to become the breeding ground for conflict. The British, in establishing their rule in Nigeria,

created policies, such as the Final Amalgamation, Indirect Rule system and Native and Land Ordinance Act of 1910, to control minority communities. These policies, subsequently led to the creation of a class system based on majorities and minorities and this system became problematic in Nigeria. Although the majorities and minorities problems are a general one, how they played out within the country differ from place to place. These colonial policies perpetuated ethnic inequality, created tension, emphasised differences and subsequently turned into violent conflict in Plateau State. The divide and rule of the Indirect Rule policy of the British, did not only create the infrastructure that has sustained ethnic divisions in Plateau State, but has also aroused ethnic consciousness that even the newspapers in Nigeria could not be insulated from. Both pre-and post-independence party-political developments in the country divided newspapers along ethno-regional lines (Galadima & Soola, 2012; Olayiwola, 1991; Yusha'u, 2015). In fact, scholars, such as Alao and Alden (2018), have lend their support to the growing ranks of those who believe that the reason why Africa-and Nigeria, in particular, has often been in the news on negative grounds, has to do with their historic colonial experiences, as has been detailed in this chapter.

The analyses of media coverage of some conflicts such as the Rwandan, Kenyan and Rohingya/Myanmar have foregrounded the role of news framing in shaping and influencing the attitudes and behaviours of the members of the audience negatively. Discourses on the way various media outlets covered these conflicts contributed to the construction of negative ethnic stereotypical epithets that fuelled those conflicts.

## Chapter Five: Mapping, Presentation and Analysis of Newspaper Reports

A Journalist is a grumbler, a censorer, a giver of advice, a regent of sovereigns, a tutor of nations. Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets.

Napoleon

### 5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters attempts were made to provide the core elements of the thesis; the emergence of the press in Nigeria and how it evolved over time; the study situates the Plateau State conflict in its historical context, how the state came into being, and how British colonial policies created ethnicity which divided communities along the line of ‘indigenes’ versus ‘settlers.’ Among the cross-cutting and wide-ranging implications of these policies was that they also divided the Nigerian media system along ethnic frontiers.

This chapter maps out, analyses the relevant newspaper texts of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* and presents the findings. It briefly sketches the background of the Plateau State conflict, especially within the period when the conflict escalated (2010-2012). It deploys six out of the eleven-steps-guide to doing Foucauldian genealogical discourse analysis, as outlined by Carabine (2001), which has already been explained in the methodology chapter to map out the texts thematically before they are analysed. After this process, Van Dijk’s (2001) discourse-cognition-society triangle CDA is then used as the centrepiece of analysis of the newspaper contents in the chapter. Finally, it presents findings that emerged from the newspapers reports analysed.

### 5.2 Plateau State Conflict: A Brief Context

The period 2010-2012 has been selected because of its significance in the violent conflict in Plateau State that stretched for nearly 20 years (Ishaku, 2012; Segun & Ebenezer, 2013). On 17 January 2010, there was a violent clash between some Hausa/Fulani youths and some of Plateau State’s indigenous ethnic youths at Dutse Uku in Nasarawa Gwong area of Jos north local government area of Plateau State (Ishaku, 2012). In an address to journalists in the wake

of the conflict, the then Plateau State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Gregory Ayanting alleged that a group of worshippers who were returning from morning church were attacked by a group of Hausa/Fulani youths. However, Ishaku (2012) asserted that the claim by the Hausa/Fulani that over two hundred of their ethnic community were attacked while trying to reconstruct a house destroyed in an earlier conflict by some of the indigenous ethnic youths, was propaganda. Whatever the truth of this is, it is worth noting that since the outbreak of this conflict there has been a great deal of propaganda from both parties in the conflict (Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010). While this conflict at Dutse UKu was still raging, another conflict broke out on March 7, 2010, where over 500 inhabitants of Dogo Na Hauwa, Zot and Ratsat (villages in the suburb of Jos south and Barkin Ladi local government areas), who were mostly women and children were allegedly killed by some Fulani mercenaries (Ishaku, 2012; Kaigama, 2012). The state was to later witness such killings on a frequent basis, such as Barkin Ladi, Riyom, Bokkos, Jos north, east and south local government areas.

It is important to look at the Plateau State conflict beyond the narrow occurrences within Jos city and its environs. At the heart of this violent conflict is the contestation for land between the state's indigenous ethnic communities and the Hausa/Fulani group. While the Hausa's agitation is for greater political access into Plateau State's mainstream politics, especially in Jos north local government area which is the economic power house of the state, the Fulani herdsmen want unfettered access to grazing lands (which belongs to the indigenous farmers) for their cattle. This conflict between the Fulani herdsmen and the Plateau State's indigenous farmers, as Dewan (2018) has noted, is fuelled due to the scourges of desertification caused by climate change. To date, this phenomenon is forcing the herdsmen and their cattle to migrate south-ward of the country for greener pasture for their cattle of which Plateau State is the gateway. The resistance of the Plateau State indigenous ethnic communities to the Fulani herdsmen's encroachment into their areas goes back to the days of the Islamic Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio of 1804 which tried to conquer the Middle Belt of which Plateau State was its bastion of resistance (Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010). Plateau remains the bastion of this resistance in the Middle Belt. Kukah (2000) argues that over 80% of the military in the northern part of Nigeria comes from the Middle Belt. Plateau State's indigenes enlisted in large numbers into the military and in the 60s to early 90s they formed part of the core of the Nigerian military. Thus, what has become known today as the 'Fulani mercenaries' and 'Berom militia' can better be understood against the backdrop of the long military tradition of Plateau State and the Fulani Jihad. This, therefore provides the prism for understanding the

current Fulani herdsmen's and Plateau State's indigenous farmers conflict that the state has been embroiled in for nearly twenty years (Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010).

Discussing the dimensions the conflict had taken, especially since 2010, Ishaku (2012) argued that the conflict had become intense and unrelenting. Certainly, the media, both local and international covered these violent eruptions of conflict: British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Voice of America (VOA), Radio Deuschel Welle, Radio France Internationale, among a host of other media. Among the local newspapers that covered the conflict, were the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard*. Although the media helped in bringing the conflict to public knowledge, however, the patterns of coverage caused outrage. For example, the Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network (PIDAN) accused most of the Hausa services of the BBC and VOA of prosecuting a vicious propaganda war against the state's indigenous ethnic groups (Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010).

Table 8 presents six out of the eleven steps of Foucauldian Genealogical discourse that is used to map out the themes from the two chosen newspapers (*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*) before Van Dijk's (2001) discourse-cognition-society triangle is applied in the analysis of the texts. Recall, the reason why Foucauldian Genealogical Discourse Analysis is being used to Map out the Discourses of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* newspapers in conjunction with Van Dijk's (2001) discourse-cognition-society triangle (see Table 9) is based on Van Dijk's strong advice that a 'good CDA, should integrate the best work of many people, famous or not, from different disciplines, countries, cultures and directions of research' (2001, pp. 95-96).

### **5.3 Mapping and Analysis of the *Daily Trust* Reports/Articles using CDA**

As already stated above, the analysis of the two chosen newspapers (the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard*) focuses on news reports/articles, headlines, opinion columns, editorials, features, which covered the period 2010-2012. This was done based on the themes raised for the analysis: Stereotype/labelling; Divisive frames; Distrust of the media; Accusations and counter accusations; Exaggeration/hyperbole/rhetoric; and Pursuit of dialogue/solution/peace, in keeping with Foucauldian Genealogical guidelines (See Table 8). Van Dijk's (2001) analytical framework is briefly applied in this chapter (See Table 9).

**Foucauldian Genealogical Discourse Analysis used to Map out the Texts of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* Newspapers**

1	Select your topic	Identify possible sources of data ( <i>The Nigeria Standard</i> and the <i>Daily Trust</i> )
2	Know your data	Read and re-read your data ( <i>The Nigeria Standard</i> and the <i>Daily Trust</i> ) as familiarity helps analysis and interpretation
3	Identify themes	Stereotype/labelling; divisive newspaper frames; accusations and counter accusations; exaggeration/hyperbole; and pursued of dialogue-solution-peace
4	Look for evidence of interrelation between discourses	
5	Identify the discursive strategies and techniques employed	News framing, litotes, propaganda, hyperboles, rhetoric
6	Look for absences and silences	Things that should be there, but are not there

Table 8: Shows Six of the Eleven Steps of Foucauldian Genealogical Discourse used for Mapping Discourses in *The Nigeria Standard* and *Daily Trust* Newspapers (Adopted from Carabine, 2001, p. and modified by the researcher).

**Teun A. Van Dijk's Discourse Cognition-Society Triangle (CDA) Methodology for the Analysis of Newspapers**

1	Topics: Semantic macrostructures	Titles, headlines, summaries, thematic sentences or conclusions
2	Local meanings	The meaning of words (lexical). CDA is interested in ideologically biased discourses & the ways these polarise the representation of groups.
3	The relevance of subtle 'formal' structures	CDA is more interested in those structures of text that are much less consciously controlled or controllable. These various 'forms' generally do not directly express underlying meanings.
4	Context models	CDA distinguishes between local and global contexts. Global contexts are defined by social, political, cultural &

		historical structures in which communication takes place. Local context is defined by social situations (conflict).
5	Event models	Mental models of the situation or events language users write about.

Table 9: *Van Dijk's (2001) Analytical Categories in his Discourse Cognitive-Society Triangle (CDA) Method used for both Analysis & Discussion of Findings* (Adopted from Van Dijk, 2001, p. and modified by the researcher).

It is essential to note that Van Dijk's (2001) theory of context allows the analysis of cognitive and social properties of communicative events, such as politics, business legislation and propaganda. This, according to Van Dijk, allows a subjective interpretation of social situations and differences between language users in the same situation and a flexible adaption of discourse to social situation. Since Van Dijk's framework allows a subjective approach to the interpretation of social situations the analysis of the newspapers in this section would take a subjective tone.

## **5.4 Mapping and Analysis of the *Daily Trust's* Reports**

The analysis of newspaper reports/articles by *The Nigeria Standard* will follow the same format as the *Daily Trust*. The analysis will also use the same themes, namely: Accusations and counter accusations; Stereotype/labelling; Distrust of the media; Exaggeration/hyperboles/rhetoric; and Pursuit of dialogue-solution-peace.

### **5.4.1 Accusations and Counter Accusations**

In the wake of the violent conflict that broke out after the mass killings of the residents of Dogo Na Hauwa, Jot and Ratsat villages in the suburbs of Jos south and Barkin Ladi local government areas of Plateau State on March 7, 2010, the *Daily Trust* newspaper did a substantial coverage of the conflict. Consistent with the suggestion of van Dijk (2001) that analysis should start with topics it provided an overall idea of what the text is about, because it directs many other aspects of discourse and its analysis, in this case, the two selected newspapers (*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*). Of the several news stories of the Plateau State conflict, the *Daily Trust*,

Thursday, March 11, 2010 published five reports: 'Jos: Police, Govt disagree over casualty figures;' 'Jang warns against reprisals;' 'NYSC cows cause tension in Jos;' 'We are not behind Jos killings-Fulani;' and 'Niger indigenes leave Plateau.' Of these five reports, two were worthy of some examination, because the other two ('Jang warns against reprisals' and 'NYSC cows cause tension in Jos'), although they are linked to the conflict, but do not have direct relevance to either answering the research questions or achieving the aim and objectives of the study: 'We are not behind Jos killings-Fulani' and 'Niger indigenes leave Plateau.' The headline entitled 'We're not behind Jos killings-Fulani,' described attempts by the Fulani who were being blamed for the mass killings at Dogo Na Hauwa and the surrounding villages to exonerate themselves. The statement of the Fulani 'We are not behind Jos killings-Fulani,' when viewed within the context of CDA, it recalls Van Dijk's (2001) notion of 'Local meaning' which are the outcome of the choice made by writers in their mental models of events which together with topics are recalled and reproduced by recipients, which may have some social consequences. It is important to also note that CDA by its orientation is interested in the study of discourses or ideologies that are biased and how this divide groups in terms of 'us' and 'them.' Thus, the statement 'We are not behind Jos killings-Fulani' implies polarisation of the representation of us (in-groups) and them (out-groups) (Van Dijk, 2001). For example, the national chairman of the Fulani group, Fula Development Association of Nigeria (FULDAN) (See, Figures 11 & 12), Ahmad Usman, in an interview said:

It was wrong to point accusing fingers at the Fulani [...] the question I want to ask is, why are people mentioning the Fulani? [...] are they the only none-indigenes in the state? (Jaafar, 2010, p. 3).

Given the fact that Plateau State's indigenous ethnic communities suspected the Fulani of the killings, the *Daily Trust* might have probed Usman further and not just accept his account without probing it; some follow-up questions could have elicited some interesting responses from their chairman in the *Daily Trust* interview. Failing to follow through on that suggested Carabine's (2001) notion of silences, that is, what one had expected the paper (reporter) to do but did not.





Figure 9: *Photo showing some Fulani herdsmen with their cattle* ([www.dailypost.ng](http://www.dailypost.ng)).



Figure 10: *Photo showing a Fulani man with his cows* ([www.guardian.ng](http://www.guardian.ng)).

In the other report: ‘Niger indigenes leave Plateau’ highlights a rather slanted report by the *Daily Trust’s* reporters and further put the authenticity of the report in doubt. This is because the *Daily Trust’s* reporter appeared resentful as this quote shows:

Our correspondent learnt that buses and trucks have been conveying people from Plateau State to Niger. Most of the returnees said they had had enough of the killings in Plateau State. Alhaji Ndayako, a returnee said coming back to Niger would mean starting life from the scratch [...], he said he had lived in Pankshin (in Plateau State) for over 50 years (Ebije, 2010, p. 3).

First, the reporters quoted an unnamed source (‘our correspondent learnt’). Second, at this stage, the conflict was still localised, that is, only in some parts of Plateau north senatorial district as Ishaku (2012) claims. Pankshin (one of the local government areas within Plateau Central), which the reporters alleged people fled from, throughout the period of the conflict, was not affected by it (Ishaku, 2012). The *Daily Trust’s* reporters ought to have tried to corroborate the claims made by their interviewee rather than rely solely on his or her claim. Beyond the use of hyperboles and rhetoric, (‘Niger State indigenes leave Plateau in buses and trucks’), the overall reports showed bias.

In a story published on 12 March 2010, the *Daily Trust* headline reads ‘GOC: Jang did not report attack,’ with a bullet point ‘Plateau State Women Development Association, Abuja Protesting the Killings.’ Reading through the headline report, what one gleaned was one side blaming the other (the governor blamed the General Officer Commanding). Governor Jonah David Jang of Plateau State blamed the military for inaction, which resulted in the alleged killing of 500 inhabitants of Dogo Na Hauwa, Jot and Ratsat villages. The General Officer Commanding (GOC) the 3<sup>rd</sup> armoured division, Jos dismissed the accusations as reported by the newspaper thus:

General Saleh Mainah, who is the commander of the joint military Federal Government Special Task Force to restore peace in Plateau State, said at a rare news briefing in Jos that he had no foreknowledge or report of the attack and only got to know about it through text messages after it had taken place (Agbese, Lalo, & Mohammed, 2010, p. 1&5) .

The report by the *Daily Trust* suggested bias. The report alleged that governor Jang said he transmitted the intelligence he received to the army commander three hours before the attacks, which suggested the attack occurred at 12 midnight. But the *Daily Trust* later claimed that ‘even though the attack victims later testified that it happened at about 3am on Sunday.’ This report was not only skewed but was suspect because there was no evidence (quote) of what the attack

victims said about the actual time the attacks took place. However, what were clear from the report were the usual accusations and counter accusations between the Plateau State government and the military. This *Daily Trust* report, overall, suggests the use of Local Meanings to polarise the conflict through the technique of ‘positive self-presentation and negative other presentation’, in which Van Dijk (2001, p. 103) says ‘our good things and their bad things are emphasized, and our bad things and their good things are de-emphasized’ as represented by the GOC (Saleh Mainah), a Fulani and Governor (David Jonah Jang), a Berom. Some other inside-page stories covered by the paper on this day includes ‘Crises: Plateau women take case to N/Assembly’ and ‘Innocent Fulani being arrested in Jos.’ Again, this last report showed bias and omission as the report did not say who did the arrest. This squares with Fairclough’s (2000) concept of nominalisation in which the subject is hidden but focuses on the object. How then did the paper arrive at the verdict ‘innocent Fulani,’ since they (Fulani) had just been arrested and not charged in a court yet? These gaps all point to the skewing of the report by the two reporters.

The *Daily Trust*, on Thursday, March 18, 2010 published a front-page report entitled ‘13 killed in fresh Plateau violence.’ The report described how the conflict spread to Riyom local government of the state. This attack, based on the report, came barely two weeks after the attacks at Dogo Na Hauwa, which the spokesperson for the Plateau State government said 500 people were killed. The *Daily Trust* report stuck to its earlier fatality figures of over a 100. However, the Plateau State government gave a higher figure of 500 deaths (hyperbole), *Daily Trust*, on the other hand, downplays these figures (over 100). This situation fits into van Dijk’s (2001) notions of hyperbole and litotes aimed by the parties (the Plateau State government and the *Daily Trust*) to either aggravate or downplay the conflict. In the report, both the Plateau State government and the *Daily Trust* did not quote any authoritative source (the police or the Red Cross), which made both reports unreliable. This buttresses Golwa’s (2011, p. 99) assertion that ‘More often than not, media figures of losses of lives and property differ with those of the Red Cross, the police and the State Security Services.’ Based on their unbalanced report, The *Daily Trust* reporters were immersed in the coverage of the conflict. Again, another noticeable feature in the report was the constant accusations and counter accusations between the Plateau State government and the *Daily Trust* over fatality figures. When compared with the *Daily Trust*’s earlier report above (‘Innocent Fulani being arrested in Jos’), which showed the identities of the people (Fulani), in this report ‘13 killed in fresh Plateau violence’ which the victims were believed to be Berom, their identities were downplayed, further showed Van

Dijk's (2001) concept of litotes and Carabine's (2001) absences (the identities of the 13 victims were not disclosed, but taking the context into consideration and by way of supposition, the victims are Berom. For example, the Plateau State Commissioner for Information and Communication, Mr Gregory Yenlong blamed some Fulani for the killing of the 13 people, in contrast, however, the chairman of Riyom local government area, Mr. Simon Mwadkom blamed the military task force set up by the federal government to restore peace in Plateau State for not doing enough to prevent the killings. Taken together, these statements constitutes what Van Dijk (2001) calls 'Context Models' which could be either global or local. Here, it refers to local context which Van Dijk explains in terms of properties of immediate and interactional situation, such as overall domain (politics, business), as well as overall action (legislation, propaganda), members in different communicative and social roles.

A *Daily Trust* report on Wednesday, September 21, 2011 entitled 'Jang rejects northern governors' forum meeting on Plateau' is significant. Governor Jang views the statement by the northern governors' forum a 'smack of mischief' to single out Plateau State out of the twelve states in the northern part of the country for discussion, when other northern states were equally enmeshed in violent conflict. The lexical selection ('smack of mischief') in the governor's reaction underscores what van Dijk (2001) refers to as negative other presentation and positive self-representation. Again, looking at the headlines 'Jang rejects northern governors' forum meeting on Plateau' recalls Van Dijk's (2001) Topics (semantic macrostructures) which are explained as global meaning, which are not directly noticeable, but could be inferred or assigned from the text by language users. However, in texts, topics are often expressed in different configurations, such as: headlines, titles, themes, sentences, summaries, abstracts or conclusions. Thus, Van Dijk asserts that topics allow language, especially writers to highlight meaning, control understanding and influence the pattern of 'mental models' of the phenomenon. Therefore, the report by the *Daily Trust* expresses the topic ('Jang rejects northern governors' forum meeting on Plateau').

#### **5.4.2 Distrust of the Media**

Despite the media's, especially newspaper's efforts in the coverage of the Plateau State conflict, they were accused of bias, among other unethical practices, in their coverage of it. For example, in the Wednesday, February 3, 2010 edition of the *Daily Trust* entitled 'Jos, Jang and genocide,' the writer of the article, Hajiya Bilkisu alleged that the then Plateau State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Gregory Ayanting escalated the conflict that began at Dutse Uku thus:

There was no incident on the second day, but the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Gregory Ayanting unprovoked went on AIT (African Independent Television) television and said some Hausa/Fulani youths went and attacked some worshippers in their church. AIT then interviewed four Berom activists who supported the commissioner's account. That ignited the violence and added a religious dimension to what started as a clash between some Hausa and Berom men (Bilkisu, 2010, p. 14).

Reading through her article, Bilkisu absorbs herself in the report by exaggerating the fatalities (150 bodies were dumped in wells). Kuru Kamara is a small settlement outside Bukuru, part of the Greater Jos. The reporter did not state the number of wells that were in the area and their sizes, and there was no indication that she confirmed her fatality figures with the relevant agencies, namely, the police and/or the Red Cross, beyond citing Aljazeera television report. Crucially, she was silent about the sizes or dimension of the wells. She further alleged that:

The Berom surrounded their victims, shot about 300 hundred people, dumped 150 of them in the wells. The recovery of the bodies was covered by some media houses and many people saw it on Aljazeera television (Bilkisu, 2010).

Bilkisu's raises several issues that could be interpreted as inconsistent, lacking clarity, grossly exaggerated, rhetorical, containing absences, silences, and suppositions, among others. Overall, Bilkisu's report features two things in Van Dijk's (2001) theoretical framework and analytical categories, namely, 'Local Meanings' and 'Subtle Formal Structures'. Local Meanings, according to Van Dijk, is a strategy that emphasizes 'positive self-presentation and negative other presentation,' as earlier noted, our good things and their bad things are emphasized, and our bad things and their good things are de-emphasized. Subtle formal structures refer to those structures of text or talk that are much less consciously controlled or controllable by the writer, such as intonation, syntactic structures, propositional structures, rhetorical figures, and so on. What Subtle Formal structures or properties do typically is hide agents. In the case of Bilkisu's quote above, she did not disclose the agents ('many people saw it on Aljazeera television'). This agrees with the conception of nominalisation which removes the subject from the text and focuses on the object instead. In another report by the *Daily Trust* published on February 7, 2010 entitled 'Jos Crisis: Has the media lost its conscience?' It accused the Plateau State-owned media (Plateau Radio and Television Corporation) of bias. The reporter, Ahmed Tahir Ajobe claimed that the invitation of the General Manager of Plateau Radio Television Corporation (PRTV), Pastor Abraham Yiljap by the Nigerian police authorities in Abuja was for questioning as head of the news corporation. This came against the backdrop of the conflict that broke out at Dutse Uku that resulted in the loss of lives and property and the alleged role PRTV played.

The report also claimed that PRTV broadcast the then Commissioner of Police's comments continuously, which allegedly amplified the conflict. Ajobe further averred that 'The station also down-played the Kuru Karama incident, where about 150 people described as settlers were massacred and their bodies deposited in wells.' This statement highlighted the use of litotes and hyperboles. Having devoted a larger portion of his article to denigrating PRTV for its alleged 'incitement' of the public, the reporter later declares that:

It was not only the PRTV that came under attack, many news organisations were accused of bias reporting in covering the recurring violence was escalating due to inaccurate reportage by the media (Ajobe, 2010, p. 5).

Taken together, Ajobe's report was biased, exaggerated and rhetorical and shows immersion. For example, since Ajobe knew that 'it was not only PRTV that came under attack, but many news organisations were accused of bias reporting in covering the recurring violence,' the question then is, why did he single out PRTV for chastisement? The reporter did not produce any evidence of the dimension of the well into which he alleged 150 bodies were dumped at Kuru Karama. Placing Ajobe's report within the context of the Plateau State conflict, it suggests both Global and Local Meanings of van Dijk's (2001, p. 103) notion of 'positive self-presentation and negative other presentation, in which our good and their bad things are emphasised.' Viewed from the perspectives of the conflict, it emphasised the alleged aggression of the Plateau State's indigenous ethnic communities and victimisation of the Hausa/Fulani group.

A *Daily Trust* report on Wednesday, March 10, 2010 pays attention to the patterns of media coverage of the mass murder at Dogo Na Hauwa, Jot and Ratsat villages. In the report: 'Genocide on the Plateau: The way out,' the author, Mohammed Haruna tried to proffer solutions to this recurrent conflict between the Berom and the Hausa/Fulani. He identifies the contestation for the control of the political economy of the state, especially of Jos, the Plateau State capital, as being at the heart of the lingering conflict. He claimed that as a deliberate means for the parties in conflict to draw attention and support, they resorted to propaganda war through the media. He alleged the Berom had greater success in the propaganda and the world's media, to; allegedly dislike the Hausa/Fulani. Haruna's article evinced the use of Context, Polarisation, and Topics as outlined by Van Dijk (2001). This also confirmed the distrust people on both sides of the conflict have about the newspapers, especially when the reports did not favour them. Ironically, even the news media were distrustful of themselves, as Haruna also

claims. For example, he accuses *The Guardian* (one of the leading newspapers in Nigeria) and other newspapers of bias in the coverage of the Plateau State conflict thus:

Even more important than the media's comparatively scanty coverage of the January massacre compared to last Sunday's is the fact that the newspapers largely shied away from identifying the names of the attackers and victims alike (Haruna, 2010, p. 56) .

He continues:

*The Guardian* of January 20, for example, talked only of 'rampaging youths in Jos' but mentioned neither their identities nor those of their victims.' In contrast to the newspaper's coverage of last Sunday's massacre left the reader in no doubt that the perpetrators were Fulani and the victims Berom (Haruna, 2010, p. 56) .

By accusing the media of underreporting the killings of Hausa/Fulani at Dutse Uku, Haruna did not only masked his real intention, but implied that *The Guardian* and the media took sides with the Berom. This agrees with what CDA is interested in, namely, what is said and what is omitted. Applying Van Dijk's (2001) discourse-cognition-society triangle to Haruna's accusations, that '[...] the newspapers, [...] shied away from identifying the identities of the attackers and victims [...]' (Haruna, 2010, p. 56), implied *The Guardian*'s show of support for the Berom. Furthermore, viewed from the perspectives of Van Dijk's 'Local Meanings', Haruna's report shows many forms of implicit and indirect meanings, such as implications, allusions, vagueness, and presuppositions.

In another *Daily Trust* report of Friday, March 19, 2010, Adamu Adamu (his first name and surname) wrote a report entitled 'Jos: Solution looking for problem.' Although the title of the report appeared somewhat paradoxical, he gave a rather long commentary on the Plateau State conflict, especially on earlier conflicts of 2008 and 2010. He berated the Plateau State governor, Jonah David Jang, the Plateau political elite, religious (Christian) and ethnic leaders for their alleged roles in the conflict. He singled out Prince Bola Ajibola, a renowned jurist from the Yoruba ethnic group of south-western Nigeria, who chaired the panel of inquiry into the Plateau State conflict. Adamu upbraided Ajibola's report of bias against the Hausa/Fulani and equally accused the south-western media of waging a vigorously malicious campaign against the Hausa/Fulani as follows:

It is no secret that most of the south-west are anti-Hausa/Fulani cry-babies, and that fact alone should have disqualified Prince Ajibola from presiding on the Plateau State dispute as an arbitrator between the Hausa/Fulani and the Berom, because his mind was already made up against the Hausa/Fulani (Adamu, 2010b).

Apart from this quote signifying the inherent ethnic tension, not just between the Hausa/Fulani and the Berom, but also between the Hausa/Fulani and the Yoruba, Adamu's statement also highlighted van Dijk's (2001) notion of polarisation thus:

Hausa/Fulani, dominating the nation's political landscape prevented Awolowo (a key Yoruba ethnic leader) from the south-west from becoming the president of Nigeria. This explains the anti-Hausa/Fulani sentiments that permeates the commentaries and reportage of the south-western media (Adamu, 2010a, p. 64) .

Adamu's lexical selections above ('Hausa/Fulani's dominance of the political landscape, and the anti-Hausa/Fulani sentiments that dominate the south-west media') show the use of Van Dijk's (2001) 'Local Meanings' which resonates with CDA's interest that study's ideologically biased discourses, and the way these polarise the representation of us(in-groups) and them (out-groups) ('Hausa/Fulani, dominating the nation's political landscape prevented Awolowo (a key Yoruba ethnic leader) from the south-west from becoming the president of Nigeria'). It also suggests that Adamu's write-up was influenced more by his ethnicity than by his professional ethics as a journalist, because of his Hausa/Fulani background.

### 5.4.3 Stereotype/Divisive Frames

The use of negative stereotypes/divisive frames in the *Daily Trust's* coverage of the Plateau State conflict has been common in their reports. For example, in its report of February 1, 2010, Mahmud Jega in his Monday column titled 'A Word for Jos Warriors' was not only cynical but somewhat satirical. Jega's article is published against the backdrop of the 2008 chairmanship elections in Jos north local government area, in which the Hausa/Fulani were allegedly short-changed:

If the Hausa/Fulani community were to borrow a leaf and informally forgo some political rights in Jos as part of a settlement, the community (Hausa/Fulani) can still exercise much political influence by determining which *Dan Kasa* (singular for Hausa equivalent for son of the soil) becomes the chairman (Jega, 2010a, p. 64).

In the report, Jega referred to the Plateau State's indigenous ethnic communities as *Yan Kasa*, (a plural Hausa term for sons of the soil). The use of the concept 'sons of the soil' by Jega shows a divide that exists between the settlers and indigenes, which fits in with Van Dijk's (2001) notion of polarisation. The deliberate italicisation of *Yan Kasa* was meant to emphasise the polarised nature of the conflict environment and local meanings. *Yan Kasa* denotes what Van Dijk (2001) explained in his notion of 'Local Meaning' as a word with ideologically biased discourse.



The *Weekly Trust* of Saturday, February 6, 2010 entitled ‘Genocide on the Plateau: The Jang Factor’ by Mannan and Alkali (2010) follows the same trajectory as the previous article. They used divisive, negative ethnic frames and stereotypes, such as ‘non-indigenes.’ The *Weekly Trust* through their reporters (Mannan & Alkali) accused both the Plateau State government and its State Assembly thus:

For over eight years, there has been deliberate and systematic attempt to, not only deprive law-abiding citizens of their basic rights by the state and its agents, but to also exterminate an ethnic community through ethnic cleansing. It is only in Plateau State that the government sponsors a bill in the State House of Assembly to officially designate an ethnic group as non-indigenes contrary to the spirit of the Nigerian constitution (Mannan & Alkali, 2010, p. 42).

These lexical selections of ‘deliberate,’ ‘deprive,’ ‘law-abiding citizens,’ ‘basic rights,’ ‘Plateau State,’ and ‘Nigerian constitution’ in the quote above are meant to present the Hausa/Fulani (although they were not mentioned by name, but judging from the context, it refers to what Van Dijk (2001), as victims and the Plateau State government as the aggressor. ‘Basic rights’ typically associated with ‘citizens’ are profoundly ideological concepts related to the ‘constitution’ of the federal republic of Nigeria. To be able to qualify the ‘illegal’ action of the government in negative phrase, Jega employed strong metaphors of war, such as ‘ethnic cleansing.’ In addition, the *Weekly Trust* recalls van Dijk’s (2001) concept of polarisation and Local Meanings of the text indicated the use of hyperboles, because the write-up was principally in defence of the Hausa/Fulani’s ‘rights’ but did not mention them by name to win the support of other non-Plateau ethnic communities resident in the state, which it cleverly refers to as ‘law-abiding citizens’. Not referring to certain people or group by name, in Van Dijk’s opinion, refers to various forms of implicit or indirect meanings, such as vagueness, allusions, omissions and presuppositions. It is rather curious that the *Weekly Trust* use a small p for Plateau State (a proper noun) in its headline. Perhaps, it is a typographical error; otherwise it could mean the extent of the animosity by the Hausa/Fulani against the Plateau State’s indigenous ethnic communities as championed by the *Weekly Trust*.

A *Daily Trust* report of Thursday, March 11, 2010 with the title ‘We’re not behind Jos Killings-Fulanis’ was a response to an earlier accusation by the Plateau State’s indigenous ethnic groups’ report against the Fulani, which portrayed them as ‘terrorists.’ In his reaction to this accusation, the Fulani Chairman, Ahmad Usman responded thus: ‘To say our people are behind the ungodly act is most unfortunate. They want to portray the Fulani as terrorists, but we are not.’ As it has been noted earlier, ‘CDA research is often interested in the study of ideologically biased

discourses, and the ways these polarise representation of us (in-groups) and them (out-groups)' (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 103). Usman statement 'they want to portray the Fulani as terrorists' resonates with van Dijk's (2001) 'Local Meaning' of negative other presentation in which their bad things are highlighted. Similarly, in the report of the *Daily Trust* on Friday, March 11, 2010, titled 'How to Contain Jos Crisis' by Yahaya Mahmood, he delineated the conflict thus 'They are ethnic clashes between those that are called indigenes and those that are called settlers.' Yahaya Mahmood tried to proffer solutions to the conflict.

Another article by the *Weekly Trust* of Saturday, December 10, 2011 with the title 'Create emirates for Hausa/Fulani in Plateau' by Sa'idu (2011) portrayed another use of labelling (characterisation). In this report, the reporter quoted Barrister Yahaya Mahmood who was seeking solutions to the conflict suggested that 'the northern governors' forum should order the Plateau State Government to recognise the Hausa/Fulani as 'indigenes.'

A *Daily Trust* report of Wednesday, October 31, 2012 reads 'Hausa/Fulani Rejects Jang's Appointment of aide.' The Hausa/Fulani reject the use of such stereotypes and the label 'settlers.' Their reason for rejecting the appointment of Barrister Lawal Ishaq (one of their own ethnic member) as Senior Special Adviser was because of the perceived notion that the Plateau State government was attempting to peg the Jasawa community (the Umbrella body for the Hausa/Fulani in Plateau State) in Plateau State as settlers, thereby putting them on the same pedestal with the Yoruba, Igbo and other ethnic communities from the south-eastern part of Nigeria.

#### **5.4.4 Exaggeration/Hyperbole/Rhetoric**

The *Daily Trust* of Friday, February 5, 2010 published an article by Hajiya Bilkisu entitled 'Jos, Jang and genocide':

The crisis that erupted again in Jos remains an unfolding tragedy as those affected counted their losses in lives put at 1000, property worth over billions of naira, the injured and the displaced are about 40, 000. The anatomy of the crisis was provided by a colleague who monitored it (Bilkisu, 2010).

This report by Bilkisu is grossly exaggerated. Every conflict that resulted in the killings of some members of the ethnic community of a reporter involved in the conflict was reported as genocide. The *Daily Trust* (and other) reporters who covered this conflict were fond of referring to the killings that involved their community as genocide (Adamu, 2010a; Lonewolf, 2012; Mannan & Alkali, 2010). Genocide, according to Raphael Lemkin, who first created the word

‘genocide’ and later defined the concept which is adopted by the United Nations and International Law is:

[A] co-ordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.... Genocide is directed against the national group as an entity, and the actions involved are directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of the group ( Lemkin, cited in Schabas, 2000, p. 25).

Admittedly, some killings have taken place in the conflict on both sides of the communities in conflict (Plateau State’s indigenous ethnic communities and the Hausa/Fulani) and her (Bilkisu’s) ethnic community (Hausa/Fulani) was, no doubt, affected. However, the reporter’s reference to the Plateau State conflict as genocide does not conform with Lemkin’s definition above, hence, a misuse of the term (genocide), perhaps deliberately aimed at aggravating the conflict. Indeed, Bilkisu lacked the competence to unilaterally refer to any killing as genocide. Apart from the fact that the reporter exaggerated the report, she was also biased in her report since she relied only on ‘the anatomy of the crisis provided by her colleague who monitored it’ as shown in the quote above. Furthermore, she did not quote an official (police or Red Cross in keeping with the country’s law) as source, but relied on her colleague, who probably was just as biased as she was, thus ‘stop the killing and destruction, let peace reign on the Plateau; this is man’s inhumanity to man, and ‘indict Jang.’

In another report by Adamu Adamu, with the same title as Bilkisu’s ‘Jos, Jang and Genocide (11)’, the writer claimed that governor Jonah David Jang of Plateau State was, not only against the Hausa/Fulani, but also against their religion (Islam), which was the religion practiced by most of Hausa/Fulani. Adamu’s deliberate choice of lexical variation, such as ‘genocide’, ‘anti-Hausa/Fulani’, ‘anti-Islam’ and ‘ethnic cleansing,’ depicted various uses of hyperboles to reinforce to show the gravity of the alleged crime committed by the Plateau State governor, Jonah David Jang. The lexical (‘genocide,’ ‘anti-Hausa/Fulani,’ and ‘ethnic cleansing’), not only emphasised, but also contributed to the polarisation between the indigenous ethnic communities and the Hausa/Fulani community, thus increasing the rhetorical effect:

[...] after the genocide is punished, the nation should boldly tackle the obnoxious issue of indigene/settler syndrome throughout the country, and especially in Jos where Jang is unlikely to do anything about it. Wherever he was, Jang had always proved unable to separate his position as governor from his extreme bigotry as anti-Islamic Christian; or, is it really only and merely an anti-Hausa/Fulani Berom?’ (Adamu, 2010a, p. 56)

In the *Daily Trust* on Wednesday, March 10, 2010, the paper carried similar headline news as the previous one, ‘Genocide on the Plateau: The Way Out.’ The paper alleged that the Plateau State governor, Jonah David Jang was anti-peace and his handling of the conflict amounted to ethnic cleansing. Again, the above headline depicted the use of hyperbole (‘genocide’). It appears the *Daily Trust*, through its staff writers (Bilkisu and Adamu) were determined to set an agenda for the news through the framing and the deliberate choice of these words ‘genocide’ and ‘ethnic cleansing.’ The way they framed their news stories reinforces what McCombs and Shaw (1972) argued that reporters, editors and newsroom staff wield such strong influence that allows them to set the agenda for the audience by the prominence they give to issues.

The *Daily Trust*’s publication on Tuesday, April 20, 2010 entitled ‘Jos Crises threat to National Security-Myetti Allah’ suggests, yet again, the use of topics and exaggeration. Reading the headline, one immediately gets the impression that the Plateau State conflict was worse than the Boko Haram conflict that was, at the time, ravaging the north-eastern part of the country. In another publication by the *Daily Trust* of February 6, 2011 reads ‘Re: Again, Jos burns.’ This title, like the previous, showed the use of hyperbole. The *Daily Trust* here used metaphors of war ‘Jos burns’ to buttress its claim of the severity of the conflict. Although the conflict in Plateau State had received world attention, it still did not fit into the categorisation of a war, not to talk of a genocide, because war by definition is an armed hostilities between countries or state (Thomson, 1998). This conflict, although at this stage involved mainly Berom and Hausa/Fulani, most other Berom communities (Foron, Kuru, Du, Zawan, Vom,) and Hausa/Fulani (Babale, Bauchi Road, communities Ungwan Rogo) were not involved.

A *Daily Trust* report on Tuesday, September 20, 2011 titled ‘Military in Biggest Peacetime Deployment,’ like the previous, indicated that the conflict was not only severe but uncontrollable by the police; hence the military had to be drafted to try to contain the conflict (hyperbole). There was still another example of exaggeration by the *Daily Trust* Wednesday, July 18, 2012 edition, such as this ‘Rockets fired at Jos Islamic School, STF.’ Again, this headline news depicted the lexical choice of hyperboles (‘rockets fired at Jos Islamic School’), rhetoric aimed at polarising the conflict along, not just ethnic, but religious divides as well. Although, rockets may have been fired at the Islamic school, the reporter did not provide evidence of the calibre of weapon used. Rockets are not easy to come by and if indeed rockets were the weapons used, the fatalities from the rockets fired would have been telling, which the reporter, again, did not provide evidence of. Therefore, it showed the use of hyperbole was with a deliberate intent to mislead the audience. As already noted, critical discourse experts may be

more keen in those structures of text or talk that Van Dijk (2001) says are much less consciously controlled or controllable by the speaker, for example, intonation, syntactic structures, propositional structures, rhetorical figures, in his 'Subtle Formal Structures.' This report is marred by fallacies and lack of vital information such as evidence to prove the calibre of weapon used and it hides the agent that fired the rockets ('Rockets fired at Jos Islamic School, STF'). Language users would refer to this process (of hiding the agent) as nominalisation, because the subject is deliberately removed from the text and in this case concentration is on the object (Fairclough, 2000)

#### **5.4.5 Pursuit of Dialogue-Solution-Peace**

Although the Plateau State conflict had witnessed the destructions of lives and property on a monumental scale, there were, however, calls for peace. The calls to end this conflict had come from both the federal and Plateau State governments, ethnic, religious and political leaders, as well as nongovernmental organisations. For example, the *Daily Trust* of Friday, February 4, 2011 published a report by Atika Balal, which was a call by the federal government of Nigeria through its Minister for Information and Communication, Mr. Labaran Maku thus, 'How FG will end Jos Crisis, by Maku.' In this, the government called for dialogue. The minister averred that:

Preventing any escalation of the Jos crisis, mitigating its effects, containing extremist elements on all sides and creating the avenue for sustained dialogue is the strategy that the federal government is using to bring an end to the crises in Plateau State [...] (Balal, 2011, p. 3).

Balal reported the minister as further saying 'The Nigerian media need to help tone down the divisive elements in national political discourse.' Similar efforts by the federal government, which was reported by the *Daily Trust* included 'Jonathan, Berom elders meet over Plateau crises,' 'How to resolve Jos Crisis; Jang, Jos and Jonathan's Peace Initiative.'

The *Daily Trust* Tuesday, August 24, 2010 published a headline report 'Lar c'ttee to Jonathan: How to resolve Jos crisis' by Bisalla, Shehu, and Agbese (2010). In this front-page report, a high-powered advisory committee on the Plateau State conflict, headed by the former Plateau State governor, Solomon Lar gave a set of recommendations to end the indigenes/settlers' dichotomy. The presidential advisory committee, among other things, suggested the setting up of a truth and reconciliation committee to create trust among the diverse ethnic communities in the state:

The committee urged for the setting up of a truth and reconciliation committee to rebuild trust among the different ethnic and religious groups in Jos north, and recommended the redesigning of Jos in such a way as to make every part of the town, especially the existing slums, conveniently habitable by providing social amenities (Bisalla et al., 2010, p. 1 & 5).

The federal government's committee, in its report submitted to President Goodluck Jonathan declared that 'religion was not the main issue.' Similar efforts by the federal government published by the paper are 'FG to bury Jos, Borno violence-VP Sambo.'

However, the status of people interviewed in the same newspaper suggest that it was a religious conflict. For example, the newspaper interviewed two leading religious leaders in Nigeria: Their Eminences, John Cardinal Onaiyekan, the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja and Muhammadu Sa'ad Abubakar, the Sultan of Sokoto. In the report by the *Daily Trust* of Friday, April 23, 2010 entitled 'Sultan, Onaiyekan harp on Peace.' Viewed from the perspectives of the Plateau State's conflict, it can be argued that the reason why Sultan Abubakar was interviewed was, not just because he was a religious leader but also because he was a Fulani leader. The *Daily Trust* may have interviewed Sultan Sa'ad Abubakar (a Fulani) may be because his views would be sympathetic towards the Hausa/Fulani.

'Jang, Ribadu lead peace talks over Plateau crises' was a report by Suleiman Bisalla and Andrwe Agbese, which the *Daily Trust* of Monday, July 30, 2012 published. The Plateau State governor, Jonah David Jang was of the Berom ethnic group, while Nuhu Ribadu, former chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) was a Fulani. The choices of these leading figures, based on the newspaper, 'are to lead others from the Berom and Fulani communities in Plateau State to revive a peace process started last year.'

The newspaper produced several other reports on finding solution to the conflict in its publications thus: 'How to end Plateau Crises, by Hausa/Fulani' by Mohammed Shehu was published in the *Daily Trust*, Friday, August 10, 2012. This was after the meeting they had with President Jonathan and in which the president had met earlier with the Berom elders. This report generated a lot of reactions by the members of the public which the *Daily Trust* published in its column tagged online reactions: what people are saying on Monday, August 13, 2012.

Other publications by the newspaper by individuals include 'Working for peace and understanding on the Plateau' by Saleh Shehu Ashaka (the *Daily Trust*, February, 2, 2010) 'How to solve Plateau Crises, by colonel Dangiwa' (the *Daily Trust*, Wednesday, September 28, 2011); 'How to Solve Plateau Crisis, by CP' (the *Daily Trust*, Thursday, August 30, 2012);

‘Working for Peace and Understanding on the Plateau’ (the *Daily Trust*, February 2, 2010); ‘How to contain Jos crisis, by Yahaya Mahmood’ (the *Daily Trust*, Friday, March 19, 2010); .

These news reports described efforts by governments, groups and individuals across a wide spectrum of the Nigerian society aimed at ending the Plateau State conflict by proffering ways that could lead to achieving peace. What was rather ironic is the fact that the *Daily Trust*, which had been accused of amplifying the conflict through its reportage is equally in the forefront of the search for peace (Ishaku, 2012; Kaigama, 2012; Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010). Earlier in the literature, the Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network (PIDAN), that is, the umbrella body that represents Plateau State’s ethnic communities had accused the *Daily Trust*, especially of being the in vanguard of a media campaign against its people.

## **5.5 Mapping and Analysis of *The Nigeria Standard* Reports**

The analysis of newspaper reports/articles by *The Nigeria Standard* will follow the same format as the *Daily Trust*. The analysis will also use the same themes, namely: accusations and counter accusations; Stereotype/labelling; Distrust of the media; Exaggeration/hyperboles/rhetoric; and Pursuit of dialogue-solution-peace.

### **5.5.1 Accusations and counter Accusations**

Under this heading *The Nigeria Standard* headline report of Wednesday, February 3, 2010 opened with a heading ‘Kaze calls for the court-marshalling of GOC.’ Bitrus Kaze (was a member representing Jos South and East local government areas in the Federal House of Representatives in Abuja) called for the arrest and trial of the General Officer Commanding 3rd Armoured Division of the Nigeria Army, Rukuba, General Saleh Maina. Hon. Kaze blames General Maina for allegedly being indifferent to the extra-judicial killings during the recent conflict in some parts of Plateau State.

Of the several headline news reports published by *The Nigeria Standard* on Thursday, March 11, 2010, these two are significant, because they underscore the accusations and counter accusations that have characterised the handling of the conflicts (Dakop, 2010a): ‘Jos Massacre: Police debunks reports,’ and ‘Jang blames crises on politicisation of religion, ethnicity.’ The report on the alleged massacre that took place at Dogo Na Hauwa, Zot and Rasat villages generated a lot of controversies on the casualty figures between the Plateau State government and the Nigeria police. Earlier, the Plateau State government had quoted 500 as

fatalities but the Nigeria Police debunk the report and said only 109 casualties were recorded (Dakop, 2010b). This report by *The Nigeria Standard* shows the use of exaggeration (500) and litotes (109). The reporter tries to balance the story by putting the government's fatalities side by side with the police's despite the differences in figures. The Plateau State governor, David Jonah Jang blames the conflict on what he describes as:

The antics employed by some desperate politicians in the country who have continued to fan the embers of discord that have resulted in the destruction of lives and property under the guise of aggression of religion and ethnicity (Dakop, 2010b, pp. 1-2).

Note that the deliberate omission of names of 'some desperate' politicians by governor Jonah David Jang marches with what Van Dijk (2001) 'local meaning' which refers to a relevant property of discourse because the omitted information is part of the mental model ('fan the embers of discord'). Again, this shows the accusations and counter accusations that has come to characterise the conflict in Plateau State, whether it is between the government and the military security task force, or the Plateau State government and other media, especially the *Weekly/Daily Trust*.

Similarly, *The Nigeria Standard*, Wednesday, March 17, 2010 published a report entitled 'CP blames Jos killings on faceless persons.' This report appeared skewed. Reading through, it said 49 Fulani were arrested as the alleged culprits, but the ethnic identities of the over 151 persons arrested around Mangu area for unlawful assembly were not disclosed. The Commissioner of Police avowed that:

49 arrested Fulani revealed that some of them were paid to carry out the dastardly act, while some of them confessed to being volunteers (Dakop, 2010a, p. 20).

However, the CP said that:

The second category of people arrested is made up of some 151-people arrested at Mangu and other surrounding villages for the offences of unlawful possession of prohibited fire arms and dangerous weapons and unlawful assembly (Dakop, 2010a, p. 20).

The undisclosed identities of the 151-people arrested presupposes that they could be indigenes. The non-disclosure of the identities of the 151 people arrested resonates with what Carabine (2001) suggests should be looked out for (absences, silence and opaque relationship). Or, it could also suggest that the police were yet to determine their case that's why their ethnicities were undisclosed. Either way, this falls into what CDA calls 'semantic properties', that is, the



omitted information is part of the mental model or a crucial information for the understanding of the text (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 106). This too fits into Fairclough's (2000) notion of nominalisation whereby the subject is deliberately removed from the text and the object instead becomes the centre of attention. Overall, it showed bias in the way the news was reported.

*The Sunday Standard* of March 21, 2010 published a report 'The military and Jos crisis.' Jacob Adamu, the writer of the article accused some unnamed people from the northern part of the country as determined to subdue Plateau State. Again, it seems *The Nigeria Standard*, either by a coincidence or a deliberate act the paper chooses not to disclose the identities of some people ('unnamed people'), which suggests another omission.

Among the many things that are interesting for CDA research, for example, is the study of the many forms of implicit or indirect meanings, such as implications, presuppositions, allusions, vagueness, among others, which are what Van Dijk, (2001) refers to as 'Local Meaning.' Thus, the report by Adamu (2010c), recalls (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 108) use of local context in his context models which describes the immediate, interactional situation in which communicative events take place,' its overall domain (politics, business) and overall action (legislation, propaganda). The overall domain in Adamu's text, based on Van Dijk's local context is politics, because of his claim that some unnamed people from the core north were out to subdue Plateau State. Based on the Local Context and the conflict environment, the 'unnamed people from the northern part of the country being referred to be the Hausa/Fulani. Earlier, the identities of the '151 people arrested at Mangu and other village's [...]' were undisclosed. Perhaps, the reason for choosing not to call those people by name is because Adamu was not sure or fear of litigation. Adamu equally accused the military of taking side in the conflict thus: 'For the military, particularly the Nigerian army, its role of non-partisanship is being questioned in the recent Jos crises as well as shielding arrested persons from the law.' The reporter used presupposition ('some people want Plateau State down and subdued') and which also shows accusations and counter accusations between the paper and the military.

### **5.5.2 Distrust of the Media**

*The Sunday Standard* of January 31, 2010 published two news reports in both the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard*. What is interesting about this report was the presentation of the two newspapers by *The Nigeria Standard*. For example, the first report was titled 'The media fabrication on Jos crisis' by Dontinna (2010) In it, the reporter, Ezekiel Dontinna accuses the *Daily Trust* of fabricating the news on the Plateau State conflict thus:

It is disheartening that some media organisations derive pleasure in fabricating information about the recent unrest in Jos, just to impart negatively on the good image of Plateau people (Dontinna, 2010, p. 11).

Although Dontinna did not mention the *Daily Trust* by name (omission) in his report, the context, his lexical selection ('fabrication,' 'negativity,' 'good image') implies that he was referring to the *Daily Trust*. It echoes the many forms of implicit and indirect meanings, such as presuppositions, omissions, vagueness in Van Dijk's (200, p.104) 'local meaning and his 'Local Context' of 'positive self-presentation and negative other presentation,' in which 'our good things and their bad things are highlighted,' and 'our bad things and their goods things are de-emphasised' ('impart negatively on the good image of the Plateau people'). There were other features too in the report, such as immersion ('we should not hesitate to invite the fabricators to appear before the Commission of Inquiry'), bias ('left to me, such individual's picture should not be displayed on the bill-boards and streets [...]'). The second report published by *The Nigeria Standard* entitled 'Efforts at stifling PRTV (Plateau Radio and Television), raise head' was because of the summoning of the GM by the Inspector General of Police to answer charges for alleged 'criminal conspiracy and inciting public disturbance.' In its defence, PRTV raised a letter expressing concern about its alleged treatment, which presented the media organisation, not only in positive light, but also as a victim thus:

The general manager pointed out that since the outbreak of the crisis, the station has aired several commentaries on the need to allow lasting peace in Jos north and Plateau State [...].

In this report by *The Nigeria Standard*, the general manager of PRTV:

[...] wonders why its staff were being molested in pursuance of their duties and noted that he has sufficient reason to adduce for the progressive work the station was doing towards peacebuilding.

Although *The Sunday Standard* of February 7, 2010, published two front-page reports on the conflict an editorial: 'Don't treat Plateau crisis in isolation-CAN President;' Editorial: 'State of emergency on Plateau State?' and 'NUJ worried over PRTV GM's summon by security,' the focus will only be on one, that is, on 'NUJ worried over PRTV GM's [...]. The members of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Plateau State Chapter frowned at the police authority's making a scapegoat of PRTV when other media organisations/outlets reported the same story. The national secretary of the union, Shua'ibu Usman Leman queried that:

PRTV management had informed the NUJ that on Thursday, January 21, 2010, three reporters of the media house were molested by soldiers in Jos and were told

that they (soldiers) were not happy with PRTV and promised to waste them if they saw them on the road again (Lar, 2010b, p. 1&2).

This report by *The Nigeria Standard* is slanted, because neither the police nor the military whom they accused of molestation and harassment were interviewed to give their own side of the story. The deliberate lexical choice of the metaphor 'waste' (kill) by the NUJ to emphasise the alleged threat to the lives of the staff of PRTV by the military. It is important to note that CDA is interested, not just in the structure of a sentence, but also how the sentence communicates a message, which can promote inequality or division in society (Yusha'u, 2012). Thus, this report by Lar (2010b) indicates the polarisation and distrust between the media and the military in Plateau State.

The report, 'Hanging PRTV through frivolous means?' by Gambo (2010b) in *The Nigeria Standard* of February 7, 2010, viewed from the perspectives of Van Dijk's (2001) mental models and metaphors ('hanging PRTV'). For example, the newspaper tried to highlight the many positive things PRTV had done over the years thus:

Most unfortunate is the fact that the station (PRTV) has over the years played a significant role towards not only educating, informing and enlightening the public but has also created an enabling environment for the nation's socio-economic, political integration and national development (Gambo, 2010b, p. 29).

It is worthy to also observe the repeated use of passive constructs, such as 'the station ('PRTV') has over the years' [...] 'created enabling environment' [...].' All these passive constructs tried to get, not only the police and the public to recall the good things PRTV has been known for, but also to achieve coherence.

The following reports by *The Nigeria/Sunday Standard* are worthy of note: February 21, 2010 'Media terrorism' by Amos Balat and 'Re: Jos: Playing with fire' by Jacob Adamu; Sunday, February 28, 2010, 'Three judicial commissions of inquiry, three indictments' by Ndiameeh Babrik; March 7, 2010 'Genocide: Jang has no case to answer' by Stephen Lonewolf Makama. These were all feature stories that appeared to malign the *Daily Trust* for its alleged unethical journalistic practices and anti-Plateau rhetoric by *The Nigeria Standard* staff reporters. One thing that these writers seemed to have had in common was the belief that the *Daily Trust* was biased in its reports on the Plateau State conflict. For example, Balat in his article 'Media terrorism' took the *Daily Trust's* to task thus:

It is quite unfortunate that the reporters didn't report the event as it was, they fed the reading public with tissues of infectious lies. A word of advice to them if they

care to listen, they should in the spirit of national interest follow the path of peace by shunning sentiments and engage in constructive and developmental journalism (Balat, 2010, p. 11).

Balat also accuses the paper of lack of objectivity and sectionalism. This, he (Balat) showed through his selection of the metaphor of violence ('metaphor of terrorism').

In two other separate articles, Makama ('Genocide: Jang has no case to answer') and Adamu ('Jos: Playing with fire') disparaged the *Daily Trust's* columnist, Adamu Adamu (the reporter's first name and surname). Makama's article was a rejoinder to Adamu Adamu's earlier article, which appeared in the *Daily Trust*, in which he accuses the Plateau State governor, Jonah David Jang of Genocide. Adamu (of *The Nigeria Standard*) also took Adamu (the *Daily Trust*) to task for allegedly being a religious bigot and ethnic champion (Hausa/Fulani). The repeated use of the concepts 'terrorism' and 'terror group' in the article (eight times) by Adamu (of *The Nigeria Standard*) was meant to reinforce his notion that Adamu (of the *Daily Trust*) was a religious bigot. Furthermore, Adamu (of *The Nigeria Standard*) claimed that 'The Hausa/Fulani have never for once supported an indigenous governor of Plateau State whether during the military or civilian civilians.'

In another report by *The Sunday Standard* of March 28, 2010) with a title 'Dogo Na Hauwa: Adamu Adamu's trophy' by Pam Jot showed both satire and metaphor in the crafting of the headline. In this, the reporter, Jot (a Berom) contended that:

Adamu Adamu and his fellow writers in the *Daily Trust* newspapers have done a very remarkable job indeed. They have successfully used their 'columns' to coax and rouse their Hausa/Fulani kinsmen into murderous campaigns against Plateau people, particularly the Berom whom they view with curious contempt (Jot, 2010, p. 13).

Jot's use of satire is reflected in the quote above. People are normally commended for doing good but given the context in which Jot wrote Adamu Adamu and his colleagues were accused by him (Jot) for allegedly waging a murderous campaign against Plateau. This same quote illustrates Van Dijk's (2001) notion of polarisation and 'negative other presentation.'

The reports of *The Sunday Standard*, March 28, 2010 by Ashikebe and *The Nigeria Standard*, Friday, February 26, 2010 were accusations levelled against the Hausa/Fulani for trying to take-over Plateau State with the connivance of the *Daily Trust*, BBC Hausa Service, VOA Hausa Service and Human Rights Watch, to advance their cause.

Irked by the alleged ‘press war’ being waged by some section of the press, especially the *Daily/Weekly Trust* against Plateau State, *The Nigeria Standard* of Wednesday, July 18, 2012 published a front-page report entitled ‘Plateau Stakeholders want state Newspaper Revamped.’ The stakeholders’ decision was ‘[...] to give a true report of what the state (Plateau) was going through to avoid sensational reportage as it inflames rather than moderate issues.’ Taking the statement of the Plateau State’s leaders in context, it features Van Dijk’s (2001) use of Topics, Local Meanings and polarisation ‘us’ and ‘them’, which here refers to the Plateau State’s indigenous communities and the Hausa/Fulani group.

The headline of *The Sunday Standard* of July 29, 2012 ‘Remember the Berom militia’ by Stephen Lonewolf Makama was poetic in his report. Makama’s lexical choice of the term ‘tragedy,’ which was repeated nine times, was not only meant to achieve cohesion, but also to present the Berom as victims of Hausa/Fulani aggression.

It is a tragedy that sections of the press rather than stand for honour, respect and dignity of the corporate existence of the aberration of a nation-rather than, even if not for that alone, present facts that would preserve a life. But instead use their positions to fan and inflame tempers [...] (Makama, 2012, p. 7).

The way this report was framed illustrates the fact that the reporter might have been out to promote the agenda of the ethnic communities of Plateau State, especially the Berom victims. This, therefore, conforms with the agenda-setting theory of McCombs and Shaw (1972).

### **5.5.3 Exaggeration/Hyperbole/Rhetoric**

Hyperboles/exaggerations were used in some of the news reports on the Plateau State conflict covered by *The Nigeria Standard*. For example, *The Sunday Standard*, March 7, 2010 published a report entitled ‘Act now to avert Jol crisis escalations.’ Although the report was a call on the military to be alive to their responsibilities to avert the escalation of a crisis in Riyom local government, reading through it also illustrates the use of hyperboles. The reporter, Bulus Gambo, gave a background to the violent eruption of this conflict, which began in 2001, in some parts of the state. Gambo (2010a, p. 9) claimed that this conflict led to:

The influx of Fulani to most of the villages in Riyom local government area, consequently to an increased population of 5, 000 herdsmen and their families.

While population increase during conflict is a common feature, the 5, 000 herdsmen and their families who moved into Riyom villages was rather exaggerated, especially as the reporter did not quote a reliable, dependable source (police or Red Cross). Gambo further claims that

‘though the host communities remained peace-loving, the Fulani descended on the villagers (indigenes) unprovoked, which resulted in the dead of several people [...] several farmlands were equally destroyed.’ As it has already been noted in discussion:

CDA is often interested in the study of ideologically biased discourses, and the ways these polarise the representation of us (in-groups) and them (out-groups) (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 103).

From Gambo’s quote, there is a division (polarisation) between the Fulani and the indigenous ethnic communities of Plateau State, especially the Berom.

*The Nigeria Standard* of Thursday, March 11, 2010 carried a front-page report ‘Jos Massacre,’ with a rider ‘Police debunks reports.’ This story came against the backdrop of the killings at three villages in Jos South and Barkin Ladi local government areas (Dogo Na Hauwa, Zot and Rasat) in which the Plateau State government and the police argued about the exact casualty figures. The Plateau State government claimed 500 people were killed, the police disputed that by saying only 109 casualties were recorded. The conflicting fatality figures by both the Plateau State government and the police recall Van Dijk’s (2001) uses of hyperboles (500) and litotes (109), among other semantic properties of the report. Such uses of hyperboles and litotes are meant to either amplify or downplay the conflict. Another report on the same massacre which *The Nigeria Standard* reported on the same front page on March 11 is ‘Victims given mass burial’ (Gambo, 2010c).

In other front-page reports by *The Nigeria Standard* of July 15, 2012, the titles read ‘Who wants the fall of Plateau?’, ‘Don’t fold your arms, Suswan says’ with a rider ‘On challenges of security’ and ‘Plateau Attack: Fulani leader quizzed, in SSS net.’ All these headlines showed use of Local Meanings, Topics, Metaphors, Context and Hyperboles. Of interest in these reports is the report ‘Plateau Attack: Fulani leader quizzed, in SSS net.’ The reason for this is that having read through the report, it did not sound as severe as the headline news report suggested. The Fulani leader was invited by the State Security Service (SSS) for interrogation ‘for a routine session.’ This report features Van Dijk’s (2001) use of semantic and rhetorical choice of metaphors. For example, the report used the metaphors of ‘quizzed’ and ‘net’ suggest that the Fulani leader was detained and perhaps molested by the security service. This may be a discursive strategy employed by Gambo, the reporter, and meant to calm the agitated Plateau State indigenous ethnic communities.

The four-front-page headline news of *The Nigeria Standard* of Wednesday, July 18, 2012 were exclusively on the Plateau State conflict: ‘Middle Belt Forum wants a united front,’ ‘Plateau stakeholders want state newspaper revamped,’ with a rider ‘[...] Jang tasks them for solutions,’ ‘Plateau Speaker laments death of Dantong, Fulani’ and ‘Gunmen fire rocket in Bukuru, kill 10-year-old child.’ The last headline news report deserves some attention. The headline is highly hyperbolised especially with the choice of ‘rocket’ as opposed to an ordinary gun fired and its alleged victim was a 10-year-old child. Overall, *The Sunday/Nigeria Standard* reports indicate the use of exaggeration and rhetoric.

#### **5.5.4 Stereotypes/Labelling**

Use of negative stereotypes/divisive ethnic frames was noticed in the coverage of the conflict by *The Nigeria Standard* newspapers. Often the labelling of a group using negative frames has served to aggravate the conflict. For example, *The Nigeria Standard* of February, Wednesday 3, 2010 published a report ‘The plot thickens against Plateau.’ In this report by Timothy Alaba, he alleged that the Hausa/Fulani were canvassing for the imposition of a state of emergency in Plateau State. Some elements of the Hausa/Fulani, such as Kanti Bello were the arrow heads of this plot at the National Assembly in Abuja.

Alaba claimed that even the head of the Muslim Ummah (community) in Nigeria, the Sultan of Sokoto, Muhammadu Sa’ad Abubakar (a Fulani), labelled the killings of some Hausa/Fulani in Plateau State on January 17, 2010 were as an act of ‘genocide.’ The alleged reference by Sultan Abubakar that the killings of some Hausa/Fulani in Plateau State as ‘genocide’ is another example of hyperbole. This is because, as already argued, and is not every act of killing that is genocide, as previously explained. For killings to be classified as genocide, in international law, it must be directed at national group as an entity (Schabas, 2000). In the article, there were other uses of negative/divisive stereotypes by Alaba, such as ‘Hausa/Fulani settlers,’ ‘indigene/settlers.

In *The Sunday Standard* of March 7, 2020 entitled ‘Sama’ila Mohammed’s indigene/settler bill,’ the writer, Jacob Adamu took Sama’ila Mohammed (a member of the National Assembly) to task on the ‘indigene/settler bill’ he sponsored aimed at recognising the indigene ship of the Hausa/Fulani in Plateau State. Although the issue that Adamu raises here was between Plateau indigenous ethnic communities (see Figures 12 & 13) and the Hausa/Fulani, the reporter, however, cites examples where some non-Hausa/Fulani ethnic group who live in Hausa/Fulani states have not been recognised as indigenes. For example, Adamu asks:

Have Igbo, Yoruba and other non- Hausa/Fulani ethnic groups who are believed to have founded and developed Sabon Gari, Kano, among other cities in the north [...] been recognised as indigenes? (Adamu, 2010d, p. 22)

By raising this, Adamu, cleverly tried to find justification for the alleged non-recognition of the Hausa/Fulani group as ‘bona fide’ indigenes of Plateau State. In other words, Adamu’s argument is that, since other ethnic communities, such as Igbo, Yoruba and others founded Sabon Gari, Kano (the heartland of the Hausa and the economic capital of northern Nigeria) are not recognised as indigenes of Kano State, why should Plateau State recognise the Hausa/Fulani as indigenes of their own state?

Furthermore, Adamu alleged that:

Wherever the Hausa/Fulani are found outside their homeland in northern Nigeria, they must cause conflict with their host communities in search of power, especially when they are resisted. They are, no doubt, the problem of Nigeria today because of their desire for power and religious fanaticism which is also linked with global terrorism (Adamu, 2010d, p. 22).

The above quote recalls Van Dijk’s (2001) discursive strategy of ‘positive self-presentation and negative other presentation, in which our good things and their bad things are highlighted’ (‘they must cause conflict with their host communities’).

Again, the editorial of *The Nigeria Standard* of Wednesday, March 17, 2010 entitled ‘Front-Page Comment: Arrest Saleh Bayari now’ continues with the use of divisive ethnic frames, such as the ‘indigene/settler.’ *The Nigeria Standard* accused Bayari (who claims to be an indigene of Plateau State) of trying to justify the killings that took place at Dogo Na Hauwa and the surrounding villages thus:

We fail to see or understand why Saleh Bayari who claims to be an indigene of Plateau State [...] should connive with outsiders to wreak such untold havoc on his fellow Plateau people? (Editorial, 2010).

This quotation suggests polarisation (‘outsiders’) and the use of satire (‘his fellow Plateau people’).

In *The Sunday Standard* of July 15, 2012, with the headline ‘Who’s after the soul of Plateau State?’ Katdapba Gobum writes against the backdrop of the killings at Gashish District of Barkin Ladi and Riyom local government areas. This title suggests the use of Topics and Global Meanings as well as Metaphor of a human being (‘the soul of Plateau State’). The reporter seemed particularly interested in where the attacks took place and its significance:



The attack occurred in a region of Nigeria's Middle Belt where the country's mostly Hausa/Fulani north (who are largely Muslims) meets its southern ethnic groups (who are largely Christians) (Gobum, 2012, p. 8 & 9).

The quote resonates with Van Dijk's (2001) use of polarisation. Gobum's report emphasizes the polarisation between the people of the Middle Belt and the core north which helps construct a biased model as part of the semantic account of how sometimes ideological discourse constitutes 'us' and 'them.'

### **5.5.5 Pursuit of Dialogue-Solution-Peace**

While Plateau State was enmeshed in this violent episode of conflict, there were calls by the federal and state governments, ethnic and religious bodies, groups and organisations, as well as individuals, for the cessation of fire to find possible solutions to the problem.

*The Sunday Standard* of January 31, 2010 published the address by the Plateau State governor, Jonah David Jang to its citizens calling on them to sheath their swords and embrace peace. The newspaper report titled 'Govt. calls for reconciliation among Plateau citizens.' Governor Jang addresses the citizens of the state thus:

My dear citizens, at this hour of hurt and despair, it is human to start trading blames and making excuses. This will in no way solve our situation. As humans, too, we are likely to be inflamed with hatred and bitterness. Also, this will do us no good as individuals and as a state (Lar, 2010a, p. 16).

Still, on the same day, the paper published another report entitled 'Govt calls for reconciliation among Plateau citizens' by Israel Lar. The report was a meeting of eminent sons of the state who met to brainstorm on the path to peace through reconciliation. CDA is interested in how a meeting can promote social inequality in the society. Viewed from this perspective, one notices from the roll call of those invited to the meeting are exclusively men (Dr Yakubu Gowon, Solomon Daushep Lar, Yahaya Kwande, Jounh Wash Pam, Joshua Dariye, John Shagaya, Bitrus Samuel Atukum, Joshua Dogon Yaro, Fidelis Tapgun and Damishi Sango), except for Ngo Hannatu Chollom. By this poor representation of women in such an important meeting, presupposes a male-dominated society (Plateau) that does not give much premium to the contributions of women, even in the search for peace.

Similarly, *The Nigeria Standard* of Wednesday, March 24, 2010 published a front-page cover story of Pope Benedict XVI's appeal for forgiveness by Randong (2010b); and on Wednesday, April 7, 2010 reported Archbishop Rufus Ositelu of Aladura worldwide and Bishop of the

Brotherhood of the Cross and Star world headquarters, Calabar, Professor David Kefin by Randong (2010a) who called for forgiveness and those responsible for the conflict in Plateau State be brought to book. Considering the profiles of these personalities that appealed for forgiveness and reconciliation, it shows that the Plateau State conflict had caught global attention.

*The Nigeria Standard* devoted much space for people to air their views on finding solutions to the conflict, however, one notices another omission in the paper's report of Wednesday, April 14, 2010 with the title 'Gbong Gwom Sues for peaceful co-existence.' *The Nigeria Standard* reported Gbong Gwom Jos', Da Jacob Gyang Buba's (the paramount chief of Jos and leader of the Berom) address at the stakeholders' meeting. One had expected *The Nigeria Standard* to also report the address (speech) of the leader of the Hausa/Fulani to balance its story. But nothing like that was reported in the paper; this could mean one of two things: either the leader of the Hausa/Fulani was not present at the 'Leaders of Thought' meeting or his speech was not reported. Critics of *The Nigeria Standard* would accuse it of bias, because even if the leader of the Hausa/Fulani was not present at the meeting the paper should have indicated so.

## **5. 6 Key Findings**

This chapter has mapped out and analysed the texts of the two chosen newspapers, namely, *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*, and in accord with the guide to doing Foucauldian genealogical discourse analysis within the period under review (2010-2012). Based on this, therefore, Van Dijk's (2001) discourse-cognition-society triangle methodological framework was used to deconstruct the news reports of the two newspapers on the conflict through the following steps in textual analysis: semantic structures (topics and macro propositions; analysis of local meanings-implications, presuppositions, allusions, nominalisation, vagueness, omissions and polarisations are especially interesting; analysis of 'subtle' formal structures; analysis of global and local discourse forms and formats; analysis of specific linguistic realisations, such as hyperboles, litotes and context. The content analysis of the two newspapers has made the following key findings:

(a) The reports of the two newspapers revealed the Middle Belt (Plateau State ethnic groups) and the core north (Hausa/Fulani) dichotomy. The patterns of media coverage of issues, especially conflict and indeed the Nigerian media system's bias patterns of news coverage reflects the way the country was conceived by the British colonial government, that is, the ethno-regional divides. This is because the colonial administration's policies, such as the final

amalgamation of 1914 which allegedly laid the foundation for the ethnic divisions and the press became enmeshed in as detailed in chapter two.

(b) Both newspapers (*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*) were used instrumentally in the conflict, through the activities of reporters and editors in creating: editorials, opinion columns, news reports, articles and feature writings. What constitutes news is a process of gathering, writing, editing, producing and circulating same by reporters and editors who have their interests and are part of the news organisation, who not only have beliefs and values, but have deeply entrenched ethnic affiliations with their communities, particularly the journalists of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* newspapers. It is therefore difficult (but not impossible) to escape these boundaries (Jamieson & Campbell, 1982).

(c) The use of negative stereotypical frames, such as ‘sons of the soil’, ‘militia’, ‘mercenaries’, ‘terrorists’, ‘indigene/settlers,’ served to stratify and accentuate divisions in communities across the state. Again, the use of such negative epithets by journalists confirmed the polarisation of the Plateau society along ethnic lines. Those negatives stereotypes were not arbitrarily selected but were part of a conscious and unconscious decisions and judgements meant to achieve an agenda(s). To achieve their agenda(s) as shown in chapter three, journalists used various discursive strategies, especially news framing to achieve their objectives.

(d) Ownerships and control of both papers (*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*) were predicated on ethnicity; hence reporters and editors could not reflect facts accurately in their reports, because they saw themselves as representing their ethnic communities as opposed to working for the public interest. Herman and Chomsky (1994) strongly argued that ownership is an important factor in deciding the type and quality of news that news organisations produced, as explained in chapter two. Therefore, the issue of ownership and control of newspapers in Nigeria is an important one because they are used as instruments of propaganda and manipulation, which is a major concern for Herman and Chomsky in their propaganda model.

(e) Reporters,’ editors’ and publishers’ ethnic interests appeared to have been more important than the country’s corporate interest. The analysis of the reports of the two newspapers clearly suggests that public interest was not their major preoccupations, rather, the interest of their proprietors of their news organisations and ethnic communities. Based on the ethics of journalism, journalists’ responsibility is principally to the news audience, not to the publisher or ethnic communities. However, the literature (in chapter two) affirmed that while newspapers

in general are supposed to serve the public good, most newspapers, especially the government-owned serves the interest of the government and those elite connected to those at the corridors of power (Adesoji & Hahn, 2011).

(f) Propaganda was used by both newspapers as a strategy to rally support of the ethnic communities in conflict. Chapter two documented how the three regions (north, east and west) rushed to set up newspapers as means to articulate their ethnic and regional interests and how the northern region felt cheated. Thus, this led to the setting of *The New Nigerian* newspaper by the northern regional government so that it would not lose the propaganda war being championed against the north by the press of the Lagos-Ibadan axis.

These key findings are aimed at achieving the thesis' aim and objectives, and to answer the research questions of this enquiry on the influence of ethnicity in newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict in north-central Nigeria. These findings are used to complement, triangulate and reinforce the evidence from it in the discussion chapter. It is imperative for this researcher to share first-hand from conflict reporters and editors of the two chosen newspapers as content creators/developers by way of analysis and presentation of semi-structured interview data which is elaborately discussed in the next chapter.



Figure 11: *Picture of some of Plateau State's indigenes at a conflict scene (www.crisisgroup.org).*



Figure 12: *Picture of some of Plateau State's indigenes* ([www.viewpoint.com](http://www.viewpoint.com)).

## Chapter Six: Analysis and Presentation of Semi-Structured Interview Data

It is difficult to Think of a more Important Institution in our Democratic Society than the News Media.

Donald McDonald

### 6. 1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is the analysis of the rich primary data generated from fieldwork using the semi-structured in-depth interviews with key reporters and editors of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* newspapers, as well as selected ethnic representatives of the communities in conflict. The goal here was to gain an understanding of how ethnicity influenced the newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict in north-central Nigeria. It analyses the data generated using the Nvivo computer software to create Word Clouds and Trees. These Word Clouds and Trees are used as guide by this researcher for deploying the interview questions to answer the three research questions. Agenda setting, news framing and human rights orientated journalism are used as conceptual analytical frameworks to analyse the data. Altogether, there were fifteen respondents: six reporters, four editors, representing the two newspapers that have been purposively chosen (*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*), and five ethnic leaders. The interview questions were raised based on the extant research literature. Thus, the question which this thesis seeks to provide answer to is to what extent did ethnicity as a factor in the Plateau State conflict influenced newspaper journalists of the two chosen papers' coverage of the conflict? And how the chapter will help facilitate an understanding of the aim and objectives of the study.

### 6.2 RQ 1: In What Ways has Ethnicity been Manifested in Newspaper Coverage of the Plateau State Conflict?

What this research question sought to find out was the extent to which ethnicity had manifested in the newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict. This was because ethnicity had become

somewhat engrained in the Nigerian psyche to the extent that it influences and determines certain outcomes, such as jobs, admissions into schools, elections, among others (Shah & Thornton, 2003; Yusha'u, 2015) . In view of this, the researcher was also keen to know how the press is animated by ethnic ideology in Plateau State. It was based on this that the interview question 4 was raised to answer research question one.

### **6.3.1 Ownership Influence**

Using the Nvivo computer software, the researcher selected word search on the Nvivo menu and fed in the following words/phrases, which were picked from the raft of interview respondents, out of which word cloud and tree were produced: freehand, leverage, peoples' newspaper, external manipulation, pressure from government, mantra, interest, ethnic minority, ownership, query, editorial independence, propaganda, employer, Hausa/Fulani, self-censorship, conflict, sensationalism and influence. Looking at the results of the Nvivo word search, as contained in the Word Cloud in Figure 15, it showed the dominance of such words as: report, government, people, editor, newspaper, published, and Muslims. At a glance, these words showed the people and institutions that wielded strong influence on news construction. The Word Cloud showed a cluster of variables, as already indicated above, that constituted the ownership pattern. All these together showed some of the interests and inclinations in the newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict and how these shaped and influenced the news that were produced and consumed by readers.





The Word Tree in Figure 16 highlighted some of the ways in which the owners of newspaper organisations exacted strong influence on their newspapers. For example, some quotes from the Word Tree above confirmed this assertion thus:

- ‘journalists must conform to the mantra of the government, sometimes not directly but through supporters’ (IR2).

- ‘the state government succeeds in manipulating the editorial’ (IR2).

Out of the 10 respondents (IRs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10), only IR7 had a contrary view, regarding the ownership influence and control of the newspapers. All the other respondents agreed that ownership strongly influenced the newspapers organisations they worked for was a strong one. This, therefore, described the kind of media environment in which these reporters work. From these myriads of views expressed by the respondents on the Word Tree in Figure 15 above, it suggests that the ownership of both *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* selected for this study were driven by ethnic interests. For example, a veteran chief editor of one of the two newspapers, IR2, explained that:

The Plateau State government believed that the aggression was externally manipulated [...] and the state was being invaded by aggressors who were external. There was pressure on our newspaper to conform to the mantra of the government.

Similarly, IR5 argued that:

The issue of ownership and control of the media has been a contentious one. The fact is that as a journalist, one is conscious of the interest of his employer [...], if I knew that by reporting a news story it will be injurious to my employer; I will play it down.

The views expressed by these two interview respondents were further corroborated by the following respondents:

The *Nigeria Standard* newspaper was set up to represent the interests of the indigenous ethnic communities (IEL1).

If the editorial policy of the other newspaper (*Daily Trust*) was that certain interests must be reflected, or if the reporter knew that the managing director was Hausa/Fulani and was motivated based on that to protect the interest of the managing director’s ethnic group (Hausa/Fulani), by portraying them in a positive light, you could not blame him (IEL2).

From these range of opinions of the above respondents, it shows that ethnicity played a part in the coverage of the Plateau State conflict. Yusha'u (2015) and Adedeji (2009) supported the strong ethnic influence on the media in Nigeria, especially the press when they argued that even the dominant newspapers in the country were not insulated from the ethnic malaise. The response of IEL2 earlier to the effect that ethnicity might have been an editorial policy of some newspapers is disturbing, because as Arifalo (2001) averred, editorial today constitutes the live media war. IEL4's views on the manifestation of ethnicity as the editorial policies of some newspapers, such as *The Nigeria Standard*, suggested endorsement when he said: 'I am happy with the newspaper report.' The underlying reason behind this respondent's tacit support for *The Nigeria Standard's* report could be because the newspaper represented the interest of his ethnic community, which was a party in the conflict. The commitment of both the reporters, and some of the ethnic leaders, interviewed, to their ethnic affiliations to the neglect of the danger it portended to Plateau State helped to fuel the conflict. This approach to news coverage, goes against Shaw's (2012) position on justice for all sides in a conflict.

The ownership and control influence of the papers was strong as the respondents concurred (IELs 1 and 2), although sometimes this influence was subtle, as IR9 believed: 'Its influence may not be direct [...], sometimes when I sent my report to my editors, it is not published.' The reality was that no matter how objectively a journalist reports on a conflict, the editors, in the final analysis, are the ones that would decide on what gets published and what does not. While it may be true, from the views expressed by the interview respondents, that they never received directives from their editors or publishers to slant a story, it belongs to the owners, whose interest the editors represent, to edit the reports they receive from the field. Furthermore, because editors are known to have been queried and some have even lost their jobs because they disagreed with the proprietor (Okwuchukwu, 2014), IR3 affirmed that: 'Some editors of the newspaper were queried for not publishing some reports issued by the owner.' Omenugha, Uzuegbunam, and Omenugha (2013) even painted a direr picture of the ownership and control pattern when they noted thus: media ownership and control confer the power of the ultimate gatekeeper since all the other gatekeepers are answerable to him. They further argued that the owner of the media organisation can hire and fire reporters and editors with impunity. This is a source of what is known as ownership pressure in media parlance today. This situation was common, especially in the post-independence era where most of the newspapers were owned and controlled by either the regional or central government, because groups or individuals did not possess the economic resources to own a newspaper organisation (Mgbejume, 1991). *The*

*Nigeria Standard*, for example, is owned and operated by the Plateau State government, on behalf of its citizens (Goyol, 1999). Because it is owned and controlled by the Plateau State government, it is expected to protect the interest of the government even when that conflicts with public interest (IR2 & IR4). The *Daily Trust*, on the other hand, is owned by a group of Hausa/Fulani (Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Yusha'u, 2015). However, both the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard* had a common agenda which is the protection of the interests of their ethnic communities (Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Sambe, 2008).

The above quote by IR3 reflected the kind of dilemma journalists faced in Plateau State regarding the ownership influence and control of the newspapers. It also indicated that in a society divided along ethnic line, it was not surprising that ethnic prejudices have become the criteria for determining the kind of news report that were published. Being a journalist in this kind of environment, where job security is not guaranteed, as IR3 claimed, working against a publisher's interests was a risky proposition. This was also the view of Okwuchukwu (2014) who contended that media owners usually have diverse interests (ranging from political, social, economic to business) and they would naturally expect those working in their media organisation to understand the need to protect them. The fear of such journalists that they will join the growing ranks of the unemployed if they went against their publishers' interest explained why they would slant their stories. It is also the reason why journalists who want to retain their job would take the middle course. Only few journalists, such as IR10, would consider resignation, as he stated, thus: 'I had felt like resigning on several occasions.' The notion that the interest of the employer or publisher must be protected at all cost, even against public interest, is a common one. This is because it highlights the ethno-centric orientation of the Nigerian press (Okidu, 2011), and as it was evidently affirmed by respondent IEL2: 'The Nigerian society is run on three very important principles: Ethnicity, religion and regionalism.'

From the foregoing, this researcher has been able to establish one of the key ways in which ethnicity has manifested in the newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict. The strong ownership and control influence of the newspapers, as expressed by the interview participants, explain why *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* are oriented toward the promotion and protection of the ethnic interests of their communities as opposed to the public interest (Goyol, 1999; Yusha'u, 2012).



The Word Cloud in Figure 17 above emphasised the factors that influenced journalists’ coverage of the Plateau State conflict (groups, Fulani, Hausa, Plateau State government, Church, Berom, among others). Although the Word Cloud, clearly, showed that ethnicity was the dominant influencing factor, it operated through other agencies, such as the ones listed above.

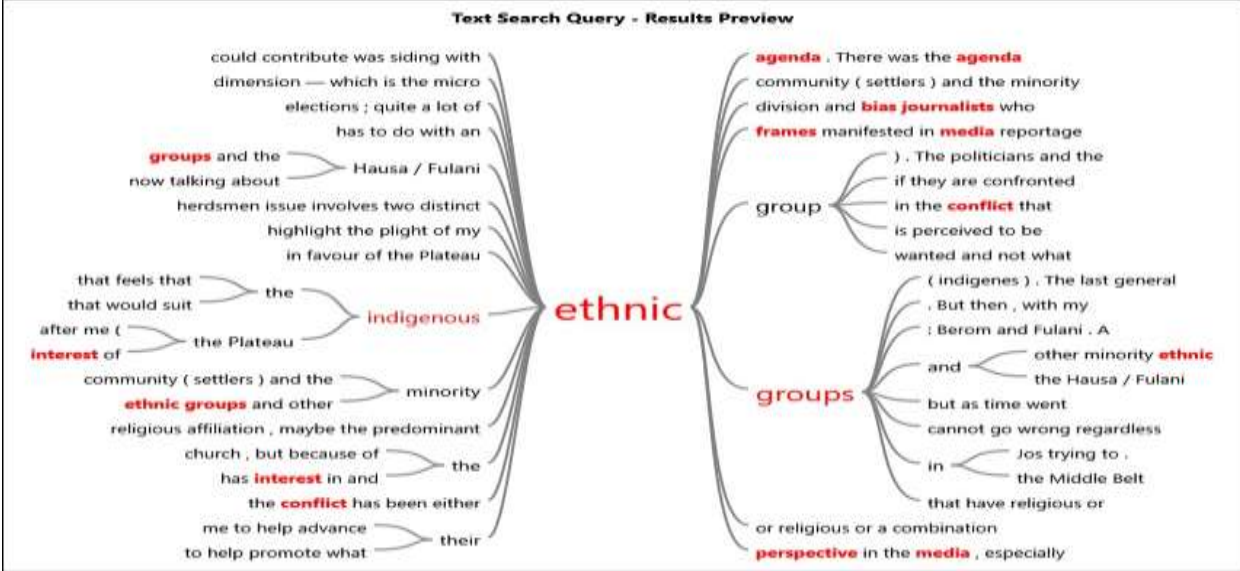


Figure 16: Word Tree showing Ways in which Ethnicity Influenced Journalists' Coverage of the Plateau State's Conflict (Researcher).

A look at the Word Tree in Figure 18 above points to some of the ways in which ethnicity influenced journalism coverage of the Plateau State conflict, such as divisions and bias journalists, ethnic or religious or groups or a combination of all. All the reporters agreed in saying that ethnicity was a major influence in the coverage of the conflict. Since ethnicity appears to be a strong factor in the Plateau State conflict, the researcher’s interest was to know the extent to which reporters were influenced by their ethnic affiliations. Hence, the researcher deliberately raised the above question to elicit from the reporters how their ethnicities influenced their reporting decisions. Although the question brought divergent opinions among the conflict journalists interviewed, some of them were of the view that because the headquarters of their newspaper was somewhat far from the scene of the conflict and their primary constituency was the whole of northern Nigeria they were not very much influenced

by the ethnic factor, and reported more of the Hausa/Fulani majority ethnic group as captured in this quote:

Our newspaper's headquarters is in Abuja. We sell our newspapers in the whole of the north; therefore, a lot of the stories must do with the north [...] and they are mainly to do with the Hausa/Fulani [...], that is, our catchment area regarding ethnicity, maybe in the pejorative form (IR7).

What IR7 implied by his statement above was that their newspaper headquarters was far from the scene of conflict by reasons of distance (Plateau State-Abuja) but what he seemed to have forgotten was that being far from the scene of conflict does not take away the fact that the conflict involved the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group and the owners of the paper were Hausa/Fulani with possible interest in the conflict. At any rate, Abuja is just about 300 kilometres away from Plateau State. Another reporter, IR1 seemed to be of the same view as IR7, when he stated thus:

I cannot say for sure that ethnicity has manifested in the newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict. However, I would agree to some extent that there were certain events that some reporters did not cover simply because certain ethnic groups were involved [...]. For me it said a lot, because reporters chose certain stories, events, and personalities involved.

Although IR1 claimed that some reporters did not cover certain events and personalities, but the decision to exclude such news stories was, in the first instance, an indication of the influence of ethnicity, given the context of the conflict. This decision to exclude certain news stories confirmed the notion that frames are hardly value free; they are often susceptible to manipulation by the editors who represent the interest of an ethnic power bloc in the conflict (Melki, 2014). This shows news framing influence (emphasizing an aspect of a story and deemphasizing the other). However, other interview respondents such as IR8 thought he was doing a patriotic duty to his Hausa/Fulani ethnic group by slanting his report toward his Hausa/Fulani compatriots, not minding whether they were the aggressors, when he declared as follows:

When I started work as a journalist I enjoyed reporting on my Hausa/Fulani community. I reported them from a victim perspective. But as I mature in the profession, I began to change course by refraining from writing reports that were biased. I also reasoned that writing in the way I did was only going to make matters worse!

It is important to note that the above quote was, by no means, an isolated case because that appeared to be quite common among conflict journalists. Reporters during the Plateau State

conflict hardly saw themselves as working for the common good, rather they saw themselves as journalists who have a patriotic duty to perform, that is, to promote and protect the interests of their ethnic groups even if they were the aggressors. This view resonated with the views of IR5 who explained that:

Initially, when I started covering the conflict I was biased in my report in favour of the Plateau ethnic communities, but as time went by and the conflict was prolonged I thought it was necessary to work towards a solution. I allowed the facts to speak for themselves so that an enduring solution could be found.

IR5's view like those of other respondents (IRs 4, 7, & 8) illustrated how sometimes conflict journalists, either do not know the implications or are deliberate about what their reportage could cause. Although this journalist's change of heart is commendable, it is imperative to note that a conflict that has either been ignited or escalated through such irresponsible and reckless reporting cannot just stop because the reporter had thought the better of it and was remorseful. What journalists in general, and conflict journalists need to know, is that respect and integrity for a news reporter is contingent upon the accuracy and completeness of the news story than on a skewed ethnic interest (Sambe, 2008; Strentz, 1989). This style of reporting is inconsistent with the social responsibility of the media, because journalist' report of a conflict is supposed to be at the service of the common good of the society in general and not just on narrow ethnic interest (Ojo, 2013). The reporter that is wholly or partly uncritical of some of the ills of society because of ethnic interests, as some of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* were, is not worthy of the name.

#### **6.11.2 Are you Satisfied with the Current State of Journalism Practice in Platea State, if not, what Recommendations would you Proffer toward Better Practice?**

Using the Nvivo software the researcher searched for the following keywords: ethnicity, influence, divisions, ethnic frames, indigenous ethnic groups, Hausa/Fulani, media war, taking side, conflict, interest blocs ethnic agenda, headline news. The search produced the following outcomes on both the word cloud and tree: ethnicity, Plateau group, Fulani, church influence suicide bomber, and Hausa. At a glance, one immediately gets the sense of the variables that influenced journalism practice in Plateau State. The researcher found it rather odd that all the interview respondents returned the same verdict on the effect ethnicity had on journalism practice. They tended to contradict their earlier assertions that ethnicity did not influence their reports.

To reinforce their claims, the interview participants gave some instances. For example, IR6, declared that:

Ethnicity has heavily influenced journalism practice, because it became more of a media war during the Plateau State conflict. Journalists were beginning to think that the only way they could contribute was by siding with their ethnic communities [...] that have cultural affinity with them.

Similarly, IR2 explained thus:

Ethnicity influenced our practice quite a lot. It has at the macro and micro levels. At the macro level because we are talking about the Hausa/Fulani ethnic community (settlers) and the minority ethnic groups (the indigenes). The last general elections brought in a more dangerous dimension, which is the micro ethnic perspective in the media [...]. There were quite a lot of divisions in the coverage of the last general elections; quite a lot of ethnic frames manifested in media reportage of the elections, especially as it concerned the candidates themselves.

If one was in doubt and needed further confirmation of how some newspapers were established primarily to champion ethnic interests, IR3 provided it when he asserted that:

[...] when the then governor of Plateau State, Joseph Dechi Gomwalk set up *The Nigeria Standard*, it was, essentially to project the interest of the Plateau ethnic communities and other minority ethnic groups in the Middle Belt against the Hausa/Fulani majority group domination of *The New Nigerian* newspaper, which was a joint venture of the northern governors of which Plateau State was one.

Although the various ethnic communities that both *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* newspapers represented could justify the historical circumstances that led to their establishments, in the first place, it is doubtful if they could in the same vein defend the abuses and legacy of ethnic bigotry of which the present generation of citizens must grapple with. This ethnic influence, therefore, goes against social capital, which seeks to promote, among other things, the existence of a certain body of values shared among members of a community that engender cooperation among them (Kukah, 1999). Furthermore, the pattern of the newspaper coverage highlighted the newspapers' tendencies to focus attention on ethnic conflict than on some of the wholesome values that could promote nation-building, such as economic partnership, interethnic marriage, cultural and sports festivals (Aapengnuo, 2010; Shah & Thornton, 2003). Focusing almost exclusively on the ethnic dimension of the conflict, as the respondents affirmed to the exclusion of other variables, such as dialogue and peace it would only affirm the danger of a single narrative.



The above statements described how ethnicity had come characterise journalism practice in Plateau State. The types of frames constructed by the newspapers were coloured in ethnic frames, as this respondent (IR9) explained:

[...] the farmers/Fulani herdsmen issue involved two distinct ethnic groups (Berom and Fulani). A Berom reporter, for example, would not report that some Berom are cattle rustlers. A Fulani reporter would not also report that some Fulani are attacking communities. We have had situations when some of our colleagues wrote reports without verifying from the security agencies and by so doing downplayed one side in the conflict and amplified the other. When it involved an ethnic group in the conflict that the newspaper had interest in and the ethnic group was perceived to be the aggressor, you get headline news, such as, 'unknown gunmen attack a community.' [...] where the newspaper has no interest, it may read, 'Fulani attack kill scores of people.'

This above quote underscores the ethnic schism that the conflict has created, and unfortunately, this has become one of the issues with journalism practice in Plateau State today. The art of downplaying an aspect of one's report in a conflict and amplifying the other clearly squares up with Entman's (1993) notion of news framing, which is a situation when one selects some aspects of a perceived reality and highlights to the exclusion of the other piece of information. What are important to look out for in media frames is the foregrounding, meaning, the values and issues that are organised in the text. Although the finger of blame was often pointed at the media in conflict situations, unfortunately, most members of the public are often oblivious of the undercurrents and the undue pressure which some ethnic power blocs exact on journalists. This was the predicament of IR10 and he expressed his frustration thus:

[...] I was under enormous pressure from [...] interest groups to support their agenda and their agenda was for me to help promote what their ethnic groups wanted and not what was good for the society. The pressure was on me to help advance their ethnic agenda. There was the agenda that feels that the indigenous ethnic groups cannot go wrong, regardless, of the number of Hausa/Fulani killed. Much as they may not come out to say I should kill the story, they would, nonetheless expect that I water down the report. Then, there was the Hausa/Fulani pressure group that believed since the newspaper I work for is owned by a group of Hausa/Fulani, I should protect their agenda, not minding that I am not Hausa/Fulani.

This scenario is, by no means, an isolated case. However, the claims of respondent 10, as expressed above, shows how ethnic interest communities sometimes try to use the media to advance their agenda during conflict, but what the respondent did not highlight was that

sometimes, too, journalists were not only willing, but have taken up such initiatives even when unsolicited. This was the opinion of IR4 when he expressed as follows:

At the level of theory journalists are supposed to be guided by the ethics of their profession, however, looking at it from the point of view of practice that is not the case. I for one would not hesitate to help highlight the plight of my ethnic group if they are confronted with some challenges that requires me to.

On the surface, the statement of IR4 did not to contravene any journalistic ethics but reading between the lines one could see that there was more to the statement than meets the eye. There was nothing wrong in highlighting the plight of one's ethnic community so long as it was within the established norms of journalism. But the underlying reason of the respondent was that he saw it as a duty to use his privileged position as a journalist to promote the interests of his ethnic community in a situation of conflict, even if those interests conflicted with the ethics of journalism. Based on the foregoing, the unrelenting reports in both *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*, speak to a prevailing journalistic bias toward conflict in coverage of ethnic social relations (Shah & Thornton, 2003). It is therefore pertinent for reporters and editors of newspapers to take into cognisance the irreparable harm they do to society by the kind of frames they manufacture. There is need for them to exercise a high degree of caution in the kind of frames reporters construct. Because as Best (2007) posited, the newspaper is a pendulum that can swing in the direction of peace if it selects to, but it can also reverse in the direction that promotes conflict if it chooses to. This is even much more so because of the nature of the conflict environment (Plateau State), which has had relative long history of ethnic-based conflict (Ishaku, 2012; Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010). This point was aptly captured by Kukah (1999) when he observed that probably next to God is the newspaper that legitimises what Nigerians consider to be the truth, in any given situation. Kukah opined that Nigerians, irrespective of whether illiterate or educated, would say a newspaper or radio or television said it. With this climate of gullibility, reporters need to be cautious in their news production aware of the ethnically charged conflict environment, such as Plateau State, that what comes out of the newspaper or media is taken as the 'Gospel truth.'

## 6.5 RQ 3: What are the Practice-based Implications of the Coverage of the Plateau State Conflict from an Ethnic Perspective?

### 6.5.1: What has been your Experience of Reporting the Plateau State Conflict?

The researcher asked the interview respondents what had been their experiences in covering the conflict? The researcher understood their experiences would be diverse because of their ethnicities, interests, organisations, among others. Furthermore, the researcher wanted to also ascertain whether those experiences shaped and influenced their reportage as well as the possible lessons that could be learned. Indeed, as it did turn out, their experiences of covering the Plateau State conflict were diverse as they were wide-ranging. For example, IR8's personal experience was intriguing as he recounted thus:

My experience as a correspondent covering the Plateau State conflict is two pronged: Being a Hausa and a Fulani comes with certain sensitivity as a journalist. After one of the bomb blasts in Jos City, I went immediately to Plateau Hospital where both the injured and he corpses were taken to. Although I was wearing a shirt that ordinarily did not depict my ethnicity, a nurse at the hospital came over to me and said the atmosphere was tense, she advised me to leave the hospital at once. By merely looking at me she could tell that I was not a native, but a Hausa man based on my mode of dressing.

The experience of the above reporter tells the story of a divided city. This reporter had gone to the hospital to investigate and report what happened, and to hear from some of the victims of the bomb blasts but could not do his job because his ethnicity (a Hausa/Fulani). The experience of this respondent did not just end at the hospital because, as he said:

After leaving the hospital, we needed to withdraw some money and stopped at a cash machine. In the process of trying to withdraw some money, my colleague had issues with her bank card and called on me in Hausa and said: *Don Allah, dubo mini jaka akwai dayan ATM card dina a ciki* (please, check inside m handbag I have another ATM card, the one I am using is acting up). I replied her: *Zo ki duba jakan ki, bana bude jankan mata* (you come and look for it yourself; I don't pry into women's bag). What we said in Hausa language immediately attracted some hoodlums and one of them shouted *enemy!* When I heard this, I immediately made a sign to my colleague to stop the cash withdrawal and drove out of the area at once.

Participant 8's experiences epitomised the inherent danger involved in not just covering the conflict, but also highlights the kind of mutual suspicion and distrust that exist when a society is sharply divided along ethnic lines. It is this type of situation that was responsible for newspaper organisations sending more than one reporter or correspondent to a conflict zone.

In selecting those reporters and correspondents to be sent, their ethnicities and religions are also considered. Otherwise, the need to have access to conflict actors significant to the story may be hampered (Richardson, 2007). This is important because, as one of the respondents (IR2) and a senior newspaper source of one of the newspapers explained:

You know, in this part of the country, most issues are analysed from the perspective of ethnicity. Issues, especially concerning conflict are always examined from the prism of ethnicity and religion. In Plateau State, you have sometimes the interplay of both because in the northern part of the country you find out ethnic issues sometime interface with religious issues because the major ethnic group in the north in the so-called Hausa/Fulani who are predominantly Muslims. The other smaller ethnic communities on the Plateau are predominantly Christians.

This interface between ethnicity and religion was what played out in the situation described above, because the reporter was a Hausa/Fulani (his father is Hausa and his mother is Fulani) and he is a Muslim by religion. Whether the nurse at Plateau Hospital cautioned the reporter because of his ethnicity or religion or both is an unanswered question. Or, indeed, whether the situation at the cash machines where some hoodlums wanted to attack him, and his colleague was for the same reason one can only infer. Whatever it is, the above scenarios underlined the prism from which people see or analyse issues, particularly in Plateau State.

Since it has been established earlier that Plateau State is a miniature Nigeria, it is home to over 370 ethnic groups (Alubo, 2006), which reflects the diverse and complex ethnic configuration of the country, it is easy to see why the Nigerian elite have routinely exploited such issues as ethnicity and religion to their advantage (Kukah, 1993; Usman, 1987). Because ethnicity is such an emotive issue and does appeal to the sensibilities of people and in order for the political elite to hide their incompetence, greed and failure (Kukah, 2000) they manipulate these differences for their selfish gains. It is this manipulation that have compounded and made worse an already bad situation as expressed by this respondent:

My experiences of the conflict are many; the conflict had political undertone. The political elite manipulate ethnicity and religion to achieve their ends; pitching Plateau ethnic communities against the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group (IR5).

One would wonder what exactly was the selfish ends of this elite, which IR5 referred to in his statement that would make them pitch one ethnic group against another? The reason for such manipulations cannot be far-fetched, because as Kukah (2000, p. 130) has said, the failure of the ruling elite to deliver on important issues, such as a society rid of injustice, poverty and

exploitation and as a convenient way of diverting public attention from themselves, they create situations of conflicts. It is no wonder then, that the media, especially the, have keyed into to this kind of manipulative tendencies of the power elite as IR3 noted:

I must admit that on the issue of Plateau State conflict we have taken sides and the same is true of the other newspapers. Our newspaper took the side of the Plateau indigenous ethnic groups while the other newspaper misrepresented the conflict in Plateau State. For instance, a friend of mine who is a journalist with that other newspaper told me that news reports on the Plateau State conflict were doctored in their newsroom.

Taking sides by newspapers goes against the ethics of journalism (balance, objectivity, fairness, truth-telling, and fairness.). This manner of reporting conflict is an affront on the social responsibility of the media, which demands and requires the media to incorporate all viewpoints, to enable the members of the public reach rational decisions (Sambe, 2008). The slanted pattern of newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict, which was based on ethnicity, often left the public in no doubt as to the newspapers' limited ability to analyse issues and overall lack of balance in its coverage (Shah & Thornton, 2003). This type of news coverage violates human rights orientated journalism mission of global justice of Shaw (2012) Earlier, the researcher endeavoured to know the experiences of the interview participants in their duty of getting the public informed about the Plateau State conflict. Their diverse experiences were revealing as they brought to the fore the risks journalists are sometimes exposed to in covering conflicts, which most people either did not know or took for granted. It showed that aside from their experiences at the scene of conflict it also revealed what went on in the boardroom (doctoring of reports) as IR3 asserted.

#### **6.5.2: How Conscious are you as a Reporter Reporting Conflict?**

In framing this interview question, what the researcher wanted to know was the level of consciousness and sensitivity the interview participants exhibited in the discharge of their duties either as reporters or editors or both. Journalists are not supposed to be immersed in the situation they are reporting but exhibit some level of sensitivity because of the sensitive nature of the phenomenon being covered (conflict). Again, the conflict journalists' responses to the question were wide-ranging as has been their responses to previous questions. Whereas four of the respondents (IRs 7, 8, 9, & 10) claimed they were conscious of their reportage, the other four (IRs 1, 2, 3 & 5) were not so direct in their own responses. What this researcher could

understand from the participants' reactions was that some of the journalists, for some reasons, were conscious of the repercussions that could come because of their news reports:

[...] First, I have a responsibility towards contributing to the peace process in Plateau State. I always thought of the consequences of my report on the conflict situation. I had on many occasions killed my stories because if they were published they could have inflamed passions. Being a Hausa/Fulani man, I recall writing a story which the chairman of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Plateau State chapter, personally commended me on because there was a sharp division between the ethnic groups and even among journalists. [...] there was a story of some Fulani who connived with some Berom youth and were arrested for cattle rustling to cause trouble in some of the local government areas: Riyom, Barkin Ladi and Jos south. That was the story which earned me a commendation (IR8).

What the above quote has shown is a rare act of journalism in an ethnically, and racially divided state that even journalists themselves were not spared. The dominant narrative is for journalists to engage in partisanship as some of the respondents (IRs 3 and 4) have earlier conceded to doing. This rare feat of journalism, thankfully, is being learned by other journalists as well:

I was conscious of many things. First, I was guided by the ethics of journalism and our common humanity. I was also conscious of the fact that in any conflict human beings are affected: People displaced, and property destroyed. I was also conscious of my role as a journalist in exposing those conflicts, hoping that my report would bring about timely intervention. I was conscious, too that there were vested interests in the crisis. Take the Hausa/Fulani and Berom conflict, for example, if a community was attacked, houses burnt, many killed, dozens displaced, and so on, the person who narrated the story to you, clearly wanted you to report from the perspective of his or her ethnic community. If the victims were the indigenous ethnic groups they would say something to the effect that they were attacked by Fulani mercenaries. But, if on the other hand, the Fulani were at the receiving end, the Fulani would say they were attacked by Berom militia (IR10).

This quote foregrounded the dynamics and the intricate nature of reporting, especially in an ethnically polarised society like Plateau State. Nothing short of being conscious and sensitive could have enabled this participant to be cautious in reporting the conflict. The above statement also has implications for framing. Interview participant 10's quote suggested that victims on both sides of the conflict already had newspapers that represented their interests and that was why headline news would be framed, thus, 'Fulani mercenaries.' Mercenaries are those hired for money to carry out a mission. This feeds into the popular Plateau indigenous ethnic communities' narrative, that the Fulani always brought in mercenaries from outside Nigeria (Niger and Chad), to attack local Plateau ethnic communities. The framing by the newspaper

skewed towards the Fulani interests such as, 'Berom militia' is not surprising. The notion militia connotes military force. It is significant to situate this notion in its proper context. In Nigeria, the bulk of the military (over 80%) is from the central Nigerian area known as the Middle Belt, of which Plateau State is a part of. Plateau ethnic communities were known to have enlisted into the military in large numbers. It is therefore within this context that one would better understand the framing of 'Berom militia' and not 'Berom Mercenaries,' as used above (Kukah, 2000). Despite the newspaper interest, there appeared to be a genuine commitment by the respondents to work for peace through responsible journalism. Not only were participants (IRSs1, 8 and 10) as seen from the foregoing, working towards achieving peace, editors, too are on the forefront of this drive as well:

[...] as an editor, you get stories from your reporters and we query stories: We query every sentence, we query every paragraph, and we query even quotations. For instance, if you write a story to say '200 Berom youth have been killed by Hausa/Fulani,' that raises a whole lot of other questions: How did you get the figures? What was the source? Did you count the corpses, or did you get the figures from the spokesperson of the Berom? Was the entire population of that community up to 200? Is the information authoritative? (IR7).

IR7's views could be said to be in keeping with standard journalistic practice worldwide. Subjecting reports to critical review is imperative to avoid biases of any kind. Although it could be argued that, perhaps, this editor scrutinised reports that passed through him because he was not an interested party in the conflict, since he was not Hausa/Fulani (but Igala and an editor), even though he worked for their newspaper organisation, he has exhibited high journalistic professionalism. Although, the narrative thus far has revealed a heavy dose of ethnic biases by reporters, however, interview respondent 7's show of professionalism has revealed something fundamental in this whole process. It revealed that reporters or editors whose ethnic communities were not involved in the conflict tended to show a certain degree of objectivity and professionalism than those who's ethnic communities were engaged in the conflict.

Following in a similar pattern of ensuring standard journalism practice, IR1, a managing editor explained:

We had seminars, workshops, particularly for those of us who go out to cover conflict situations. I knew that if I brought my person into my report it will certainly destroy me. Whenever we went out I was conscious of what I observed, also, many as my reporter would do same, and we would compare notes. Since the correspondent's report would end up on my table I would know how to edit it. Our

reporters were trained to do the right thing and not to get sucked into the conflict regardless of whether they report for a Hausa/Fulani newspaper, or a Middle Belt newspaper or a southern newspaper. Those trainings helped us (IR1).

Although, the trainings, workshops, seminars, and so on, which IR1 stated above indicated that journalism practice in Plateau State was beginning to take a turn for the better, then he threw a spanner into the works:

However, some of the reporters were not helped by their trainings and I have reason to believe why those reporters were not helped by the training. Some of the reporters/editors had their opinions already about the conflict. There were reports that suggested correspondents did not write the reports. There were reports that it was the editor who thought he knew what was happening in Plateau State and reported, based on that.

IR1's claim is a sad commentary on journalism practice in Plateau State. This puts a dent on a profession that was beginning to reinvent itself by the consciousness and sensitivity with which most of the interview participants responded. Judging from the news frames used by journalists and the responses from the Interview Respondents, it is obvious that they (journalists) were not as they ought to be in the discharge of their job as reporters.

### **6.5.3: How Aware are you of the Possible Effects of your Reports/Articles on Readers?**

With the assistance of the Nvivo, the researcher searched for the word 'effects' on the Nvivo menu. The purpose of this was for the researcher to know if at all interview participants were aware of the possible effects of their reports on their large numbers of readers and consumers. The outcome of the search from the Word Tree (see Figure 19) showed that journalists were fully aware of the effects of their reports/articles on their readers. If conflict journalists were aware of the effects their news reports have on their readers, as shown on the Word Tree, this researcher could not but wonder why they still went ahead to produce the kinds of frames they did, such as 'Fulani mercenaries, Berom militia, and so on? If, again, the Word Tree was a true reflection of what conflict journalists did using news framing, it then confirmed the earlier held views of this researcher, that is, there was a correlation between the newspaper reports and the escalation of the Plateau State conflict. Out of the 10 respondents, 8 claimed they were fully aware of the effects of their write-ups on their readers (IRs 1-6; 9 and 10), one (IR7) was rather philosophical in his response, while IR8 claimed not to initially know about the extent of the effects of his news reports on his readers.



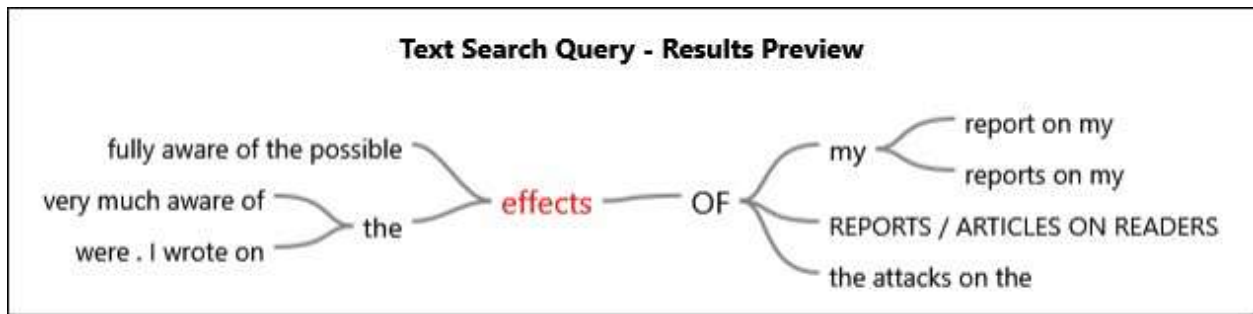


Figure 17: *Word Tree showing if Journalists were aware of the Effects of their Articles on their Readers (Researcher).*

Beyond being a veritable avenue for information dissemination, the media also shape and moulds public opinion, especially through its news framing (Renström, 2011; Sambe, 2008). News framing has a powerful influence and that is why the way the readers read and process the information they read is determined by the way they are framed. Thus, the kind of frames that the newspaper imposes could determine certain outcomes (for good or bad). For example:

There were disadvantages in imposing media [...] frames on some of those stories. I am quite aware, of course, that a passenger vehicle was stopped in the heartland of the Berom and passengers were slaughtered, because they fitted the profile of the Hausa/Fulani, which the media, not our newspaper organisation alone, had painted as the aggressors. Therefore, they became victims of attacks, which was unfortunate. Not long after, on their way to Bauchi State (which is predominantly Hausa/Fulani area), some Berom youth whose car broke down and had to spend the night by the road side were heard speaking Berom, which fitted the profile of the Plateau State aggressors, which a section of the media had turned them against and murdered those young people. These are some of the dangers of news framing generally, especially based on religion and ethnicity (IR2).

The above quote described the kind of environment the newspaper has created through framing in which the ethnic conflicts were spawned. The news media, in the views of this interview respondent, employed certain frames through the process of selection and on that basis organised and structured their news to the public (Schuck & De Vreese, 2006; Shah & Thornton, 2003). This is very much in keeping with the agenda-setting function of the media; the media influence the audience based on the agenda they set for them. It has been three decades since McCombs and Shaw (1972) carried out their investigation during the 1968 election. However, Wanta and Ghanem (2010) maintained that in the intervening years several

other investigations have carried out on the role of the news media in influencing the perceived importance of issues the majority of these researchers have found support for a media influence on the issue of salience. In the heat of the Plateau State conflict, the newspapers, were inundated with various frames (Berom militia and Fulani mercenaries), as earlier attested to by the respondents, especially IR1. Extant research literature on the Plateau State conflict indicated that the conflict has spanned nearly twenty years (Ishaku, 2012; Kaigama, 2012; Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010). Therefore, news frames must not only be seen from its narrow perspective, that is, the news materials readers are exposed to alone, but it is critical to also see the over-time persistence of product effect (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2012).

Framing, even for the journalism profession has continued to pose a serious challenge:

These are some of the challenges we are facing in the industry today. These are some of the recurrent issues that we discuss whenever we meet at the conference of editors. Most of the time people form their opinion based on what they read in the newspapers. For instance, if there is a conflict and you say ‘200 Berom have been killed by Hausa/Fulani,’ if the story circulates in Plateau State for instance, the tendency is for the Berom to say we are going to retaliate and they could descend on innocent Hausa/Fulani. That is where the challenge lies for the editor (IR7).

The admission by the above interview participant that news framing poses a challenge suggested that it must have had some influence in the Plateau State conflict. Because the newspaper possesses an inherently powerful influence by fact of its frames, hence it could be a force for good or bad since the media in general influence public agenda (McCombs & Reynolds, 2009; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). If framing does, indeed, pose a challenge for journalists, as IR7 acknowledged, that should make both reporters and editors to exercise a high degree of caution in the type news frames they construct. Unfortunately, some of the reporters and editors rely heavily on public opinions, as IR3 stated:

We do research on what our readers want, and we tailor our news reports to meet their interests, at least, 50% of what they want, if not they will not buy the next editions of the paper.

Although, the assertion by IR3 ties in with the claims of Yusha’u (2012), that for profit reasons newspapers can and have gone to great length to publish reports that have created disaffection, which is in tandem with the first of the five filters of the propaganda model of Herman and Chomsky (2002): size, ownership, and profit orientation of the mass media, considering the

effects of such frames, opinions polls should not be allowed to play such a significant determinant. The need to maximise profit at all cost has driven many businesses, including the newspaper corporations into some compromising situations as stated above.

The claim by IR8 that he was misled into slanting a report during the conflict to serve the interest of his Hausa/Fulani ethnic community was a further testimony to the propaganda media war that ensued, as he explained thus:

[...] it was after I had written the report that I realised that it was propaganda. It was then that I understood that I was used by our newspaper organisation to promote the interest of the Hausa/Fulani in the crisis. I regretted being sensational in my report. After one of such conflicts that involved the Fulani and the natives, I interviewed the chairman of Myetti Allah (the Fulani socio-cultural association) who told me that thousands of Fulani were leaving Plateau State. I wrote in my report that thousands of Fulani were leaving Plateau State without verifying his claim. From that incident, I resolved never to engage in propaganda or sensationalism.

In any conflict, particularly of an ethnic nature, it was bound to be backed by interest groups and blocs, as affirmed by IR8. Perhaps, his being a Hausa/Fulani might also explain why he was approached to slant his report to project his ethnic community from the perspective of victims in the conflict. Journalists that rise above such factors as ethnicity, politics and religion, as IR8 claims, is worthy of commendation, because it shows compliance with the ethics of journalism. It is instructive to note that both reporters and editors do receive feedbacks from their readers and those feedbacks tend to shape and influence some of the media frames they produce.

As a practicing journalist, I am aware of the dictum that says, communication is not complete without a feedback, in this case from the readers. Of course, one is aware of the import of one's report on his readers. There are ways in which one gets feedback from readers such as phone calls, interactions, and other follow up media programmes that normally bring out that consciousness in one (IR6).

Similarly, IR9 opined that:

Sometimes the feedbacks are positive, but some other times are negative. We have been accused of taking sides in our reports...sometimes one may be balanced but not fair in his/her report. Or you may give a party in conflict five paragraphs, and the other two paragraphs of report.

Since the consensus by media scholars is that, framing lacks clear, definite, universal conceptual definition, but depends on specific context for meaning (Scheufele, 1999; Van Gorp, 2007), IR9's opinion as stated above, of giving one party in conflict a large portion of write-up, while the other, just some fraction, fits into framing's selection of some aspects of perceived reality and make it more important, while the other is downplayed. For Mitchell (2007, p. 67), the idea that 'news frames select, highlight and therefore have the potential to direct attention to specific elements of an event, making them salient,' is contentious. This is, especially so, if by salience it 'means making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences.' This also supports the thesis that frames by their nature are neither value free nor neutral, they are well thought out by the gatekeepers (Kim, 2003; Melki, 2014). IR9 must have deliberately done what she did with the hope of achieving a predetermined outcome, by emphasising one party's position or interest, while downplaying the other. This also implies that this interview participant's frames were driven by the interest she may have had in the conflict. What the researcher sought to explore by the interview question was to know the effects of newspaper reports on readers. From the above, the researcher was, in no doubt, that the way the newspapers framed their reports, especially in a conflict-ridden environment, such as Plateau State, had strong effects on the reading public and led to the escalation of the conflict Lyengar and Simon (1997 cited in McQuail, 2008). This is because; journalists' news framing is a product of a deliberate, conscious, painstaking decisions as they choose from the myriads of facts available to them. Hence, the frames which journalists produce cannot be said to be value neutral, since they prioritise alternatives based on what, in their judgement, they consider appropriate for theirs, which their decisions have achieved (Anyadike, 2015; Danaan, 2017; Phillips, 2015).

#### **6.5.4: How do Salaries determine Objectivity of your Reports?**

The intention of the researcher here was to find out how salary influenced the sense of objectivity or balance of the interview respondents as conflict journalists who covered the Plateau State conflict, as well as to know if the 'brown envelope syndrome' (is a situation whereby journalists receive some inducements before news are reported) influenced their decisions. Objectivity, in the views of Richardson (2007) is a key defining principle in contemporary journalism practices and it is, therefore, an issue of great interest to many within the field. Objectivity is a contested concept today, largely because it lacks a clear definition, difficult to establish or even conceptualise (Golwa, 2011; McQuail, 1993). McQuail (1993), argued that the concept, for most journalists is a professional ideal, which although it cannot

be fully attained, because it requires an arsenal of efforts by the entire news organisations. McQuail describe objective reporting as ‘one which is highly factual, in the sense of offering as much detailed and checkable information as possible’ (p. 185). Some of the critics of objectivity, such as Glaser (1984) has refused the suggestion that objectivity is being observed by media practitioners and accused its proponents of undue propaganda under the guise of neutrality. Despite these criticisms, objectivity is still being accepted as a norm in journalism practice, because many experts such as Cunningham (2003), contends that many journalists believe it. Since the notion objectivity stemmed from the determination to transcend partiality, it is applied in this thesis within that context. The concept ‘balance’ denotes fairness (giving equal opportunities to people). Hence, this researcher uses both notions in this study. Since both are used in journalism the world over, it was expected that those reporters who covered the Plateau State conflict to have been guided by these key ethics of journalism. Although the focus of this interview question is on the objectivity of the conflict journalists in their coverage of the Plateau State conflict, it was important for the researcher to seek to know how the payment or the non-payment of their salaries influenced their sense of objectivity or balance.

With the help of the Nvivo software the researcher undertook a word search that included the following words/phrases: condition, service, not good, journalists, unnecessary risks, government mantra, and salaries not paid, and brown envelopes. From this, the Word Tree was produced as shown in Figure 20. Although the information contained on both branches of the Word Tree is self-evident, the researcher decided to emphasise a few to highlight how poor wages affected the reporters’ sense of balance. Furthermore, objectivity, as already noted, is such a contested word in journalism practice, McQuail (1993) asserted that its applications in reporting lies at the heart of their task. Even though is a known fact that objectivity as a notion is an ideal, which in McQuail’s view, cannot be achieved; this researcher, looked at the responses of the respondents as encapsulated on the Word Tree could see some of the factors that tended to work against professional journalistic practice in Plateau State are tainted with corruption.

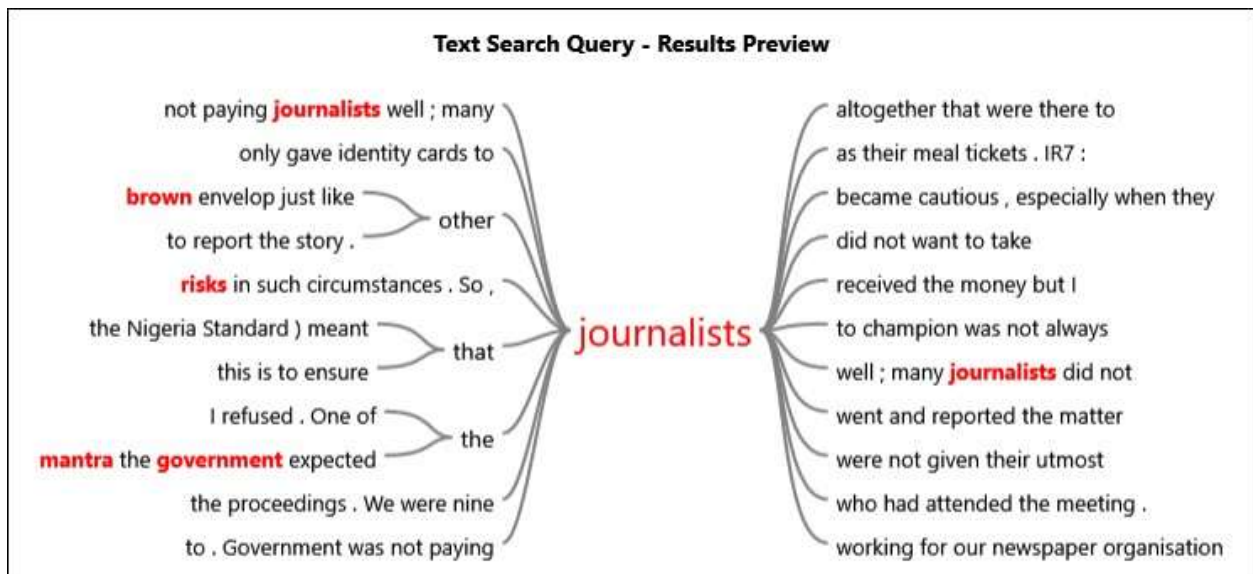


Figure 18: *Word Tree showing how Payment of Salaries Influenced Journalists' Objectivity/Balance in their Coverage of the Plateau State Conflict (Researcher).*

For example, among the responses from the Word Tree include the following:

- Not paying journalists well; many journalists became cautious (IR2)
- So, journalists did not want to take risks (IR2)
- The mantra the government expected the journalists to champion was not always adhered to (IR2)
- Newspaper organisations only gave identity cards to journalists as their meal tickets (IRs 5 & 7).

All the respondents (IRs 1-10) agreed fully that the salaries cum conditions of service of journalists had a strong influence on their sense of objectivity. From some of the reactions of the participants as shown on the Word Tree above, it indicated that, although objectivity was a cherished value in journalism practice, poor conditions of service would invariably affect the credibility and integrity of their news values (Richardson, 2007). It is, therefore, necessary to recognise that for a journalist to strive towards achieving objectivity; their organisations must pay them living wages as well as their other needs, such as, transports equipment, and allowances. Unless these basic needs of journalists are met, it is highly unlikely for a journalist

in Plateau State to risk his or her life to be objective. Some of the interviewees were categorical in voicing their frustrations that:

Wages determine objectivity to a point, because poor funding meant that journalists were not giving their utmost to the extent that the mantra the government expected the journalists to champion was not always adhered to (IR2).

Similarly, IR5 posits, thus:

It is quite unfortunate that some of these things are happening. There are some newspaper organisations that only give identity cards to journalists as their meal tickets.

What one could deduce from IR5's quote is that some of the 'journalists' workings for some of the newspapers are not 'bona fide' staff of their organisation. The identity cards which the newspaper organisation gave them were supposed to serve as 'their bread and butter' (meal ticket). What this, in effect, means is that whatever they got, including 'brown envelope,' was their reward for their services to the organisation. Although the issue of brown envelopes is not peculiar to Nigerian journalists in Nigeria, however, whether the issue tends to receive the tacit support and encouragement of some media establishments in Nigeria. But it is also important to state here that most of those who are given such identity cards may not be journalists in the strict sense of the word, because they were not trained, as IR7 claimed:

The issue of brown envelopes, which is a serious matter in journalism is simply because most of the reports you find in newspapers are not journalistic, they are just public relations.

While this claim may be true to the extent that some portions of newspaper reports are nothing but public relations, it is not altogether correct to say that trained journalists do not engage in receiving brown envelopes. One of the interviewees (IR8) did acknowledge the existence of such practices and confessed to receiving such brown envelopes, except, as he also claimed, it did not influence his judgement:

Although it is against the ethics of the profession (journalism), I still receive brown envelope. But let me be clear, no amount of brown envelope would influence my judgement, objectivity or balance.

Based on the foregoing scenario in which the interview participants operated, not only were some of them willing to accept brown envelopes in return for doctored news reports, some newspaper organisations have put their "staff" on the corruption lane through the identity card

practice. It is, therefore unfortunate to, in the circumstance, expects an objective or balanced news reports from such newspapers. The reason is because to file an objective report, Richardson (2007, p. 86) argued that it requires:

A journalist to distance himself from the truth claims of the report; distancing one's self from the truth claims of the report does not mean removing all value judgements from a report, but that the fact and opinion in a news report needs to be that of people other than the journalist.

Despite these appalling working conditions of the reporters, there were some newspaper organisations who were doing their utmost, not only to pay their staff (journalists) as and when due, but also paid their allowances, as expressed by this respondent (IR9):

The newspaper organisation I work for does its utmost in terms of payment of staff salaries. I do not know think there is any newspaper that takes the issue of staff welfare seriously as our organisation does: Apart from our salaries we receive our allowances.

The responses of the interview participants on how their poor wages influenced their sense of objectivity or balance in the coverage of the Plateau State conflict, showed the difficult operating environment under which they did their work, which sometimes left them susceptible to compromises that made nonsense of one of journalism's core principles (objectivity). But, despite this gloomy picture painted, there is, thankfully, a ray of hope for journalism practice in Plateau State, IR3 declared:

Although we were sometimes not paid our salaries, we nonetheless stuck to the ethics of the profession (journalism). Despite the temptations to receive brown envelopes, we resisted it. We did our best to cover every event [...] and ensured that our reports were balanced.

#### **6.5.5: To What Extent do you agree with the suggestion that the Way Newspaper Headlines were Framed Contributed to the Conflict?**

The researcher's intention here was to find out the extent to which news frames contributed to the escalation of the Plateau State conflict. Hence, the researcher fed the word 'framing' into the Nvivo word search, which produced the Word Tree and Word Cloud (see Figures 21 & 22). The Word Cloud did not produce tangible result, but the Word Tree did. So, the analysis will focus on the Word Tree. The dominant word produced from the word search was 'framing' which glues the two branches of the Word Tree together. On both sides of the tree are quotes from some of the interview respondents, thus:



-news framing exacerbated the conflict (IR1)

-news framing seriously did exacerbate the conflict (IR2)

-framing, such as, unknown gunmen attack (IR9)

-journalists framing their stories along the line that promoted the interests of the Hausa/Fulani (IR2).

From the above quotes, it is evident that the respondents were unanimous in their assertions that the way editors, who are the final gatekeepers, framed their headline news did inflame the conflict. For example, IR1 and IR2 were rather categorical in saying that news frames exacerbated the conflict. IR2 further gave instance of how journalists' frames were done, sometimes, to promote the interests of some ethnic communities (in this instance, the Hausa/Fulani). Still, IR9 provided a context when news frames were predicated on ethnic interest. Based on the interviews the researcher conducted, all the respondents (IRs 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, & 10), except IR7, believed strongly that newspaper frames contributed to the escalation of the conflict in Plateau State. As it has earlier established, ethnicity has been elevated to the level of toxicity, hence, as Nnoli (2008) explained: ethnicity is a highly emotive and sensitive issue in the African context, and, perhaps, this may explain why from the early beginnings of the newspapers in Nigeria, particularly during the colonial period (Galadima, 2012), the newspapers became enmeshed in ethnicity. Ethnicity, in Nnoli's view, does not exist in a vacuum; it exists in relation to other factors, such as politics, religion, among others. It is, therefore, easy to see how ethnicity has permeated the media system in Nigeria and especially the newspapers (Okidu, 2011; Yusha'u, 2015).



in situations of conflict for ethnic communities to analyse texts, and depending on how such frames were interpreted, they could influence ethnic communities to violence or rally them towards peacebuilding. For example, IRs 5 and 6 separately explained how some of the newspapers framed headline news stories during the Plateau State conflict:

Whether deliberately or not, the way the news was framed affected the conflict. This is because people do look at the headlines without even reading the details, the content of the story (IR6).

IR5 corroborated this view, thus:

[...] you may find up to three newspapers reporting on the same issue, but their framing would differ. Mere looking at the headlines could indicate the standpoint of the newspaper concerning the conflict.

Although the concern of this interview participant may be a legitimate one, it is imperative to state that no two people necessarily see the same thing the same way. This applies to journalists as well, because different people see the same issue in different ways (Strentz, 1989). This also ties in with the narrative about the blind men and the elephant: each of the blind men felt the elephant's body parts (legs, tail, side, ear, and tusk) and interpreted it in his perspective. The reality is that the way facts are reported, and how the news is shaped, would depend on a whole range of issues, such as the nature of news gathering, how the news is defined, how it is made intelligible, prejudged and how the reporters coped with the pressure to produce the stories. For example, some of the interview respondents were forthright in saying that the frames took the angle of indigenes/settler's dichotomy, which boiled down to the same ethnic conflict, as captured by IR1:

The truth of the matter is that some journalists had preconceived minds before even going to cover a conflict (this is how I am going to cover the conflict if it is in Barkin Ladi; I know how I will start my lead).

It is worth pointing out here that of the seventeen local government areas of Plateau State, Barkin Ladi, which the above participant referred to, for example, was probably the only local government that has a significant Fulani percentage in a predominantly Berom land. Therefore, the temptation for a newspaper with some links to the Berom in Barkin Ladi to construct frames that would portray them as victims and not as valiant was high. Some of the respondents admitted that their newspaper organisations played a part in the exacerbation of the conflict through their reports:

I was a party to some of the reports that appeared in the *Daily Trust* newspaper. I had written so many disparaging reports about other ethnic communities in the conflict, on behalf of my Hausa/Fulani community (IEL1).

In another, the participant had this to say:

The newspaper organisation I work for, too, was not left out of this propaganda, which is why many Plateau indigenous ethnic groups do not like it (IR8).

IR9 was even more direct on the motivation for writing in the way they did:

We write sensationally for the report to come out in the next day's edition, important facts may be missing.

If further proof was needed to confirm the way newspaper organisations framed reports, IR9's quote has provided it. The fact of the matter is that journalists, reporters and correspondents were by no means the only ones that the finger of blame should be directed at. Complicit in this were the editors who are the final gatekeepers. Going by their positions as the final gatekeepers, they ought to get the greater share of the blame for the kinds of frames they manufactured. For example, IR9 did not mince words in apportioning blame to editors for the construction of sensational frames. In her words:

Editors are the main culprits in this because they want their papers to sell. For instance, I may write a story from my perspective, but the editor may decide to change it to a more sensational headline.

As gatekeepers, editors, no doubt, occupy positions of influence, because they give direction to the news content the readers consume. This view is in congruent with Max Hastings, former editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, when he posited that:

Readers have no rational idea of what they do or do want in their newspaper-by proxy they employ editors to decide for them (Hastings, 2003).

This was especially so in Plateau State where some of the newspaper readers lacked the literacy to analyse content media texts, hence they would take in newspaper reports they read hook, line and sinker. While it is true that, 'you cannot please all the people all of the time,' it is nonetheless imperative for editors to ensure that their news frames please the broadest number of readers (Brighton & Foy, 2007, pp. 25-26). In reorienting journalists from the excessive use of ethnic and other negative frames by the newspapers that has contributed to the escalation of the conflict, some conflict managers have organised trainings, especially for reporters. One of the participants complained, why editors were not invited and vented her frustration thus:

I once attended conflict management training and I complaint that you cannot call correspondents, reporters and security agents without inviting editors to such training. It does not make sense, because it is the editor who frames the news (IR9).

From the array of interview respondents interviewed (IEL1, IR8, and IR9), and their responses, as seen above despite their claims to being conscious to the way they reported and edited their reports, their statements here do not portray that. Although the Plateau State conflict had also been blamed by some scholars on newspaper reports (Ishaku, 2012; Kaigama, 2012; Musa & Ferguson, 2013), it is equally important to note that newspaper frames go well beyond headline news and reports. It is also about the deliberate decision by editors to exclude or include certain pieces of information with the sole aim to distort facts or reality. Musa & Ferguson (2013) noted that editors, especially, go the extra mile to select certain information and exclude others to construct convenient frames to demonise the other. Such inclusion and exclusion of vital information by some newspapers in Plateau State conflict was: [...] to portray the people of Plateau State as unworthy in character.

Similarly, the Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network (Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010) also claimed that:

Since the outbreak of conflicts in Plateau State, there has been a great deal of propaganda being churned out, almost daily by some section of the print [...] media all in a desperate bid to portray the Plateau State people as the aggressors in the conflicts [...] (Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010, p. 111).

The myriad views of the interview participants were quite revealing. Beyond the accusation and counter accusations that the views of the respondents revealed (journalists and media organisations blaming one another) there appear to be hope for better journalism practice in Plateau State. Journalists expressed regrets over their roles in the exacerbation of the conflict by attaining various training and programmes that were aimed at the attainment of peace in Plateau State. The approach, which both conflict reporters and their editors had adopted in the coverage of the conflict, (mainstream media journalism) was not helpful. Therefore, their new approach towards peace was very much in keeping with Shaw's (2012) human rights-based-approach to journalism, which complements the four orientation of peace journalism as advanced by Galtung (1996) and supported by Lynch and MacGoldrick (2005):

- Win-win rather than win-lose oriented.
- Truth rather than propaganda.

- People rather than elite.
- Solution rather than victory.

Shaw further asserts that human rights journalism complements peace journalism in the following ways:

- Global (triple-win) rather than just selective (win-win) or win-lose
- Bias in favour of, rather than against, vulnerable voices
- Pro-active (preventive) rather than reactive (prescriptive)
- Attached rather than detached to victims of violence and justice.

#### **6.5.6: Are you Satisfied with the Current State of Journalism Practice in Plateau State?**

The researcher asked the interview respondents their views regarding the state of journalism practice in Plateau State. By this question, the researcher sought to know what their views were regarding the state of journalism, especially during the conflict, whether conflict reporters were guided by the ethics of their profession. Again, all of them (IRs 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10), except one (IR1) expressed dissatisfaction with the way journalism is practiced in Plateau State. IR1 was not categorical in his view as others were. Rather, he expressed mixed feelings. Participants attributed the situation to a variety of reasons: lack of training, framing issues from perspectives of ethnicity and religion, lack of operating tools, no strict guidelines to guide the establishment of a newspaper organisation, ineffective Nigerian Press Council, among others. Thus, these issues have conspired to make journalism practice in Plateau State unsatisfactory.

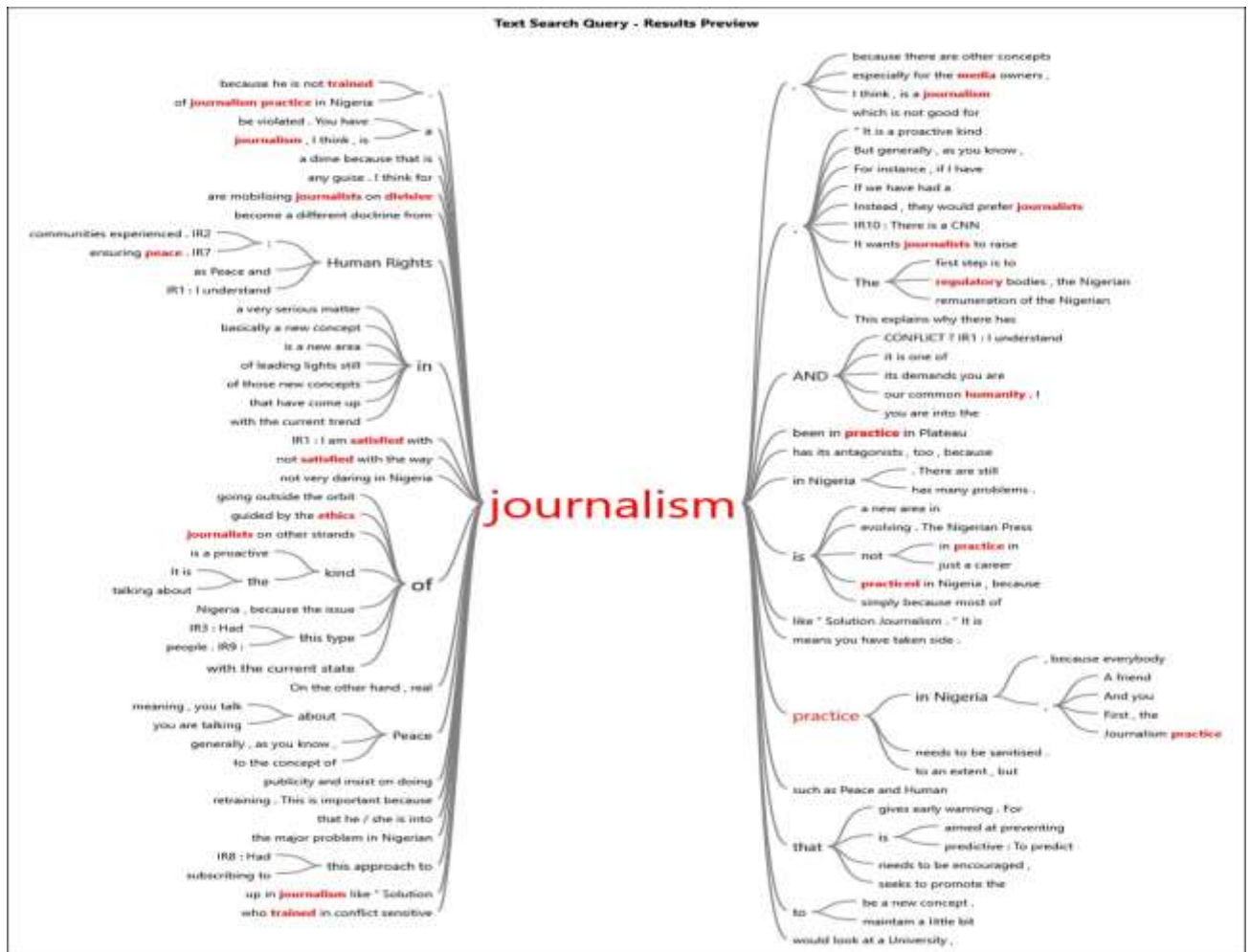


Figure 21: Word Tree showing the State of Journalism Practice in Plateau State (Researcher).



Figure 22: Word Cloud showing the State of Journalism Practice in Plateau State (Researcher).

Considering the above, the researcher undertook a word search of these words/phrases: not satisfied with journalism practice, sanction, ethics of journalism, Nigeria Union of Journalists, ethnicity, religion, regulatory agencies, media frames, negative, politicians, divisive journalism, sanitisation, lack of professionalism, lack of strict guidelines, and journalism training. The Word Cloud in Figure 24 produced the following dominant words: journalists, state, practice, reporters, journalism, newspaper, remuneration, Nigeria, and government. Out of the many phrases from the Word Tree (see Figure 23 the researcher deliberately picked one of them based on the preponderant nature of the comment:

They are mobilising journalists on divisive journalism (IR2).

This statement was made by a senior newspaper source interviewed of one of the newspapers selected for this study. It is important to understand the specific context within which this statement was made. Participants had blamed the polarisation of the newspapers on the Nigerian political elite who were divided along ethnic lines. This in turn had impacted negatively on a society that was sharply and cruelly divided along ethnic lines (Galadima, 2010). In IR2’s opinion, journalism practice in Plateau State and, indeed Nigeria cannot take its pride of place in the journalism world, so long as there were no genuine efforts on the part of the Nigerian political elite toward unity. This view was corroborated by Olutokun and



Seteolu (2001) when they said that the problem with the Nigerian media were a combination of several factors, such as ethnicity, regionalism, long standing sentiments, religion and the bifurcation of the public sphere. Nigerian politicians have continued to fan the flame of ethnic bigotry, which has been responsible for the spate of conflicts that have bedevilled Plateau State. The newspapers, on their parts, have been rather indiscrete and intemperate in publishing some of their political utterances, depending on the ownership of the newspapers (Galadima, 2010). What this researcher had so far noted was the use of the newspapers as instruments for the promotion of sectional/ethnic agenda, which began during the colonial era and persists today. Unfortunately, the newspapers do not seem able to exorcised themselves from the demon of ethnic/sectional interests that has tended to retard its growth and development (Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Yusha'u, 2015). The interview participants were not just satisfied with just outlining a litany of problems that were wrong with journalism practice in Plateau State, but also offer some suggestions toward a better practice. Among the recommendations, they proffered included the following: screening of journalists, training, payment of salaries, sanctioning of erring journalists, and equipment.

#### **6.5.6.1 Screening of Journalists**

The journalism profession has often prided itself as a noble profession (Akinfeleye, 2011). It is, no doubt a noble profession, but the reality is that it has been defaced and debased because it has become open to everyone. There seem to be no well-structured mechanism for the screening of those who claim to be journalists. Although, journalism may be a profession, but journalists in Nigeria, based on the integrity checklist outlined by Akinfeleye, were far from meeting standards for journalism. Among the criteria are the following: Do Nigerian journalism has its own language to domesticate journalism? Do journalists adhere to the codes of their profession? Are Nigerian journalists capable of regulating their own ranks? How about a discrete and substantive body of knowledge? It is no wonder then that some of the respondents, such as IR3 advocated, among other things, the screening of journalists: 'The Nigeria Union of Journalists should be alive to its responsibilities by screening practicing journalists and then licenced.' This view resonates with the opinion of IR9 who expressed her frustration, thus: 'There are a lot of quacks in the profession.'

The legion of untrained in the profession was the reason why IR3 had called for the screening of practicing journalists as a way of sifting to know the real journalists from 'quacks.' But the reason why the profession appears saturated with 'quacks,' in the opinion of IR6 was, largely

because ‘[...] most media houses do not pay salaries. Journalists go there to take up identity cards of those media houses that serve as their meal tickets.’ Although, this may be exaggerated, but some of the interview respondents have already corroborated this. A managing editor with one of the newspapers (IR7) complained that: ‘[...] wages were poor that was why journalists were not enthusiastic about going on assignment.’

#### **6.5.6.2 Training of journalists**

Allied to the issue of screening of journalists is the fact that journalists are ill-trained. A significant number of journalists in Plateau State and in Nigeria lack the requisite journalism training or education. IR5 lamented that:

The issue of training, and retraining, of journalists is not being given much importance. I therefore suggest that media owners should take the issue of building of their staff seriously.

This lack of training of journalists in current trends in journalism is evident in the quality of journalism in Nigeria. IR7 averred thus:

Let me tell you, the crops of Nigerian journalists we have are not adventurous. Most of the reports on corruption that we have published are sourced from regulatory agencies, anticorruption agencies. You can hardly find a Nigerian journalist who will dig deep and on his own come up with a story, because you don’t see things like this happening regularly [...]

The above position was further reinforced by IR10, that:

There was a CNN jingle that says, ‘When we know, you know.’ Journalists should be well informed otherwise they cannot inform. A journalist could walk pass news without knowing because he is not trained. Journalism is not a career, but a professional career. Most Nigerian journalists are not trained at all, and even those who are trained have not undergone any retraining. This is important because journalism is evolving.

Investigation is one of the defining features of journalism profession in the contemporary society. Therefore, the statement made by IR7 to the effect that Nigerian journalists are lacking in investigative skills and would rely on what regulatory agencies have unearthed is a serious indictment on the profession. Journalists take pride in the fact that theirs is a profession, but when a professional lack even the most basic of training required, what qualifies him or her to be called a professional? Therefore, training and retraining of journalists should be an integral part of the news organisation’s schedule.

### 6.5.6.3 Working Tools

The lack of training of journalists does not tell the whole story regarding the way of journalism profession has degenerated in Nigeria. Added to this problem is the fact that journalists are ill-equipped even with the most basic journalistic tools (recorders, email, social media, computer, printer, electricity). Communication technology is not just evolving but it is doing so at a very high speed. Although reporters who covered the Plateau State conflict have been traduced for their low productivity as the above respondents (IRs 5, 7 and 10) have affirmed, the fact is that even the amount that they produce are done under the most appalling of conditions. Echoing the same sentiments, IR5 bemoaned the situation thus: 'Journalists are not performing at full capacity because they do not have the required operating tools.' Although all the reasons that have been advanced for the poor state of journalism practice in Plateau State, especially during the conflict may be legitimate, as so many participants have advocated, still cannot justify some of the unethical practices that have characterised journalism practice that have been witnessed in the state. Erring journalists and media organisations must not go unsanctioned as captured by IR1:

I think we have reasons to insist that things are done correctly, particularly on the issue of the ethics of the profession; journalists must be disciplined; journalists must be shown the way out if they run afoul of the ethics of the profession. And because journalists have not been sanctioned, they have bombarded the pages of newspapers [...] with their stories.

Some participants (IR1; IR7) called on the regulatory bodies, especially the Nigeria Press and Regulatory Council to be alive to its responsibilities. Unfortunately, the way the Nigeria Press Council itself has become embroiled in ethnic conflict (Yusha'u, 2015), because the newspapers are being owned by an elite organisation, during conflict, rather than for it to provide the moral compass of being the watchdog of society, have, unfortunately become ethnic champion, hence, unable to live up to its mandate of regulation. Even though some participants (IR2; IR10) were of the view that the Nigeria Press and Regulatory Council was ineffective, the reality is that the journalism profession has been hamstring by a myriad of problems, as IR2 had earlier stated, was beyond the Nigeria Press Council itself; the political elite needs to get its act together first.



Plateau State. For example, out of the ten journalists and five ethnic leaders interviewed, none of them could give a clear description of the notion human rights journalism. Three of the journalists thought that the concept was the same as peace or conflict sensitive journalism. That was the closest they came to in terms of trying to explain the term. However, when the researcher took time to explain what the concept meant, the participants became more at home and freely discussed their own experiences and the potentials that the HRJ holds for the restoration of peace in the troubled state. Three of the respondents (IRs1, 6, 7 and 9) conceded that the notion was completely new to them as IR1 explained:

I understand human rights journalism to be a new concept. For me, it is basically a new concept in journalism and it is one of those new concepts in journalism that needs to be encouraged, because of its importance to journalists.

It is obvious from this statement that IR1 does not know much about human rights journalism, because it was new to him, but despite that he thought that it should be encouraged, perhaps he envisaged it has some great potentials, that if utilised by journalists, could help in bring about the desired peace. Similarly, IR6 did admit that, before now he did not know about this strand of journalism as he noted, thus:

I did not know about this concept until you explained it. Trainings and workshops were organised only after a conflict had taken place. Many nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) moved into Plateau State: Some were sponsored by the government, some others came on their own to do capacity building workshops on identifying flash points, early warning signs and things to do to douse the tension. I have attended several of them, both within and outside Plateau State.

Another participant (IR7), a seasoned journalist and a managing editor of a newspaper, admitted that, although, he had come across similar concepts, he had not heard about human rights journalism. For this participant, human rights journalism was a new area in journalism, because there are other similar concepts that have come up in journalism like ‘solution journalism.’ Although most of the participants knew little or nothing about human rights journalism, from their responses, this researcher could see that they were confident if this approach to journalism was used during the Plateau State conflict, the news frames which journalists constructed would have been different and would have, perhaps helped douse the conflict. IR3 was optimistic about the potential HRJ holds for the restoration of peace in the state and emphatically declared:

Had this type of journalism been in practice in Plateau State we would not have witnessed the kind of conflict we had, because as I speak to you more and more journalists are subscribing to this approach to journalism. This explains why there has been relative peace in some parts of the country. For example, hardly do you hear about conflicts in Kwara or Lagos states. It is only in this part of the country (north) that you still witness conflicts.

Reinforcing the views of the above respondent, interview participant (IR7) opines that:

Had HRJ been in practice it could have helped security agencies a great deal in arresting the situation. For instance, if a journalist got a hint that violence was brewing in Barkin Ladi, and he did an investigation as to the kind of meetings that were being held, the kinds of weapons being assembled, the sponsors or masterminds and he exposes them, the security personnel would have nipped it in the bud. They would have gone after such persons and effected arrests.

IR8 was not in any way out of sync with the earlier respondents on what HRJ approach to conflict could have helped achieve in Plateau State when he said:

Had this approach to journalism been in practice in Plateau State it could have helped to prevent the conflict from either erupting or escalating. Even if the press would not have prevented the conflict it would have at least could enlighten the members of the public on the issues involved; because the learned in the community read newspapers, watch television and listen to radio.

If IEL1 needed reassurance on his peace mission, he found it in the human rights journalism-based-approach to conflict. IEL1 believed that:

HRJ does have the capacity to bring about peace not just in Plateau State but in the world at large. I was a practicing journalist, but I took time to study conflict resolution; to study how I could recognise some of the triggers of conflict and how to nib them in the bud, but to see how I could go beyond primordial sentiments to look at issues, analyse them and profess solutions to them. This is what I am doing currently and that is why I call myself a “peacemaker” and a journalist as well.

The respondents’ lack of knowledge on HRJ and later, their appreciation of its potentials (conflict-prevention and justice for all), implied that journalists might have committed human rights violations, unconsciously, through their use of discursive strategies, such as news framing, propaganda, hyperboles, litotes, presupposition, among others. The above data have illustrated,

first, the lack of knowledge on the part of the participants regarding human rights journalism as a concept as the Word Cloud shows (see Figure 26), but later there was an appreciation for it, after the researcher took time to explain the term to them in a clear, understandable manner. Although HRJ is not a ‘cure all pill,’ the optimism expressed by the participants on the potentials that it holds is indeed encouraging. Their seeming optimism and determination to be in the vanguard for peace by attending workshops and trainings, all towards achieving peace in Plateau State gave reason for hope in an ethnically divided and fractured state. Although it will be naïve to think that just because journalists have pledged to reorient themselves toward HRJ and other related peace journalism practices by reporting some of the possible triggers of conflicts to the government or policymakers to take preventive measures, there is no guarantee that such bodies may take the necessary preventive steps, as some of the interviewees have affirmed. Galadima (2010) supported this view when he said that almost all the newspapers blamed the government for failing to take preventive action about the warning signals of the impending conflict in the state after series of media reports. But despite the government’s seeming indifference sometimes in acting on newspaper and other media reports on impending conflict in the state, hope was not lost. The willingness and the desire of the interview participants to pursue peace by eschewing ethnic bigotry would, hopefully, reduce the rate of ethnic-induced media frames that have characterised journalism practice in Plateau State. Crucially, this would challenge the status quo rather than reinforce the voices of the powerful dominant political elite and their ethnic agenda, against the weak and marginalised (Shaw, 2012).

## **6.7. Summary of Analysis**

From the analyses above, interview participants claimed they were aware of the effects of their reports on their readers, but journalists report showed they were biased towards their ethnic communities in conflict (IRs 1, 2, 5, & IEL1). For example, IR1 contends that some journalists did not cover certain events because certain personalities were involved. The choice to exclude some stories and include others conforms with Entman’s (1993) idea of news framing of the media. Through this process the journalists of the two chosen newspapers achieved the agenda(s) of their ethnic communities or those of their proprietors. Again, the IRs avowed that they were conscious in reporting the Plateau State conflict. However, the use of negative ethnic frames betrayed this claim of being conscious in reporting the conflict (unless, despite being conscious in reporting the conflict, they still went ahead with their skewed reports). It was not uncommon for those journalists who covered the Plateau State conflict to see themselves as performing a

patriotic duty by portraying their ethnic community as victims while the other as valiant, as IR8 asserted: 'when I started work as a journalist I enjoyed reporting my Hausa/Fulani community from the perspective of a victim.' Journalists are supposed to present all shades of opinions in conflict and not just the views of political elite that dominate national, regional or local ethnic communities as the coverage of the Plateau State conflict as detailed in this chapter (Baran & David, 2003). However, the reports by those respondents interviewed confirmed the roles played by those conflict journalists in constructing and producing reports based on peoples' ethnicities. Existential realities, occasioned by poor salaries, appalling conditions of service and strong ethnic affiliations were responsible for conflict journalists neither being objective nor balanced in their reportage of the conflict (IRs 5, 8, & 9). Objectivity and balance are among the core values of the journalism profession (McQuail, 2010), which unfortunately have been sacrificed by journalists who covered the Plateau State conflict on the altar of ethnicity. Reporters and editors, as detailed by some of the IRs studied found themselves in some compromising situations, such as poor wages which negatively affected the integrity of their news productions. The alleged poor or non-existent payment of journalists' salaries by their news organisations, as claimed by some of the respondents, is not only unjust but criminal.

Almost all the IRs were not happy with the state of journalism practice in Plateau State. Journalists complained that their profession has been defaced and defamed by a range of factors (quacks, poor/lack of salaries, lack of working tools, and lack of clear guidelines for establishing newspapers), which sometimes even accomplished journalists are subdued by the attitudes and policies of their news organisations, among others (Pate, 2011a). The issue of the lack of training can and have impacted negatively on the content of news reports. The deliberate distortion of facts to achieve an ethnic agenda undermines the moral and ethical character of, not just a journalist but indeed, the news organisation s/he represents. It is imperative to note that sometimes what is omitted is even of greater significance in journalism than what is published (Sankore, 2001). Due to either poor or lack of training, journalists who are supposed to serve the 'public interest' by maintaining a high degree of professionalism by presenting fact-based reports which takes into consideration contexts, among other variables, are unable (Strentz, 1989).

Human rights orientated journalism is not a well-known approach to the coverage of conflict among the IRs studied. The goal of HRJ, which is an offshoot of peace journalism is to pro-actively prevent conflict before it erupts (Shaw, 2012). Out of the fifteen respondents interviewed, none of them could sufficiently define what the notion was apart from three journalists (1,3, & 7) who thought that HRJ was the same as peace journalism. However, when this researcher took time to explain to them what the model was about they expressed enthusiasm



and optimism that if the approach was imbibed by journalists it could be crucial in the sensitisation and mobilisation of the various ethnic communities in conflict towards peace. HRJ, as discussed in chapter three has the capacity to challenge conflict in varied forms: indirect structural, and cultural imbalances of society as cold conflict rather than wait until they erupt at direct political violence, as hot conflict, by which time it might be late (Shaw, 2012). The interest and optimising expressed by the respondents was encouraging, especially as they pledged to attend works, seminars, symposia and conferences on HRJ. It is hoped that when they follow through on this it will douse ethnic bigotry especially among journalists and thus reduce the incidents of ethnic-induced frames which they routinely produced.

The primary purpose of this study is to establish the extent to which ethnicity as a factor influenced the newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict in north-central Nigeria by conflict journalists of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*. The outcome of the analysis of this primary data, potentially, would help to answer the aim and objectives and the research questions of this study. In the next chapter, which is the discussion chapter, attempts will be made to triangulate the study's findings both from contents and interview data with the literature.

## **Chapter Seven: Discussion of Findings**

Public discourse is a touchstone of democracy. It is inescapably associated with the democratic possibility. Where public discourse is absent, attenuated, or irrelevant, a democratic people are in trouble. And such discourse can only be as informed and intelligent as the journalists who report public affairs.

Professor William Rivers of Stanford University

### **7.1. Introduction**

The essence and purpose of this research centres on providing an enriched understanding of the extent to which and how ethnicity influenced newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict in north-central Nigeria. In achieving this goal, this chapter interprets and critiques the meaning of the findings from the literature, newspaper texts and semi-structured interviews analyses undertaken in the research. It uses the project's research questions to structure this discussion. The discussion adopts and applies the agenda setting, news framing and human rights orientated journalism (which have been discussed in chapter three) as explanatory frameworks of this thesis to the evidence to provide an enriched understanding of it. The study's findings (from literature, content analysis and semi- structured interviews) lead to the key contention that: there is a correlation between the newspaper coverage and the escalation of the Plateau State conflict; although interview respondents claimed that they were aware of the effects of their reports on their readers the content of their newspapers production did not support such claim; journalists in most cases were not paid living wage and this put them in some compromising situations which consequently skewed their abilities to be objective and balanced in their reports; interview respondents found the concept human rights orientated journalism to be new, but it possesses inherent potentials which if imbibed by journalists could help to prevent outbreak of violent conflicts. Thus, the explanatory frameworks outlined above would help this researcher to answer the thesis' aim, objectives and research questions.

### **7.2. RQ1: In what Way(s) has Ethnicity been Manifested in the Newspaper Coverage of the Plateau State Conflict?**

Here, the researcher sought to know the way(s) in which ethnicity showed in journalists' reportage of the conflict. Data from both content and interviews indicated that the ownership

and control of both chosen newspapers and the newspaper framing of the conflict in terms of the Middle Belt and core north dichotomy were key factors in the ways ethnicity manifested itself in the coverage of the conflict. One report each, from the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard*, was analysed and discussed to illustrate the study's findings.

Displeased by the alleged 'media war' (Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010) being waged by some sections of the press, especially the *Daily/Weekly Trust* against the Plateau State's indigenous ethnic communities, *The Nigeria Standard* (of Wednesday July 18, 2012, p. 1) published front-page report entitled 'Plateau Stakeholders want state Newspaper Revamped' by Peter Title (Title, 2012). Title avowed in his report that the stakeholders' decision was meant '[...] to give a true report of what the state (Plateau) was going through to avoid sensational reportage as it inflames rather than moderate issues' (Title, 2012, p. 1). This statement as framed by Title speaks to the broader issue of the politics of the Plateau State conflict that has polarised ethnic communities not just in the state, but also in terms of the Middle Belt area and the core north geo-politics. Recall that the driving force behind the setting up of *The Nigeria Standard* newspapers in the first instance by the then Plateau State governor, Joseph Dechi Gomwalk in 1972 was to give the none Hausa/Fulani ethnic communities in the entire Middle Belt area a voice against their alleged maltreatment by *The New Nigerian* newspaper which was perceived to be the mouthpiece of the core north (Goyol, 1999). This feeling of marginalisation as expressed by the Middle Belt, especially in news coverage by *The New Nigerian* is the same as the earlier complaint by the northern regional government against the Lagos-Ibadan media in south west of the country. In the opinion of Kukah (1993), the reason for the establishment of *The New Nigerian* by the northern regional government was primarily to counter the perceived propaganda war between the north and south. Thus, the resolve of the Plateau State leaders for *The Nigeria Standard* to be revamped might have been borne out of the desire to see the paper achieve one of its core objectives, that is, to protect and project the interests of Plateau State and its ethnic communities. One of the IRs argued that a lot of ethnic frames manifested in the media coverage of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria (IR2, P. 156). This buttresses the notion that *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* newspapers were used as weapons of conflict whereby reporters and editors served as the foot soldiers by the kinds of articles and reports they produced.

Thus, the statement credited to the chairman of the meeting, Admiral Atukum, on behalf of the Plateau State leaders above, which 'noted with dismay certain uncomplimentary comments made by some prominent northern elders on the military intervention in the affected five

villages of Barkin Ladi and Riyom local government areas' speaks to this division between the Middle Belt and the core north. Although the desire of the Plateau elders to revamp *The Nigeria Standard*, on the surface, is to be commended, the reporter could still have interrogated their claim further to see if there was a relationship between revamping of the paper and the upholding of journalistic ethical principles. Failing to do all that implied Title's (name of the reporter) immersion in his story.

The *Daily Trust* published an editorial titled 'Jos crisis again?' (Tuesday, September 13, 2011, p. 31). This editorial was published against the backdrop of the violent attacks on Rukuba Road in Jos, the Plateau State capital where some mainly Hausa/Fulani Muslims had gone to pray to mark the end of their one-month fasting period (Eid-el-fitr) on Monday, August 29, 2011. These attacks, which the editorial said was contained in a police report alleging that fifteen-people died, were 'blamed on the native Berom youths.' This, may have been the case, however, considering the sensitive nature of the editorial, the editorial should have quoted the alleged police report to show that it was not a fabrication. The *Daily Trust* has often been accused of running a pro-Hausa/Fulani agenda in its paper by the Plateau State indigenous ethnic communities (Ishaku, 2012; Kaigama, 2012; Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010). Alozieuwa (2011) gave an instance of such alleged accusations when he quoted a *Daily Trust* front page report of Thursday June 17, 2010 which had a large pictorial display of dead herds of cattle allegedly belonging to the Hausa/Fulani, but purportedly poisoned by some of Plateau State's indigenous ethnic communities. The way the *Daily Trust* editorial was framed was meant to achieve an agenda, which was to portray the Hausa/Fulani as victims of Berom aggression. Taking the context of the conflict into consideration, it implies that because the paper was owned and controlled by a group of Hausa/Fulani that was why the paper gave the report such prominence (by its editorial). Failure to quote the alleged Police report, which purportedly 'confirmed that fifteen people were killed in the attack and blamed on the native Berom youths,' meant that the paper deliberately slanted its editorial to favour its Hausa/Fulani community.

The notion that the ownership and control of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* was one of the ways in which ethnicity has manifested as an important factor that determined news direction was attested to by IR2 (p. 140). This interview respondent claimed that the Plateau State government (publisher of *The Nigeria Standard*), for example, believes that the aggression visited on the state was externally manipulated. Based on this, *The Nigeria Standard*, in the respondent's views, was under pressure to conform to the mantra of the

government, which suggests slanting of reports. Corroborating IR2's claims, one of the Plateau State's ethnic leaders (IEL1, p. 140) avowed that *The Nigeria Standard* ab initio was set up to give Plateau State's indigenous communities, not just a voice, but to represent their interests. Similarly, another ethnic leader (IEL2, p. 140) sees nothing wrong if, for example, the editorial policy of a newspaper (the *Daily Trust*) is that certain interests be reflected in it. Or, if any of the paper's reporters decided to protect the interest of the publishers' ethnic community (Hausa/Fulani) by portraying them in a positive light. This pattern of newspaper coverage as evidenced by the two respondents (IR2 & IEL2), as stated earlier, goes against some of journalism's core values, namely, objectivity and balance because of the undue ethnic/sectional agenda of both *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*.

Although, IEL2's views implied that some journalists, even without much pressure by their organisation, could slant their reports toward projecting an ethnic interest, the fact is that corporate pressure has always been an issue of great concern to the media systems, even in developed democracies. But it is even more so in developing democracies like Nigeria, because media owners exert significant influence on the coverage of issues, as noted above. Indeed, the influence of media owners on their media is so strong that scholars (Beyene, 2012; Gentzkow, 2010; Sule, 2015; Zeleza, 2011) have posited that it does not matter how benevolent a government, developed a society or advanced a democracy is. Sometimes media proprietors could hire and fire if their staff's loyalty is not assured. Thus, media proprietor's influence is channelled through what Sule (2015) calls the 'deferential behaviours' of reporters, correspondents and editors. Therefore, journalists are retained or sacked, depending on how they reflect the interests of the owners. The roles of editors in determining the direction of news in the media (Lewin, 1951) are crucial because they determine the news that gets published, deferred or even deleted. Based on this, journalists can and have routinely slanted their news reports toward achieving the goal of their employers or of their ethnic groups. Hence, the views of the interview participants earlier (IR2, p. 140 & IEL2, p. 140) corroborate this assertion. This is because their (editors') roles involve the selection, inclusion, highlighting and exclusion of key constituents, such as facts, opinions, value judgements in the production of texts, which offer certain explanation of an occurrence, connect it to a moral logic and thus offers an answer or solution to a question or problem (Entman, 1993, 2004). This is part of the discursive strategies or frames journalists, especially editors, employ in their news construction and production.

It is important to note that the way newspapers, especially are funded in Nigeria go far beyond the narrow economic benefits of the publisher (Graham, cited in Adesoji & Hahn, 2011). Some of the nationalists' newspapers (*The West African Pilot* owned by Nnamdi Azikiwe, *The Nigerian Tribune* owned by Obafemi Awolowo), during the colonial period (1900-1960) are examples of how the papers were used, not just for profits, but more importantly for power and political influence. This is because these newspapers, among others, served as the mouthpieces for the articulation of the interests of the then three regions (north, south and west). Ethnic sentiments have always been a major catalyst in influencing, as well as shaping the content of national discourse in Nigeria. The publishers of these newspapers wielded enormous political powers in their respective regions and the papers served in post-independence era and to date in reinforcing ethno-regional interests (Adebanwi, 2004; Adedeji, 2009; Yusha'u, 2015).

As McCombs and Shaw (1972) have argued in their agenda setting theory of mass communication, the media influence the members of the audience to consider certain events as important. One of the key findings in this study showed that the ownership and control patterns of both papers (*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*) were founded on ethnicity as some of the respondents (IR2, p. 140) & (IR3, p. 140) have already affirmed. This situation had a significant effect on the coverage of news, especially the Plateau State conflict, which was, clearly, slanted towards the ethnic interests of certain actors in the conflict in this case Hausa/Fulani and the Plateau State's indigenous ethnic communities. The reports of both *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* on the conflict showed the importance they (journalists) attached to its coverage. For instance, *The Nigeria Standard* published front-page bold headline news on the Plateau State leader's suggestion 'to revamp' *The Nigeria Standard*. The choice of the front page is significant because, for a news editor front page is a show window where the most important stories are arranged advantageously so to attract readers (Hugh, 1981). Equally, the *Daily Trust* on its part carried an editorial on the alleged killings of fifteen Hausa/Fulani at Eid praying ground, in Jos, to attract readers. The choice of a front page to place its story by *The Nigeria Standard* and the editorial by the *Daily Trust*, all speak to the importance both papers attached to their stories. The section in which a newspaper places its story and the size of the headlines, and the structural organisation of the text have important implications for reader's perception (Carvalho, 2008). All these are no accidents, but part of a deliberate, conscious selection and judgments involved in news framing (Entman, 1993).

The belief that the ownership of a paper is a strong influence was reinforced by Omenugha (2004) when she analysed the newspaper coverage of the Hausa/Yoruba conflict of 2002 and

concluded that the papers were more interested in reporting the conflict in ways that tended to serve ethnic interests of their respective owners than in reporting the actual events. This view is in tandem with Hallin and Mancini (2004) who contended that due to the diverse interests of the media, it is hard for them to be neutral. The media always represent certain interests. Such commitment to reflecting or protecting the interests of newspaper proprietors at the expense of human lives, as has been noted earlier, contravenes one of journalism's ethics of objectivity. Thus, the data of this study showed that ownership and control patterns of both papers (*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*) are responsible for the slanting of the news reports of the Plateau State conflict toward ethnicity. This position also resonates with those of Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 37) on their notions of professionalism and professionalization. They argued that instrumentalisation of the media arises when the media are controlled by 'outside actors-governments, parties, politicians, social groups or movements, or economic actors seeking political influence-who use them to intervene in world politics.' In their views, if media organisations (both private and public) are instrumentalised, professionalism will be low. The consequence of this is that journalists will not be able to exercise autonomy, political interests, rather than exclusively journalistic criteria will guide journalism practice, and the media will serve only the interests of a specific ethnic group rather than working as a 'public trust.' The evidence of this research confirms both McCombs and Shaw's (1972) assertion that agenda setters play crucial roles in the process of news selection and news content, since they have been deliberately selected to influence their consumers by shaping their behaviour in a certain direction. The finding of this research further demonstrated that ethnicity manifested strongly in the newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict through the strong ownership and control of both *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*.

In answering the second part of RQ1, the researcher examined how newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict by journalists from *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* contributed to the escalation of the conflict by framing their stories along the Middle Belt and core north division. Two newspaper reports each from the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard* for the purposes of illustrations were utilised in the discussion: 'Jang rejects northern governors' forum meeting on Plateau' (the *Daily Trust* Wednesday, September 21, 2011), 'Jos: Solution looking for problem' (the *Daily Trust*, Friday, March 19, 2010), 'The military and Jos crisis' (*The Sunday Standard*, March 21, 2010) and 'Middle Belt Forum wants a united front' (*The Nigeria Standard*, Wednesday, July 18, 2012).

The report by the *Daily Trust* newspaper (of Wednesday, September 21, 2011) entitled ‘Jang rejects northern governors’ forum meeting on Plateau’ tells of a division between the Middle Belt (Plateau State and other non-Hausa/Fulani speaking states in the north) and the core north geo-politics (majority Hausa/Fulani states in the north of the country). The Middle Belt and core north issue is better understood within the context of identity politics in Nigeria. It arises from the idea that minority ethnic communities, within the larger political entity, called northern Nigeria are being marginalised both in terms of political and economic opportunities, which is rooted in pre-independence agitations (Egwemi, 2014). Thus, this polarisation is better explained within the prism of this divide. The *Daily Trust* reported the Plateau State Governor, David Jonah Jang, as saying that:

The stand by the chairman of the northern governors’ forum, through his spokesman is clearly at variance with the official letter of invitation to governors inviting them to the meeting, with the ‘general security situation in the north’ as among the issues to be discussed at the meeting (Agbese, 2011, p. 3).

The statement implied conspiracy against Plateau State aimed at marginalising it by the northern governors’ forum.

Here, although the action of the chairman of the northern governors’ forum, on the surface, is appropriate, the statement also entailed (in the views of the Plateau State governor) abuse of power. This claim was further reinforced by the Plateau State governor’s press statement, ‘The Plateau State government has noted with concern (researcher’s emphasis) the position of the northern governors’ forum on Plateau State.’ Viewed from the perspective of news framing theory of the media, the newspaper headline ‘Jang rejects northern governors’ forum meeting on Plateau’, from the point of view of news framing (choice of the word ‘reject’) gave the impression that governor Jang was totally opposed to a peaceful resolution of what the chairman of the northern governors’ forum was credited to have said, ‘protracted crises in Jos.’ The governor appeared not to be opposed to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, rather, what he was opposed to, was the perceived gang-up by the other governors against Plateau State. This notion fits into the common narrative among Plateau State’s ethnic communities of the historical injustice occasioned by the dominance of the Hausa/Fulani over the minority ethnic communities, especially in the Middle Belt area.

Another report by the *Daily Trust* (Friday, March 19, 2010) by Adamu Adamu (the reporter’s first name and surname), showed division, not just along the Middle Belt and the core north divide, but also along north/south divide in ‘Jos: solution looking for problem.’ Adamu accused



governor Jonah David Jang and the traditional Chief of Jos, Da Gyang Buba (Gbong Gwon Jos) of inaction in the killings of some Hausa/Fulani who were murdered at Dutse Uku in January. Adamu claims that:

It was because of the feeling of abandonment and extraordinary partisanship of Plateau leadership, which left them to their devices, that the victims of the 2008 and January 2010 crises reached the conclusion that the only language killers would understand was one that they spoke-violence (Adamu, 2010b, p. 64) .

Adamu's deliberate choice of words in the quote above such as 'abandonment,' 'partisanship,' 'victims,' is meant to draw the reader's attention. Beyond the local division between the Middle Belt and core north, which Adamu alluded to in his report, he also chastised Prince Bola Ajibola, one of Nigeria's renowned jurists (from the Yoruba ethnic group in the south-west) and the chairman of the board of inquiry into the Plateau State conflict set up by the Plateau State government, shows another level of division:

[...] it is known that the view widely shared by the elite of the south-west from where Ajibola comes, that the Hausa/Fulani are a problem; but, for them, it was and remains a problem of an entirely different sort [...]. The Hausa/Fulani are guilty this time, not of being settlers but, of dominating the nation's political landscape. The same unfortunate mind-set permeates the commentaries and reportage of south-west media (Adamu, 2010b, p. 64) .

Here, Adamu, from emphasising the division along the north-south divide of the country, he uses his framing to create another division between the 'envious' Yoruba ethnic group (of which Prince Ajibola is one) and the 'successful' Hausa/Fulani political elite who 'dominate the nation's political landscape'. Adamu skewed his report towards his ethnic community (the Hausa/Fulani), hence, he did not mask his prejudice as a Hausa/Fulani. Thus, the framing of news along the Middle Belt and core north divide, such as done by Adamu did contribute to the escalation of the conflict. Taken together, it is reasonable to conclude that Adamu was not at all conscious of the effects of his article on the reading public.

This second part of discussion on RQ1 showed how newspaper reports were influenced by geographical divide. This report by Jacob Adamu in *The Sunday Standard* (of March 21, 2010) titled 'The military and Jos crisis.' Adamu's report was written within the context of the Middle Belt and core north divide that characterised relations as well as media reportage of events in the area. For instance, Adamu claimed that:

The Hausa/Fulani desire to overrun Plateau State dates back into time and they have promised to sustain the struggle so long as Nigeria remains a single entity [...] let

other Nigerians not think that the war is against this state alone as it is a systematic one designed to be taken to other parts of the country as well (Adamu, 2010c, p. 64).

Through deliberate choice of words and metaphors, Adamu presented Plateau State as a victim, and warned other states to be careful. For instance, he used a metaphor of war 'overrun' and presented a dire picture and pragmatically, Adamu tried to emphasise the unity and solidarity of the minority groups (within the Middle Belt), when he said, 'let other Nigerians not think that the war is against the state alone' (Adamu, 2010c). Adamu's alleged fear of being overrun by the Hausa/Fulani, confirmed the concern of IR3 (p. 147) when he argued that the main reason why *The Nigeria Standard* was set up was to give the Middle Belt a voice against their domination. For Adamu, the way the Hausa/Fulani would try to achieve their perceived agenda of 'overrunning' Plateau and other states was through what he called 'the military thrust.' Adamu's report was slanted and showed a reporter that immersed in himself in the story. Adamu's choice of lexical term, as noted above, does not serve to prevent conflict nor advance peace.

The second report by *The Sunday Standard* (of Sunday, April 4, 2010) was titled 'Plateau, the Middle Belt and the myth of 'One North' by Bishara John Goni. For him, 'One North' that includes Plateau State, is nothing but 'dangerous hypocrisy and make-believe.' In Goni's views, the concept of 'One North,' is nothing more than a myth. He doubted if the idea ever existed, but if it ever did, it has since evaporated with the sporadic conflicts across the region. Goni advice's that:

It is crucially important that we come to terms with the truth [...] the Hausa/Fulani (Muslim) north has a heritage rooted in the tradition of Jihad and the Caliphate. The Middle Belt (Christian) has an identity anchored on Christianity and resistance. The people of the Middle Belt are what they are today because they were never conquered by Jihad and never subscribed to enslavement by the Caliphate and its feudal powers (Goni, 2010, p. 5).

Goni's lexical choice showed the use of metaphors of war ('Jihad,' 'resistance,' 'conquer,' 'enslavement,' 'feudal' and 'powers') (Goni, 2010, p. 5). They aimed to emphasise the deep division and polarisation between the Middle Belt and the core north. Goni's choice of lexical terms within the context of agenda setting theory were deliberately chosen to achieve an agenda (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). His quote above can be explained in two ways. One, seen from the angle of the Plateau State conflict, the writer carefully framed his story to present the Plateau State's indigenous ethnic communities as 'victors' and not 'vanquished.' Second, based on his

(Goni's) words selection ('Jihad' and 'Caliphate') showed the Plateau State indigenous groups as 'victims', while the Hausa/Fulani as 'aggressors.' This is because the Fulani reformist, Usman Dan Fodio waged a violent Jihad in Nigeria in 1804 aimed at Islamising the entity that would later be known as Nigeria and beyond (Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010). One of the interview respondents (IR3) in this research corroborated Goni's position by recalling the circumstances that led to the establishment of *The Nigeria Standard* in 1972, which he argued was to help safeguard the interests of the minorities in the Middle Belt against the domination of the Hausa/Fulani. Based on this historical antecedent, Goni's report should be seen from that viewpoint of subjugation and resistance:

The attempt to subjugate and humiliate the people of the Middle Belt is nothing new. Our northern Pharaohs had always ensured that the region was always marginalised (Goni, 2010, p. 6).

Although the reporter tried to present his angle on the conflict, the way he framed his report implied immersion and the report as slanted. Both *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* reports did not demonstrate objectivity and balance since they were bent at protecting the ethnic interests of their ethnic communities (IRs 9 (p. 148) & 10 (pp. 148-9)). Thus, the finding confirms the classification of Nigerian newspapers in Nigerian parlance along 'Lagos-Ibadan' and 'Abuja-Kaduna' axis (Yusha'u, 2015). Hence, the positions assumed by the journalists and their organisations (*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*) regarding their news framing in terms of the Middle Belt and core north which only served to further polarise an already divided society. The choices of news frames by journalists of both newspapers were deliberately created to project the agendas of their ethnic communities engaged in the conflict as victims. The history of the incorporation of ethnicity in the Nigerian press, Abati (2000) argues, goes back to the period of merging journalism practice and politics during the nationalists struggle for independence during the colonial period (1900-1960). It is rather ironic that most countries on the African continent fought brutal wars for their independence, Nigeria, on the other hand, fought and won its independence on the pages of newspapers. Unfortunately, the same newspapers, today, have become the battlefield upon which violent ethnic conflicts are being waged in Nigeria (Kalejauye, 2009) . From this study's finding, evidence suggest that the division along ethno-regional lines, which goes back to pre-independence times, persists as shown in the coverage of the Plateau State conflict by *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*. It would be recalled that it was because of these ethnic differences, among others, that led to the establishment of *The Nigeria Standard* by the then Plateau State Governor, Joseph

Dechi Gomwalk, in 1972 (Goyol, 1999). The minority ethnic communities within the Middle Belt felt that their interests were not being reflected in *The New Nigerian*, which was being managed by the Hausa/Fulani in Kaduna. As a child of necessity, *The Nigeria Standard* was, therefore, meant to give a voice to those minority communities within the Middle Belt area.

### **7.3. RQ2: How has Journalists' Ethnic Background Influenced the Reporting of the Plateau State Conflict?**

This research question was posed to find out how journalists' ethnicity influenced their reports on the Plateau State conflict. The researcher utilised data from literature, semi-structured interviews and textual contents. Two newspaper reports from each of the chosen newspapers were examined under the sub-theme of 'stereotypes/divisive ethnic frames' (the *Daily Trust* 'A word for Jos Warriors' by Mahmud Jega, 'Plateau: '209 Fulani herdsmen killed in 3 LGs' by Suleiman Bisalla and two reports from *The Nigeria Standard* 'Who wants to cripple Plateau?' by Bulus Gambo and Kenneth Dakop and '151 arrested people caught defending communities' by Kenneth Dakop).

Opening the discussion with the report entitled 'A word for Jos warriors' by Mahmud Jega (a staff columnist), Jega dwells rather extensively on the subject matter of *Yan Kasa* (Hausa word meaning 'sons of the soil'). The opening paragraph of the report showed a journalist who was dispassionate in his report, which indicated objectivity and balance, which are among the core values of journalism practice, thus:

The carnage in Jos, the Plateau State capital and its environs two weeks ago, left many outside observers confused and bewildered as to how such a terrible event could occur now. [...] the indiscriminate killings, including women and children, maiming of people, setting ablaze of mosques, churches, shops and houses with the occupants inside, genocidal attacks on village, farms workers and herdsmen, and the waylaying of vehicles on the highway, to drag out and kill innocent people (Jega, 2010b, p. 64).

From the point of view of neutrality (McQuail, 1993), Jega's report appeared balanced through his deliberate choice of such words as 'indiscriminate,' 'women,' 'children,' 'Mosques,' 'Churches,' 'farmers,' and 'herdsmen' (Jega, 2010b, p. 64). However, the author shortly after, began to immerse himself in the report by taking an ethnic position. The reporter blamed the intractable Plateau State conflict on the fact that some key agencies in the state were partisan, thus:

The Jos carnage is becoming intractable because all the key agencies and agents who should contain it, namely the Plateau State governor, the police commissioner, and army GOC, and the federal government have been alleged to be partisan in the conflict (Jega, 2010b, p. 64).

Jega's accusations in the quote above shows bias in favour of the Hausa/Fulani. Jega's deliberate lexical choice of *Yan Kasa* and italicised instead of the English 'sons of the soil', which he used five times, were for emphasis. It is important to note that none of these institutions mentioned by Jega ('police commissioner,' 'General Officer Commanding,' and the federal government) were established by Plateau State, apart from the people of the state who elected Jang as governor, which cut across the prisms of ethnicity and religion. By implication, Jega's application of *Yan Kasa*, as already noted, 'sons of the soil' (a derogatory term) meant that others (Hausa/Fulani) were excluded and considering the conflict environment it clearly referred to Plateau State.

In the second report 'Plateau: '209 Fulani herdsmen killed in 3 LGs' by Suleiman Bisalla followed the same trajectory of immersion, slanted and unsubstantiated reporting as the previous reports. Bisalla merely reported the alleged petition of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association, Plateau State Chapter, alleging that 209 of its members were killed in Jos south, Riyom, and Barkin Ladi local government areas of Plateau State; the local governments areas mentioned (are predominantly Berom) in the petition presupposes that Berom were the aggressors, although, the names of the alleged killers were not mentioned. The report was biased because there was no evidence of a police or Red Cross report to confirm the numbers of Fulani killed and by whom. The report also shows an attempt by the reporter to implicate Governor David Jonah Jang, thus 'The petition said 81 Fulani were killed in Jos South, out of which 27 died in non-combatant encounter in Du village.' Although the report also alleged that Fulani were killed in other villages, the reporter's specific mention of Du, which is the village of the Plateau State governor by implication, means that the governor may have been complicit in it because he (Governor Jang) is Berom. When Bisalla's report is viewed from the perspectives of the agenda setting theory it shows that by adding the name of the village where the killings allegedly took place, the reporter tried to influence the anti Berom agenda of the Hausa/Fulani.

The first report by *The Nigeria Standard* 'Who wants to cripple Plateau' (Gambo & Dakop, 2010, p. 1), which is a front-page news report by Bulus Gambo and Kenneth Dakop is rather interesting. Although the title of the report was in bold on the front-page of the paper, the actual

report was in the inside page (pages 9 & 10). Strangely, the story in the inside pages had a different title ‘Who wants Plateau on its knees?’ It is hard to decipher what the real intentions of the authors were in their lexical selections of ‘cripple’ and ‘knees,’. Even though, the words are similar, but different, implies the polarisation and local meanings (‘positive self-presentation and negative other presentation’). Whereas the dictionary defines a ‘cripple’ as someone who is permanently lame, and disabled, the ‘knees’, on the other hand, means kneeling without the element of permanence (Pocket Oxford English Dictionary). What is implied here by the reporters’ use of the two metaphors (cripple and knees) was to present Plateau State as a victim of a contrived aggression by the Hausa/Fulani group. The framing of their (Gambo and Dakop) report showed immersion in their story and skewed, perhaps, because of their being indigenes.

This second report on the violent conflict at Dutse Uku in Jos north local government by Gambo and Dakop is slanted towards the Plateau State’s indigenous ethnic communities. For instance, the two leaders they interviewed (the district head of Jos Jarawa, Ada Ezekiel Ajang Izang, and the village head of Agodong-Izar in Jos Jarawa, Ada Michael Atsi) were both Afizere by ethnicity, who are indigenes. The two reporters did not interview the head of the Jasawa community (the umbrella body of the Hausa/Fulani in Plateau State) to get his perspective on the matter. Assuming the Jasawa leader was interviewed, the two reporters would have quoted him. Failing to interview the Jasawa leader to balance their report clearly showed exclusion, which is against the stance of HRJ, which seeks to give equal opportunity or voice to people (Shaw, 2012). Gambo and Dakop, using some discursive strategies, such as vagueness and omission, the authors did not refer to the Hausa/Fulani whom they alluded as being behind the conflict in other parts of the state by name in their report, rather they referred to them as ‘hoodlums’ (three times) until almost towards the end of their article they declared thus: this, again fits into the concept of nominalisation that deliberately hides the subject and centres on the object (Fairclough, 2000).

But what the residents of the peace city of Jos and its environs did not envisage was that the Hausa/Fulani expansionists would be so brutal in the attacks at Kuru Centre, Bishichi, Ungwar Doki (Rahol Kanang), among other places (Gambo & Dakop, 2010, p. 10).

By employing these discursive strategies of vagueness and omission, the authors deliberately intended to manipulate reality to accomplish either their personal goals or those of their ethnic communities. Going by their quote above ‘the residents of the peace city of Jos and its environs’

vis-à-vis 'Hausa/Fulani expansionists' their goals are clear, namely, present especially Plateau State people as peace-loving while the Hausa/Fulani as expansionists. Anything that does not serve the interest of peace or likely to promote division goes against the principles of human rights journalism as propounded by Shaw (2012). By implication, the city of Jos was peaceful because its residents (who presumably are indigenes) were peace-loving, while the Hausa/Fulani were not because they were belligerent ('expansionists'). This further reinforced the use of negative stereotypes to disparage an ethnic group.

In the second news report '151 arrested people caught defending communities' with a rider '49 confessed to being hired' by Kenneth Dakop was published against the backdrop of the mass killings at Dogo Na Hauwa, Zot and Ratsat villages in Jos south and Barkin Ladi local government areas (2010). This report by Dakop highlights the use of hyperbole ('151 arrested') and litotes ('49 confessed'). A reporter would amplify fatalities or under quote them, depending on which serves or advances his/her agenda or the agenda of his/her employer. Although the reporter obtained his information from the acting commissioner of police, Ikechukwu Aduba, the framing of the headline '151 arrested people caught defending communities' showed a certain bias by the reporter towards the arrested persons who were, allegedly, doing a legitimate duty of 'defending communities.' Based on the context, they were indigenes like himself (based on his name). While, the rider '49 confessed to being hired' implies that they were mercenaries also shows polarisation. In other words, the 151-people arrested were defending communities, against the 49 who are the aggressors.

The use of negative stereotypical frames by both *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* in their reports, clearly, showed the extent to which ethnicity, not only featured, but influenced the reporting decisions of the journalists. This further buttressed the assertions of IR5 (p. 140) and IEL2 (p. 140) that the two newspaper organisations' agendas are the protection of their ethnic community's interests, which also fits into the agenda-setting theory of the media (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The ethnic influence was a strong variable to the extent that both reporters and managing editors sometime depart from their professional ethics (standards) assessing their news reports based on ethnic affiliation (Hugh, 1981). Thus, journalists use the press to shape the attitudes of their readers (Hackett, 2003; Hugh, 1981). So, following RQ2, how has journalists' ethnic background influenced the reporting of the Plateau State conflict? The research noted the use of divisive/ethnic frames, such as 'Yan Kasa,' 'Hausa/Fulani,' 'Berom,' 'indigenes/settlers,' 'expansionists' in the newspaper reports. This assertion correlates with some of the views of the interview respondents. For example, IR6 argues that

in the heat of the Plateau State conflict, some ‘journalists were beginning to think that the only way they could contribute to the discourse was by siding with their ethnic groups’ (p. 147). Ethnicity also influenced the reporting of the Plateau State conflict, especially at the macro level because two distinct ethnic groups were involved, that is, the Hausa/Fulani settlers and the indigenous ethnic groups. The newspaper reports of the 2011 general elections in Plateau State mirrored this division as ethnic frames featured quite prominently (IR2, p. 147).

Both the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard’s* reporters, correspondents and editors chose news frames that would advance the ethnic agenda of their communities in the conflict, because for as far as they were concerned they were performing a legitimate duty. Therefore, their news frames were carefully selected and framed to achieve their agenda. In the conceptualisation of Shaw (2012), HRJ is a style of reporting whose goal is justice for all, not minding one’s ethnicity, religion, political association, nationality, gender, or geographical location. Thus, taking an ethnic approach to news production is against the spirit of this type of journalism. For these journalists, news values took back stage to the ethnic interest they were out to project. Perhaps, to situate this in its proper context, it is important to recall here that both newspapers (*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*) were founded to promote ethnic interests (Goyol, 1999; Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Yusha’u, 2015). Thus, this scenario is consistent with Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) notion that the media systems the world over, have interests to either protect, or project. Hence, they are hardly able to exercise the neutrality their profession and audiences expect of them.

In seeking answer to RQ2, the researcher noted that reporters from both newspapers were under pressure from the ethnic groups in the conflict to slant their reports in their favour. This was the experience of IR10 (p. 148) who said that:

[...] I was under pressure from [...] interest groups to support their agenda by promoting ethnic interests. There was the Hausa/Fulani pressure group that believes that since the newspaper I work for is owned by a group of Hausa/Fulani, I should protect their agenda.

Although journalists who covered the Plateau State conflict were under pressure from various interest groups (in addition to corporate pressures) to report their stories in ways that expressed bias towards their ethnic communities, however, some of them resisted such pressures. One of the interview respondents, IR4 (p. 148) contends that, for him, to slant a report in favour of his ethnic group during the conflict was a legitimate duty. Thus, McCombs and Shaw’s (1974) arguments that the media’s emphasis on an issue to influence the audience as well as give



prominence to the issue cannot be ignored. The views of IR1 (p. 145) also resonates with the positions of McCombs and Shaw, namely, that '[...] some reporters refused to cover certain events because some ethnic groups were involved [...], reporters also chose to cover certain stories, events and personalities involved.' All this is in line with the framing theory of Entman (1993), of an editor selecting an aspect of a perceived reality and making it prominent and so direct the reader's attention to a particular direction. The refusal to cover certain issues, as IR1 posited above, amounts to exclusion and marginalisation of some people or communities, which HRJ is out to counter (Shaw, 2012). In general, the finding here has shown that the ethnic backgrounds of the journalists who covered the Plateau State conflict was a key factor. There was evidence to support this claim using partisan language in both newspapers, such as 'sons of the soil,' 'indigenes/settlers,' 'mercenaries,' 'militia,' 'expansionists,' among other divisive ethnic frames by reporters and editors, which tended to sway readers along ethnic lines. This does not only undermine journalistic core values of balance, fairness, accuracy, truth telling, objectivity, among others, but goes against conflict preventive approach and equal justice stance of human rights journalism (Shaw, 2012). Taken together, journalists failed to be conscious of the fact that their skewed reports might have violated human rights, even though they claimed in their interviews to be aware of the effects of their reports on the reading public.

#### **7.4. RQ 3: What are the Practice-Based Implications of the Coverage of the Plateau State Conflict from an Ethnic Perspective?**

In posing this question, the researcher aimed to share the diverse experiences of the conflict reporters and editors in the process of their news coverage and production on the Plateau State conflict. Furthermore, the researcher examined some headline frames and how they might have exacerbated the conflict through propaganda. The researcher was also keen to know if the reporters and editors were conscious of the effects of their news reports on their readers. Three reports each from the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard* are used: The *Daily Trust* '200 killed in Jos villages raid,' 'Jos crises threat to national security-Myetti Allah,' and 'Rockets fired at Jos Islamic schools, STF' with a rider 'Boy, 5 others killed.' *The Nigeria Standard* 'Jos Massacre: Police debunks reports,' 'The plot thickens against Plateau,' and 'Slain politicians: 'Their blood shall win freedom.'

Here, the headline reports of the *Daily Trust* 'Jos crises threat to national security-Myetti Allah' by Hamza Idris and *The Nigeria Standard* 'The plot thickens against Plateau' were discussed as examples of how both newspaper framed their reports as part of the propaganda. For

instance, in the report 'Jos crises threat to national security-Myetti Allah' is an example of how hyperboles were used in reporting the conflict. Journalists and other news media professionals frequently use frames to process large amount of data which they will logically package and present to their readers as news. Through this well-thought process of value judgement and selections, content creators/developers choose words and tools to construct their perceived reality (Giltin, 1980). Thus, the framing of this headline news 'Jos crises a threat to national security-Myetti Allah' speak to the kind of propaganda that has come to characterise the coverage of the Plateau State conflict by the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard* newspapers. The report was an interview with the Chairman of the Myetti-Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), Alhaji Mai Aliyu Usman in Yobe State. The reporter deliberately framed the headline report to achieve two things: to attract public attention and to paint the picture of a dire situation thus 'The continued attacks and gradual killings going on in Jos is a threat to national security, which must be addressed before it moves to other places' (Idris, 2010, p. 3). Although the Plateau State conflict had lasted over a decade and lives and property were lost (Ishaku, 2012; Kaigama, 2012; Musa & Ferguson, 2013), Idris should have done a follow-up interview with Usman, especially about his claim on the Plateau State conflict being a threat to the national security of the country. For instance, at the time the Plateau State was raging, the Niger Delta conflict and the Boko Haram insurgency was equally being fought with even greater intensity in states within the north-east geo-political zone of the country, namely, Gombe, Yobe, Borno and Adamawa, with vast expanse of territories under the control of the insurgents. Yet, Usman did not consider those crises as threats to national security. This implied an attempt by Idris to disparage the state (Plateau), a situation which the Plateau State Indigenous Association Network (PIDAN) had complained about. It also showed immersion in the report and lack of balance on the part of the reporter. Because if as Usman implored the Federal Government of Nigeria to see the Plateau State conflict 'as a national emergency,' shouldn't the Niger Delta and the Boko Haram insurgencies have been greater national emergencies? Hence, Idris' sense of objectivity is called into question. Taking the context of the conflict environment into consideration, there was an agenda, which the *Daily Trust*, through its reporter (Usman) wanted to achieve, namely, to portray Plateau State as unsafe. Furthermore, news media professionals routinely use frames to accomplish the objectives of the ethnic community they (journalists) have pledged their loyalty by ensuring that the views of the other party in conflict is not heard even if it is a public-funded newspaper (Danaan, 2017). The issue of allegiance is an important factor, as Kukah (1993) avowed, which cannot be ignored in trying to understand problems in Nigeria, especially conflict. This is because a

typical Nigerian has various networks of associations to which appeals are made routinely by his or her patrons, such as clan, village, tribe, political, ethnic and religious communities, among others.

The framing of the headline report 'The plot thickens against Plateau' by Timothy Alaba of *The Nigeria Standard* meant a conspiracy against Plateau State and implied polarisation. Again, one does not only see division, but also the use of propaganda. The reporters claimed that: 'The plot against Plateau State thickens with every passing day. It is so thick in the air that one could catch it. This evil plot is being orchestrated by the Hausa/Fulani of the core north.' It is presented in dramatic terms. His lexical choice of metaphors created a movie-like-scene. This agrees with the propaganda narrative that tends to characterise the coverage of the conflict by the two newspapers. Just like the *Daily Trust* report on the headlines, Alaba deliberately crafted the headline to sway the opinions of the Plateau State indigenous ethnic communities. The headline presented Plateau State as a victim of a grand conspiracy, which he asserted thus: 'This evil plot is being orchestrated by the Hausa/Fulani of the core north' (Alaba, 2010, p. 6). Alaba's choice of vocabulary 'core north' confirms the polarisation between the Hausa/Fulani and the Plateau State's indigenous ethnic groups. Apart from further emphasising the polarisation between the local Hausa/Fulani in Plateau State, the text creates another level of polarisation between the 'Hausa/Fulani of the core north and the indigenous ethnic communities of Plateau state. The report also called to question Alaba's sense of objectivity and balance because it indicated his immersion in it. What was clear in both reports was the use of various forms of hyperbole and rhetoric ('Jos threat to national security,' 'plot,' 'thickens,' 'everyday,' 'one could touch it') aimed at 'shaping public belief and the decisions and behaviour of an audience which is consistent with goals of news framing' (Richardson, 2007, p. 186).

The *Daily Trust* front page headline news entitled '200 killed in Jos villages raid' by Andrew Agbese, Ahmed Mohammed and Misbahu Bashir, was in the aftermath of the well-publicised Dogo Na Hauwa, Jot and Ratsat killings. Some unnamed villagers in the affected areas who were interviewed by the reporters claimed that 'the invaders were Fulani herders because they were heard speaking 'Fulfulde' (Fulani language).' Although *Fulfulde* is the language widely spoken by the Fulani, just because the attackers were heard speaking Fulfulde did not necessarily imply they were Fulani. They might have been non-Fulani who spoke *Fulfulde*. The report showed the use of presupposition, which is when information is inferred. Again, among those interviewed by the reporters in the aftermath of the killings was the Plateau State

Commissioner for information, Gregory Yenlong who ‘said up to 500 people were killed and many others were being treated at various hospitals in the state.’ The reproduction of the commissioner’s interview on the fatality figures (500) without a query by the *Daily Trust* reporters is noteworthy. Taken together, the reporters could have been accused of partisanship if they were not the *Daily Trust* reporters, because of the lack of a follow-up interview and the acceptance of the fatalities without quoting the relevant agencies, such as the police and the Red Cross. The Plateau State commissioner for information’s figures contrast sharply with those of the *Daily Trust* reporters (200), which might have been intended to downplay the enormity of the killings. Looking at this against the backdrop of the news framing, by deliberately exaggerating the fatalities in one count (500) and de-emphasising in another (200), the intention was to influence the behaviour of the readers.

*The Nigeria Standard* also published a similar front-page report on the same attacks ‘Jos Massacre: Police debunks reports’ by Kenneth Dakop. The fatality figures of both the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard*, as already noted, differed significantly. Whereas the *Daily Trust* claimed 200 people were killed, *The Nigeria Standard*, on the other hand, alleged 500, the police, on their part, gave a completely different report on the numbers of people killed thus:

Contrary to the 500-casualty figure of victims of Sunday, March 7, 2010 massacre at Dogo Na Hauwa, Zot, Ratsat and Kutgot villages given by the Plateau State Government and reported by *The Nigeria Standard*, the command of the Nigerian police in Plateau State, yesterday announced that only 109 were confirmed killed in the fracas (Dakop, 2010c, pp. 1-2) .

The discrepancies in the fatality figures reflects the use of hyperboles and litotes, the politics of manufacturing figures with the deliberate intent to fuel conflict between the warring ethnic communities. Both the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard*, as a matter of law, were required to cross check their facts with either, the Nigeria police, or the Nigeria Red Cross, and because they are the bodies officially certified to give reports on casualty figures. The reason for this was to avoid the politicisation of casualty figures, which has been a common feature in reporting the conflict. But, clearly, both newspapers did not adhere to that and that, therefore, accounted for the inconsistencies in the numbers of fatalities, which entailed that their reports were slanted. This could mean that both newspapers (*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*), through their reporters and editors were determined to drive through the ethnic agenda of their communities and patrons whom the pay allegiance to (Plateau State’ ethnic communities and the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group) (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Since the

commitments of the reporters and editors was the actualisation of their community's agenda, it implied that they were not conscious of the possible implications of such coverage (aggravating the conflict) in their reports through exaggeration. The politicisation of fatalities by newspaper organisations constitutes, in the views of Shaw (2012), human rights violation. This is because framing news reports in the way they did were aimed at stoking enmity and creating division.

Another noticeable feature in the ways reports were framed by both papers was the use of propaganda. The research finding indicated that by consistently employing hyperboles and litotes in their reports, reporters and editors employed propaganda as part of their discursive strategies in their news production. News media professionals always seek to influence the attitudes or actions of their readers and, thus attempt to influence the behaviour of their ethnic communities in such a way that they (the ethnic group) forms an opinion and specific behaviour (Domenach, 1973). Therefore, Domenach's opinion resonates with that of Rutman and Shoemaker (2007 cited in Katu, 2016), which is that media frames often provide the lens through, which ethnic communities analyse and interpret texts which could either persuade them to violence or rally them towards peacebuilding. This approach is consistent with the news framing theory of the media, which emphasises some aspects of the news, but de-emphasises others thereby influencing the opinions of readers. In this way, prejudice could be expressed, hatred stoked and conflict escalated (Entman, 1993). This, too agreed with the agenda-setting theory of the media (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), because the basic assumption is that frames about news violence emanates from the newsrooms and editing sites; hence, journalists will set the agendas for the audience to express their viewpoints (Mitchell, 2007). Interview evidence (IR5, p. 166) also indicated that it was possible to find three newspapers reporting on the same issue, but facts may differ as it was the case on the fatality figures above. IR5 adduced that by merely looking at the headlines one could predict the standpoint of the paper concerning the conflict. Some of the interview respondents (IR8, p. 167 & IR9, p. 167) acknowledged the role of papers in such propaganda. These respondents noted that, even the newspaper organisation they work for was part of the propaganda and further explained that they were assured that their reports would be published in the next edition. The propaganda model squares with the findings of this thesis, which points that conflict reporters/editors used propaganda as a tool to rally support of their readers along ethnic lines. The propaganda embarked on by the newspapers in reporting the Plateau State conflict contradicts the conflict-prevention model of HRJ as conceived by Shaw (2012). Had journalists been conscious of this, they might have been temperate and moderate with the kinds of frames they produced.

The second news report by the *Daily Trust* newspaper which may have swayed the opinions of some of its readers was published in front-page entitled ‘Rockets fired at Jos Islamic school-boy, 5 others killed’ by Lami Sadiq and Hassan Ibrahim. This bold headline was deliberately employed to arouse the emotions of the Hausa/Fulani who are predominantly Muslims by using the word ‘Rockets.’ The report is highly hyperbolised using the word ‘Rockets’ by the two reporters (Sadiq and Ibrahim) to allegedly show the calibre of weapon used. However, the absence of some basic facts in the report implied that the report was biased. For instance, the reporters claimed that ‘Three rocket-propelled grenades were fired in Jos yesterday, one at an Islamic school packed with students taking exams and two near an office of the Special Task Force’ (Sadiq & Ibrahim, p. 1). The report, further claimed, that ‘a 9-year-old boy was killed in the first attack that targeted the Nuru Islam School in Bukuru, in Jos south local government area at about 10:30am, while two more people were found dead in the vicinity soon after.’ It is apparent that the reporters did not do much investigation before publishing their report since no security report was quoted to verify the cause of the fatalities. Just because two bodies were found within the vicinity of the school does not mean, definitively, that it was because of the ‘rocket-propelled grenades.’ There was no evidence to show the type of weapon used. The weapon used might have been an ordinary gun rather than a rocket-propelled grenade since there was no proof that an expert was consulted on the type of weapon used, since they (reporters) only relied on those who heard the sound. This, therefore, has led this researcher to believe that the report was deliberately slanted by the reporters to mislead the public to further incite fear and polarise an already divided society. This is because the bold headline ‘Rockets fired at Jos Islamic School, STF-Boy, 5 others killed’ (Sadiq & Ibrahim, p. 1) is not supported by the newspaper’s text, because ‘the grenade missed the school, but hit a nearby home, killing a boy named Rufai Umar. The article’s content indicates the use of presuppositions. Taking this report in context and considering the ethnic and religious backgrounds of both Sadiq and Ibrahim, which is Hausa/Fulani and Muslims, showed evidence of their immersion in their report. Thus, the advice of Ramasubramanian (2013) on this cannot be ignored, that journalists and other news content creators/developers in their news production, need to be conscious of the types of frames they produce, bearing in mind the potential negative effects of their outputs on their audiences or reading public.

The second report of *The Sunday Standard* for this discussion which also appeared on the front page titled ‘Slain politicians: ‘Their blood shall win freedom’ by Kenneth Dakop was replete with metaphors and suppositions. The front-page report was published against the backdrop of

the killings of two illustrious politicians from the state (Plateau): Gyang Dantong who was a senator representing Plateau north senatorial zone and from Riyom local government area and Gyang Fulani, a member Plateau State House of Assembly, representing Barkin Ladi and Riyom local government areas. The two politicians had gone to attend the funeral of victims of an earlier attack. The area in question was within their constituency when they came under attack by some suspected Fulani attackers. Dakop's report, which quoted the state Commission of Information, Yiljap Abraham, they were killed:

In the blood of these two martyrs shall we will win our freedom to live and occupy a state that is totally free of the fear of attacks by those who hate us (Dakop, 2012, p. 2) .

The headline news was a direct quotation, but the author paraphrased the state Commissioner's statement: 'Their blood shall win freedom', which used metaphors of war ('blood,' 'win,' 'freedom, 'attacks, 'hate'). By selecting these words: 'Blood,' 'win,' 'freedom,' 'attacks,' and 'hate,' it paints the picture of a persecuted community. The framing of the headline news resonates with notion of polarisation because by using those lexical, meant that Plateau State was in a state of war. Beyond quoting the speech of the state Commissioner, Dakop did not do much by way of questioning the Commissioner for Information's speech based on his claims. For instance, the Commissioner used metaphors that suggested Plateau State was at war, but deliberately did not say with whom. Not disclosing the identity of those that the state was at war with is in keeping with the news framing theory where some frames are included, and others excluded. Indeed, the judgement to either include or exclude the variety of news contents constitutes framing (Entman, 1993). This also squares with Fairclough's (2000) concept of nominalisation in which the subject is removed from the text while the object is the centre of attention. In the opinions of Giles and Shaw (2009), it is essential when analysing news frames to pay attention to the story and its character, by analysing the story form and the discourse use. Thus, the use of those lexical terms ('Blood,' 'win,' 'freedom,' 'attacks,' and 'hate' by Abraham was a conscious decision. There was also no evidence that the reporter sought to get the commissioner to clarify by way of a follow-up interview. Failure to follow through on this implied immersion and slanting of the report. This also fits into the story that the conflict was being externally manipulated by people who did not mean Plateau State well. It must be remembered that the procedure whereby reporters and editors include or exclude media frames are not merely aimed at shaping the attitudes or behaviours of their audiences, but crucially aimed at achieving the agenda of their ethnic patrons.

Furthermore, the deliberate use of religious/metaphoric frames, such as ‘blood,’ ‘martyrs,’ and ‘freedom,’ were meant to create the impression that, although the conflict was ethnic in nature, it nonetheless had a religious dimension to it. This resonates with McCombs and Shaw (1972) agenda-setting theory, which attaches importance to news reports through placement, choice of frames, size and frequency of appearance of such reports. Lexicalisation is always intentional, and based on popular held notion, the choice of frames in newspaper-writing is not an accident or arbitrary, rather, it is systematically determined (Pan, Meng, & Zhou, 2010). Again, this view is consistent with the agenda-setting theory of mass communication as asserted by McCombs and Shaw (1972). This model, as it has already been observed, posits a nexus between the relative stress placed by media outlets on a range of issues and the influence it has in shaping and moulding public opinion (Chan, 1999). Scholars, such as Ader (1995) have argued that when the media persist in trying to keep an issue prominent in public discourse it succeeds, not just by providing information, but also by attempting to convey the legitimacy of that issue to the audience. Dakop’s reference to the two politicians as ‘martyrs’ also implied that Dantong and Fulani were killed, not only because they were Berom, but because they were Christians.

Overall, this correlates with the idea that most conflicts in Nigeria are analysed from the perspectives of ethnicity and religion, because most of the times these issues interface, especially in Plateau State (IR2, p. 151). Earlier, it was noted that Plateau State, based on its ethnic composition is a miniature Nigeria because it is home to over 370 ethnic communities (Alubo, 2006). This research finding, therefore, attests to the fact that the ethnic configuration of the country, which later affected the Nigerian media system since the colonial period persists. Hence, it confirms the literature that during the colonial period, the nationalists’ media, especially *The Record* and *The Standard* (owned by the Yoruba ethnic group) and *The West African Pilot* (owned by Nnamdi Azikiwe, of the Igbo extraction) were among the pioneer papers that served as outlets for the agitation for independence in 1960. However, before independence and shortly after, the media were involved in a dangerous ethnic awakening (ethno-regional politics), which to date, characterises the Nigerian media landscape based on negative propaganda and the use of inflammatory rhetoric (Adedeji, 2009; Galadima & Soola, 2012; Okidu, 2011; Yusha’u, 2015). Politicians used their newspapers to galvanise their ethnic communities during politics, which was one of the major reasons that prompted the northern political elite, too, to establish *The New Nigerian* that would protect as well as project the northern regional government’s interests (Kukah, 1993).



## **7.5 Toward a Human Rights Consciousness Journalism Model**

This thesis has established a connection between the coverage of the Plateau State conflict by the newspaper journalists of the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard* and the fuelling of it. The study has detailed the nature and ways newspaper conflict journalists of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* constructed and produced the news stories they presented to their reading audiences. The research data showed that journalists and their news corporations, despite their claims to the contrary, were not conscious of the negative impact of their reports on their readers considering the way they framed their news (use of negative/stereotypical frames, such as ‘sons of the soil,’ ‘Berom militia,’ and ‘Fulani mercenaries,’ among others). Added to this was the fact that the journalists did not show much understanding of how ethnically complex the conflict environment (Plateau State) they covered was. Had they shown more consciousness and sensitivity, perhaps they might have been a bit more careful in the manner of their news production and presentation. This deficiency in knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of the conflict, coupled with the journalists’ loyalty to their ethnic communities and patrons, made them reported the conflict in manners that suggested human rights infringements.

## 7.6 Human Rights Consciousness Journalism



Figure 24: A *Human Rights Consciousness Journalism Model for Conflict-Prevention in Plateau State* (Dewan, 2018).

The above model of Human Rights Consciousness Journalism (see Figure 26) described the steps, if taken by journalists, content creators/developers and newspaper organisations, could

either prevent conflict altogether or help to ameliorate its effects. The basic assumption of this Human Rights Consciousness Journalism model is that if journalists and their news corporations are conscious of the harm their reports could potentially cause the society, they would be more moderate and careful with the kinds of frames they produce. This is because framing is a product of strategic action, which involves a deliberate and a conscious selection of words and devices, and not a random activity of reporters. Through this process of framing, reporters construct their reality, which they present to the reading audience (Vincze, 2014; Yoon & Galadima, 2002). The fundamental principle of this model as expounded in this thesis has been for journalists, content creators/developers and newspaper owners to always work toward conflict prevention and management. Thus, if such a model is utilised as put forward here it will ameliorate and ultimately lead to the prevention of conflict erupting violently. Based on this logic, therefore, the following stages (key points) of the model are explained thus:

#### **7.6.1 Knowledge of the Environment**

The literature covered during this thesis indicated that conflict reporters and editors were often not well informed of the complex and intricate conflict situations they were reporting (IR5; IR7, pp. 166-167) Knowing the history, culture, tradition, the ethnic diversities and compositions as well as the belief system of an ethnically plural conflict environment, such as Plateau State, is important for journalists to avoid writing on issues they may not be well informed about and could cause conflict. For example, the Plateau State indigenous ethnic communities have had a rather long history of conflict with the Hausa/Fulani group (Danfulani, 2006; Fwatshak, 2005b; Ishaku, 2012; Mangvwat, 2013; Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010; Plotnicov, 1972). This frosty relationship between the Hausa/Fulani and the Plateau State indigenous ethnic groups is traced to the Islamic Jihad of the Fulani reformer, Usman Dan Fodio of 1804 (Mangvwat, 2013; Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010). The Plateau State ethnic communities fought and resisted all attempts by Dan Fodio to impose the Islamic religion on them. Hence, they had lived as independent communities and polities before the imposition of the British colonial rule which colonised them (Plateau State indigenous ethnic communities) and brought them under the Emirate system of Bauchi (Mangvwat, 2013). Hence, the Hausa/Fulani have always been looked upon as invaders and occupiers by the indigenous ethnic communities. Some of the reporters and editors who covered the conflict had little or no in-depth understanding of the conflict in terms of historicity and underlying factors that characterised it. This view was reinforced by IR1 (p.155) when he said that:

Some of the reporters/editors had their opinions made about the conflict. There were reports that suggested correspondents did not write the reports. There were reports that the editor thought he knew what was happening in Plateau State better and reported, based on that.

Reporting physical conflict, as the journalists of the two chosen newspapers had done, did not tell the whole story. Indeed, it is significant, as Hallin and Mancini (2004) have posited that reporters and editors reporting conflict should pay attention, among other things, to the cultural area or environment they are reporting. This is because, journalists embarking on such assignments of covering conflicts in other cultures are likely to be influenced by their own cultural background. Therefore, this model advocates very strongly for journalists and other news media professionals covering conflicts to always have good background knowledge and understanding of the conflict environment they are reporting, or they may end up escalating the conflict as data on the Plateau State conflict confirmed.

#### **7.6.2 Consciousness and Sensitivity to Ethnic Diversities**

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines consciousness as ‘awareness of; the totality of a person’s thoughts, feelings, and sensations’. Literature has avowed the ethnic diversities of Plateau State (Alubo, 2006; Fwatshak, 2005a; Mangvwat, 2013; Musa & Ferguson, 2013). The ethnically plural nature of the state, as earlier discussed in literature, was due to the discovery of tin, the construction of the railway from Kaduna to Maiduguri, and agricultural opportunities. These events led to the influx of various ethnic nationalities both from across Nigeria and other countries outside it. Although, the mosaic of ethnic communities in the state brought opportunities, it also created tensions that have subsequently spiralled into violent conflict. Furthermore, British colonial policies, such as the Native and Land Use Act of 1910, divided these ethnic communities based on their ethnicities. The policies, not only discriminated against the indigenous ethnic communities, such as the Anaguta, Afizere and Berom triad, by alienating them, but dispossessed them of their ancestral lands (Mangvwat, 2013). These policies, therefore, turned the owners of the land into second class citizens while ‘settlers’ became their masters. Most of the reporters interviewed admitted that they did not show much consciousness and sensitivity when reporting the conflict in Plateau State. Meaning, their preoccupations were with the news of the conflict and hardly paid much attention to the ethnic and cultural diversities that has been one of the essential features of the state. The Human Rights Consciousness Journalism model requires that reporters should always be conscious and sensitive, taking into consideration the ethnic diversities of an area.

### **7.6.3 Framing based on Evidence**

Today, more than ever, the world is witnessing the rise and the proliferation of the phenomenon of fake news. Fake news is news that is falsely designed to influence or manipulate their consumers to cause conflict. Although the concept of fake news gained popularity because of Donald Trump during the American elections in 2016, it has a rather long history that dates back millennia (Din, Picone, & Smets, 2017). Since then, there has not only been an upsurge in such weaponized lies, but has been spreading like wild fire (Pope Francis, 2018).

The interview data for this thesis has shown that both reporters and their editors framed their news reports sometimes without concrete evidence (IRs1, p. 155, 3, p. 152, 8, p.158, 9, p.158). The consensus from the reporters interviewed showed that sometimes their reports were not evidence-based because of their commitment to ‘help’ their ethnic communities who were involved in the Plateau State conflict by being biased in their reports. Some of the reporters confirmed that they were under pressure by their news organisations and some ethnic pressure groups to slant their stories. Corporate and other pressures, such as from advertisers are among the factors responsible for the way reporters report their news stories (McQuail, 1993). Because journalists were biased in their news reportage they compromised on one of the basic values of their profession, which is truth-telling. Furthermore, because of the nature of the conflict (ethnic), journalists knew what their ‘editors prized as strong news story and in writing the story as strongly as they dare, they often make omissions and use language, which exaggerated or ‘hyped’ the story beyond its true value’ (Randall, 2016, p. 194). Journalists should only write what they know to be true and not deliberately omit facts and/or perspectives that could have been valuable in a report. Human Rights Consciousness Journalism model, on its part, requires journalists to write their news stories based on evidence and not manufacture reports to suit an ethnic agenda. It is essential to note that even evidence or facts that journalists may have available to them, in the interest of peace, must be handled responsibly. When this approach is taken, reporters can be said to conform to standard journalistic reporting. This model (Human Rights Consciousness Journalism) advocates that evidence should neither be exaggerated nor hyped as journalists are often tempted to in their news framing processes. Supposition in writing a report by journalists is unacceptable, because it can and has cost lives. All news reports, as Randall (2016) has noted, should be products of a conscious effort, not only to be balanced and accurate but true to both the detail and spirit of the material.

#### 7.6.4 Conflict-Prevention

The aim of Human Rights Consciousness Journalism model is the prevention of violent conflict in any form. Based on the orientation of this model and based on the data obtained and analysed during this thesis, not all journalists can possibly become Human Rights Consciousness Journalists, because of their strong ethnic and tribal affiliations. Some of the reporters interviewed admitted to this kind of ethnically inclined reportage although they later changed:

When I started work as a journalist, I enjoyed reporting on my Hausa/Fulani community: I reported on them from the perspectives of victims. But as I mature in the profession, I changed from writing in a skewed manner (IR8, p. 145).

Similarly, another reporter who also was biased in his reports because of his closeness to the Berom ethnic group explained that:

Initially, when I started covering the conflict, I was biased towards the Berom ethnic group in my report, but as time went by and the conflict was prolonged, I thought it was necessary to work towards a solution. I allowed the facts to speak for themselves so that an enduring solution to the conflict could be found (IR5, p. 146).

The two examples of biased reporting based on ethnicity cited above, were common features among reporters and editors of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* newspapers who covered the Plateau State conflict. Human Rights Consciousness Journalism reporting would strive to avoid frames that are likely to cause discontent or could lead to conflict, such as: prejudicial stereotypes based on ethnicity, writing reports that are not supported by evidence, use of language that are offensive to the sensibilities of other ethnic communities ('expansionists,' 'militias,' 'mercenaries,' 'sons of the soil,' among others) (Ojo, 2000; Pate, 2002; Yusuf, 2002). Human Rights Consciousness Journalism model encourages journalists to consciously work towards promoting dialogue in their news reports as a way of getting ethnic communities to appreciate ethnic diversities. Journalists, through their reports can make ethnic communities see ethnic diversities as opportunities and strengths as opposed to seeing them as weakness or problems. Furthermore, journalists and their news corporations should, as a matter of policy, put the twin issues of restructuring of the Nigerian state and integration on the front burner of public discourse. The data from this thesis corroborated that colonial policies divided ethnic communities based on their ethnicities and these divisions are still visible today in Plateau State and across the country. 'us' and 'them' are common adjectives for describing communities and therefore form some of the realities people have to live with every day in

Plateau State. These ethnic divisions have, not only been responsible for constant tension, but have fuelled some of the conflicts witnessed in the state (Mangwat, 2013).

Overall, the success or otherwise of this model (Human Rights Consciousness Journalism) would depend in large measure on the issue of training and retraining of journalists to orientate them towards conflict-prevention as opposed to just the coverage of the physical conflict. This study's data has documented that among those who perceived themselves as reporters and editors have not received any training at all in journalism. General training in journalism is not enough for journalists to become Human Rights Consciousness Journalists. They must show commitment towards the promotion of dialogue and so prevent conflict. The model's position is that when the different stages, as already discussed, are integrated and practiced by both journalists and their news corporations, they will potentially prevent the outbreak of violent conflicts, not just in Plateau State, but in Nigeria.

## **7.7 Conclusion**

The discussion of findings in this chapter produced some very important results. For example, RQ1 sought to know how ethnicity has been manifested in the coverage of the Plateau State conflict by *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*. Ethnicity manifested in the newspaper coverage of the conflict by the two chosen newspapers through ownership and control of the papers and the coverage of the conflict based on the Middle Belt/core north divide. The reporters and editors of both *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* were more interested in the protection of the interests of their ethnic communities than the overall interest of Plateau State. Again, reporters framed news in terms of the Middle Belt/core north divide, which further stoked the ethnic divide and made ethnic integration difficult. The Middle Belt/core north divide conformed to the majorities and minorities categorisation in Nigeria's politics, which is a factor in fuelling ethnic conflicts in Nigeria (Omololu, Ayodele, & Kikelomo, 2014). The ownership and control of the media in Nigeria determine how news reports are produced. In the views of Omenugha et al. (2013), the proprietorship rights of the media owners are far-reaching, cross-cutting and weighty because they involve 'the power to determine the corporate policy, editorial slant, content and workforce of such media establishment' (p. 99). Similarly, Okunna (2003, p. 89) claims that the ownership and control influence of the media is such that 'publisher of a newspaper could pressurise the editor to publish a 'canned' editorial written by the editor.'

RQ2 was aimed at finding out how journalists' ethnic backgrounds influenced the reporting of the Plateau State conflict. One key variable that featured here was the use of negative stereotypical/divisive ethnic frames by reporters such as *Yan kasa*, which is the equivalent 'Sons of the soil.' The use of such frames was common among reporters of the two newspapers (*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*). Again, the use of such a lexical approach fits into the narrative of the indigenes/settlers' contentious issue. The Plateau State conflict has been largely a contestation for the ownership of Jos north local government area of the state, which is not only the political capital of the state, but also its economic nerve centre between, the state's indigenous ethnic communities and the Hausa/Fulani group. The use of such phrases (indigenes/settlers) has further accentuated and stratified a state already divided along ethnic lines. What the journalists did was to reinforce the status quo (division along ethnic lines) rather than challenge it in keeping with human rights journalism norms (Shaw, 2012). Therefore, journalists' background who covered the Plateau State conflict very much influenced using negative stereotypical/divisive frames especially indigenes/settler's dichotomy.

Finally, RQ3 was meant to identify some of the practice-based implications of the coverage of the Plateau State conflict from an ethnic perspective. Some of the noticeable features unearthed by the data was the use of propaganda, which exacerbated the conflict, which by implication meant that reporters and editors, even when they claimed were conscious of the effects of their reports on their readers, they were not. Journalists also used negative frames, such as 'indigenes/settlers,' 'Berom,' 'Hausa/Fulani,' 'militia,' 'mercenaries,' among others. Reporters and editors routinely used hyperboles and litotes, depending on which of these were likely to advance their ethnic community's cause. Fatality figures were either exaggerated or under reported and through such deliberate manufacturing of figures, journalists played on the sentiments of their ethnic communities, thus, influenced them to take up arms in 'defence' of their community. The way some headline news was produced illustrated this point thus: 'Jos crises threat to national security-Myetti Allah,' 'Rockets fired at Jos Islamic school-Boy, 5 others killed,' 'Plot thickens against Plateau' and 'Slain politicians'- 'their blood shall win freedom.' Taken together, both reporters and the editors of the two newspaper establishments (the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard*) were not conscious of the harm they inflicted on, not just their readers but the state, by their irresponsible reports. It also did not show that they were conscious of the human rights violations they might have committed by their deliberate acts of incitement of groups to violence.



## Chapter Eight: Conclusions and Recommendations

It is a misfortune that necessity has induced men to accord greater license to this formidable engine, to obtain liberty that can be borne with less important objects in views, for the press, like fire, is an excellent servant, but a terrible master.

James Fenimore Cooper.

### 8.1 Introduction

This thesis has focused on the influence of ethnicity in newspaper coverage of the protracted conflict in Plateau State in north-central Nigeria. Literature on the conflict discussed this phenomenon from political, economic, ethno-religious and media audience perspectives (Alubo, 2006; Danaan, 2017; Galadima, 2010; Higazi, 2011; Katu, 2016; Musa & Ferguson, 2013). However, to date, none of these studies have examined how ethnicity influenced newspaper journalists' coverage of the conflict. The need to close this gap in knowledge motivated this investigation. To address this research problem clear, concrete steps were taken. Two newspapers were selected, namely, *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*, based on the fact that they are among the most widely read newspapers in the region (north) as well as their interests, and nearness to the scene of the conflict (Galadima, 2010). *The Nigeria Standard* represents the Plateau State's indigenous ethnic communities, while the *Daily Trust* represents the Hausa/Fulani group. In selecting the two papers, this researcher aimed to provide a better understanding of ethnicity in newspaper journalists' coverage of the Plateau State conflict. The study is based on the argument that in covering this violent episode newspaper journalists were influenced more by their ethnic affiliations than by the ethics of journalism.

The study employed the constructivist research philosophy, which argues that meanings are constructed by social actors (human beings) based on their experiences of the world they seek understanding of. This philosophical worldview contrasts sharply with the objectivist philosophy which holds that meanings are discovered and not constructed (Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2014; Crotty, 2003; Gray, 2014). The constructivist philosophical worldview aligns with the qualitative methodology chosen for this enquiry, while the objectivist approach is oriented towards the quantitative research which is not well-suited for this study. The thesis utilised textual content from the two selected newspapers (*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*) and semi-structured interviews to obtain rich primary data from key journalists (reporters

and editors) and ethnic leaders that were qualitatively analysed. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was used as a method to analyse the newspaper texts. Three key conceptual explanatory frameworks (agenda setting, news framing and human rights orientated journalism) were deployed for the analysis of interview data. Through the utilisation of these conceptual explanatory frameworks, the research attempted to understand how conflict journalists of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* constructed and produced their news reports by examining the two sets of primary data gathered in the thesis.

The research has produced some very important results. Ethnicity manifested in the newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict by the two selected newspapers in two key ways: ownership and control patterns of newspapers and the coverage of the conflict based on the framing of news in terms of the Middle Belt and core north dichotomy. The ownership and control of the newspapers, for example, has confirmed earlier studies, especially those of Omenugha et al. (2013) and Okunna (2003) who avowed that the ownership and control rights of proprietors are far-reaching and weighty (they control editorial slant and content, and workforce). The framing of news by journalists who covered the conflict based on the Middle Belt and core north divide matches with the majorities and minorities classification in the Nigeria political equation set out by Omololu et al. (2014). The data of this thesis has further deepened understanding of how the recruitment processes of the two chosen newspaper organisations have contributed to the entrenchment of the ‘us’ and ‘them’ ideology. Many journalists of both newspaper organisations interviewed were either of the same ethnicity with the owners or from the same state (IRs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, & 9). This pattern of recruitment of journalists has serious implications for journalism practice in Plateau State. This process, often, does not consider the most qualified; rather it privileges mediocrity so long as the candidate is related to the proprietor or patron. During the conflict, journalists from some ethnic communities could not move freely within communities and vice versa. Those journalists who, because of their ethnicity, were unable to cover events in other communities for fear of being attacked relied on their colleagues who, based, could cover such events without fear of being attacked. This process might have compromised the integrity of the information they got from their colleagues. It is important for the proprietors of news organisations to employ qualified journalists from other ethnic groups as part of efforts to push back the frontiers of ignorance of the other’s tradition, culture, ethnicity and religion.

This study has provided additional evidence with respect to how the ethnic backgrounds of conflict journalists have influenced reporting of the conflict. Negative stereotypical/divisive

frames such as *Yan kasa*, meaning ‘sons of the soil,’ were used. The utilisation of such phrases highlights the indigenes/settlers contentious issue in Plateau State. It is important to remember that the indigenes/settlers’ division has its roots in British colonial policies, such as the final amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates in 1914, Indirect Rule, and the Land and Native Ordinance Act of 1910, that balkanised and stratified communities based on their ethnicities (Mangvwat, 2013). These were key factors in the ethnic entrenchment evident in Plateau State, which have negatively affected, not just the press but the Nigerian media system. Although the causative factors in the conflict are many, key is the contestation for Jos north local government area between the Plateau State’s indigenous ethnic groups and the Hausa/Fulani community, because it is the economic nerve centre of the state.

Furthermore, the results of this research project provided a depth of knowledge in identifying some of the practice-based implications of the coverage of the conflict from an ethnic standpoint. Reporters and editors of the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard* newspapers exacerbated the conflict using propaganda even when they claimed they were conscious of the effects of their reports on the reading public (IE11, p. 167, IRs 8, p.167 & 9, p. 167). Fatalities were either exaggerated or downplayed depending on which would help them achieve their goals or those of their patrons (*Daily Trust* of Friday 5, 2010 by Bilkisu ‘Jos, Jand and genocide;’ *The Nigeria Standard* of July 15, 2012 ‘Who wants the fall of Plateau?’). The ways journalists framed headlines were enough incentives to those looking for motivation to take up arms in the conflict. Reporters and editors, through their discursive strategies, especially news framing, consciously and deliberately select frames that would help them achieve their objectives (Vincze, 2014), thereby amplifying the conflict.

It is important to note that the key innovation of this thesis is the utilisation of human rights orientated journalism as conceptualised by Shaw (2012). Human rights journalism aims to prevent conflict before it breaks out, and it puts justice to both victims and perpetrators of human rights violations on the forefront of its mission. Data from this study showed that human rights journalism model in media coverage of conflict holds great potential either in preventing conflict or ameliorating its effects. The optimism and determination expressed by interview respondents (IRs 3, 7 & 8, p. 177) regarding the opportunities that are inherent in this model, in their views, will help prevent conflict when it is fully imbibed and practiced by journalists and other news media professionals. Although the respondents were under no illusion that human rights journalism is a ‘cure all pill,’ however, with training opportunities, workshop and

seminars, news media professionals would learn to select frames that neither encourage nor promote conflict.

This study has also shown that the grossly unethical practices by journalists, news media professionals and their proprietors (brown envelope, and yellow journalism, among others) are due largely to the inefficiencies of the regulatory bodies, especially the Nigeria Press and Regulatory Council (NPRC) and the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) and to enforce their regulations. The NPRC and the NUJ are the officially recognised and certified bodies for the regulation of the activities of print media in Nigeria. Apart from these regulatory bodies having their national headquarters in the country's capital Abuja, they also have branches across the thirty-six states of the federation. Yet, these bodies are so weak and inefficient that journalists have routinely contravened the ethics of the journalism profession without consequences. The issues of inaccuracies, biased reporting, half-truths, yellow journalism, propaganda, weaponized information, and disinformation, were common features among journalists in their coverage of the Plateau State conflict (IRs 2, 5, & 8, p. 162). Worried by the way the journalism profession has been brought to disrepute by the activities of some members, Katu (2016) has advocated for a complete restructuring of the regulatory bodies (NPRC and NUJ) for effective service delivery. The regulatory bodies need to professionalise the practice by ensuring that there is a minimum academic requirement for all those aspiring to the profession to raise the standard of the profession from its current state. If this measure fails, then the Nigerian government might have to intervene by setting up a board of inquiry like the Lord Leveson Inquiry set up by then British Prime Minister, David Cameron in 2011, to evaluate the practice of the journalism profession in Nigeria. The Leveson Inquiry focused on the culture, practice, and ethics of the press in the United Kingdom in policy areas, such as privacy, regulation, and accountability which have been inactive for many years. Lord Leveson himself declared during the inquiry that the British regulatory board (the Press Complaints Commission) had proved to be a failure (due to structural flaws and lacked independence) (Behrens, 2011).

The empirical research that has been undertaken in this thesis on the influence of ethnicity in newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict in north-central Nigeria, 2010-2012, extends knowledge and makes some sets of recommendations aimed at better journalism practice in Plateau State, Nigeria.

## **8.2 Contribution to Knowledge**

The wealth of data obtained, and their analyses have advanced knowledge of the study and based on this it makes a three-fold contribution to knowledge:

### **8.2.1 Conceptual Contribution to Knowledge**

The conceptual contribution to knowledge is the deployment in unison of agenda setting, news framing, and human rights orientated journalism as classic media research tools to illuminate the Plateau State conflict from the perspective of ethnic influence in newspaper conflict journalists' coverage of the phenomenon. This contribution is unique because no research has, to date, been undertaken on the newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict that combined these conceptual explanatory frameworks (agenda setting, news framing, and human rights orientated journalism). Through deliberate and conscious choice of certain frames, journalists were able to reflect the agenda and interests of their ethnic communities and of their patrons in conflict. Based on this, journalists were absorbed in the Plateau State's conflict as parties rather than neutral reporters. Thus, the deployment in unison of these conceptual explanatory frameworks illuminate the need for journalists and content creators to be conscious of the kind of frames they use in their news construction and production to avoid the evident tendency toward the promotion human rights violations.

### **8.2.2 Empirical Evidence on the Role of Ethnicity in Newspaper Coverage of Conflict**

The data generated about the conflict produced a new body of empirical evidence (literature, semi-structured interviews and textual content) on the role of ethnicity in newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict in north-central Nigeria. The literature detailed how British colonial policies, especially The Indirect Rule system and the Land and Native Ordinance Act of 1910, created ethnic consciousness among Nigerians that was hitherto dormant, but which has created problems in Plateau State today (through ethnic divisions occasioned by these policies). Ethnicity manifested in newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict through the ownership and control of the newspapers. Thus, journalists of the two selected newspapers (the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard*) framed the conflict they covered in terms of Middle Belt and core north. Journalists' ethnic backgrounds influenced the reporting of the conflict because issues were analysed through the lenses of ethnicity. Journalists frequently used negative frames, such as: 'indigenes/settlers,' 'sons of the soil,' 'Berom militia,' 'Fulani mercenaries,' and 'expansionists' in their news construction and productions. The data produced has described

how journalists who covered the conflict were influenced more by their ethnicities than by the ethics of the professions.

### **8.2.3 Human Rights Consciousness Journalism as a Conflict-Prevention Strategy**

The data obtained and analysed in this research showed that the conflict journalists of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* newspapers were not conscious of the negative effects of their reports on the reading public (See Chapter 6). The analyses in the study further helps illustrate the lack of knowledge displayed by the interview respondents on Human Rights Journalism as a conflict-prevention strategy. However, when the potential that JRJ holds in conflict-prevention was explained to them, all the participants expressed enthusiasm. For example, one of the interview participants (IR3, p. 177) declared that ‘Had this type of journalism been in practice in Plateau State we would not have witnessed the kind of conflict we have witnessed [...]’ IEL1 (p. 177) contends that ‘HRJ does have the capacity to bring about peace not just in Plateau State but in the world at large.’ Similarly, IR8 (p. 177) argued that ‘Had this approach to journalism been in practice in Plateau State it could have helped to prevent the conflict from either erupting or escalating [...]. Thus, Human Rights Consciousness Journalism (HRCJ) has emerged in this research as a conflict-prevention strategy not just in Plateau State but, indeed Nigeria since most conflicts in the country are ethnic in nature (Alubo, 2006). Human Rights Consciousness Journalism as already described in chapter 7, outlined concrete steps, if taken by journalists and their news organisations, could prevent violent conflict or ameliorate its effects. Since studies have shown that the use of negative media frames by journalists were instrumental in fuelling the Plateau State conflict (Danaan, 2017; Ishaku, 2012; Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, 2010), the position of this research is towards conflict-prevention. Although Shaw’s (2012) Human Rights Journalism is aimed at ensuring justice for all, this study advances this position further (through HRCJ) by encouraging journalists to be conscious of the kinds of frames they use in their news production.

## **8.3 Recommendations**

### **8.3.1 Training**

Some of the journalists in Plateau State were not well trained. In the contemporary world, it is inconceivable for anyone to become a doctor, banker, engineer, nurse, or scientist without undergoing formal training or education in the field, which teaches, among other things, the

ethics and responsibilities of the profession. It is, therefore, strange that today people would present themselves as journalists without any formal education in the field and believe that both quality and ethics of the profession would not be compromised. It was, therefore, not surprising that some IRs (IRs 5, p. 173, 7, p. 173, & 10, p. 173) complained that the issue of training and re-training of journalists was not being given priority attention by their newspaper organisations. The profession currently appears to be an ‘all-comers’ affair in Plateau State, because it is hard to distinguish the trained journalists from amateurs. What may qualify one to be a journalist in Plateau State and in Nigeria may just be the aptitude to read and write (Eke, 2014). IR10 (p. 173) deplored this situation thus ‘Most Nigerian journalists are not trained at all, and even those who are trained have not undergone any retraining.’ Similarly, IR7 (P. 173) bemoaned the apparent low-level of journalism practice in the country when s/he declared that:

The crops of journalists we have are not adventurous. Most of the reports on corruption that we have published are sourced from regulatory and anti-corruption agencies. You can hardly find a Nigerian journalist who will dig deep and on his or her own come up with a story [...].

If some of those who called themselves journalists are not trained in journalism, then, it is something of a paradox to talk about a profession, such as journalism without professionals (Akinfeleye, 2011). This is one of the problems faced by journalists in Plateau State. The consequence of this, based on the claims made by some of the IRs (7 & 10, p. 173) that the unqualified ‘journalists,’ through their reports have not only undermined the integrity and ethics of the journalism profession, but have exacerbated the Plateau State conflict, since as has been noted in the thesis all that seemed to matter to them is the interests of their ethnic communities. Hence, training and capacity building of journalists to keep up with current trends in the journalism profession globally should be of utmost priority for the newspaper organisations, because as IR10 (p.173) avowed, journalism is constantly ‘evolving.’

### **8.3. 2 Ownership and Control of the Press**

Regarding ownership and control of the newspapers, the evidence of this thesis reinforces the works of authors, such as Beyene (2012) and Musa and Ferguson (2013). Ownership and control of the media is a key factor that influences media’s role in ethnic conflict in Plateau State. *The Nigeria Standard* is owned and controlled by the Plateau State government, the *Daily Trust*, on the other hand, is owned and controlled by a group of Hausa/Fulani (Goyol, 1999; Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Sule, 2015). Just as the ownership of the press in both pre-and post-independence Nigeria was shaped by ethnic and political interests, the same phenomenon exists

even today (Yusha'u, 2015). There is, therefore, the need for a restructuring of, not just the Nigerian political landscape as it is being advocated currently towards full integration of various ethnic communities into the country's structure, but also the media systems too need to reflect that restructuring. Since *The Nigeria Standard* newspaper, for example, is currently being funded and sustained by the Plateau State Government, part of the restructuring here should be for the paper to be managed by a Public Trust so that it would reflect the shades of opinions and views of the Plateau State people without prejudice to, especially ethnicity. Again, both the *Daily Trust* and *The Nigeria Standard* also need to change their recruitment patterns since most journalists of the two newspapers are either of the same ethnicity or state with the proprietor. This, hopefully would narrow the gap created by ethnic divisions that characterise journalism practice in Plateau State.

### **8.3.3 Poor/Lack of Equipment for Journalists**

The study has evidenced the poor/lack of equipment for journalists in Plateau State (IR5, p. 174). The conditions in which journalists and other news media professionals operate in Plateau State are a far cry from the acceptable journalistic standards around the world. Journalists in Plateau State have often been berated for their low and substandard productions by the reading public but even what they produced has been under the most appalling of conditions, (lack of constant electricity, thus journalists use candles and mobile phone lights to write their reports) (IRs 1, 5, 7, & 10, p. 174). IR5 summed up this sentiment thus 'Journalists are not performing at full capacity because they do not have the required operating tools.' Often these criticisms, though legitimate, ignore the poor working conditions of journalists and the fact that they are ill-equipped. Journalists lack basic working tools, such as recorders, transport, computers, and printers, editing suits, cameras, electricity, up-to-date libraries and internet facilities (IRs 1 & 5, p. 174). Therefore, newspaper organisations need to provide their journalists with the necessary equipment and good operating environment to enhance their productivity. A well-equipped digital media organisation (instead of the analogue which is still being used by *The Nigeria Standard*) would, not only bring about efficiency and productivity, but also save time and cost of news production.

### **8.3.4 Salaries/Entitlements**

The findings of this research have shown that inadequate salaries are some of the challenges faced by most journalists in Plateau State, which has made them susceptible to all forms of



corrupt practices, especially the ‘brown envelope’ syndrome (IRs 2, 5, 7 & 8, pp. 162-163). The brown envelope syndrome, as it has been explained earlier, is an unethical practice whereby money is given to reporters as a bribe to influence the journalist to report an event. For example, Ronning (2009), views the African custom of favour for a favour as constituting part of an acceptable circle of corruption. The borderline between corruption and the African culture of favour for a favour, as Ronning described might provide the impetus for expecting some ‘rewards’ for services rendered. However, in Plateau State, often ‘brown envelope’ could take the form of gifts, money, piece of land, food, drink or clothes (Akabogu, 2005; Nwocha, 2004; Okunna, 1995). It is a common practice among journalists in Plateau State not to cover an event, however newsworthy, unless they are given an honorarium. Nwocha (2004) succinctly described ‘brown envelope as the ‘money given to reporters and editors to persuade them to write positive stories or kill a negative story...’ Respondents in this research decried the way journalists were treated by their organisations, not only were they inadequately paid; sometimes they were not paid their salaries for several months. This was the view expressed by IR5 (p. 162) thus, ‘it is quite unfortunate that some of these things are happening. There are some newspaper organisations that only give identity cards to journalists as their meal tickets.’ This means that these ‘journalists’ are not trained and are not staff of the news organisation but carry the identity cards of the organisation and whatever monetary or any other inducements they are given by the client during their news coverage serves as their benefit. Similarly, IR2 (p. 162) noted that inadequate salaries have made journalists not to carry out the directives of the government-owned newspaper they work for. Therefore, if journalists are not empowered economically there is no way they can perform (Oso, 2011). Poor wages and other entitlements leave journalists open to all kinds of corrupt and sharp practices. Media organisations also, must stop the practice of engaging people who are not on their payrolls, but are only given identity cards of the media organisation to serve as their meal tickets (IR5, p. 162). This practice would only promote and entrench the circle of corruption that has brought the journalism profession in Nigeria into disrepute.

### **8.3.5 Newspaper Organizations and Staff Recruitment Processes**

The method of employing journalists by newspaper establishments (ethnically inclined) has buttressed the entrenchment of ethnicity in Plateau State. Most of the journalists of *The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust* interviewed were either of the same ethnic affiliation with the proprietors or from the same state. Based on this, it was difficult for some of the journalists to go to conflict areas dominated by people of other ethnic extractions, as it was the case with the

coverage of the Plateau State conflict. This situation prevented journalists from one ethnic group entering into the other's area to report on certain events. As part of effort to achieve ethnic integration in the country, media organisations must review their employment pattern, that is, of recruiting only journalists that share their ethnicity to work for them. Newspaper establishments should, as a matter of deliberate policy, employ journalists from other ethnic communities to work for them so that it will help to narrow the gap between 'us' and 'them' ideology that characterises journalism practice in Plateau State today. This kind of ethnic mix would also help to push back the frontiers of ignorance of the other's history, culture, religion and tradition. The appreciation of the other's culture and tradition will fill the void hitherto occupied by ignorance and would shape journalists' perspectives when reporting about other ethnic communities. Thus, this would limit the spate of misinformation and biased reporting that could create situations of conflict. Clientelism which is a common feature in employment processes should be discouraged and merit should be the criterion for employment.

### **8.3.6 Regulatory Framework**

Extant research literature shows gross unethical practices by both journalists and their newspaper organisations in the discharge of their duties. The newspapers' coverage of the Plateau State conflict was characterised by biased reporting, lack of balance, inaccuracies, half-truths, among others, which are among the core values in journalism practice worldwide. Based on their social responsibility, the newspapers were supposed to be on the forefront of efforts towards the promotion of peace in the society. But on the contrary, the press in Plateau State continue to emphasise those differences, especially ethnicity, which tend to make the attainment of peace elusive (Albert, 2002). Both the Nigeria Press and Regulatory Council (NPRC) the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) appeared to have failed in their task of enforcing the laws guiding newspaper activities in Nigeria. The press must, not only, be accountable, but must be regulated like other institution, such as medicine, law and many others. The newspapers, right from their inceptions, have been central to the growth and development of democratic culture in Nigeria. Given the place of the media, especially the press in Nigeria's democratic setting, it behoves on the NPRC and the NUJ to rise to their responsibilities of ensuring that both journalists and their organisations operate within the ambient of the press laws of the land. The NPRC and the NUJ should put in place a policy framework that should streamline professional qualification for journalism practice in Nigeria (Katu, 2016). If efforts by the media at self-regulation or the regulatory bodies fail, it may be necessary for the government to intervene by setting up a board of inquiry like the Lord

Leveson Board of Inquiry in the United Kingdom by the then British Prime Minister, David Cameron in 2011, to review journalism practice in Nigeria, as earlier pointed out.

#### **8.4 Limitations and Future Research**

Two key factors limited this study on the influence of ethnicity in newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict in north-central Nigeria.

Firstly, the thesis focused on only two newspapers (*The Nigeria Standard* and the *Daily Trust*). One of the major reasons for the selection of these papers was the fact that they are among the most widely read in the region and they showed much interest in the coverage of the Plateau State's conflict. The two newspapers reported the various dimensions of the conflict as news, editorial, feature, opinions, and commentaries much more than the other newspapers in the period studied (2010-2012). For this reason, it meant that so many other general interests' newspapers, such as *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, *The Nigerian Tribune*, *The Vanguard*, *The Nation*, *Sun*, *ThisDay*, and several others were left out. Future research could sample newspapers from other parts of the country as well as other media (radio, television and social media) on the phenomenon of the violent conflict in Plateau State as 'uninterested participants' to see what their coverage would reveal.

Secondly, the research project selected and deployed the qualitative research methodology only out of range of other potential methodologies such as grounded theory, survey, questionnaires, participant and non-participant observations. There is need, therefore, to extend this research project on the influence of ethnicity in newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict beyond qualitative methodology. Future studies could explore the possibility of combining both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to see what the findings would be. Statistical revelation from the application of quantitative methodology, in addition to others, can be useful in, for example, determining the rate at which each of the two selected newspapers used negative stereotypes, because it may explain why the conflict has lasted nearly twenty years.

## Appendix One



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03 October 2018

University of Salford

Dear Andrew Danjuma Dewan

**Re: Ethical Approval Application – AMC 15-17: The Influence of Ethnicity in Newspaper Coverage of the Plateau State Conflict in North-Central Nigeria (2010–2014).**

I am pleased to inform you that based on the information provided, the Research Ethics Panel have no objections on ethical grounds to your project.

Yours sincerely

*Julie Connett*

**Julie Connett**  
**On Behalf of the Research Ethics Panel**

## Appendix Two



### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What has been your experience reporting the protracted Plateau State conflict?
2. To what extent would you say the Plateau State conflict is ethnic in nature?
3. How conscious are you as a journalist reporting the ethnic conflict?
4. How aware are you of the possible effects of your reports/articles on the reading public?
5. What is usually on your mind when reporting/editing the conflict?
6. In what ways does the ownership of your newspaper have influence on your coverage?
7. In what ways has ethnicity influenced your reporting of the Plateau State conflict?
8. How has ethnicity influenced journalism practice in Plateau State?
9. How does remuneration determine objectivity or balance of your report vs the brown envelop syndrome?
10. To what extent do you agree with the suggestion that the way news headlines were framed contributed to the escalation of the Plateau State conflict?
11. Are you satisfied with the current state of journalism practice in Plateau State, if not, what recommendations will you make toward better practice?
12. How can Human Rights Journalism prevent or douse the situation of conflict?



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