



The Punch, Nigerian Tribune and Daily Trust Coverage of Insecurity in Nigeria between January and June 2022

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ABSTRACT

Background: Nigeria has a long history of violence and instability, characterised by poverty, social unrest, insurgency, communal conflicts, banditry, kidnapping, and terrorism. The media's role in reporting conflict has attracted considerable scholarly attention, with many researchers advocating a shift from war journalism to peace journalism. Despite the growing body of literature, there remains a gap in understanding how Nigerian newspapers frame insecurity from the perspective of conflict-sensitive journalism. This study addresses that gap.

Objective: This study examined how three Nigerian newspapers—*Punch*, *Nigerian Tribune*, and *Daily Trust*—reported insecurity in Nigeria between January and June 2022.

Method: The study adopted a quantitative content analysis design, guided by Framing Theory. Using purposive sampling and the Krejcie and Morgan sample size table, 226 newspaper editions were selected from a population of 549 editions published during the study period. Individual newspaper stories constituted the unit of analysis and were coded across ten content categories, including story genre, story placement, depth of coverage, type of insecurity, gender focus, and tone of reportage. These categories enabled a systematic assessment of how the selected newspapers framed insecurity issues during the six-month period.

Results: The findings indicate that although the newspapers devoted considerable attention to insecurity-related issues, the majority of reports were straight news stories with limited depth. Most stories occupied quarter-page spaces and were characterised by predominantly negative or harsh tones, reflecting widespread concern over the deteriorating security situation.

Conclusion: The study concludes that the selected newspapers have yet to provide sufficiently in-depth reporting on insecurity issues. Their heavy reliance on straight news stories limits comprehensive public understanding of the complexities surrounding insecurity in Nigeria.

Unique Contribution: This study provides empirical evidence demonstrating that Nigerian newspapers continue to rely predominantly on routine news reporting rather than investigative reports, editorials, feature articles, and analytical pieces in their coverage of insecurity. The findings contribute to the growing literature on conflict-sensitive journalism and offer evidence-based recommendations for media practitioners, policymakers, and journalism educators.

Key Recommendation: Nigerian newspapers should move beyond predominantly event-based reporting by embracing conflict-sensitive journalism that incorporates investigative reporting, editorials, feature stories, and analytical commentaries. Media organisations, policymakers, and journalism educators should also collaborate in strengthening journalists' capacity to adopt ethical, responsible, and peace-oriented reporting practices capable of promoting informed public discourse and contributing to conflict resolution.

Keywords: Mass media, insecurity, banditry, Nigerian newspapers, conflict-sensitive journalism.



INTRODUCTION

The importance of the press in any democratic society has long been recognised. While emphasising the indispensable role of newspapers in governance, the third President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, famously wrote: "...were it left for me to choose whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter" (Mustapha & Abdulbaqi, 2015, p. 130). Jefferson made this celebrated defence of a free press in a letter to Edward Carrington dated January 16, 1787, while serving as the United States Minister to France. His assertion underscores the centrality of the press in promoting accountable governance and an informed citizenry. Effective governance depends on effective communication, and the mass media remain indispensable in facilitating two-way communication between governments and citizens while promoting the values, ideas, and information necessary for national cohesion (Nwabueze, 2019).

Newspapers have historically played a significant role in nation-building. In Nigeria, the newspaper industry has evolved considerably since Reverend Henry Townsend established *Iwe Irohin* in 1859, the country's first newspaper. Since then, numerous newspapers, including *The Guardian*, *Punch*, *Daily Sun*, *ThisDay*, *Vanguard*, *The Nation*, and *Daily Independent*, have emerged as influential sources of information, providing both hard and soft news to diverse audiences. From the colonial period through military rule and into the current democratic dispensation, the Nigerian press has remained an important institution in shaping public opinion, promoting accountability, and contributing to national development (McQuail, 2013).

Despite these contributions, Nigeria continues to grapple with widespread insecurity. Crime exists in every society and generally refers to behaviour that violates established laws and social norms. Persistent criminal activities often generate fear, instability, and insecurity, particularly where violent conflicts remain unresolved (Nwabueze, 2019). According to Achumba et al. (2013), terms such as *Boko Haram insurgency*, kidnapping, Niger Delta militancy, banditry, and ethno-religious conflicts have become defining features of Nigeria's security landscape. Even before the emergence of Boko Haram in 2009, the Niger Delta region had experienced prolonged militancy and kidnapping arising from grievances over resource control and perceived marginalisation.

In recent years, insecurity has spread across virtually all geopolitical zones of Nigeria. The South-East has witnessed increasing incidents of kidnapping and attacks by armed groups, while ethno-religious violence has persisted in parts of Plateau State and other regions. The Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East, together with the activities of bandits and other criminal groups, has further compounded Nigeria's security challenges (Jimoh & Awodi, 2021). The current level of insecurity has reached alarming proportions. Ozohu-Suleiman (2019) observes that violent crimes, insurgency, kidnappings, and armed conflicts have significantly damaged Nigeria's national image. In reporting these events, traditional media continue to play an essential role in informing the public. However, the rapid growth of digital communication technologies has transformed the media environment by providing additional platforms through which insecurity-related information is produced, disseminated, and debated. Consequently, it has



become important to examine how digital communication complements or challenges traditional newspaper coverage of insecurity. Nevertheless, the primary focus of this study remains the coverage of insecurity by selected Nigerian newspapers.

This study specifically investigates the extent, prominence, and depth of newspaper coverage of insecurity in Nigeria. Beyond simply reporting violent incidents, the media influence how conflicts are interpreted by audiences through the selection, framing, and presentation of information. Scholars have argued that the media's historical tendency to sensationalise conflict and violence contributed to the emergence of peace journalism as an alternative reporting paradigm. Consequently, several researchers have advocated a transition from war journalism to conflict-sensitive and peace-oriented journalism (Karlsson, 2008; Kemi, 2016; Mustapha & Abdulbaqi, 2012; Nwafor et al., 2013; Nwafor et al., 2023; Nwankwo et al., 2023).

Although considerable scholarship exists on insecurity in Nigeria, important gaps remain. Most previous studies have focused on media framing, audience perception, language use, or the effects of insecurity reporting, with relatively little attention devoted to the depth and quality of newspaper coverage from a conflict-sensitive journalism perspective. For example, Bright-Ajoku et al. (2025) examined language use in media representations of insecurity and its implications for public perception but did not evaluate the depth of newspaper coverage. Similarly, Ajaegbu et al. (2025) investigated the influence of media framing on audience perceptions of insecurity without examining the extent and quality of newspaper reporting. This study addresses this gap by analysing the prominence, depth, and framing of insecurity coverage in selected Nigerian newspapers through the lens of conflict-sensitive journalism.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How often are articles about insecurity published in the selected newspapers?
2. What categories (genres) of insecurity-related stories are published in the newspapers?
3. What is the prominence given to insecurity stories in the selected newspapers?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualising Insecurity

Insecurity is defined as anything that can endanger one's life or cause pain or unpleasantness in one's existence (Entman, 2016). The opposite of security is insecurity. However, the concept of insecurity has typically been assigned multiple interpretations in relation to the many ways in which it impacts individuals or groups due to the myriad ways in which it influences human life and existence. Want of safety, risk, hazard, uncertainty, loss of confidence, questionable, insufficiently guarded or protected, unstable, disturbed, lack of protection, and unsafe are some common descriptors of insecurity (Adeola & Oluyemi, 2012).



Obi (2015, p.12) describes insecurity as ‘a chronic threat to humans’ life, territories, states, religious beliefs, property and institutions, among others.’ According to his account, insecurity is a phenomenon that endangers people's lives and has an impact on their surroundings. This situation has led to several insecure situations that have caused property and commercial destruction in addition to multiple fatalities.

Furthermore, Okeke and Oji (2014) contend that the media is, without a doubt, the means by which security agents are trained to be proactive rather than reactive in protecting the nation against the threats posed by insurgents operating within its borders and that the public is informed about security-related matters. This is predicated on the notion that communication is the primary means of facilitating social contact, which has the power to both avoid and reduce hostility and advance societal harmony. In a similar vein, Jimoh and Awodi (2021) stress how alarmingly high the current level of insecurity in Nigeria is and how almost every effort to alleviate it just helps to fuel new worries.

From what has been said thus far, it is clear that Nigeria is facing a variety of challenges, such as an increase in the number of insecurity occurrences, an ongoing trend of attacks on individuals, and agitations resulting from ethnic divisions. Threats to Nigeria's survival, stability, and security include the militancy of herdsmen, the militancy in the Niger Delta, the separatist agitations in the South-East, the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East, and the recent wave of violent crimes such as kidnappings, armed robberies, and abductions.

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

Nigeria's socioeconomic development is significantly undermined by insecurity stemming from both internal and external factors, with internal factors posing the greater challenge. A key driver is ethno-religious conflict, as the coexistence of diverse ethnic and religious groups has bred mutual mistrust, fear, and violent confrontations between communities. Ongoing tensions between Islam and Christianity, alongside disputes over resources, land, authority, and governance, have resulted in large-scale violence and casualties across the country.

Ethno-religious clashes have escalated alarmingly across multiple Nigerian states, including Kano, Jos, Lagos, Taraba, and Enugu, among others. These divisions have evolved into deeply polarising social forces that actively threaten peace, stability, and national security. Rather than fostering unity, ethno-religious identities have become fault lines that fragment society and obstruct sustainable development.

Compounding these tensions is the government's failure to manage public trust and economic hardship effectively. Worsening economic conditions, high-level corruption, soaring inflation, and record unemployment have deepened public disillusionment. Policy decisions such as the removal of fuel subsidies and hikes in electricity prices have further inflamed public anger, particularly among the youth, pushing insecurity to even greater levels and dimming prospects for Nigeria's socioeconomic recovery.



Causes of Rising Insecurity in Nigeria and the Role of the Media

One of the principal causes of rising insecurity in Nigeria is the weakness of its security system. This weakness stems from inadequate training and insufficient weaponry available to the country's security forces, compounded by unfavourable behavioural and attitudinal tendencies among security personnel (Achumba et al, 2013). Nwankwo et al. (2023) clarify, however, that this does not amount to a complete failure of Nigeria's security architecture, but rather points to a deficiency in the political will required to decisively confront insurgency. In other words, the problem is not entirely structural but is also a reflection of the priorities and commitment of those who govern.

Closely related to this is the challenge of poverty and unemployment, which remains one of the most potent drivers of insecurity in Nigeria. The country's alarmingly high rates of unemployment, particularly among the youth, render a significant segment of the population vulnerable to recruitment into violent and criminal enterprises. Nwabueze, (2019) further argues that unequal income distribution across ethnic nationalities compounds this problem, fostering grievance and resentment that can easily translate into social unrest. Since the bulk of Nigeria's productive workforce remains without meaningful employment, the nation's development continues to be severely undermined, and the fertile ground for criminal activity remains largely unchecked.

Another significant factor is the porosity of Nigeria's borders. Achumba et al. (2013) observe that the largely unmonitored movement of people across Nigeria's borders has substantially elevated the country's insecurity levels. This porosity, as Okpaga, Chijioke, and Eme, (2012) note, facilitates the unrestricted flow of small arms and light weapons into the country, which in turn fuels insurgency and criminal activity across various regions. The gravity of this situation is underscored by the fact that Nigeria accounts for more than 70% of the approximately 8 million illicit firearms estimated to be circulating in West Africa (Kemi, 2016). Furthermore, the unchecked influx of migrants, predominantly young men from neighbouring countries such as Niger, Chad, and the Benin Republic, has been identified as a contributing factor to criminal activity within Nigeria's borders (Adeola & Oluyemi, 2014).

Systemic and political corruption rounds off this cluster of causative factors and arguably underpins all the others. In academic discourse, corruption has been described as a cancer deeply embedded in the fabric of Nigerian society, so pervasive that it has become almost inseparable from the institutions it afflicts. Beyond its moral and institutional dimensions, Udeh and Ihezue (2013) argues that corruption actively hinders economic growth, disproportionately burdens the poor, and diminishes the effectiveness of both aid and investment. By diverting public resources and undermining governance, corruption weakens the very systems that ought to address insecurity.

Given these multifaceted causes, the question of the newspapers role becomes both pertinent and urgent. As the fourth estate of the realm, the media bears a fundamental responsibility to report on, combat, and sensitise the public about the factors driving insecurity in Nigeria. Beyond mere



reportage, newspaper is expected to serve as a watchdog, holding public officeholders accountable and interpreting legislation and its implications for the citizenry. It is equally tasked with scrutinising the manifestos and policy commitments of elected officials, particularly as they relate to security matters. In a context where governance failures, corruption, and poverty intertwine to breed insecurity, an active, independent, and responsible media becomes not just desirable but indispensable to Nigeria's stability and democratic health.

A Review of Nigeria's Security Challenges

Nigeria faces a severe and worsening security crisis characterised by rampant armed robbery and kidnapping. Armed robbery has become so pervasive that most Nigerians now live behind fortified walls and barriers, reflecting the state's failure to protect lives and property. Kidnapping, which originated in the Niger Delta as political protest, has since grown into a widespread criminal enterprise, with politicians in the Southeast even weaponising it against rivals, collectively creating a deep and enduring climate of fear among ordinary citizens (Udeh & Ihezue, 2013).

The Boko Haram insurgency represents Nigeria's most internationally recognised security threat. Emerging around 2002 in the northeastern states of Borno and Yobe, the group is ideologically driven by opposition to western education and culture, seeking to impose Sharia law across northern Nigeria Karlson, (2008). Its activities have been catastrophic, encompassing mass civilian killings, bombings across major northern cities, and the rape of women, while also severely undermining investor confidence and threatening the survival of businesses throughout the region.

Terrorism, of which Boko Haram is a key example, constitutes a broader and graver threat to both Nigeria and the global community. It is distinguished from ordinary crime by its premeditated, politically motivated use of violence aimed at compelling authorities to yield to specific demands. That is why Obi (2015) concluded that in Nigeria's context, terrorism has compounded an already fragile security landscape by weakening governance, displacing large populations, and steadily eroding the social fabric of the communities most affected by its reach.

The Media Challenges

Publicity is a powerful deterrent against insecurity in a country, and newspaper plays a significant role in the security realm. During wars, media professionals, reporters in particular, typically have extremely difficult tasks to do. There have been instances where journalists have been harassed and had their equipment seized, which has left them feeling afraid and intimidated. While the media plays a crucial role in times of war, "activities such as death threats, torture, and official coercion, charges of contempt, sedition, and criminal defamation hinder the press' ability to play this role effectively and efficiently without fear or favouritism (Karlson 2008, p. 27). Thus, Obi, (2015) argued that empirical evidence suggests the newspapers have not had an easy time adjusting to the current democratic experience. A critical assessment of the newspaper struggles under the current setup leads one to conclude that the military regimes of the past, which are typically perceived as being anti-press, should not be held accountable because the



civilian regime has not fared any better. Notwithstanding the foregoing and any number of potential flaws, the media is expected to carry out its responsibilities with the greatest audacity and sincerity. This relates to the requirement that "the truth should be told always and that charlatans and Saints should be called by their proper names" arising from the conflict issue.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was anchored on framing theory. The concept of the framing theory was first proposed in 1972 by an anthropologist, Gregory Bateson, who avows that psychological frames are a type of meta-communication that functions as a "spatial and temporary bounding of a set of interactive messages" (Bateson, 2000, p. 197). Thinking about news items and story content within a familiar framework is a technique that is explained by framing theory. Like the agenda-setting theory, framing expands the scope of the investigation by focusing on the substance of the issues at hand rather than a particular topic. According to framing theory, decisions on how to absorb information are influenced by the way it is presented to the audience, or "the frame." Abstractions called frames are used to shape or arrange the meaning of messages. The most frequent application of frames is in the context of the framing that the media or news places on the content they report (Weaver, 2007).

According to framing theory, news items are introduced by the media with predetermined and limited contextualisation, which creates this frame. Frames are employed as cognitive shortcuts to connect stories to the larger picture or as tools to improve understanding. Although Weaver (2007) posited that the concepts of framing and agenda setting are clearly conceptually related, the idea of framing is akin to the "second level" of agenda setting, which "examines the relative salience of attributes of issues," as detailed by McCombs (2005) and Ghanem (1997). Although the term "level" suggests that characteristics are more detailed than objects, this agenda of attributes is referred to as "the second level," which differs from "the first level, which has traditionally focused on issues (objects)."

In agreement with Weaver, McQuail, (2013) states that "it could be construed as a form of second-level agenda-setting – they not only tell the audience what to think about (agenda-setting theory), but also how to think about that issue (second-level agenda setting, framing theory)." Furthermore, Goffman (1974) proposed Frame Analysis, which holds that people evaluate their environment through the lens of their fundamental framework. Goffman (2017) states that within the main frameworks, there are two distinctions: natural + social. Both assist people in interpreting information so that their experiences can be put into a larger societal perspective. The two are different in a functional way.

Owing to the foregoing, framing theory provides a strong theoretical basis for examining the reporting on insecurity in Nigeria by The Punch, Nigerian Tribune, and Daily Trust. We can learn more about these newspapers' impact on public opinion and conversation by looking closely at the particular frames they use. The utilisation of framing theory in analysing the insecurity coverage by The Punch, Nigerian Tribune, and Daily Trust indicates how these *publications* influence the public's perception and comprehension of insecurity. Their deliberate



framing decisions affect suggested remedies and policy reactions in addition to how the problem is viewed.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research paradigm, specifically utilising a content analysis approach to examine how *The Punch*, *Nigerian Tribune*, and *Daily Trust* newspapers covered insecurity in Nigeria. Quantitative content analysis is a systematic study technique where characteristics of written, visual, or audio content are documented, categorised, and analysed (Coe & Scacco, 2017). This method allows for objective measurement of media representation and is particularly suited for analysing large volumes of text.

The unit of analysis for this study consists of articles related to insecurity published in the selected newspapers from January to June 2022. These six months were chosen to capture a significant time frame marked by numerous violent incidents. A purposive sampling technique was used for this study, focusing on the three newspapers that have a larger readership and circulation compared to others. This choice was based on the understanding that *The Punch* is read nationwide, *Daily Trust* has a strong presence in the North, and *Nigerian Tribune* is widely read in the South. This distribution ensures a comprehensive representation of the national discourse on security issues.

The total population for this study includes all editions of the three newspapers published during the specified time frame, resulting in a total of 549 editions. Using Krejcie and Morgan's formula for determining sample size (1970), a sample size of 226 editions was selected for analysis. To ensure validity and reliability, two coders were employed to independently code the contents of the newspapers using the same code sheet. This approach helped minimise errors and guaranteed the validity of the results. According to Wimmer (2011), if materials are subjected to the same evaluation and coding process and yield consistent outcomes when repeated by other researchers, reliability and validity are assured. Similarly, Hosti (1969) noted that inter-coder dependability can be computed in various ways. In this study, the percentage of agreement between the two coders was measured using Hosti's formula:

$$ICR = \frac{2M}{N1 + N2}$$

Where M is the number of coding decisions that both coders agreed upon, and N1 and N2 represent the total number of decisions made by the first and second coders, respectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on this methodology, the analysis of the research questions was conducted using frequency and percentage distributions, as illustrated in the tables below. Meanwhile, this section presents the results of the quantitative content analysis conducted on *The Punch*, *Nigerian Tribune*, and *Daily Trust* newspapers regarding their coverage of insecurity in Nigeria. The



findings reveal significant trends in how insecurity is reported and analysed within these publications.

The analysis of the total number of editions from January to June 2022 indicates that *Daily Trust* stands out with the highest volume of coverage (614 articles), representing 48.5% of all insecurity-related stories across the three newspapers. In contrast, *The Punch* published the fewest articles (272), accounting for only 21.5%. This discrepancy suggests that *Daily Trust* may be more attuned to the public's concerns regarding insecurity, potentially positioning itself as a primary source of information on this critical issue.

Table 1: Summary of Selected Editions

No	Newspaper	Total Editions	Percentage
1	The Punch	272	21.5%
2	Nigerian Tribune	379	30.0%
3	Daily Trust	614	48.5%
	Total	1,265	100%

Source: Author's analysis.

Genre and Position of Coverage

The analysis of reporting genres across the sampled newspapers reveals an overwhelming dominance of straight news articles as the preferred format for covering insecurity in Nigeria. Daily Trust recorded the highest proportion in this regard, with 92.7% of its coverage consisting of news reports, followed by the Nigerian Tribune with 86.3% and The Punch with 81.6%, representing 327 and 222 news articles, respectively. This pattern was consistent across all the newspapers examined, pointing to a sector-wide preference for immediate, event-driven reporting over more analytical forms of journalism.

While news articles serve the important function of informing the public about incidents as they occur, the near-exclusive reliance on this genre raises significant concerns about the depth and quality of security coverage in the Nigerian press. Notably absent, or at best marginal, were more interpretive formats such as feature articles, investigative reports, and editorials, which are better suited to providing contextual understanding of the complex, multidimensional nature of insecurity. This finding suggests that the newspapers largely reported on insecurity as a series of discrete events rather than engaging with its underlying causes, patterns, and policy implications.

This finding aligns with the position of Nwankpa and Onyekosor (2015), whose study on media coverage of militancy similarly found that the preponderance of straight news indicated that not much conflict analysis and interpretative reporting was done to help readers grasp thoroughly the dominant issues involved. The convergence of both findings across different security contexts and time periods points to a persistent and systemic pattern within Nigerian newspaper journalism, wherein the preference for surface-level event reporting consistently overshadows the deeper analytical engagement that complex security issues demand. In this sense, the predominance of news reporting may represent a missed opportunity for the press to fulfil its broader democratic function of



not merely informing, but also educating and orienting the public on one of the most pressing challenges confronting the Nigerian state. A more deliberate incorporation of in-depth and analytical genres into insecurity coverage would arguably strengthen the media's capacity to contribute meaningfully to public discourse and policy conversations on the subject.

Table 2: Genre of the Report

GENRE	THE PUNCH	NIGERIAN TRIBUNE	DAILY TRUST
News	222 (81.6%)	327 (86.3%)	569 (92.7%)
Features	22 (8.1%)	17 (4.5%)	23 (3.7%)
Pictures	5 (1.8%)	3 (0.8%)	1 (0.2%)
Editorial	17 (6.3%)	18 (4.7%)	14 (2.9%)
Other	6 (2.2%)	14 (3.7%)	7 (1.1%)
Total	272 (100%)	379 (100%)	614 (100%)

Source: Author's analysis.

Position of the Stories

Most articles appeared on the inside pages, with only a small fraction featured on the front pages. While *Daily Trust* provided greater prominence to insecurity stories on its front pages (38.3%), the overall trend of relegating such critical news to inside pages raises questions about the perceived importance of these issues. For example, *The Punch* had 82 articles (30.1%) on the front page, indicating a potential underemphasis on the severity of insecurity.

Table 3: Position of the Stories

POSITION	THE PUNCH	NIGERIAN TRIBUNE	DAILY TRUST
Front	82 (30.1%)	113 (29.8%)	235 (38.3%)
Inside	184 (67%)	262 (69.1%)	377 (61.4%)
Back	6 (2.2%)	4 (1.1%)	2 (0.3%)
Total	272 (100%)	379 (100%)	614 (100%)

Source: Author's analysis.

Depth of Reporting

The findings also indicate that a significant proportion of articles were presented in quarter-page formats. In *The Punch*, 169 articles (62.1%) were presented in this format, while *Nigerian Tribune* and *Daily Trust* had 265 (69.9%) and 259 (42.2%), respectively. This suggests that while the media is active in reporting on insecurity, there is a lack of comprehensive exploration of the underlying causes and implications of these events.



Table 4: Depth of the Stories

Depth	THE PUNCH	NIGERIAN TRIBUNE	DAILY TRUST
Full	57 (21.0%)	36 (9.5%)	113 (18.4%)
Half	46 (16.9%)	78 (20.6%)	242 (39.4%)
Quarter	169 (62.1%)	265 (69.9%)	259 (42.2%)
Total	272 (100%)	379 (100%)	614 (100%)

Source: Author's analysis.

The overwhelmingly harsh tone of reporting across all newspapers (over 93% of articles) indicates a serious portrayal of insecurity. For instance, *The Punch* used a harsh tone in 261 articles (96.0%), and *Nigerian Tribune* in 368 articles (97.1%). While this approach effectively communicates the gravity of the situation, it may also foster a climate of fear and hopelessness among readers, potentially leading to public desensitisation toward ongoing violence.

Table 5: Tone of the Report

TONE	THE PUNCH	NIGERIAN TRIBUNE	DAILY TRUST
Harsh	261 (96.0%)	368 (97.1%)	574 (93.5%)
Soft	6 (2.2%)	9 (2.4%)	14 (2.3%)
Neutral	5 (1.8%)	2 (0.5%)	26 (4.2%)
Total	272 (100%)	379 (100%)	614 (100%)

Source: Author's analysis.

The analysis of the tone of insecurity reporting across the three sampled newspapers, as presented in Table 4.9, reveals a striking and consistent pattern of harsh reportage. Across all three publications, the harsh tone was overwhelmingly dominant, with the *Nigerian Tribune* recording the highest proportion at 97.1% (368 reports), followed by *The Punch* at 96.0% (261 reports), and *Daily Trust* at 93.5% (574 reports). By contrast, soft and neutral tones were almost negligible across all three newspapers. Soft reporting accounted for only 2.2% in *The Punch* (6 reports), 2.4% in the *Nigerian Tribune* (9 reports), and 2.3% in *Daily Trust* (14 reports), while neutral reporting was equally minimal, ranging from 0.5% in the *Nigerian Tribune* (2 reports) to 4.2% in *Daily Trust* (26 reports).

This near-universal adoption of a harsh tone across the three newspapers is a significant finding that warrants careful reflection. It suggests that Nigerian newspapers tend to approach insecurity coverage in a sensational and emotionally charged manner, prioritising the gravity and urgency of events over measured, balanced, or solutions-oriented reporting. While the harsh tone may be partly justified by the severity of the security situations being reported, its near-exclusive dominance raises questions about whether such an approach deepens public anxiety rather than fostering informed understanding. The virtual absence of neutral or soft tones further reinforces the earlier observation that Nigerian newspapers lean heavily toward surface-level, event-driven reporting, pointing to a broader tendency within the Nigerian press to report insecurity in ways



that may amplify fear without necessarily equipping readers with the contextual knowledge needed to engage constructively with the issues at stake.

Importantly, the predominance of harsh tone across all three newspapers, despite their different ownership structures and regional orientations, is itself theoretically significant. The observed pattern is consistent with the basic assumptions of Goffman's (1986) Frames Theory, which holds that media do not simply report reality but actively construct it by selecting, emphasising, and organising information in ways that reflect particular perspectives and interests. The harsh framing of insecurity across these newspapers thus reflects deliberate editorial choices that are shaped, at least in part, by the ownership interests and institutional priorities of each publication. This position is further reinforced by Shoemaker and Reese's (1991) Media Ownership Theory, which foregrounds the influence of ownership structures on editorial decisions and news content, and by the Propaganda Model of Chomsky and Herman (2002), which argues that media output is fundamentally shaped by the economic and political interests of those who own and control media organisations. Taken together, these theoretical lenses help explain why newspapers serving different ownership structures, regional constituencies, and political affiliations would nonetheless converge on a similarly harsh tone in framing insecurity, suggesting that commercial imperatives and ownership interests may be a more powerful determinant of tone than regional or editorial identity. Indeed, the implications of ownership on media framing and tone have become so well acknowledged in scholarly discourse that Watson and Hill (2016) observed that the traditional watchdog role of the press has, in many instances, been so compromised that the watchdog has effectively become a lapdog; a metaphor that powerfully captures the tension between the media's democratic ideals and the commercial and political realities that too often constrain its independence.

Ethical clearance

Since this study employed content analysis of three purposively selected newspapers, no human participants were directly involved in the research process. The newspapers analysed are publicly available print and digital publications, and their inclusion in this study does not constitute any breach of privacy or confidentiality. All materials were accessed and utilised strictly for academic and scholarly purposes. The researcher observed full compliance with ethical standards governing media and communication research, including proper attribution of sources and responsible handling of data throughout the study.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Authors' Contributions

Mr. Adeyemi Oyewumi ADELOLA conceived the study, including the design, collated the data, and Dr. Victor Olusegun BABATUNDE handled the analysis and interpretation, while Mr. Oluwajuwonlo Emmanuel AYANWALE wrote the initial manuscript. All authors have critically reviewed and approved the final draft and are responsible for the content and similarity index of the manuscript.

Data availability statement

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.

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