

READERS' PERCEPTION OF NEWSPAPER REPORTS ON NIGERIAN MIGRANTS IN LIBYA

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies had looked at the economic impact of migration, migrants' use of social services, multiculturalism or ethno racial considerations, migrants as security threats, and representations of migrants in the media but how the audience perceive these media representations could influence public opinion of people about the migrants. This work therefore interrogates the Readers perception of Newspaper reports on Nigerian Migrants in Libya. The study adopted the survey design to study the federal civil servants in the South East and South-South zones of Nigeria. The study found that more than half of the stories were perceived by the audience to be non-sensational. Several others were also found to be either negatively reported against the migrants or negatively reported against the government but majority of the migrant stories was perceived to be unfavourably reported by the Nigerian newspapers. The stories were relatively scarce and majority of the audience were uncomfortable with the way the Nigerian newspapers represented the migrants on the newspapers. Also, they predominantly perceived condition of the migrants is repatriation or deportation from Libya. The study concludes that the audience of the migrant stories in Nigerian Newspapers have multiplicity of other media channels through which they obtain such kinds of information apart from the newspapers. The study recommends that the Nigerian government may consider providing good living conditions for the youth as part of measures of curtailing their migration to Libya in search of greener pastures; the relevant government agencies and Nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) may organise some sensitization and enlightenment programs targeted at counselling Nigerians on the dangers of irregular migration and the Nigerian newspapers should be encouraged to always give adequate coverage to issues of national interest especially migration

Keywords: Newspaper, Newspaper Readers, Perception, Nigerian Migrants, Libya

Setting the scene

Migration is a worldwide phenomenon and a megatrend of the 21st century (United Nations, 2016). The coverage of news media has driven migration to the forefront of regional, national, and international debates, making it a concern at the forefront of international discussion. The media's construction of immigration issues is also crucial to the public's understanding of the topics (Dzilenski, 2017). In other words, the news media could act as a key source of information for the public and has the power to shape the thought, perception and behaviour of the public because they decide what to report and how to report it. While Migration is conceived as a human experience that brought civilization to every corner of the globe, its modern manifestation threatens stability, human rights, resources, and security. Nowadays, migration has metamorphosed to a number of negative effects on the host countries citizens, and constitutes a life challenge for the immigrants themselves (Kosho, 2016).

Besides, Libya has been overtime recognized as a gateway to Europe for migrants from across sub-Saharan Africa and also from the Arabian Peninsula, Egypt, Syria, and Bangladesh (Steemit, 2023), given also that Libya is among the African countries with very high oil reserves. It has been alleged that militia from Syria and Iraq are using Libya as a ‘gateway’ to Europe since the closure of Balkan route in 2016 and that many have made the dangerous journey across Africa and the Mediterranean headed towards Europe. The Italy’s prime minister, recently signed a memorandum of Understanding with Libya to curb the flow of migrants to Europe aimed at strengthening cooperation between the two countries and establishes control over the territories. One of the major justifications for this study is the accusation by people and the Nigerian government that terrorism and banditry in Nigeria is linked to fleeing migrant militia from Libya. It has also been alleged that weapons that have been used in inter-communal violence that have killed thousands of people in Nigeria were trafficked from Ivory Coast, Libya and Turkey. (Punch Newspaper, 2020). Meanwhile, President Mahammadu Buhari, on the 3rd of August 2022, blamed banditry and terrorism in Nigeria on the political instability in Libya and that his administration is making efforts towards tackling banditry and terrorisms in Nigeria, urging the international communities to collaborate with Nigeria in tackling insecurity (Daily Post, 2022). These justify why Libya remains the primary focus of this study.

However, there are numerous studies of public opinion about migration and migrants, most of them focusing on destination countries (Kugler, Oren, & Hillel, 2017; Aubry, Hillel & Ariell, 2016). However, global news media have focused heavily on the rapidly emerging flows of migration over the past decade, simultaneously chronicling global human migration and its wide-reaching consequences (Dzilenski 2017, p. 1) but the perception of the Nigerian newspaper readers on how these Nigerian newspapers represent the Nigerian migrants is yet to be explored. The public perception and recognition of an issue or event could be based on how the media frame such stories and what aspects of the story they consider salient. This could shape their reception of the message depending on the level or depth of information they have prior to such messages. Given the presumed power of the media in the construction of realities and in the interpretation of the reports on the Nigerian migrants in Libya (especially if skewed or biased), the perception of the readers to an extent may be affected. These may promote some kinds of negative connotations on the image of Nigeria and migrants, leading to loss of access to some positions and non recognition in some places. The study is therefore set out to address the following research objectives:

1. To ascertain the perception of readers towards Newspaper reports of the Nigerian Migrants in Libya.
2. To ascertain the dominant readings of the people reading the Newspaper reports of the Nigerian Migrants in Libya

Migration and its effects

Migration from African countries to especially European nations has in recent times gained more global attention and the media are awash with disturbing reports, particularly on the migrant slavery in Libya (Wilson & Abubakar (2017). A recent, growing literature in economics and political science has analyzed the determinants of individual preferences regarding migration policy, paying particular attention to the role played by perceptions of the economic effects of immigration and by concerns about the impact of immigration on the way of life of local populations (Kosho, 2016). It is also widely accepted that the nature of the messages communicated by the media in all its forms can have a discernible impact on overall societal attitudes, which in turn can have a bearing on behaviour and this is particularly relevant to the public discussion of migration, aspects of which have become increasingly contentious in national, regional and global arenas (Kosho, 2016).

This Human migration which is topical and controversial in the Nigerian society is also argued to be one of the greatest issues facing today’s society. Driven by violent conflict, social strife, poverty, and political turmoil, migration creates questions about the distribution of jobs, space, and resources, the cost of education and health care, and the security of national borders. It also challenges preconceived notions of nationality and belonging, as well as community traditions and culture (Dzilenski, 2017). International migration has also become one of the most debated topics in many developed and developing countries (Gheasi & Nijkamp, 2017).

Host countries are concerned about the socioeconomic consequences of international migration, while sending countries from a developing country's perspective are concerned about the brain drain and loss of their younger population (Gheasi & Nijkamp, 2017). While the Media around the world have been reporting on the issue through its various platforms and content types (text, pictures, cartoons, video and audio), these media coverage, the reports, as is always the case with the media, have been framed differently (Wilson & Abubakar, 2017). With regard to these, many studies, show that the media impact on public opinion is enormous and essential and many issues of everyday life, human crisis or mainstream policies, once covered and analyzed from the lenses of the media, become the main concerns of the citizens and have a meaningful impact on the attitudes of the public opinion (Kosho, 2016). Little wonder, Migration is also captured as a phenomenon that has contributed to shape the history of mankind with a striking increase in public attention to migration and dramatic events such as drowning of Africans in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean and terrorist threats which have coloured debates and public perception (Kosho, 2016). **It is also worthy of note that** International immigration has had a substantial impact on the cultural diversity and socioeconomic enrichment in many developed countries in terms of an increase of social capital, the diasporas' contribution to innovation, and the intensification of international linkages through trade and foreign direct investment, so that the host societies can benefit from the stock of diasporas in their societies (Gheasi & Nijkamp, 2017).

However, the migration issues seem to have both positive and negative effects on the migrants depending on the socio-cultural and environmental factors. Indeed, Immigrants have a significant impact on the socioeconomic condition of their country of origin. For example, the positive impact of remittances on the socioeconomic development of the country of origin is a well-studied subject in migration literature (Gheasi & Nijkamp, 2017). The evidence indicates that remittances have raised internal consumption, increased local investment, and prolonged education attainment (Page & Plaza 2006). Similarly, in the years preceding the current economic crisis, the steady improvement in the employment situation had helped calm the debate on labour migration and reduced the weight of opinion opposed to increased immigration in many developed countries (Kosho, 2016). Also, Migration can be a self-selected or non-self-selected movement which the media may frame differently and such, could have some kinds of effects. These impacts can be observed from two perspectives; first, the impact of migrants on host societies; and second, the impact of diasporas on the social and economic development of their countries of origin. From the receiving societies' perspective, nowadays significant shares of migrant-receiving societies' economic activities especially low-cost sectors such as food processing, elderly care, domestic work, etc. depend on migrants (Gheasi & Nijkamp, 2017). From a residential perspective, migrants tend to concentrate more in urban, agglomerated areas, and places where they have already established a strong network (often called ethnic precincts or ethnic enclaves) (Edin, Peter & Olof, 2003), which could lead to socioeconomic impact of immigration at different geographical levels (e.g., local, regional, national, and global). Concerns have been expressed in some circles over what is seen as unfair competition from immigrants in the labour market and their potential negative impact on public finances. Managing these potential sources of social tension presents a serious challenge to governments of developed countries, especially as prevailing demographic trends will require many of them to reappraise the role of labour migration in the subsequent years (Kosho, 2016). There is also a large body of literature (with different methodological approaches) on the socioeconomic impact of immigrants in host societies, which continues to grow as migrants tend to have a neutral or modest positive effect on local labour markets, regional development, and spatial distribution" (Gheasi & Nijkamp, 2017). From a global perspective, it is indicated that completely opening up borders could add more to the global output than trade liberalization (Goldin et al. 2011).

The socioeconomic impact of migrants can also be divided into two types of effects: direct effects (e.g., tax payment, unemployment benefits, increase in consumption, etc.); and indirect effects (international trade, foreign direct investment, etc.). The impacts can have short-run or long-run effects on the countries of origin and destination. In view of these, some scholars regard migration as a complicated phenomenon. Even nowadays, migration has a deeply-rooted impact on both sending and receiving countries. It has not only changed the social and cultural structure of many migrant-receiving societies, but it has also had a significant impact on wider economic activities as migrants can also act as a bridge of information between their countries of origin and host countries and by observing this effect, one can easily assume that an increase in

the number of migrants can incite flows of capital in the form of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), tourist flows, and international trade (Gheasi & Nijkamp, 2017).

However, the frequently cited factors shaping people's decisions to migrate are personal and political security, and to secure livelihood opportunities; a person's motives may change in nature and in importance over the course of their journey, suggesting that categorising individuals as 'economic migrants' or 'asylum-seekers' does not reflect the complex and fluid reality of people's migration experience (Cummings, Pacitto, Lauro & Foresti, 2015). This is in view of the fact that many reasons may motivate people to migrate and that migration could have some kinds of effects on the individual and the host country.

Review of Empirical Studies

Amankwah, Adwoa Sikayena (2010) studied the newspaper readership habits of the residents of the Adenta Flats, Adenta, Accra. He further interrogated the particular subject items that respondents consider most important in a newspaper, the factors that influenced newspaper readership, the newspapers considered credible or otherwise. Credibility was matched against the level of readership of the selected newspapers to determine whether there was a correlation between the two variables. The results indicate that most respondents bought the newspapers they read or accessed them through supplies at work, from public libraries, universities and colleges, co-tenant and friends because primarily, they considered them informative and credible sources of information. It was obvious from the study that respondents buy more of newspapers they consider credible and less of those considered not credible. The study also discovered that physical features such as headlines, well written stories as well as even newspaper review programmes boosted newspaper readership among the people. This study was focused on newspaper readership habits while the current study was focused on perception of the Nigerian newspaper readers towards reports on the Nigerian migrants in Libya

Aliagan (2011) investigated the pattern of newspaper readership in Ilorin metropolis using 150 respondents in a survey. The study revealed that an average of 4,800 newspapers is sold in Ilorin on daily basis, with some newspapers selling as low as 80 copies. This revelation confirms the general appraisal on low newspaper patronage and readership in the country and also poor economic background of most people as a challenge to newspaper patronage in Ilorin. The study suggested that the reason for low newspaper patronage is shallow reports of activities in the metropolis as majority of the newspapers devote their pages on reporting the rest of the nation to the metropolis and have scanty reports about the local readers and their activities. This study addressed the pattern of newspaper readership while the current study specially addressed the Nigerian migrants in Libya.

Akanda and Haque (2013) surveyed newspaper reading habits of the graduate students of Social Science faculty of University of Rajshahi in Bangladesh. The study demonstrates that the majority of the graduate students read Bengali and English newspapers and that international section of the newspaper is the most preferred section. The study also highlights the barriers and attempts to provide the suggestions to overcome the hurdles of reading both printed and online newspapers. This study shows a positive attitude to newspaper readership among students in Bangladesh, such might not be the case in other places in Nigeria like Taraba State. The study was focused on newspaper reading habits of the graduate students in Bangladesh while the present study is focused on the perception of Nigerian newspaper readers to reports on the Nigerian migrants in Libya

Edegoh, Ezeand Samson (2015) examines newspaper reading habits of youths in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study uses quantitative research technique. It adopts a sample size of 300 youths, purposefully drawn from Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi. The survey is anchored on the Uses and Gratification theory of the mass media. The paper employs the simple percentage method and frequency tables as analytical tools. Findings of the study show that youths in Anambra State read newspapers a lot and that The Sun, The Guardian, Complete Sports and The Vanguard are the newspapers they mostly read. Findings revealed that sports, political and economic news, are the major stories the youths read and that they obtain the newspapers they read mainly by going to newspaper stands (to read without paying) browsing newspapers with their cell phones, borrowing from friends and neighbours and by visiting the public library. The study established the

newspaper reading habits of youth in Anambra State while the current study is on the perception of the Nigerian newspaper readers to reports on the Nigeria migrants in Libya

Olley, and Chile, (2015) assessed the state of Nigerian newspapers published on the internet by looking at the state of awareness and utility in readership and response to feedback services of online newspapers among readers as well as the challenges and prospects of internet newspaper publishing in Nigeria. The study employed the survey design. The respondents were purposively sampled from the population of newspaper readers (both online and conventional) in the selected cities in South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria. The authors selected respondents using the stratified random sampling technique. The researchers used the income earners and students within the age brackets of 18-65 years of both sexes (bivariate) who reside in Warri, Benin City, Port-Harcourt, Uyo, Yenagoa, and Calabar. The study revealed that, the internet has played a significant role in the transformation of the newspaper industry in Nigeria and that the high rate of internet charges and low services experienced by internet subscribers is a drawback to Nigerian online Newspaper readership. The scholars recommended that The lack of ICT knowledge should be tackled, the Nigerian media should help the government in creating awareness of the Nigerian Newspapers online and there should be adequate power supply for the operation of the technologies used in the News media houses. This study is focused on awareness and utility in readership and response to feedback services of online newspapers while the present study addressed the perception of the perception of Nigerian newspaper readers to the reports by the Nigerian newspapaers on the Nigerian migrants in Libya.

Asemah, & Gambo (2016) examined the influence of online newspapers on the readership of traditional newspapers, focusing on the staff of Kogi State University, Anyigba. They looked at the influence of online version on the readership of the printed versions of newspapers. Media richness and uses and gratifications theories provided the theoretical base for the study. The authors used Survey research design, and also the questionnaire as their instrument for data collection. They discovered that online newspaper is negatively affecting the purchase of traditional newspapers as readers prefer to read newspapers online. They also discovered that online newspaper affects the readership of the traditional newspaper to a great extent. Based on these, they recommended that print media houses should endeavour to increase their circulation rate to the remotest parts of the country, so as to have enough copies available to readers. As this work is primarily focused on the influence of online newspapers on the readership of traditional newspapers, this current study explored how the Nigerian newspaper readers perceive the newspaper reports on the Nigerian migrants in Libya.

Ngene (2016) appraised the newspaper readers' perception of campaigns for the eradication of corruption in Nigeria. The study was conducted among newspaper readers from States' Capitals selected from the six geo-political zones of the country and the Federal Capital Territory. The population of the study is a total of 3,304,110 (three million, three hundred and four thousand one hundred and ten) from which a sample size of 400 was obtained using the Taro Yamane formula. They employed the survey design as the study methodology where a structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The study revealed that newspaper readers' perception of the performance of the press in the anti-corruption campaign is independent of the respondents educational qualification; that Newspaper readers exposure to newspaper campaigns on corruption had a significant impact in terms of contributing to their attitudes and behaviours regarding corruption; that Nigerian newspapers used their editorial columns effectively to crusade against corruption; that Nigerian newspapers' performance of their surveillance role in the campaigns to eradicate corruption in Nigeria was significant. The study recommended that Nigerian journalists need to be much more encouraged, protected and motivated to consistently campaign against corruption in the country and that their reports must be made to reach the rural areas where over 70% of Nigerians still reside and where every citizen of the country comes from. This work looked at the newspaper readers' perception of campaigns for the eradication of corruption in Nigeria, but this present work dwelt on the readers perception of the Nigeria migrants in Libya. The two works are quite similar as they both addressed very significant socio-economic problems in Nigeria.

Hassan and Azmi (2018) investigated the extent of readership preferences for both print and online newspapers in northwestern Nigeria. Daily Trust, being the largest circulating newspaper in the study area was selected for case study. The study employed quantitative approach, in which descriptive survey method was used to gather and analyse data from print and newspaper readers in the study area. Structured questionnaire was used as a data - gathering instrument. The questionnaire was distributed to a sample of 330 newspaper readers using simple random sampling. The findings revealed a moderate readers' preference for the online version of the newspaper to its print counterpart. Further analysis of the findings revealed that the majority of the readers find themselves reading less print copy of the newspaper because they have access to the free online versions. It was further established that majority of the readers spend less time reading the print copy of the newspaper due to the availability of its online versions. Meanwhile, the majority of the readers are confident that the newspaper will continue to survive despite the availability of its free online versions. This study looked at readership preferences for both print and online newspapers in northwestern Nigeria, but this current study is focused on the southern part of Nigeria and basically centered on the Newspaper reports about the Nigerian migrants in Libya.

Apuke, and Omar (2020) studied newspaper readership among Mass Communication students in the Taraba State University, Jalingo. The research design adopted was a descriptive survey, and the population consists of 630 Mass Communication Students of Taraba State University, Jalingo registered in 2018/2019 session. The sample size was 242, selected via a stratified random method. The study found that there is low newspaper readership among the students who preferred general interest newspapers particularly Daily Trust and the Sun Newspapers. They also found that the manners in which the students access newspapers were majorly through borrowing and vendor stand-free-reading. They also reported that politics and sport are the major subjects of interest which the students often seek from newspaper while the problems militating against the newspaper readership among the students include lack of money, prevalent of online newspaper and poor supply of newspaper in the University library and the Department. The study further recommended that Nigerian Universities should provide newspapers in the University library daily and create newspaper hub or stand within the department of mass communication to enable students to access newspapers. The study interrogated the readership of newspapers among students of mass communication but this current study addressed the perception of the Nigerian newspaper readers to reports on the Nigerian migrants in the Nigerian newspapers.

Anyim, (2021) examined the readers' perception and preferences for both online and print newspapers in the university library. The study employed quantitative approach, in which descriptive survey method was used to gather and analyze data from the students on Rhema University, Nigeria. The population of the study comprises of 252 registered students in the library who regularly read newspapers. Structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection, which was distributed to a sample size of 100 newspaper readers using simple random sampling. The findings revealed that a greater number of readers prefer the online version of the newspaper to its print counterpart. Findings revealed that majority of the readers find Online newspapers more convenient for reading compare to print newspapers, agreed that "ease of access" is what determines their preference for either print newspaper or online newspaper and that readership level of online newspapers is greater than that of print newspapers. These show the ease of accessibility of the content by the readers on the online platforms. The study examined the perception and preferences of the print and online newspapers but this current study looked at the perception of the Newspaper readers to the reports on the Nigerian migrants in Libya by the Nigerian newspapers.

What came out strongly from these literature is that that physical features such as headlines, well written stories as well as even newspaper review programmes boosted newspaper readership among the people; that readers mainly prefer the online version of the newspaper to its print counterpart as they find themselves reading less print copy of the newspaper because they have access to the free online versions. It was also discovered in the literature that newspaper readers' perception of newspaper contents is independent of their educational qualifications. That is why this study is particularly focused on how the Nigerian Newspaper Readers perceive the reports on the Nigerian migrants in Libya, as given in the newspapers. Therefore as the Nigerian newspapers may frame and report all these migrant stories in different ways, this study interrogates the perception of the audience regarding the Nigerian newspaper reports on migrants in Libya.

Theoretical Framework

The Perception Theory

This study is anchored on the perception theory. According to Folarin (2005), perception depends on a complex of variables such as psychological disposition, past experiences, cultural expectations and social relationships. All these result in the selective process. In selective exposure, the Nigerian audience has to be exposed to the Nigerian newspapers and also seek out information on the Nigerian migrants in Libya that appeals to them. This determines the extent to which they expose themselves to information on Nigerian migrants in Libya. In the selective attention, the study seeks to determine the extent to which the Nigerian newspaper readers pay adequate attention to stories on the Nigerian migrants in Libya. In selective perception, it is envisaged that each of the Newspaper readers could perceive and then decode the reports on the migrants in unique and individual ways. In selective retention, the study will further establish the extent to which the Nigerian newspaper readers recall or retain the information on migrants which they had received from the Nigerian Newspapers.

Social Responsibility Theory

The social responsibility theory is one of the normative theories of the press. Frederick Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm, popularised the social responsibility theory in 1956. The major thrust of the theory is for the media, while being free, to be regulated to ensure that public interest is given priority and pursued by the media for the good of the society. The social responsibility theory shot into prominence around the period of the Second World War. Scholars specifically cite the year 1947, when the Hutchins Commission gave its report on the freedom and responsibility of the press, as the origin of the theory. The Hutchins Commission was set up in 1942 against the background of an American press widely criticised for its sensationalism, commercialism, political imbalance, and monopoly tendencies (McQuail, 2010), which increased the pressure for government regulation of the media (Baran & Davis, 2012). It was these criticisms and threatening possibility that led to the initiative to form an independent commission called the Committee on a Freedom and Responsible Press, chaired by Robert Hutchins, then President of the Chicago University, and funded by Henry Luce, publisher of Times and Life magazines. Recommendations proffered by the Hutchins Commission from their inquiry later formed the tenets of the social responsibility theory.

The social responsibility theory can be described as an outgrowth of the libertarian theory because it was conceived as an upgrade to address the shortcomings of the libertarian theory. The argument for a free market place of ideas had been advanced in the libertarian paradigm, but it failed to guarantee press freedom and bring about expected benefits to the public (Folarin, 1998). Media ownership was highly concentrated in the hands of a few elites while commercialism in the media was the order of the day, with little or no thought given to accountability to the public. At the emergence of the social responsibility theory, however, it was sought that media ownership be seen “as a form of public trust or stewardship, rather than an unlimited private franchise” (McQuail, 2010, p. 171).

As in the libertarian theory, entrenching freedom of the press is a major tenet of the social responsibility theory. However, unlike what obtains in libertarian theory, the social responsibility theory concedes that absolute freedom of the press can be inimical to the society and, therefore, the press, as a responsibility that comes with its freedom, must take it upon itself to carry out certain obligations to preserve the rights of the public. Siebert, et al (1956), cited in Folarin (1998), outline some functions the media must carry out as obligations to the public:

1. To serve the political system by making information, discussion and consideration of public affairs generally accessible.
2. To inform the public to enable it to take self-determined action.
3. To protect the rights of the individual by acting as watchdog over the government.
4. To serve the economic system; for instance by bringing together buyers and sellers through the medium of advertising.

5. To provide good entertainment, whatever “good” may mean in the culture at any point in time.
6. To preserve financial autonomy in order not to become dependent on special interests and influences. (p. 28)

Baran and Davis (2012) note that service to the public is the guiding canon for the media under the social responsibility theory, even if it might result in the reduction of their profits. The media are to pursue cultural pluralism by giving equal opportunity to all strata of the public to express their views. Elite groups are not to be unduly favoured, and minority groups are to be consciously given a voice by the media.

The theory emphasises the need for the media to be self-regulated, but when the media fail to do this, compliance to standards must be enforced by certain social structures (Folarin, 1998). What this puts to perspective is the expedience for the media to discharge their duties within the boundaries of ethical standards. The media have to be objective, fair and accurate in their gathering and presentation of information. The theory, meanwhile, advocates that the media should not merely be concerned about objective reporting but also interpretative reporting. The goal of reporting, instead of being about the delivery of abundant information, then, becomes the need for news to be an agent of community formation (Nordenstreng, 1997). Dennis McQuail (1987), cited in Baran and Davis (2012), encapsulates the basic postulations of the social responsibility theory thus:

1. Media should accept and fulfil certain obligations to society.
2. These obligations are mainly to be met by setting high or professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity, and balance.
3. In accepting and applying these obligations, media should be self-regulating within the framework of law and established institutions.
4. The media should avoid whatever might lead to crime, violence, or civil disorder or give offence to minority groups.
5. The media as a whole should be pluralist and reflect the diversity of their society, giving access to various points of view and to rights of reply.
6. Society and the public have a right to expect high standards of performance, and intervention can be justified to secure the, or a, public good.
7. Journalists and media professionals should be accountable to a society as well as to employers and the market. (p. 137).

Therefore, certain tenets of the social responsibility theory hold some applicability to this research study. The assumption that the media are obligated to the public, in the light of this study, means the press cannot afford to shirk in their responsibility to the public in terms of the welfare of the citizens and other situational changes in the environment. The postulation of the theory that requires the media to report information truthfully, objectively and accurately is germane to this study because the manner in which the Nigerian press present information about contemporary issues such as migration, may affect the audience perception of the migrants.

Research Methodology

Survey is also considered apt for this study owing to the need to sample the views of Nigerian newspaper readers on how Nigerian newspapers report the Nigerian migrants in Libya. The population of the study were federal civil servants which available literature agreed were potential readers of newspapers in Nigeria. On this note, Nigerian civil servants in the South South and South East were used as the population of this study. According to the Federal Character Commission (2021), the population of the Federal Civil Servants in the two geopolitical zones is the total of **34793 persons** as contained in the table below:

Table 1
The Study Population

South East	Population of Federal Civil Servants	South South	Population of Federal Civil Servants
Abia State	3579	Akwa Ibom	4416
Anambra State	3576	Bayelsa	1172

Ebonyi State	865	Cross River	2681
Enugu State	2695	Delta	4419
Imo State	5825	Edo	3890
Total		Rivers	1675
16540		Total	
		18253	
Grand Total			
34793			

A sample size of 500 persons was determined based on the recommendations offered by Comrey and Lee (1992). According to them, for every research, a sample size of 50= very poor; 100 = poor; 300=fair; 500= very good while 1000=excellent. A multi-stage sampling technique was also adopted for selecting the respondents in each of the States as follows:

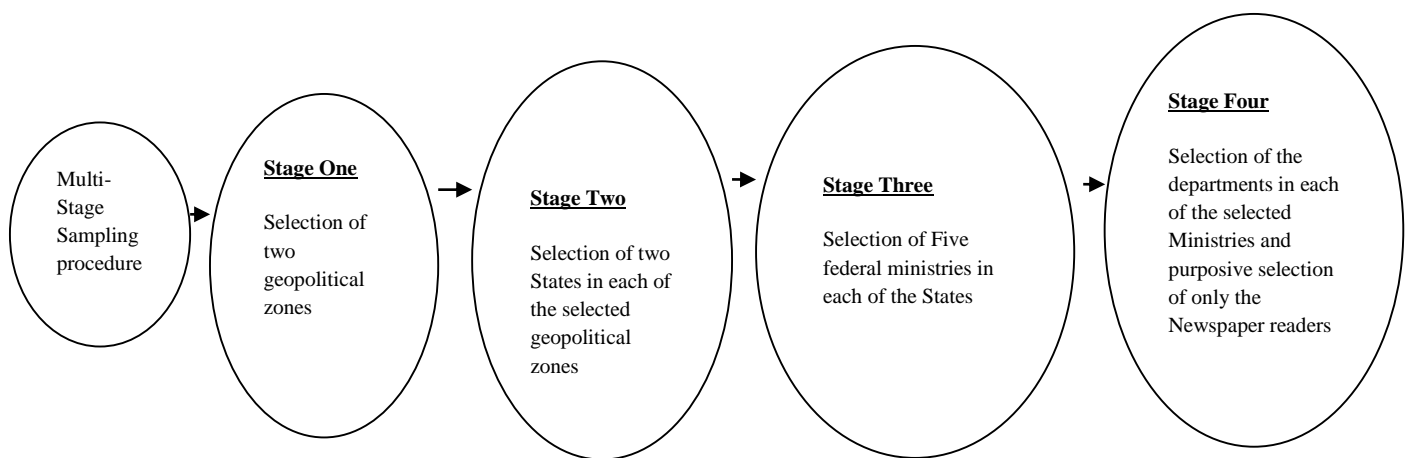


Figure 1: Graphical Illustration of the Multi-Stage Sampling Procedure

To obtain the accurate sample in each of the states selected, the researcher adopted the proportion statistics such that the total number of civil servants in the states will help determine the exact samples for each of them. Having selected Enugu, Imo, delta and Edo States, the number of these selected federal civil servants in the four states becomes 16, 829 encompassing the population of Enugu Federal civil Servants which is 2,695; Imo Federal civil Servants which is 5825; Delta Federal civil Servants which is 4419 and Edo Federal civil Servants which is 3,890. The study adopted the proportion statistics to share the sample size among the various States selected. The statistics provides that appropriate sample size for divergent groups in any study is gotten by the overall population of the groups. This proportion statistics is stated underneath:

$$X = \frac{n}{N} \times \frac{\text{Suggested Sample Size (500)}}{1}$$

Where X = the proportion of sample to be allotted for any of the States
 n= the population of the federal civil servants in each of the States selected
 N=the overall population of the federal civil servants in the selected States

In view of the above formular, the sample size for the federal civil servants in Enugu State is as stated below:

$$X = \frac{2,695}{16,829} \times \frac{\text{Suggested Sample Size (500)}}{1}$$

= 80 federal civil servants in Enugu State.

Using the same formular, the sample size for Imo federal civil servants is also stated thus:

$$X = \frac{5,825}{16,829} \times \frac{\text{Suggested Sample Size (500)}}{1}$$

= 173 Imo federal civil servants.

The sample size for Delta federal civil servants is also stated thus:

$$X = \frac{4419}{16,829} \times \frac{\text{Suggested Sample Size (500)}}{1}$$

= 131 Delta federal civil servants.

Using the same formular, the sample size for Edo federal civil servants is also stated thus:

$$X = \frac{3890}{16,829} \times \frac{\text{Suggested Sample Size (500)}}{1}$$

= 116 Edo federal civil servants.

A simple random sampling was used to specifically select some of the federal Ministries in each of the selected States. The Newspaper readers in each of the selected departments were studied using the proportional statistics. For purposes of fairness, the statistics was able to guide in determining the exact number of federal civil servants to sample in each of the States and ministries.

RESULTS

Table 1

How the Newspaper readers view media frames of the migrant stories

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent
Sensational	221	45.2	45.2
Non Sensational	268	54.8	54.8
Total	489	100.0	100.0

This study revealed the ways the readers of these migrant stories view the frames of the stories in the newspapers. The study, as captured in this table showed that more than half of the stories (54.8%) were perceived by the audience to be non sensational while other stories were also perceived to be sensational (45.2%). These show that the stories were mainly, non sensational and more fairly reported by the newspapers.

Table 2

How the Newspaper Readers perceive the media reports on Nigerian Migrants

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent
Biased	71	14.5	14.5
Negatively reported against the Migrants	84	17.2	17.2

Negatively reported against the government	66	13.5	13.5
Neutral	268	54.8	54.8
Total	489	100.0	100.0

This table shows how the Newspaper readers perceive media reports on Nigerian migrants in Libya. The study revealed that majority of the stories was perceived to be neutral (54.8%). Several others were either perceived to be negatively reported against the migrants (17.2%) or negatively reported against the government (13.5%). A few of such stories were considered biased by the audience (14.5%). These show that majority of the stories were neutral which reinforces the findings from the previous table, revealing that the stories were mainly non sensational.

Table 3
Reactions on whether the migrants were favourably reported by the Nigerian Newspapers

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent
Yes	67	13.7	13.7
No	422	86.3	86.3
Total	489	100.0	100.0

This table shows whether the readers’ reactions on whether the migrants stories were favourably reported by the Nigerian Newspapers. Findings revealed that majority of the stories were unfavourably reported by the Nigerian newspapers (86.3%) as against only (13.7%) others which were positively reported. The implication is that these reports were mainly negative stories against the migrants and also against the government.

Table 4
How prominent the Newspaper Readers perceive the migrant stories on the newspapers

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent
Scarce	468	95.7	95.7
Slightly Prominent	21	4.3	4.3
Very prominent	--	--	--
Total	489	100.0	100.0

This table shows clearly that the stories on Nigerian migrants in Libya were mainly considered scarce by the newspaper readers (95.7%) while a few of them were considered slightly prominent (4.3%). None of the stories were considered very prominent by these newspaper readers. The study therefore suggests that majority of the migrant stories in the newspapers were not found to be prominent by the readers.

Table 5
Comfortable with the way these migrants were represented in the newspapers?

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent
Yes	71	14.5	14.5
No	418	85.5	85.5
Total	489	100.0	100.0

This table shows whether the readers were comfortable with the way the migrants were represented in the newspapers. The study revealed that majority of the readers was uncomfortable with the way these newspapers represented the migrant stories on the newspapers (85.5%). However, only a limited number of them are comfortable with the way these migrants were represented in the newspapers (14.5%).

Table 6
Themes observed by the respondents in the ways these newspapers represented the migrants

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent
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Poor Condition of Migrants	489	100.0	100.0
Good Condition of Migrants	--	--	--
Total	489	100.0	100.0

This table shows the themes observed by the respondents in terms of the ways the migrants were reported in the newspapers. The study found, as reported in this table, that the respondents observed the theme to be predominantly centred on poor condition of the migrants (100%). This shows that the reports on the migrants were mainly of human interest. The themes also identified poor and worrisome situation of the Nigerian migrants.

Table 7

Audience perceived causes of the migration as reported by the newspapers

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent
Hunger/Starvation	79	16.2	16.2
Employment	49	10.0	10.0
Business	70	14.3	14.3
Drug/ Illicit Business	291	59.5	59.5
Total	489	100.0	100.0

The study was also able to establish the audience perceived causes of the migration as reported by the newspapers. The study revealed that more than half of the respondents (59.5%) perceive the cause to be mainly ‘drug’ related or illicit business venture. Some others perceive the cause to be hunger/starvation (16.2%); search for employment (10%); and other business venture/opportunities (14.3%). These show that there are various causes of the migration as perceived by the respondents but with the dominance of drug/illicit businesses.

Table 8

Audience perceived condition of the migrants as reported by the newspapers

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent
Detention	116	23.7	23.7
Arrest	48	9.8	9.8
Repatriation/Deportation	305	62.4	62.4
Not identified	20	4.1	4.1
Total	489	100.0	100.0

This table showed that more than half of the respondents perceive the condition of the migrants to be mainly deportation or repatriation (62.4%). Others perceive the condition to be detention (23.7%), and arrest (9.8%). They mainly believe that the predominantly perceived condition is the repatriation or deportation of the migrants from Libya.

Discussion

The study was able to establish how the readers of these migrant stories perceive or view the migrant stories in the newspapers. The results revealed that more than half of the stories (54.8%) were perceived by the audience to be non-sensational while other stories were also perceived to be sensational (45.2%). These show that the stories were non sensational and fairly reported. The respondents also perceived majority of the stories to be neutral (54.8%); and several others to be either negatively reported against the migrants (17.2%) or negatively reported against the government (13.5%). A few of such stories were considered biased by the readers (14.5%). These show that majority of the stories were neutral which reinforces the earlier findings from this study that the stories were mainly non sensational. The study revealed that majority of the migrant stories was perceived to be unfavourably reported by the Nigerian newspapers (86.3%) as against only

(13.7%) others, perceived to be positively reported. The implication is that these stories were mainly negative stories against the migrants and also against the government.

The study was also able to also show clearly that the stories on Nigerian migrants in Libya were mainly considered scarce by the readers (95.7%) while a few of them were considered slightly prominent (4.3%). None of the stories were considered very prominent. The study further revealed that majority of the audience were uncomfortable with the way these newspapers represented the migrant stories on the newspapers (85.5%), only a limited number of them are comfortable with the way these migrants were represented in the newspapers (14.5%). The themes observed by the respondents in terms of the ways the migrants were reported in the newspapers were also revealed. The study found, that the respondents observed the theme to be predominantly centred on poor condition of the migrants (100%), suggesting that the reports on the migrants were mainly of human interest as well as poor and worrisome situation of the Nigerian migrants in Libya.

The study also found that more than half of the respondents (59.5%) perceive the causes of Nigerian migration to be mainly drug related or associated with illicit business venture. Some others perceive the cause to be hunger/starvation (16.2%); search for employment (10%); and other business venture/opportunities (14.3%). These show that there are various causes of the migration as perceived by the readers but with the dominance of drug/illicit businesses. Interestingly, more than more than half of the readers perceive the condition of the migrants to be mainly deportation or repatriation (62.4%). Others perceive the condition to be detention (23.7%), and arrest (9.8%). They mainly believe that the predominantly perceived condition is the repatriation or deportation of the migrants from Libya.

Conclusion

The study also concludes that the stories on Nigerian migrants in Libya are predominantly framed or skewed in negative ways against the migrants and the government.

Recommendations

This study, recommends as follows:

The readers/ audience of Nigerian media contents should be more thorough, sceptical and critical in evaluating the contents of media messages.

The Nigerian government may reconsider providing good living conditions for the people as part of measures of curtailing their migration to Libya in search of greener pastures

The relevant government agencies and Nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) may organise some sensitization and enlightenment programs targeted at counselling Nigerians on the dangers of irregular migration

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