

**NEWSPAPER COVERAGE PATTERN OF THE RE-ARRESTS OF NNAMDI  
KANU. A CONTENT ANALYSIS REVIEW OF TWO NATIONAL DAILIES**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Studies have shown that media coverage affects how the public learns, understands, or thinks about an issue. Therefore, this study examined the newspaper coverage pattern of the re-arrests of Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of the indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB). The study aims at identifying the genre of stories, prominence, frame, and space allocated to the levels. The study was anchored on media framing and frustration-aggression theories. For this investigation, content analysis was used. Samples were drawn from select newspapers (The Nation and Vanguard). This study's duration was the first four months of Nnamdi Kanu's re-arrests, June 26 to September 2022, and the last two months of conducting the research, which is December and January 2022. The population of the study comprised all 289 editions. The findings show that newspapers have news stories dominating the re-arrests of Nnamdi Kanu in their publication, with slight prominence in the front-page lead. Another result shows that the Vanguard allocated more space to the coverage of the re-arrests of Nnamdi Kanu. The study, therefore, recommends that Nigerian journalists should always critically interpret and investigate issues in crises instead of depending on straight news stories. Interpretative features will help provide a more detailed report of a topic, like the re-arrests of Nnamdi Kanu.*

**Keyword:** Newspaper, coverage pattern, re-arrests, Nnamdi Kanu

**INTRODUCTION**

The media has long been recognized as playing an essential role in society. Society and all media are intricately interwoven. The media's influence over society is easy to see these days. As a whole, society and how it works are shown in the media. Furthermore, the law requires them to carry out some essential responsibilities, such as informing, educating, mobilizing, and entertaining the public. Constitutional provisions in Chapter 2 titled, "The fundamental obligations and directive principles of state policy," force the press, radio, and television, as well as other mass media organizations, to protect fundamental freedoms of

the media and to uphold those provisions. Section 15(2) states that discrimination based on religion, national origin, sex, social status, ethnic affiliation, or ties to other countries is prohibited by the Constitution.

The press has a critical role under the law to be socially responsible in coverage of subjects that potentially divide the country responsibly. This crucial duty of the media originates from the mass media's well-known ability to impact individual and social results. Scholars say the media may build or destroy governments and societal systems. Instrumentality of the press like news stories, features, editorial articles, opinions, and other resources, can help society achieve peace, unity and togetherness. Heaven & Obaje (2021), citing Ekwueme (2008), submit that scholars and politicians worldwide have praised the role of the media, especially newspapers, for contributing to every functional society. The letter of Thomas Jefferson to Edward Carrington in 1787, which became a famous phrase, stated that "It is better to have a government with a journalist than not to have a media with the government" (Mnookin, 2004). Despite being a government official, Thomas Jefferson alluding to the power of the media believed the media were more valuable than the government. In an ideal democracy, the press is a vital tool to mould public opinion.

Nigeria has Africa's most significant population. The United Nations world population prospect estimated the people of Nigeria as of February 2022 to 216,746,934. The ethnic diversity of Nigeria's population adds to the population's complexity. Nigeria is home to about 250 ethnic groups, each unique language. Due to their sheer numbers, three influential groups arise in national dialogue: the Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba representing the North, Southeast and Southwest, respectively.

Internal threats to Nigeria's territorial integrity are not new. Still, the method they have manifested themselves in recent times is problematic, especially Southeastern agitators' Indigenous people of Biafra, otherwise known by the acronym IPOB and the southwestern Oduduwa Republic agitators. The former is led by a London trained economist Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, with dual citizenship, both from British and Nigeria, who formed and led the indigenous People of Biafra. At the same time, the Oduduwa Republic agitator was also directed by Sunday Adeniyi Adeyemo, known as Sunday Igboho, the chairman of Adelson International Business Concept Limited, human suitable activities, Yoruba self-determination activist and philanthropist.

The IPOB claims that Nigeria's federal government discriminates against and marginalizes the Igbo people. They went on to say that it is difficult for anyone from the Igbo extraction to be named Nigeria's chief of army staff. "What kind of a dunderhead country is that?" In one of his speeches, Nnamdi Kanu inquires, "What kind of imbecile would want me in a place like that?" (Oduah, 2017). A senior analyst with the international crisis Group Nnamdi Obasi submits that the South East feels politically marginalized. There is a point to that. As one of the three major regions in the country falling down the pecking order, to a minority with a deflated number of states among the six geopolitical zones of the country is hard to chew. In response, IPOB and its leader, Nnamdi Kanu, have increased their efforts to establish an independent Biafra state consisting solely of Igbo people. The group has been responsible for many deadly and property-damaging rallies across the southern part of Nigeria. The IPOB leader was arrested in October 2015 and kept in prison until

April 25, 2017, when a Federal High Court granted him conditional parole in Abuja. He enjoyed his bail until September 2017, when troops on Operation Python Dance II allegedly attacked his Afaraukwu, Ibeku Umuahia rural residence, resulting in a conflict between the army and IPOB members then fled to the United Kingdom. On June 27 2021, he was again re-arrested by the Nigerian government from Kenya and extradited to Nigeria to face trial for reasonable felony and other allegations. However, the Kenya government claimed that Kanu was not arrested and deported from the country. The event around the re-arrests of Nnamdi Kanu and how the media frames the crises are potent mechanisms that may desire how the people analyze the reason, assign responsibility, and explain consequences. The public's opinions and perceptions are influenced (Olutokun and Seteolu, 2001).

Previous research has looked at how the media frames crises of various types, such as Boko Haram and political problems. However, very little has focused on media reportage patterns, especially in the coverage of secessionists. None have attempted to examine the way of media reportage of the re-arrests of Nnamdi Kanu. This study, therefore, wants to critically look at Newspaper coverage of the re-arrests of Nnamdi Kanu through some selected national daily within the time frame of Nnadi Kanu re-arrested by the Nigerian government.

The objectives of the study were to identify the genre of stories on Nnamdi Kanu re-arrests by the newspaper, to examine the level of prominence given to the news stories on Nnamdi Kanu re-arrests by the newspaper, also to know the dominant frames used mainly by the newspaper in reporting Nnamdi Kanu re-arrests and finally to know the space allocated to the coverage of Nnamdi Kanu re-arrests by the newspaper.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Following Nigeria's independence from Britain on October 1, 1960, internal tensions erupted nearly immediately, leading to war. On July 7, 1967, Nigeria launched a civil war that lasted until January 15, 1970, a decade after gaining independence from Britain. The discriminations and mistreatment of the Igbo are responsible for the civil war. Egbejule (2017), cited in Okeke et al. (2019), submits that the foremost reason for the war was the killing of Igbo ethnics residing in the north from in the year 1953 and 1966. Notable is the fact that the killing happened pre and post-independence. But Igbos still believed it was ethnic cleansing. Civil war is said to be the aftermath of the 1960's coup. The 1966 killing fueled the 1967 agitation for Biafra secession (Egbejule 2017).

Agboeze, A.A. (2017), citing Umechukwu (2001, P. 353), opined that; "ethnic politics can be said to be a deadly disease, which has polluted the Nigerian bloodstream since the colonial days. After amalgamating the northern and southern protectoral as one nation in 1914, Nigeria politics has been constantly played along ethnic lines". This supposedly planted the seed of discord amongst the various ethnic groups in Nigeria, especially the North and the South, then the Eastern region of Nigeria and other areas of Nigeria. There were allegations of political marginalization resulting from an imbalance in the structuring of political positions in Nigeria. This motivated the people of the Eastern region of Nigeria

to demand and agitate for the political liberation of the Biafra people from Nigeria that jointly gained independence from their colonial lords within the decade. The first declaration of the Biafra republic took place in the year 1967 by Chukwuemeka Ojukwu, who was then a lieutenant colonel in the Nigerian army and military governor of eastern Nigeria. The declaration culminated in a civil war for three years (Agboeze 2017).

Nnamdi Kanu, a Nigerian-British born at the end of the Nigeria-Biafra war in 1970, is the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Najakku (2017), cited in Okeke et al. (2019), claim that the IPOB is an aggrieved group that broke out from the Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State Biafra (MASSOB). As Najakku points out, IPOB is well-funded, thanks to the generosity of its donors. As a result, the organization has enough funds to purchase Biafra-themed items, such as wristbands, T-shirts, flags. Okeke et al. (2019), citing Ugorji (2017), points that the leader of the IPOB capitalized on the emergent new medium of communication to rally millions of Biafra activists, supporters, and sympathizers in support of the Movement's cause. The group also used radio Biafra to spread their message.

Nigeria's government employed both military and legal methods to deal with the threat posed by IPOB. The government legally petitioned the Federal High Court to ban IPOB. The judge ruled as follows: "That an order, declaring the activities of the respondent – Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) – in any part of Nigeria, especially in the South-East and South-South regions of Nigeria amount to acts of terrorism and illegality, is granted (Ikhilae, 2017) cited by Okeke et al. (2019)." Also, as part of the legal approach, the leader (Nnamdi Kanu) of IPOB was arrested in Lagos on October 14, 2015, by agents of the Federal Government but detained and released on April 28, 2017, on bail. He had enjoyed his bail until September 2017 when troops on a military exercise, Operation Python Dance II, allegedly invaded his Afaraukwu, Ibeku Umuahia country home, prompting a clash between the soldiers and IPOB members after that departed Nigeria to the United Kingdom in 2017. On June 27 2021, he was again re-arrested by the Nigerian government from Kenya and evacuated to the country to continue his trial for treasonable felony with other allegations. On the other hand, the Kenyan authorities denied Kanu's being detained and deported to Nigeria. Scholars through much literature have described Indigenous People of Biafra from their different views cum ideological activities of the organization, and the most similar element that runs through their definitions is that; it is a separatist cum agitation organization fighting for Independence of Biafra.

Ekpo and Agorje (2019: P. 5) described Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) as a secessionist movement based in Southeast Nigeria intending to restore defunct Biafra, albeit through peaceful means. The group (IPOB) was also identified by scholars as an offshoot of the Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), with similar goals and objectives to the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), but less extremist than IPOB. The same scholars maintained that the organization's purposes are to facilitate and advocate the rights of the Igbo people. According to these researchers, the goal of the IPOB is to create a new country. Similarly, Jacob, Nwobi, & Igboji (2020: P.

41) identified IPOB as a group driving the Movement for separating Biafra from Nigeria based on its activities.

In the same way, historians viewed the group as a revival of the weakening pro-secessionist groups of MASSOB and the Biafran Zionist Movement BZM to build an independent state for the people of the ancient Eastern area. Ideological philosophy has also been used to characterize the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) by academics. Thus, the group's origins may be traced back to the Igbos' historical and cultural roots to demand the separation of the Biafran Nation from Nigeria (Nwaiwu 2016; Okafor 2017). The group believe Nigeria's Central Government has been maltreating the Igbo people and sidelining them. Academics also argued that the organization is advocating for a democratic and civic referendum in Igbo territory to settle the Biafra question. According to them, another method utilized by the IPOB movement is a sit-at-home protest in South-East states to commemorate those who perished in the 1967-1970 Nigeria-Biafra conflict and those who have died in the struggle for the actualization of Biafra and to demand Kanu's release from detention (when he was still incarcerated). Residents of South-Eastern States, primarily Igbos, were told to stay at home on December 2, 2021, among many other days, including but not limited to Mondays, among other things.

The concept of secession or secessionism is well known in Global politics, resulting from a 1648 treaty of Westphalia; the idea of the nation-state was established in international politics. "Balkanization" or "the disintegration of an entity into parts or units that are smaller" is what the term "secessionism" refers to in this context. There were autonomous nation-states in Eastern Europe that were born following the breakup of the Soviet Union (USSR) (Kohen, 2006: ii). A surge of secessionism led to the creation of South Sudan, which had previously been a single state. The same can be said about Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Estonia, Belarus and Pakistan. All of these countries have been the result of secessionist movements. In some cases, secessionism impedes the existing state's legal personality in the comity of nations or reduces its physical and terrestrial scope. It implies that Nigeria's topographical coverage would be drastically reduced if the autonomous states of the Odua Republic and IPOB were achieved.

As it frequently threatens to return linked communities and nations to their primordial structure, secessionism is a risk to the existence of a multiethnic and a multinational (Mansbach & Taylor 2012). When it comes to sociopolitical and economic issues such as governmental or political horizontal inequality, secessionism is a risk but should not be seen as irrational or dishonest. Political horizontal inequality is when the existing state of affairs gives one ethnicity or group preferential treatment at the expense of other ethnic groups in a multicultural culture. The Odua Republic and Biafran agitators, for example, repeat the idea that ethnic groupings in Nigeria's Federal Republic are politically unequal since the Hausa and Fulani are seen as Nigeria's only favoured groups (Langer et al., 2007). Their dominance in Nigeria's politics and other vital areas, such as Federal Government parastatals, was no longer acceptable to the Odua Republic and Biafran agitators. Due to Nigeria's size, the Hausa ethnicity has a significant influence. Among the Hausa, the Fulani ethnic group presently looks to be dominant. The Hausa ethnic group could be a Fulani

weapon. As a result, individuals may incorrectly believe that Hausa and Fulani are the same. In truth, they share a strong religious bent. The Fulani are Nigeria's closest ethnic group near the Hausa majority. This results from increasing political injustices in the Hausa and Fulani populations.

Media have power in shaping public opinion through their various content. Media reports on conflicts in Nigeria so far largely influence the outcome of the battle either negatively or positively. Studies on the Nigerian newspaper coverage of matches confirm that they are not socially responsible when it comes to covering conflicts most of the time. Ojo (2000) claims that the media has led to conflict escalation and retaliation attacks. The media influence them on how to think about things. Social media is where most people get their information about public events now as it is accessible to the most media audience.

As a result of the attention placed on the news, they also learn how much value to assign to a story. Framing is an evolving theory from mass communication researchers and others in related fields (Psychology, Sociology, and Political Science). According to this view, the media focus attention on specific occurrences before placing them inside a sphere of meaning. According to the notion, frames can change how important specific events or reports are seen. According to Marshal McLuhan, as Folarin (1998) described, the press can colour events by using them in a particular way or not using them at all. Frames play an essential part in how individuals perceive reports, whether semantic, visual, episodic, or thematic.

The Framing theory was chosen to anchor this present study. The approach provides an understanding of the media's contribution to the coverage of Nnamdi Kanu's issue. Framing theory offers a framework for understanding the media's contribution in covering the Nnamdi Kanu issues. This is partially due to the media's influence on the resolution or escalation of conflict. According to some estimates, only one erroneously framed media report is sufficient to set an entire country ablaze. For example, the IPOB agitations are being promoted primarily by Igbos, who consider Hausa/Fulani their adversaries. Suppose the media portrays or frames Igbos as assaulting Hausas in the East or Hausas as attacking Igbos in the north. In that case, a retaliation attack may occur, resulting in the spilling of innocent blood.

It was developed in 1939 by psychologist John Dollard and his colleagues, who named it the frustration-aggression theory. The hypothesis was later acquired by scholars such as Leonard Berkowitz (1962) and Aubrey Yates (1962), who made significant contributions to it (Olley & Ekareafu 2013). The theory is concerned with the "Want and Get Ratio" and the difference between expected need and satisfaction and actual need satisfaction, among other things. The hypothesis is predicated on the assumption that people will display aggressiveness if they do not acquire what they desire in the first place. To add further meaning, Olley & Ekareafu stated that when individuals are inept at receiving what they merit, frustration can develop, and this might culminate in violence or protests against those who they believe are accountable for their situation of deprivation (p,34). The framing theory was shown to explain the IPOB's violent agitation effectively. When their

expectations as Nigerians are not met, IPOB members resort to violent rages and call for secession to rectify perceived injustices in the country. The Nigerian government is also unhappy with how IPOB portrays Nigeria to the outside world

## **METHOD**

The study utilized content analysis to meet the objectives of this study. Ohaja (2003, p. 15), cited by Heaven, K.K., and Obaje, C.E., (2021), topics pertinent to media coverage of varied concerns require content analysis for proper evaluation and interpretation. Ohaja (2003, p.9) defines content analysis as a research method that quantitatively and qualitatively describes manifest communication content objectively. Thus, for this study, the newspaper's coverage pattern of Nnamdi Kanu's re-arrests was analyzed. According to International Media Newspapers (2019), 26 Nigerian national newspapers have not been updated. The study purposively sampled two newspapers ranked top on the 2019 web ranking for newspapers in Nigeria. They are namely Vanguard and The Nation newspapers. The scope of the content analysis was the first four-month of Nnamdi Kanu's re-arrests, June 26 2021, to September 30 2021, and the last two months of conducting the research, which is December to January. This study's population comprised 289 Vanguard and The Nation newspapers published from June 27 to September 2021 and December to January. The reason for the choice of the period is because it was the time of the re-arrests of Nnamdi Kanu.

## **DATA PRESENTATION**

The following tables show the breakdown of research questions.

### **Research question 1:What is the genre of stories on the re-arrests of Nnamdi Kanu?**

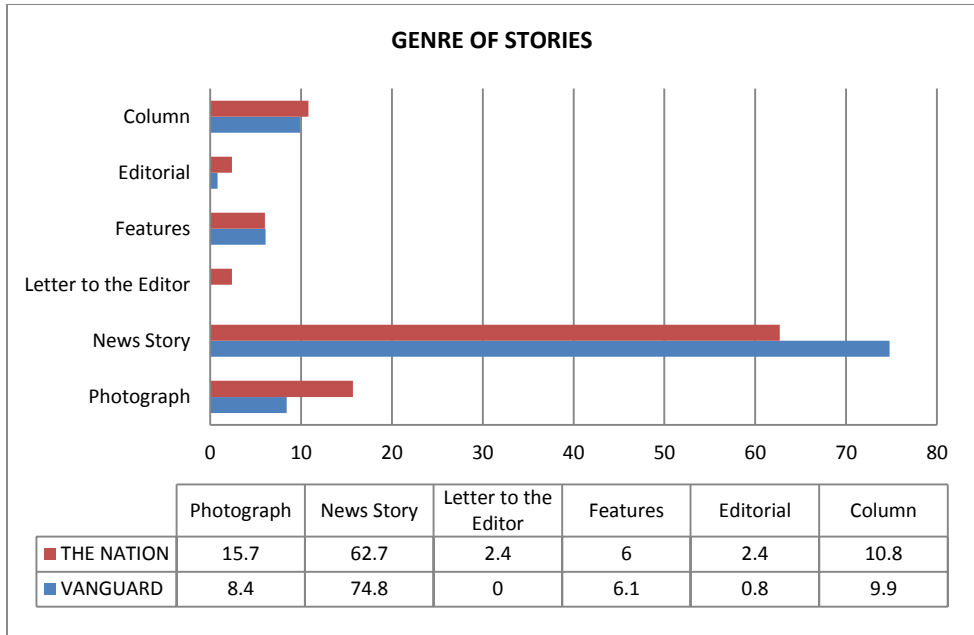
The following unit of analysis onthe column, editorial, features, letter to the editor, news story, and pictureswill be analyzed through table and percentages.

**TABLE 1: GENRE OF STORIES.**

THE NATION	NUMBER	PERCENT AGE	VANGUARD	NUMBER	PERCENT AGE	COMBINED TOTAL/ PERCENTAGE
Column	9	10.8%		13	9.9%	22 (10.3%)
Editorial	2	2.4%		1	0.8%	3 (1.4%)
Features	5	6.0%		8	6.1%	13 (6.1%)
Letter to the Editor	2	2.4%		0	0%	2 (0.9%)
News Story	52	62.7%		98	74.8%	150 (70.1%)
Photograph	13	15.7%		11	8.4%	24 (11.2%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100%</b>		<b>131</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>214 (100%)</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2022**

The table reveals that most of the reports on Nnamdi Kanu re-arrests were dominated by the news story, which accounted for 70.1%, and the lowest information was a letter to the editorial with 0.9%



**Research Question 2: What is the level of prominence of stories given to the news stories of the re-arrests of Nnamdi Kanu in terms of placement?**

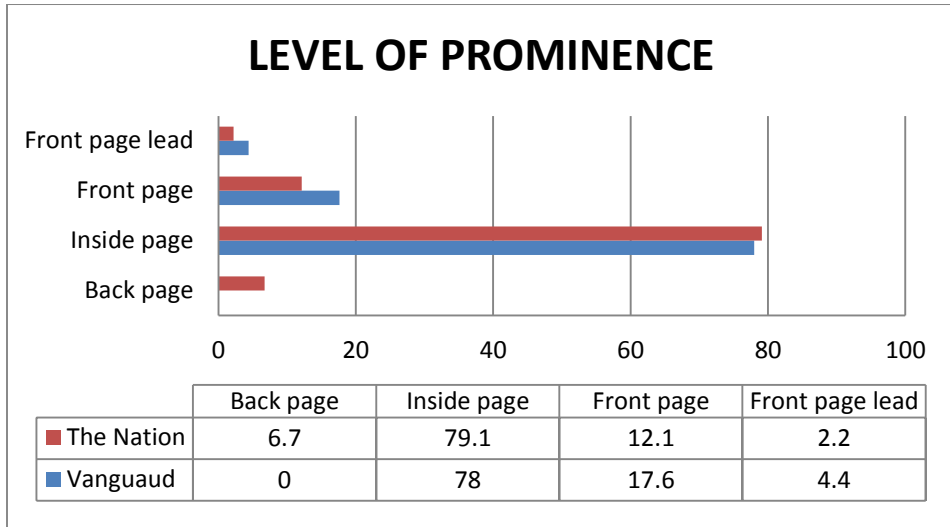
**TABLE 2: LEVEL OF PROMINENCE**

THE NATION	Number (no)	Percentage (%)	VANGUARD	Number (no)	Percentage (%)	Combined Total (%)
Front page lead	2	2.2%		7	4.4%	9 (3.6%)
Front page	11	12.1%		28	17.6%	39 (15.6%)
Inside page	72	79.1%		124	78%	196 (78.4%)
Back page	6	6.7%		0	0%	6 (2.4%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100%</b>		<b>159</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>250(100%)</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2022**

The import of the table shows that the majority of the stories were tucked in the inside page and the Nation newspaper led in this reports with 79.1% while the less was the back page of the Vanguard that record 0%.





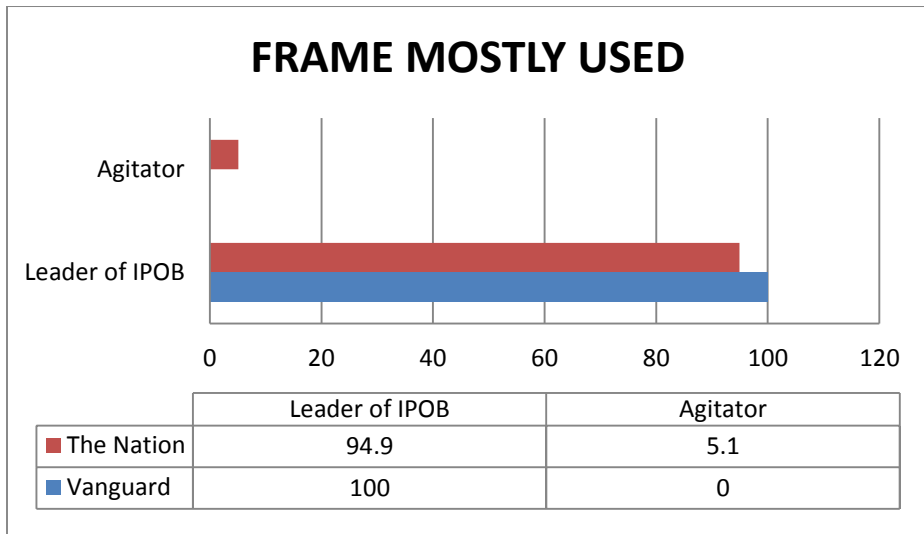
**Research Question 3: Dominant frame used by the selected newspaper in reporting the re-arrests of Nnamdi Kanu?**

**TABLE 3: KIND OF FRAMES USED BY THE SELECTED NEWSPAPERS IN REPORTING NEWS**

THE NATION	Number (no)	Percentage (%)	VANGUARD	Number (no)	Percentage (%)	Combined Total (%)
Agitator	4	5.1%		0	0%	4 (2%)
Leader of IPOD	74	94.9%		124	100%	198 (98%)
Total	78	100%		124	100%	202(100%)

**Source: Field Survey, 2022**

The table above reveals that out of the two frames used by the two national dailies under study, the Leader of IPOD frames was dominant, accounting for 98%. In contrast, the Agitator frame was less dominant with 2%.



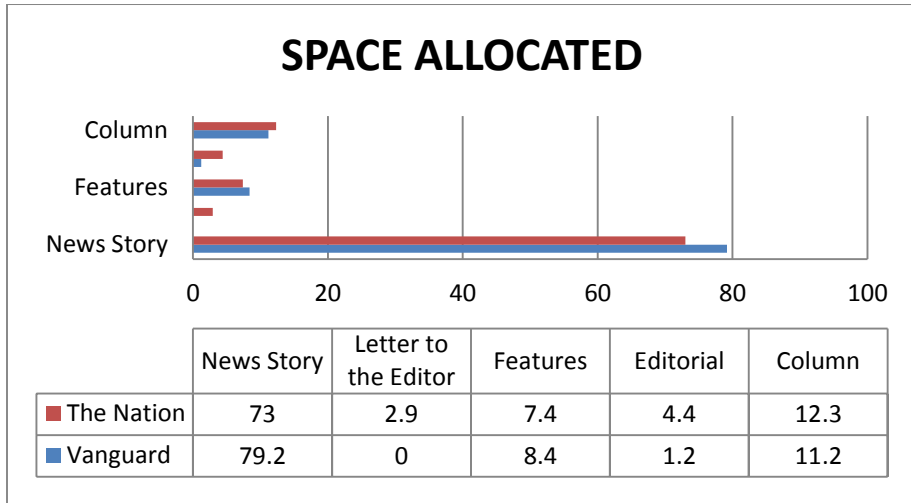
**Research Question 4: What is the space allocated to the coverage of the re-arrests of Nnamdi Kanu trials by the selected newspaper?**

**TABLE 4: SPACE ALLOCATED TO THE COVERAGE TO THE COVERAGE OF REARRESTS OF NNAMDI KALU**

THE NATION	NUMBER	PERCENT AGE	VANGUARD	NUMBER	PERCENT AGE	COMBINED TOTAL/ PERCENTAGE
Column	72	12.3%		112	11.2%	184(11.6%)
Editorial	26	4.4%		12	1.2%	38 (2.4%)
Features	43	7.4%		84	8.4%	127 (8.0%)
Letter to the Editor	17	2.9%		0	0%	17 (1.1%)
News Story	427	73%		791	79.2%	1218 (76.9%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>100%</b>		<b>999</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1584 (100%)</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2022**

The space used by each daily was measured through paragraphs allocated to each story. The table above reveals that Vanguard gave more space to the report of Nnamdi Kanu re-arrests with 63.1% space allocated to all the accounts while The Nation recorded the lowest space with 36.1%.



**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The study found out that the selected newspapers have news stories that dominated the re-arrested of Nnamdi Kanu in their publication; thus implies that the dailies gave attention to the story in informing people of the subject matter, but interpretations and follow-ups on developing issues were insignificant. The media audience would have been more informed about the problem through feature stories. Feature as defined is an in-depth analysis or comprehensive and writing that is factual and truthful on a contemporary subject matter that looks to inform using an appealing and easygoing tone than plain news,' writes Ohaja (2005, p.1), cited in Chioma R. et al. (2017). The study found that the percentage of editorials and letters to the editor on the re-arrests of Nnamdi Kanu compared to the straight news stories is too low. This makes the newspaper stand on the issue not well known or their position.

Another finding reveals that most of the stories on the re-arrests of Nnamdi Kanu were tucked in the inside page of both selected newspapers, with The Nation Newspaper leading in these reports with (79.1%) over Vanguard that recorded (78%). The two selected newspaper does not give the front page lead to the story in general as the data show that (4.4%) news stories occupied the front-page lead of Vanguard while The Nation only had (2.2%) news stories that occupied the front-page lead. This indicates that much prominence was not attributed to the re-arrests of Nnamdi Kanu through the selected two dailies front page.

The study also found that the two selected newspapers used only Agitators and leaders of IPOB in reporting cases around Nnamdi Kanu's re-arrests. Findings revealed that the Leader of IPOB frame was dominantly used through the record of (98%) followed by Agitators frame that has only (2%). Kostadinova (2012), cited in Chioma et al. (2017), claims that frames impact people's opinion, understanding, and attitudes toward events,

subjects, matters, and institutions. Finally, the find shows that the Vanguard newspaper gave more space in the evaluation through paragraphs allocated to the stories of Nnamdi Kanu re-arrested cases with the percentages of (63.1%) than The Nation that recorded (36.1%).

## **CONCLUSION**

The present study found that stories covered by the two dailies were majorly news reports of the re-arrests of Kanu. The inside pages of the newspapers carried more of the re-arrests stories than the front pages. It was thus deduced from the study that the selected dailies did not give prominence through the front page lead on the re-arrests of Nnamdi Kanu. The two chosen newspapers only use two kinds of frames when writing their stories: Leader of IPOB and Agitators. The study concludes that Vanguard gave more space in the report of Nnamdi Kanu re-arrests than The Nation newspaper.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on this study findings, the following suggestions were made:

1. Instead of relying on straight news articles, Nigerian journalists should constantly critically evaluate and investigate issues in crises, as most straight news stories are 'copy and paste'. Interpretative characteristics will aid in providing a complete report on a problem, such as Nnamdi Kanu's re-arrest.
2. Newspaper should always give front-page lead prominence to issues of national concern, especially issues related to the secessionist report.
3. Newspapers should routinely remind reporters to exercise caution and professionalism when reporting sensitive issues like religious ethnicity; newspapers must also be seen as socially responsible for promoting peace and unity in the country.
4. Nigerian dailies should endeavour to allocate more space to the coverage of issues that are more important to the country's unity.

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