

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF NIGERIAN PRINT MEDIA COVERAGE OF MAZI NNAMDI KANU AND MR. SUNDAY IGBOHO'S SECESSIONIST MOVEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Comparative analysis of Nigerian print media coverage of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho's secessionist movements is a content analytical study whose aim was to examine the news stories on both activists in order to ascertain whether reportage and framing are dependent on background/ownership of the press and ethnic orientations. The press, bestowed with the functions of agenda setting, watchdog and surveillance etc., it became imperative to find out who formed the major agenda for the press and the reason for the formation of such. The objectives that guided the study were among others, to compare the frequency of reportage as well as the prominence given to Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho by the press, and to examine the framing of media reports on the both activists by the press. The study, anchored on agenda setting and framing theories, utilized the content analytical research method, to examine six Nigerian Dailies based on different ethnic backgrounds which include: Daily Sun, The Punch, Vanguard, The Guardian, This Day and Leadership newspapers. The content analysis was conducted from January to August 2021 with composite week sampling as the technique for sampling in the study. Findings revealed that Mazi Kanu enjoyed higher frequency and more prominence than Mr. Igboho in the Nigerian press. The study concluded that reportage and framing of news stories were dependent on background/ownership of the press, and influenced by ethnic sentiments/affiliations. The study recommended that the press should pay less attention to ethnic sentiments in its reportage, despise politics and be more objective in its reportage on the essence of agitations with their movements.

Keywords: Comparative analysis, Press, Framing, Coverage and Secessionist movements

Introduction

Nigeria, since the amalgamation of its Southern and Northern Protectorates in the year 1914 by Lord Fredrick Lugard (Isiani & Obi-Ani, 2019), has had a number of challenges ranging from wars (the case of Nigerian civil war; 1967-70) (Maiangwa, 2016), military coups d'etat (the cases of 1966, 1975, 1985, etc.) (Onah & Okeke, 2017), election violence (the case of 1993 general election and M.K.O Abiola's saga commonly known as *Oso-Abiola*) (Ojukwu & Oluwole, 2016), insurgency (the case of Boko-Haram) and certainly, the current secessionist movements (Obiakor, 2022). These challenges seem to resurface frequently since the amalgamation of Southern and Northern Nigeria by Lord Lugard was done without due consideration or consultations with the diverse peoples that eventually made up Nigeria (Mimiko & Adeyomi, 2005, p. 57; Azom, Alumona & Iloh, 2019). These people already have their religious affiliations, their cultural values, their language as well as their psyche (Odum, 2018). Many advocates of secessionism exist in Nigeria. The two most outstanding are: Nnamdi Kanu, who will be called Mazi Nnamdi Kanu in this study, and Sunday Adeniyi Adeyemo, widely known as Sunday Igboho, who will be called Mr. Sunday Igboho in this study. These two activists are of different ethnic groups, fighting a common goal and with a common enemy as the Federal Government of Nigeria (Campbell & Quinn, 2021).

In the past, there have been several agitators first among them was Dim Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, whose agitation came as a result of the non-implementation of the Aburi Accord, Ghana that took place in January, 1967, leading to the declaration of the Republic of Biafra in May, same year (Ediagbonya, Duyile

& Nwachukwu, 2020). Other agitators include: Sir Isaac Adaka Boro, Chief Ralph Uwazulike, Barr. Benjamin Onwuka, to mention but a few. However, while some agitators were separatist in nature, some others were secessionist in nature. It is worthy to note that separatism is a principle which supports the separation between a state and another; while secessionism is a principle which supports a total pulling away of an organization from its main body.

The core difference between these two concepts could be viewed from married couples who seek to separate while continuing the marriage (this is the case of separatism) and the married couples who seek to divorce their marriage (this is the case of secessionism). The implication of this is that, separatism is more peaceful in nature than secessionism which is more violent in nature. What this means is that, for atypical Nigerian onlooker, the adoption of separation is more ideal, giving a back up to restructuring. But for the agitators themselves, secession is the ultimate. However, for the reason of this study, the two concepts are used interchangeably. This is because different researchers refer to the same concept differently in terms of separatism and secessionism.

Though the reasons for these different agitations may differ from person to person, or from group to group, the collective idea of separatism and/or secessionism (have/has) always been to demand for fairness and equity. Secessionism has indeed taken many shapes and forms from the days of the “Original Biafra” led by Dim Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, who declared the republic of Biafra on 27th May, 1967, leading to the most devastating war that claimed the lives of over 2 million persons, between 1967 and 1970 (Nwafor & Onwubere, 2019; Campbell & Quinn, 2021), to the present “Rebranded Biafra” championed by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, and very recently, the clamour for Oduduwa nation led by Mr. Sunday Igboho, though the secessionist campaign of the South-South region, leading to the declaration of the Niger-Delta republic on February, 1966, by Isaac Adaka Boro, cannot be forgotten.

Meanwhile, secessionist movements, rebellion and opposition to governments particularly in Africa, and the world at large, have never been overlooked. The Rwandan war has remained indelible in the African mind, having claimed more than five hundred thousand lives (Nwogu & Egwu, 2019). The war which lasted between October, 1990, and July, 1994, came as a consequence of the dispute between the Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda, with the Hutus leading the government, and the Tutsis opposing the government, the result which was the Rwandan genocide of all times. The key thing to note here is that opposition to the regime has always been met with series of attacks from the government who holds both power and authority, and sees every opposition as threat to stability. The cases of the Nigeria/Biafra civil strife, the Niger-Delta republic’s declaration and the Rwandan war are derivable instances.

Pertinent is the fact that separatism, rebellion or opposition to the government according to Nwafor and Onwubere (2019), is as a consequence of the experiences or injustices meted upon the members of certain social groups. These social groups seek greater autonomy in the type of ‘religious segregation’, ‘racist segregation’ or ‘sexist segregation’, as a result of these injustices, by choice of course, and not ‘government-enforced segregation’ (Ngwu, Ekwe & Chiaha, 2015).

Meanwhile, certain reasons lead to secessionist movements. The most common of them as expressed by Duruji (2009) include: emotional resentment and hatred for rival community, ethnic cleansing and genocide, resistance by victims of operation (the case of operation python dance), propaganda and influence by those inside and outside the region who hope to gain politically from inter-group conflict and hatred, political and economic dominance of one group that does not share privilege and power in an egalitarian fashion, economic motivations such as seeking to end exploitation of more powerful groups, or conversely, to escape economic redeployment from a richer to a poorer group, destabilization from one separatist movement giving rise to others, feeling that the perceived nation was added to a larger State by illegitimate means, the perception that the State can no longer support one’s own good, or has betrayed their interest, etc. In most cases, it has become reasonably apparent about the presence of the aforementioned reasons as suggested by Duruji, with regards to the wars that have taken place at one place or the other including the Biafra civil war, the Rwandan war, the war against the 12-day republic, and even the current cases of the ongoing struggles for self-actualization as being expressed by the two most notable activists under discussion in this research work.

Separatist agitations have been a common characteristic of Nigerian politics, which inversely remains a veritable means of expressing dissatisfaction with the Nigerian State, as well as a apparatus for demanding equitable political inclusion (Alumona, Azom & Iloh, 2019). Meanwhile, Separatists are seemingly quasi messiahs or at best, liberators to the groups whose separation they mobilize for (Adibe, 2017). This,

according to Adibe (2017), is as a consequence of the fact that the movement lays emphasis on local grievances by amplifying them or making whatever evident benefit their in-groups get from the country to appear less than whatever their counters get.

For Aladekomo (2021), religion remains the background for secessionist campaigns in Nigeria. His argument is based on the fact that the Southern and Northern protectorates were baselessly amalgamated by Lord Lugard in 1914, with majority in the Northern region as Muslims and majority of the Southern Protectorate as Christians; hence, creation of potentials for violent confrontations.

And now, religious, sectional and ethnic suspicion and tension have worsened under the current administration led by President Muhammadu Buhari, who has persistently refused to correct what the ethnic nationalities in the Middle Belt and south have been denouncing as naked “Marginalization”, “Fulanization”, “Islamization” and “Northernization” of the Federal Government appointments and establishments as well as pampering of the Boko-Haram terrorists and jihadist Fulani herdsmen (Aladekomo, 2021). These reasons and many more have resuscitated the hunger for secession in Nigeria, with Mazi Nnamdi Kanu at the forefront of the people of Biafra and Mr. Sunday Igboho leading the Oduduwa Republic Agitators.

One can veritably perceive that most of the reasons that resulted to the previous wars as already mentioned earlier are also the same reasons that are giving rise to these series of movements for secession in almost all corners in Nigeria.

As earlier pointed out, many secessionist movements exist currently in Nigeria, but this study will focus on these two major secessionist struggles, as led by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho whose agitations are for the greater autonomy of the Western and Eastern regions respectively; hence, the emergence of the republic of Biafra and the Oduduwa nation. It has to be recalled that the republic of Niger-Delta earlier existed in 1966 leading to the 12-day republic, and that the Arewa nation was also called for during the October 1, 2017 quit notice to Igbo people staying in the Northern parts of the country.

This study focused on the content analysis of the press coverage of these secessionist activities. The idea was to find out the framing of news reports on these activists by the Nigerian press; to look at the print media, basically the newspaper, content-analyze them and find out how these media houses reported the activities of these two major activists based on the angles of reportage and how the reports were framed. The study also examined whether background/ownership and structure of the media house influenced and guided the angles and framing of the news reports.

Meanwhile, the media have always been very active in movements towards the mobilization and support for self determination. This was made manifest in the struggle for Nigerian independence in the 50s and early 60s with Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo at the forefront using their newspapers – *West African Pilot* and *Nigerian Tribune* respectively. These newspapers made much impact in the realization of Nigerian independence because of the regular issuance of reports and framing of those reports. While Dr. Azikiwe was solidifying the position of the East for self determination, Chief Awolowo was grounding the position of the West for the same purpose.

Hence, among the over 50 newspapers currently in circulation in Nigeria (Nigerian Finder, 2022), *Daily Sun* newspaper which has its major audience in the South-East, *The Punch* newspaper which has its major audience in the South-West, *Vanguard* newspaper which has its major audience in the Niger-Delta (South-South), *Leadership* newspaper which has its base in the North, *The Guardian* and *This Day* newspapers with national background were used in this study.

Statement of Problem

This study understands that the essence of media coverage of issues is principally for public enlightenment. The presented information is expected to provide the basis for making rational decisions relating to the issue. For instance, the activities of the nationalistic presentations of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe’s *West African Pilot* stimulated interest in the struggle for Nigeria’s independence in 1960. It therefore becomes clearer that newspaper coverage set the media agenda that stimulate the public agenda. It then means that the media agenda-setting role of the press is essential for better comprehension of the issue under discussion.

Hence, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho are believed to be secessionists whose ethnic backgrounds are different, but pursuing a similar mission for their respective peoples, having a common enemy – the Federal Government. The media reportage of their activities may have added to the support or neglect they get from the various regions whose courses/causes they champion, more especially the elites from those regions. Based on the aforementioned, it is very important to note that ethnic background/media

ownership and structure may be affecting the framing of news reports on these separatists, otherwise called quasi messiahs.

In lieu of this, it suffices that the contents of some of the Nigerian national dailies be examined in order to analyze as well as find out the prominence given to these separatist agitators. The study also aimed at discovering whether background/ownership and structure of the press influence or determine the angles of reportage and framing of these reports on Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho. The essence is that the media in most cases champion certain movements with regards to reportage and framing. These concepts gave backbone to movements depending on the position of the media. Therefore, the major issue to be discovered in this work is how the media reports are framed and what informs the framing of these media reports.

Objectives of the Study

The major aim of this study is to evaluate and discover whether reportage and framing of newspaper stories are influenced by background/ownership and structure of the newspaper organizations. Thus, this study was guided by these following objectives:

1. To compare the frequency of reportage on Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho's secessionist movements by the Nigerian press.
2. To examine the angles of reports on Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho's secessionist movements by the Nigerian press.
3. To ascertain media framing of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho's secessionist movements by the Nigerian press.
4. To compare the prominence given to Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho's secessionist movements by the Nigerian press.
5. To compare the depth of coverage on Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho's secessionist movements in the select newspapers.

Theoretical Framework

This content analytical study was anchored on the agenda setting and framing theories.

Agenda Setting Theory

The agenda setting theory as propounded by Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw in the year 1972, based on the premise that the media which are the means of communication, set agenda for the audience to follow (Asemah, 2011, p. 176). This theory according Asemah (2011), maintains that most of the pictures we accumulate in our heads, most of the things we worry or think about, most of the issues we talk about are based on the things we read, listened to, or watched in the diverse mass communication media.

The theory suggests that "a clear connection exists between news coverage and public opinion" (Merilainen & Vos, 2011, p. 295). The core proposition of the agenda setting theory is that the salience of issues in the news determines the salience of the issues in the public domain (Carrol & McCombs, 2003, in Meribe & Oke, 2019). The implication is that the coverage of an issue by the media makes people believe that the issue is essential. Hence, the audience is likely to pay attention in the issue if the media focus their attention on them. The point here according to Colson (2010, in Meribe & Oke, 2019) is that the news media play a pivotal role in the determination of topics that dominate public discussions at any given time. This is the main reason why Baran and Davis (2012) hinted that there is an essential relationship between media report and people's ranking of public issues. The mainstay in this statement is that there is a connection between the rate at which the media cover a story and the extent at which people think that the story is important.

In the context of this study, the public, having learnt about Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho from the media reports, form an opinion which guides their thoughts and perception about the duo. The implication is that the audience (the public) talk about these two activists, most often, in the line of the reportage given to them by the media depending on the direction of the news stories.

Media Framing Theory

It is the belief and the opinion of the proponent of this theory (Gregory Bateson in the year 1972), that the media through their means of designing and sending out media messages, could influence how the media

consumers see and perceive a particular issue (Ikegbunam & Agudoso, 2019). As one of the media effect theories, framing is largely used in analyzing how the mass media filter information and thus, influence the audience's responses to a whole array of exterior stimuli (De Vreese, 2004, in Ikegbunam & Agudoso, 2019). The major issue of discourse here is that the media frame an issue or a topic in a particular dimension. That is to say that most often, the media focus attention on certain events or issues and then place them within a field of meaning; in the sense that the media shape the audience's thinking of an issue in a specific dimension by giving a frame to that issue while eliminating the other frames.

Practically, framing theory portends that the direction the media report an issue of national concern determines the way the people to whom the contents are exposed understand the issue (Nwabueze, Ikegbunam & Obiakor, 2019). Hence, media framing is all about focusing on the real meaning of the issue at hand rather than the issue itself.

In the context of this study, media framing of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho is very paramount. The essence is that the two activists are given coverage by the media, of course, in a particular dimension. And so, since the media are able to select certain issues within a story through emphasis or deliberate neglect, it follows that they can alter the manner the audience receive and interpret news on Mazi Nnamdi Kanu with the Biafra agenda and Mr. Sunday Igboho with the Oduduwa agenda.

The Review

The Birth of Secessionist Movements in Nigeria

The Niger Delta republic has been regarded as the first ever secessionist agitation in the history of Nigeria, just shortly after the independence. The republic of Niger-Delta was declared on 23rd February, 1966 by the then leader of the Niger-Delta Peoples Volunteer Force, Major Isaac Jasper Adaka Boro, an Ijaw and a soldier. The revolution as led by Adaka Boro (popularly called Boro) came as a result of the exploitation of oil and gas resources in the Niger Delta areas which benefited the federal government to the negligence of the areas where these resources are got from. The belief of Adaka Boro was that the people of the area deserved a larger share of the proceeds of the oil wealth, whose expectation was not realized.

Thus, Boro in his speech while declaring the republic of Niger-Delta, said:

Today is a great day, not only in your lives but also in the history of the Niger Delta. Perhaps, it will be the greatest day for a very long time. This is not because we are going to bring the heavens down, but because we are going to show the world what and how we feel about oppression. Remember your 70-year-old grandmother who still farms before she eats; remember also your poverty stricken people; remember too, your petroleum which is being pumped out daily from your veins; and then fight for your freedom.

Boro's revolt was the first armed rebellion against the federal government of Nigeria, whose revolution lasted only but twelve (12) days (Egbejule, 2020); hence, the name "The Twelve Day Revolution". Meanwhile, Boro and his men were defeated by the federal Forces after the twelfth day, arrested and jailed on the charge of treason. He was however granted amnesty by the Gen. Yakubu Gowon regime just on the eve of the Nigeria/Biafra civil war in May 1967. Boro enlisted and commissioned as a Major in the Nigerian Army to fight against the Biafra side. Boro however died mysteriously during the war at Ogu near Okrika in Rivers State in 1968. Boro's revolution has been regarded as one of the major effects that gave morale and effrontery for the declaration of the republic of Biafra by Major Gen. Dim Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu in May 30, 1967. It was also learnt that Major Gen. Ojukwu was opposed to the declaration of the Niger-Delta by Adaka Boro even though he was motivated by the same man to declare the republic of Biafra just months after the first secessionist declaration.

Secessionist Agitations and Activities in Nigeria

Nigeria has over 250 ethnic groups with multi religious system including Christianity, Islamic religion, African Traditional religion, Judaism, Hinduism, to mention but a few. The fact that most of these ethnic groups as well as the religious affiliates are always on the verge of attacking the others at a slightest opportunity is enough reason for agitations that may lead to separatism. For these and many other reasons, different calls for different republics have taken place in Nigeria. The republic of Biafra which was the second but the highest secessionist movement in Nigeria after its first republic was declared in May, 1967, leading to the Nigerian/Biafra civil war of between 1967 and 1970. Other secessionist agitations are the Oduduwa group, the Arewa group and even the Niger-Delta group.

Meanwhile, after the civil war that ended in July, 1970, there seemed to be a sudden death of secessionist movements in the country, perhaps, as a result of the military style of leadership. The military regimes that

were brought about by military coups only came to a temporarily end in 1999 leading to the fourth republic. Since then, the echoes of separatism have drastically increased as a result of mistrust, dissatisfaction and loss of interest stemming from exclusion and lack of adequate governance on the part of the leadership circle. It will be recalled that the Ralph Uwazulike's Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) came on board shortly after the 1999 general elections. This movement was championed by mostly the Igbos and several protests were taken to Onitsha, Aba, Nnewi, Awka, Port Harcourt, Owerri, Enugu, Asaba, etc and these protests most often have resulted to several killings of the protesters. The movement agitated for the independence of the Biafra land, of course based on the travails of Ndigbo so many years after the civil war, the non-implementation of the Aburi-Ghana Accord and the 3Rs: Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation policy that was jettisoned by the federal government, as well as the non-inclusion of any Igbo service chief in the 1999 administration as led by Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo (Nkwopara, 2020).

Meanwhile, MASSOB started fiddling away with the formation of the Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM) and later, the Biafra Zionist Front (BZF) in November, 2012, as a result of the accusation of the leader of MASSOB for his deviation from the struggle, a movement formed by Barr. Benjamin Onwuka on the grounds of insecurity and attacks on the Igbos.

Incidentally, the end of a movement gives room to another. After the arrest, release and the re-arrest of the founder of the BZF, and a gradual disintegration of the movement, a Biafra Rebirth came to the light with the formation of, and continuous agitations of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), leading to the arrest of its leader Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, in October, 2015. The IPOB agitations have taken several forms, and this has heightened till today, leading to the killings of many Igbos by the people of the Nigerian Police and the Army during protests. These constant killings have however, not impeded the growth of these agitations and protests which in some cases have been taken to outside the country, including Canada, London, Japan, etc., and still continues even as Mazi Nnamdi Kanu is in the custody of the Department of State Services (DSS). Interestingly, the separatist agitations took another dimension in 2017 when the Igbos in the Northern states were given a month quit notice to leave the North on or before October 1, 2017, by a group of the Northern youths under the aegis of Coalition of Arewa Youths. The quit notice, popularly known as the "Kaduna Declaration" even heightened the rate and the depth of hatred and bitterness, and a more call for the dissolution of the federal republic of Nigeria.

The Republic of Niger-Delta was first declared in 1966, in a 12-day battle with the federal forces. Another declaration was set to be made in 2019 as a result of the inability of the Buhari-led administration to tackle the rising killings, kidnappings and banditry everywhere in the country. Though the 2019 planned declaration did not take place any longer, but these agitations have so many things to tell about the current situation in the country both for the citizens of Nigeria and even the outsiders.

The latest separatist agitation that rocked the federal government of Nigeria is the call for Oduduwa nation led by Mr. Sunday Igboho who moved against the Fulani herders in January, 2021. Since then, the federal government started looking for an avenue to put a stop to these separatist agitations. They have so far arrested Mazi Nnamdi Kanu in an extra ordinary rendition from Kenya, and tried to extradite Mr. Sunday Igboho from Benin Republic, though it seemed harder than what was expected. Meanwhile, Mr. Sunday Igboho was released during the filing of this research work, in March, 2022, while Mazi Nnamdi Kanu was still in DSS custody at the time of this work.

The Media and Movements for Self Determination in Nigeria

The revolution of the media industry in recent times and the position of the press have made certain movements easily realizable anywhere in the world and especially in Nigeria. The prominence given to issues and political movements aid the reception of such issues and perception of the audience about the movements. It will be recalled that the press especially the newspapers played a major role in the determination of independence and even social mobilization and political development in Nigeria.

Historically, the pioneer newspaper: *Iwe Irohin* that was first published in 1859 was done by Rev. Henry Townsend, a missionary and an activist who with his colleagues were committed to the social values of the people, justice and welfare (Ola and Olatunde, 2018). Mr. Robert Campbell published the second newspaper in Nigeria in 1863 and this was a major breakthrough as far as the Nigerian press is concerned. Other newspapers include the *Lagos Times* and *Gold Coast* advertiser published by Mr. Richard Blaize, the *Lagos Observers* published by Mr. John Jackson, the *Mirror* newspaper, *Lagos Weekly* and *Lagos Weekly Record* (Mabadeje, 2004).

Furthermore, the Nigerian press continued to grow with the establishment of *African Messenger* newspaper as published by Ernest Ikoli in 1921, who later became the first editor of *Daily Times* newspaper from 1926 to 1928. Other newspapers that surfaced within this era were the *Lagos Record*, *Nigerian Chronicle*, *Lagos Standard* and the *Nigerian Premier* (Mabadeje, 2004 in Ola & Olatunde, 2018). In 1925, Herbert Macaulay established the *Lagos Daily News* and regarded as the founding father of the Nigerian nationalism. With Macaulay, the seed of nationalism movement was sowed since he used his newspapers for political activities with the aim of awakening the citizens' consciousness to join the struggle for independence from anti-colonial rules (Ola & Olatunde, 2018).

The emergence of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe with his *West African Pilot* in 1927 and Chief Obafemi Awolowo with his *Nigerian Tribune* in 1949, gave relevance to the Nigerian press and this was a catalyst in the quest for Nigeria's political independence and self determination.

Method of Research

This study adopted the comparative content analysis method of study in trying to determine or examine the Press coverage of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho's secessionist activities. Content analysis method of study according to Babbie (2013), is the study of recorded human communications such as books, magazines, bulletins, board postings on the internet, laws and constitutions as well as any components or collection thereof. The angles of reportage, framing and depth of coverage as well as prominence or importance given to the two activists or better put, secessionists, were examined. The units of measurement are news stories, feature articles, editorials and investigative reports, while the content categories in this study were straight news reports, feature stories, illustrations and cartoons as well as editorial comments. All these featured as news stories. The content category also featured placement in terms of front page, inside page and back page.

The target population for this study is all the editions of the six newspapers (*Daily Sun*, *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, *This Day* and *Leadership*) content-analyzed starting from 1st January, 2021 to 31st August, 2021 (8 months), which is considered in this study as the peak of separatist agitations in the country. The targeted newspaper editions in an accurate representation are 1,458. This was arrived at by counting all the editions of the six newspapers from January to August, 2021. That is to say that January, March, May, July and August all have 31 days, added to the 30 days each of April and June, with the 28 days of February, all multiplied by 6 newspapers. That is 243 editions multiplied by 6 newspapers to give a total of 1,458.

The sample size for this study was selected using the composite week sampling technique. This is a technique where the researcher chose to draw one Monday from the four or five Mondays of the month for the study (this was randomly chosen). The researcher here also chose to draw one Tuesday from the four or five Tuesdays of the months under study, also, chosen at random. This method of selection is done until the 7 days of the week were represented within the month of study. This same method was replicated in all the months covered in this study. Hence, this sampling technique provides an average coverage of 7 days per month of study.

The composite week sampling technique was chosen as a result of the fact that the cases of study (Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Sunday Igboho's secessionist activities) may not be so frequently reported in the press. This method gave a wider opportunity for better coverage and analysis. This is because every day of the week was studied and a particular day chosen to represent the other composite days. Therefore, the sample size in this study was 7 days multiplied by 8 months which totaled 56. Then 56 multiplied by 6 newspapers totaled 336. Hence, 336 served as the sample size for the study.

Purposive sampling technique was adopted in studying these six newspapers (*Daily Sun*, *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, *This Day* and *Leadership*), while the months of January, 2021 through August, 2021, were examined. The criteria for the choice of these newspapers were: one newspaper each from South-east and South-west where the two activists originate, one newspaper from Northern Nigeria and one Niger-Delta newspaper and two national newspapers.

The study employed the following frames in analyzing the media coverage of the separatist agitations of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho: Political frame, ethno-religious frame, economic frame, violence, terrorism and radicalism frames. Description of political frame was done in such a way that any story that frames Mazi Nnamdi Kanu or Mr. Sunday Igboho's secessionist movement in a political angle or has a political undertone or sees the struggles of both secessionists as politically motivated were categorized

as political frames. Any story that featured the activities of these two separatists from ethnic angle was categorized as ethno-religious frame.

More so, economic frame was categorized on the basis of reports whose framing had economic motivations. It means that the reports portrayed these activities of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho as causing economic disruption in some parts of the country. Such stories were assigned with economic frame. Furthermore, terrorism frame was assigned to stories that portray Nnamdi Kanu and Sunday Igboho's activist movements as causing security tensions, terror and instability in the country.

The essence of these frames was to determine the nature of reportage given to these separatists, whether they are seen as pursuing political positions; whether their activities have political reasons, whether the reports are given based on the ethnic background or the media organization, whether religion influenced the reports on the activists, whether their activities are seen as causing economic havoc and whether their activities are causing terror and security uproar in the country.

Further still, this study was also categorized on the basis of violence frame whether the activists are reported from the angle of causing violence in parts of the country. Therefore, the units of analysis, as already pointed out earlier in this study are: Frequency of reports, Angle of reports, Framing of reports, Prominence and Depth of coverage.

Findings and Discussions

Research Question One

What is the frequency of reportage on Mazi Nnamdi Kanu compared to Mr. Sunday Igboho's secessionist movements by the Nigerian press?

From the data collected, it was observed that the percentage of frequency of reportage on Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho is at the ratio of 66.9%:33.1%. This is as a result of the fact that some newspapers pay more attention to Mazi Nnamdi Kanu compared to his Yoruba counterpart, Mr. Sunday Igboho. For instance, *Daily Sun* newspaper and *Vanguard* newspaper gave more attention to Mazi Nnamdi Kanu than to Mr. Sunday Igboho within the duration under study.

Meanwhile, *Daily Sun* newspaper has its background as of Igbo origin with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) as Chief Dr. Orji Uzor Kalu who hails from the same state as Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. This may have been the reason why more stories were attributed to the Igbo originated activist than to the Yoruba activist, Mr. Sunday Igboho. Again, *Vanguard* newspaper which gave the second higher frequency of reportage to Mazi Nnamdi Kanu is of the South-south background from where some Biafra agitators hail. This may have triggered the reason for more coverage of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu than that of his Yoruba counterpart, Mr. Sunday Igboho.

However, *The Punch* newspaper which is of South-western background, with Mr. Sunday Igboho from the same region, though it gave more frequency of reportage to Mr. Igboho than to Mazi Kanu, only devoted a little more percentage of the Igboho's stories than of Kanu's. Further still, while some newspapers paid more attention to the activities of the secessionist agitators, some others paid less attention to same. Little wonder Uduaghan (2011) expressed that survival mechanism for development in Nigeria can best be achieved through regular and adequate communication. The implication of this is that more coverage of these activities ought to have been given, especially by those media organizations that paid less attention to these movements, which perhaps will bring about good governance in Nigeria.

Research Question Two

What are the angles of reportage on Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho's secessionist movements by the Nigerian print media?

From the data gathered, it was observed that the percentage of positive reports on the both activists is 72.8% as against 27.2% negative stories on them. The evidence of this percentage was observed from some of the headlines as captured by the content analysis from the six newspapers under study: 6 People Feared Dead, as IPOB's 'Sit-at-home' Order Records Total Compliance (*Vanguard*, Aug. 10, 2021), Court Overrules DSS, Grants N80M 'Iron Bail' to Igboho's 12 aides (*Vanguard*, Aug. 5, 2021), Nigeria will Disintegrate except... - Nwoye, IPOB's Spiritual Leader (*Daily Sun*, Jan. 24, 2021), Sunday Igboho: Enfant Talk and Do (*Daily Sun*, Jan. 28, 2021), IPOB's Lockdown Threat: Between Self Determination (*The Guardian*, July 07, 2021), Southeast Shuts Down, as Residents Obey IPOB's 'sit-at-home' Order (*The Guardian*, June 1, 2021), Ohanaeze, Afenifere, Northern Elders Urge Caution in Prosecuting Kanu (*The Guardian*, June 30, 2021), That DSS Attack on Citizen Sunday Igboho (*The Guardian*, July 11, 2021), Okorocho to Uzodimma: Engage IPOB, Don't use Force as First Option (*Vanguard*, Apr 10, 2021), Igboho, Kanu, Bandits and Nigeria's

Future (*The Punch*, July 22, 2021), How Sunday Igboho was arrested in Cotonou (*Leadership*, July 21, 2021), to mention but a few.

From the above mentioned headlines from the different newspapers under study, it is observed that most of the stories on both Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho are in positive angles, some pointing to the efficacy of the groups and the powers of the activists, others beckoning on, while cautioning the Federal Government to be less punitive and more tactical in taking measures on the activists. This finding is in line with one of the findings of Nwafor and Onwubere (2019), that media reports induced sympathy and enthusiasm of Biafra's cause..., while giving dialogue between the government and agitators as solution to the agitation.

However, there are negative stories on the both activists though majority of the negative stories are from the *Leadership* newspaper with Northern background. This shows that to a reasonable extent, background of the media organization as well as the ethnic origin of same influence the media reportage on Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho's secessionist movements. The judgment is that *DailySun* newspaper, followed by *Vanguard* and *The Guardian* newspapers gave more positive reports on Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, *The Punch* newspaper gave more positive reports to Mr. Sunday Igboho while *Leadership* newspaper gave more negative reports on the both activists.

Research Question Three

What are the frames given to Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho's secessionist movements by the Nigerian press?

From the data collected and collated, the dominant frames from the newspaper reports on the both activists include political, ethical/religious and radicalism frames. Economic, terrorism and violence frames were recorded from the stories too. The record of these frames is in line with the position of Ugondo (2015), that the news media use different frames in their coverage of conflict and terrorism.

Meanwhile, Ezegwu, Uduak and Obichili (2021) see framing as the way events and issues are organized and made sense of, especially by the media professionals and their audiences. From the results provided by the pie chart three, political frame ranks highest, followed by ethnic/religious frame with 33% and 22.2% respectively. This is because most of the feature stories and opinion articles, including the straight news reports on Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho are reported from political and ethnic bases. For instance, the stories with the headlines: 2023: IPOB Out to Destabilize S-East, Scuttle Igbo Presidency- Igbo Professionals (*Vanguard*, Jan. 19, 2021), IPOB Hails South-East Governors Over Open Grazing Ban (*Daily Sun*, Feb. 3, 2021), Its Unfair AGF Hurriedly Extradited Kanu, but Insists on Due Process for Kyari- Kanu's Lawyer (*Vanguard*, Aug. 5, 2021), El-Zakzaky, Kanu, Igboho as Faces of Dystopia (*The Guardian*, Aug. 23, 2021). These mentioned news stories portray the use of political frame as well as ethnic/religious frame in the reportage of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and his Yoruba counterpart, Mr. Sunday Igboho.

Meanwhile, the least dominant frame is the economic, followed by violence frames, with 5.6% and 10% respectively. This shows that Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho's secessionist movements are portrayed as being more politically and ethnic motivated than economically and violently framed. This is in line with the postulations, that the direction in which the media shape a particular incidence through selection and repeated reporting of such incidents commands opinion of the masses to whom the contents are exposed (Tankard, 2001; Shah, Watts, Domke & Fan, 2002; Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2008; Azlan, 2012; Eti, 2012; Odoemelam, Okeibunor & Adibe, 2012).

Research Question four

What is the prominence given to Mazi Nnamdi Kanu compared to Sunday Igboho's secessionist movements by the Nigerian print media?

Guanah (2017, p. 136) believes that the importance and prominence of a news story is determined by the location and placement of such story (ies) in any publication. From the records gathered, it is obvious that the prominence given to Mazi Nnamdi Kanu is higher than that given to his Yoruba counterpart, Mr. Sunday Igboho. Prominence here was recorded in terms of front page stories, back page stories, inside page stories as well as the editorial comments. By front page stories, this study took into cognizance the headlines on the front page of the newspapers concerning the two activists under study. A practical evidence shows that a greater number of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu's stories have their headlines on the front page of the newspapers under study when compared to Mr. Sunday Igboho's. From the study, it was observed that more than 85% of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu's stories placed inside the newspaper have their headlines on the front page compared

to Mr. Sunday Igboho's stories that have a lower percentage of the inside page stories with the headlines on the front page.

For instance, the stories with headlines: IMO BOILS: Governor's House Burnt, IPOB Cmdr, members (*Vanguard*, Apr. 25, 2021), Confusion in IPOB Leader's Hometown, as Community Plans Protest, Claims Son Made Some Valid Points in his agitations (*Daily Sun*, July 11, 2021), Southeast Shuts Down as Residents Obey IPOB's 'Sit-at-home' Order (*The Guardian*, June 1, 2021), are some of the stories whose headlines were featured on the front page, with the full stories located inside the newspapers' inside pages.

Judging from the data collected in this study, it is observed that the degree of prominence given to Mazi Nnamdi Kanu compared to his Yoruba counterpart is 241° as against 119° giving 66.9% against 33.1% respectively. There are also editorial comments on both Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho. For instance: On Nnamdi Kanu's Re-arrest and Trial (*The Guardian* editorial, July 14, 2021), That DSS Attack on Citizen Sunday Igboho (*The Guardian* editorial, July 12, 2021). Also on the back page, there are stories as: IPOB's Lockdown Threat: Between Self Determination (*The Guardian*, Aug. 7, 2021), Dairo, Igboho, Kanu and Those on Trial (*The Guardian*, Aug. 5, 2021). From the headlines above, it will be observed that the prominence given to Mazi Nnamdi Kanu compared to Mr. Sunday Igboho is greater.

Hence, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu with his secessionist movement was prominently covered by the Nigerian print media under study since according to Guanah (2018, p. 112), the front pages of newspapers or magazines contain the most important stories, as observed in this study, where greater percentage of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu's stories have their headlines placed on the front pages of the newspapers under study.

Research Question Five

What is the depth of coverage on Mazi Nnamdi Kanu compared to Mr. Sunday Igboho's secessionist movements by the Nigerian press?

From the data collected in this study, it was observed that Mazi Nnamdi Kanu received deeper news coverage when compared to his Yoruba counterpart, Mr. Sunday Igboho at the degrees of 270 and 90 respectively, and at 75%:25% respectively. Meanwhile, it has to be noted that the depth of coverage is measured by the number of words, sentences or number of pages of the news newspapers on the both activists, as the case may be. For instance, the stories with the headlines: IMO BOILS: Gov's house bombed, IPOB Cmdr, members killed... (*Vanguard*, Apr 25, 2021, full page), Concerns over IPOB's threat to lockdown Southeast over Nnamdi Kanu (*The Guardian*, Aug. 02, 2021, full page), After Nnamdi Kanu, FG Tightens Noose on Igboho (*The Guardian*, July 03, 2021, full page), Igboho still in Republic of Benin in handcuffs, lawyer refutes release rumour (*Guardian*, July 31, 2021, full page).

The data gathered in this research work revealed that the depth of coverage on Mazi Nnamdi Kanu is more than the depth of coverage on Mr. Sunday Igboho. This is because Mazi Nnamdi Kanu's stories have greater number of columns, words and pages in most cases compared to those of Mr. Sunday Igboho. This is also evident with the story: Untold story of Rev Fr. Mbaka..., with IPOB Leader, Kanu, in the Mix (*Daily Sun*, May 8, 2021, 2 pages). Therefore, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu's secessionist movement was given more in-depth coverage than Mr. Sunday Igboho's secessionist movement by the Nigerian print media.

Summary

The findings therefrom this research work have provided a heavy breakthrough on related studies and also made an opening for new areas of research. The press as the fourth estate/power of the realm has over the years acquired the explicit capacity of advocacy as well as the implicit ability of framing issues. This also is made manifest in the coverage of the movements both for separation and/or secession, especially in the cases of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mr. Sunday Igboho.

The Nigerian print media represented by the six newspapers content-analyzed in this research work have been observed based on the findings of the study, to have been good in some areas but lacking in others; and this is the main position of the social responsibility theory of Mass Communication- that the media ought to be responsible in their reportorial functions. This study aimed at revealing the frequency, angles, framing, prominence and the depth of coverage on Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and his Yoruba counterpart, Mr. Sunday Igboho by the Nigerian press through a content analytical method of study.

Therefore, the major finding of this research work is that reportage and framing of news stories are strongly influenced by background/ownership and structure of the media organization. This is evidence in the fact that *Daily Sun* newspaper (South-East) gave more prominence to Mazi Nnamdi Kanu because of his ethnic origin, *The Punch* newspaper (South-West) gave more prominence to Mr. Sunday Igboho because of his ethnic origin too. Again, *Vanguard* newspaper (South-South) gave more coverage to Mazi Nnamdi Kanu

because of regional affiliations. The Guardian and This Day newspapers also gave more preference to Mazi Kanu than Mr. Igboho, while *Leadership* newspaper (North) reported both activists in bad light and saw them as terrorists, all the other newspapers saw these activists as nationalists and freedom fighters.

Conclusion

Based on the data generated from the study, the following conclusions were realized:

Since the media reports on Mazi Nnamdi Kanu with his secessionist movement occupied the greater parts of the Nigerian print media under study, it then holds that the frequency of reportage on Mazi Nnamdi Kanu with his secessionist movement by the Nigerian press is higher compared to the frequency of reportage on Mr. Sunday Igboho with his secessionist movement.

On angles of reportage, it was concluded that most of the media reports on the both secessionist activists were positively presented. The implication is that the activists are so powerful and that the media presented them as powerful as they are.

On framing, it was discovered that the most dominant frame in the study is the political frame, followed by ethnic/religious frame, then, the radicalism frame. It was also discovered that least dominant frame is the economic frame, followed by the violence frame, and then the terrorism frame.

On prominence, the study revealed that the stories on Mazi Nnamdi Kanu with his secessionist movement were more prominently reported compared to the Yoruba activist, Mr. Sunday Igboho, by the Nigerian press. This is as a result of the fact that most of the media reports on Mazi Kanu were featured on the front and back pages of the newspapers under study.

On depth of coverage, this research work concluded that the depth of coverage on Mazi Nnamdi Kanu is more compared to that of his Yoruba counterpart, Mr. Sunday Igboho. This means that the size of the media reports on Mazi Kanu is greater than the size of the media reports on Mr. Igboho.

Recommendations

Based on the data generated in this study, and the conclusion reached above, it was therefore recommended thus:

The press, irrespective of background, ethnic and/or religious affiliations, should not be biased in its reportage by giving more relevance to one group while paying less attention to the other. This recommendation is based on the fact that the Northern originated newspapers paid less attention to the activities of the secessionists.

The press, through its reportorial functions, should maintain a high level of social responsibility by being objective; this is in union with the ethics and principles of journalism practice anywhere in the world. This recommendation is based on the fact that the Northern newspapers portrayed the both activists as terrorists where others see them as nationalists and freedom fighters.

Economy, being the hub of a nation, should have been the prior essence of the media reports. Unfortunately, this is not the case; therefore, the press should always put the economy of the nation first in its reportage. Recall that the economic frame ranks the least in this country.

The press, without being seditious, should also not be partisan in its reportage; this will make way for balanced reporting.

More attention should be given to the hazards caused by the activities of these secessionist movements by the press; this will automatically bring about development in the society rather than destruction of lives and property induced by the incessant agitations of the secessionists.

This work is therefore recommended for researchers who may undertake similar topics in the future for guidance and reference purposes.

Further studies should examine the broadcast media contents as well as the social media framing of the activities of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and his Yoruba counterpart, Mr. Sunday Igboho; such studies will give validity or bring disputation to the findings of this research work.

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