

Newspaper Reportage of Cult Related Activities in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State

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Abstract: *The mass media are formidable forces in creating social realities in conflict situations and represent selectively these realities through the process of news framing. Within this context, this study examines newspaper reportage of cult related activities in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. The objectives of the study are to determine the degree of prominence given to the cult related stories in Emohua Local Government Area, and to ascertain how cult related stories are being framed and reported by Nigerian newspapers. The study anchors on the theoretical premise of Media Framing Theory. The study employs quantitative content analysis. The population of this study is limited to the publications of three national newspapers in Nigeria; The Punch, The Guardian and The Nation. The period covered is from June 1st 2021 to April 30th 2022. Within these eleven months, these newspapers had three hundred and thirty five (335) publications apiece making a total of one thousand and five (1005) publications. Purposive sampling was employed while the unit of analysis for this study consisted of news stories, editorials, advertorials, columns/opinions, interviews, feature stories and others focusing on cultism as published by the three newspapers being studied. These newspapers were chosen due to their ownership structure, area of coverage and frequency of publication. The findings reveal that cult related stories were not given prominence as was supposed to be. The study concludes that one challenge that will continue to confront the journalist as well as the media in general is the level of attention to be given to societal violence. The study recommends that newspaper reports should pay more attention to the issue of cultism in Emohua Local Government Area by giving more prominence to it and propel societal action against it.*

Keywords: *cult activities; emohua; newspaper; reportage; rivers state*

I. Introduction

The link between newspaper representation of events in the society and the understanding of such events by the members of the society is so adjoining that one influences another. The choice of words applied by the reporters cum newspaper editors no doubt affects angle of understanding and show the perspectives activated by the story. The way people present themselves in the public determines how they are rated and profiled. In the same way, the format in which news stories are framed or reported affects how people understand them. Ideas are expressed through words, speech, symbols and other forms of verbal meanings. How these words/symbols are presented tells a lot about the writer and in turn affects the readers' perception of the entire story. Therefore, the choosing of words especially for the print media becomes more challenging than what people would feel it is.

This challenging task begins with how the headline is captioned down to how the tiniest details of the story are portrayed within the story. While the headline draws the audiences' attention, the details (including the lead paragraph) leave a lasting impression in the mind of the audience. The captivating nature of the headline can also create a pseudo-reality in the minds of the audience as some might not have the patience of reading through the story.

Every word in a story counts as it is capable of having multiple meanings and interpretations. The style of presentation can also be the game changer in motivating members of the society to read and act on what they read from the pages of the newspaper. Newspaper report is therefore, a technical job, especially when it involves crisis reporting (Yar'Adua et al., 2023).

From the foregoing, conflict of representation (choosing what to report and how to report it) remains a vital challenge that confronts journalists in their daily routines. Every reporter has a conflict of choice; choice of angle to the story, choice of words and most importantly, choice of being objective (Aondover, 2017). Conflict, according to Himelfarb and Chabalowski (2008), constitutes major news value to the media and therefore remains at the forefront of the development of the media. Media participation from the beginning of conflict, to its intensity and consequences thus becomes indisputably significant (Pate & Dauda, 2015) and eventually in 'precipitating, ameliorating, and discouraging conflict' (Eytan, 2006, p. 596).

The mass media are formidable forces in creating social realities in conflict situations and represent selectively these realities through the process of news framing (Chakraborty, Borah, & Hazarika, 2015; Yoanita, Dwi-Nugroho & Lesmana, 2015). Hence, depending on how reporters interpret or select how to represent reality, news framing of conflicts can have either escalatory or de-escalatory implications (Macdonald, 2003). This is because frames influence audience perception of reality. This is particularly peculiar to situations where frames (news stories) create categories of 'good' against 'evil' or 'us' against 'them' situation in a conflict (Shinar, 2002). So news "frames serve multiple functions for different actors" (Norris, Kern, & Just, 2003, p. 11) and news framing offers as many techniques or possibilities to represent events, issues and situations and it is as complex and multifaceted as frames are dynamic (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010; Vladisavljević, 2015).

Rivers State has witnessed an upsurge in cult clashes in recent times especially with the 2023 elections and politicians' unbridled quest for power. All parts of the state witnessed cult clashes with Emohua, Ahoada and Ogoni axis being the worst hit with high casualty figures. In all of these, the media is called to question as to how the reportorial slant of the stories go and how such slant drive societal attention and action against cultism.

Okedi (2020) avers that current activities of secret cults have clearly redefined the societal notion on what cults represented in the past. Today, the word 'cultism' has come to denote a very negative and violent way of living, away from being an ideologically and ethically driven association of rational beings, used to tackle societal issues. Consequently, known members of street cults have become security risks to be associated with. They are into drugs, alcoholism, rape, murder, armed robbery and other forms of unprintable vices, disturbing the fragile peace of the society (Abba et al., 2021). The rate of perceived criminality in Rivers State has made society to believe that cultism is devilish and therefore must be dispensed with. This piece was therefore conceived to investigate how the reportage of the scourge by newspaper is aiding or not, societal efforts at tackling the scourge.

Cultism is one reality that is undeniable in Nigeria and indeed Rivers State. The members of known cult groups have continued to wreck havoc on unsuspecting members of the society and thus created an atmosphere of fear and great disillusion for those with peaceful disposition. For instance, several cult groups were recruited by political parties across Nigeria to intimidate their opponents and suppress possible votes that could accrue to them in the 2023 general elections. Of particular note is the recruitment of thugs by the Peoples'

Democratic Party, PDP in Rivers State to intimidate electorates that were not ready to vote their candidates in the elections in what Amadi (2017) describes as a do-or-die affair. The problem is that most of the members of these cults are faceless and only show up when they are about to carry out a hit, leaving the security operatives with no trace of their identity.

Notable members of these cults have become social recluse and only show up in the open when it is time to carry out their cultic activities. These activities include the several reported clashes between rival cults within communities, leaving several of its members and non-members either dead or fatally wounded in the process. These activities were sometimes, in reprisal for society's rejection. Presently, Communities like Egbeda, Omerelu, Ibaa, Ogbakiri, Rumuekpe among the Ikwerre speaking people of Rivers State cannot boast of having its indigenes move freely when at home even during festive times without a special security arrangement because of the violence being unleashed by cultist in these areas. Almost all parts of Rivers State are affected with different cult groups holding territories and dictating the tide of security of human lives and property within their respective domains of operation.

Most troubling is the fact that extra judicial killing by security agencies like the Army, Police, Navy and others, have become legal and justified upon the allegation that the dead were involved in cultism or that they were cultist(s) before being killed by the security operatives. These security agencies have severally set up special operations like 'Operation Flush', 'Eagle Crack Squad', 'Swift Operation Squad', 'Operation Delta Safe', 'Operation Desert Storm', 'Operation Pulo Shield', 'Operation Crocodile Smile', 'Operation Python Dance', 'Operation Sting' and so on, to fight the crime allegedly perpetrated by cultists and their likes in Rivers State. The dictum of a suspect being presumed innocent till proven guilty in the court of law becomes an after-thought in this case.

The dilemma of the researcher is as to why cult groups have continued to unleash terror on the people of Rivers State, especially Emohua Local Government Area despite the presence of security establishments in the state and the media. How has media reports therefore affected the scourge of cultism in Emohua Local Government Area.

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Conceptualising the History of Cultism in Rivers State

According to Okedi (2020), the rise of cultism in Rivers State can be linked to several factors which are more economic, political and social than religious. This is because cultists are constantly engaged in a battle for economic, social and political survival in the society. The motor parks in Rivers State are usually a den of touts who are invariably referred to as cultists, elections are always characterized with violence allegedly perpetrated by cultists and several social gatherings are often interrupted by the same cultist. It follows therefore that their actions within this distinct areas point to the many battles they are inevitably involved in.

Okedi (2020) further reports that cultism in Rivers State was initially limited to the gathering of adults in a religious format which was generally termed occult before the 1990s. The youths were only involved in general juvenile delinquency as area boys, street boys, Ogele boys and so on. There were no street cults as is the case today apart from the fact that some youths took to some fetish means of being recognized socially. Some of the fetish pranks required acquiring charms like 'Blow Drop (Aziza Seven Bags of Cement)', 'Darkness Cover (Miami High Spirit of Asaba)', 'Stab not (Seven Stick of fire wood)', 'Iroko tree no dey comot for ground' and so on.

The Blow Drop was gotten from the god of Aziza and was believed to give its holder an edge over an attacker to the extent that a single fist blow will knock off the attacker. The Darkness cover was to aid the escape of a perceived enemy from his attackers. It was believed that the holder of this charm would be invisible to his attackers. Stab not was another protective charm that was believed help the holder stay unhurt when attacked with a weapon especially glass bottle. The Iroko tree charm was to aid the holder as was believed, not to be thrown to the ground by the attacker no matter the level of pressure applied.

There was an upsurge of the use of magical powers by youths in Rivers State within the 1990s. This time coincided with the reign of the World Wrestling Federation (WWF) telecast with fighters like the Undertaker, Hulk Hogan, Warrior, Macho Man, and their ilk. The youths then were styling themselves along the line of these fighters on the street. Several youths began to engage in body building activities and adopting names that postured them in the light of the WWF fighters as a way of gaining social recognition. Men like Joe 1000, Iron man and the rest of them built gyms and fighting rings for youths to freely engage in WWF style fights on the streets of Port Harcourt.

It was the aftermath of the WWF telecast that led many a youth in Port Harcourt to start forming street gangs. These gangs controlled their streets and were out to attack any intruder that belonged to a rival cult to the streets they were allegedly controlling. The name of street cults then was limited to Deywell and Deygbam. This process continued as the youths continued their exploits unrestrained. Their major mode of showing their presence or dominance in an area was to overrun it with glass bottles flung all over the place to scare away would be challengers. Sometimes they will hold peaceful processions, drumming away and carrying a masquerade while soliciting arms in the process.

Cultism took a different dimension in Rivers State when in 1995, the struggle for the control of oil royalties in riverine Nembe town (now Bayelsa State) gave birth to two cult groups – the Isongoforo and Agbara-Fero. By the year 2000, as Odungweru (2010) reports, conflicts within the cult groups had escalated and led to the loss of many lives and property. The quest to grab political power at all cost by the Peoples' Democratic Party, PDP, and the Defunct All Nigerian Peoples' Party, ANPP, in Rivers State, led to the formation of the Niger Delta Peoples' Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the Niger Delta People Vigilante Service (NDVS) led by Alhaji Asari Dokubo and Ateke Tom respectively in the year 2003 after the 1999 general elections. These groups acted as the militarized armed thugs of the political parties against their opponents and aligned with smaller street cults to gain and control operational territories.

According to Port Harcourt Telegraph Newspaper of June 15-21, 2004, the Anti-Cultism Law passed by the Rivers State House of Assembly identified about one hundred cult groups operating in Rivers State. Odungweru (2010) reports that the emergence of armed small groups seeking to advance personal and group interest smacks of a general loss of confidence in government's ability to meet the legitimate expectations of the citizens, 'just as the brazen operation of the ethnic militia indicates the failure of government to protect the people', p.6.

According to Odungweru (2010), the Iclander cult group was formed in 2000 by some members of the Supreme Vikings Confraternity and some loyalists of the PDP from Okrika under the alleged funding and support of Dr. Abiye Sekibo, the then Secretary to Rivers State Government in preparation for 2003 general elections. Before this time, a splinter

group within the Vikings Confraternity had formed the Deewell street cult group to challenge the Deygbam, another street cult. The Deewell street cult had some internal wrangling that almost led to its disintegration before Ateke Tom drew some members of the group to boost the Icelander confraternity.

The ANPP was aligned with the Bush Boys confraternity formed in the 1990s in the thick of the crisis between the Eleme and Okrika people of Rivers State. The founding philosophy of the Bush Boys was in defense of their communities from attackers and had no political alignment. But when the crisis was over, politicians procured the services of its members to gain political relevance and power. It was formed in Okrika but the Icelanders backed by the PDP were able to counter their dominance in the area.

The Niger Delta Vigilante Service (NDVS) was formed in Okrika in the year 2003 in an attempt to rebrand the Icelander cult group and exonerate it from several killings in Rivers State. The political dragnet of the NDVS widened to other parts of Rivers State as more youths joined the fray. Soboma George was the head of the Icelander Cult within the Kalabari axis and also doubled as the second in command to Ateke Tom. Soboma later founded the Outlaws. Deygbam also split into G12, Titans and the Niger Delta Peoples' Volunteer Force (NDPVF). The NDPVF later had the Mangrove Movement, COMA and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) as offspring.

In the wake of the 2007 elections, Dr. Magnus Kpakol assembled the armed group called the Gberesaako Boys. This group was originally formed in 2001 with its members drawn from several villages within the Ogoni axis of Rivers State. After the 2007 elections, the cult boys were left to fend for themselves. The resultant effect was the unleashing of terror on the society with sophisticated weapons in their arsenal in protest of their abandonment by their sponsors and benefactors.

These trends of cult formation and sponsorship for political cum economic interest have continued to dot and dog the length and breadth of Rivers State. Today, the issue of cultism has become a rampant and flippant vocabulary. This is because of the way and manner the cultists carry out their activities and sometimes to the detriment of the peace, security, growth and development of society. Members of the society have been engaged in blame trading by ascribing the destructive effects of cultism to the inability of the government at all levels to fulfill her duties of protecting the citizenry effectively (Mojaye & Aondover, 2022).

The latest trend now is proliferation of illegal oil bunkering sites operated by the cultists to make ends meet. Most of the territorial lords now own oil bunkering sites where they operate at the risk of the society environmentally, health-wise, security-wise and economically. To date, the accidents from the illegal bunkering sites have continued to incinerate human lives, flora and fauna. The damage can only be imagined if weighed against the supposed benefit from the trade.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study adopted Media Framing Theory. This theory according to Myles (2004) was propounded by Erving Goffman in 1974. The word 'framing' is used here to imply how the mass media project a particular angle of an issue through selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration (Okoro & Odoemelam, 2013). This means that every medium's content are framed according to the desires of the reporter or the media house they work for. Similarly, Chew, Ahmad, Ibrahim, and Chang (2012) conceptualize framing as a model which is

concerned with the appearance of media contents. Framing theory posits that reporters underscore some aspects of reality and foreground others in the news gathering and production process (Goffman, 1974). This means that framing can either be done consciously or unconsciously by reporters as well as the media houses for which they work.

Little wonder why Kuyers (2006) defined framing as the process whereby media practitioners act consciously or unconsciously to construct a particular point of view that encourages the facts of a given situation to be seen in a particular manner, with some facts highlighted to be more noticeable than others. It becomes pertinent to state that the media have grown to become the eye of the society who relies so much on the contents from daily media coverage before actions are taken. The media is seen to be everywhere representing the society and gathering information for public consumption hence any information dominant in the various media is taken seriously by the society (especially those who have direct access to these media).

Media frames therefore metamorphose into societal frames making the Journalist a visionary for the society (Aondover et al., 2022).

What the media say consistently becomes the trend including how the media presents it. Framing is therefore important as it affects the way the society view life itself. This is because every piece of information or fact remains neutral until it is framed and framing is perspective driven depending on the reporter or the media house from which they report. For this reason, Gitlin (1980:7 cited in Okon 2016) argued that media frames are the very way in which symbol handlers consistently organize both verbal and visual discourses including how stories are chosen, emphasized and presented for public consumption. The reporter being the first gate keeper decides what is selected as news and the angle from which what is selected should be viewed. Whichever angle the reporter chooses to report from becomes the frame and exposure to that news coverage and this leads to learning that is consistent with the frames that structure the coverage (Baran & Davis, 2009).

Framing theory is of a similar line of thought like the agenda setting theory, in fact, McCombs, Shaw and Weaver (1997) suggested that, not only are agenda setting and framing effects related, framing is indeed, an extension of agenda setting. They used the term second level agenda setting to describe the effect of the importance of characteristics of media coverage on audiences' interpretation of these news stories. But while agenda setting describes which issues will enter the public domain and how they may later influence political judgment, Terkidsen and Schnell (1997) posit that the theory of framing holds that texts, in themselves, can be arranged or presented in multiple fashions and as such influence citizens and ensure issue considerations and level of policy/public support (Aondover & Pate, 2021). The implication of this theory to the study is that media framing and content understanding are mutually related. People rely on what the media presents to take informed decisions hence Bara and Davis (2009) posit that framing theory suggests that media consumers apply the information they get from the media to their own experiences. Put distinctly, people sometimes depend on the media to make conclusions hence media owe them as a duty to frame and report events from neutral and unbiased perspectives.

III. Research Methods

This study adopted a one-tiered approach in its methodology consisting of a quantitative content analysis. Mordi and Ogbu, (2017) defines content analysis as a research technique used for the objective, systematic and quantitative explanation of the manifest content of communication encounters. This design is justified by its capability to streamline the frames within which the cult related activities were reported. The quantitative content analysis was used to ascertain the number of frames used in the reports understudied and to highlight the characteristics of the frames within the period covered.

The population of this study is therefore limited to the publications of three national newspapers in Nigeria; The Punch, The Guardian and The Nation. The period covered is from June 1st 2021 to April 30th 2022. Within these eleven months, these newspapers had three hundred and thirty five (335) publications apiece making a total of one thousand and five (1005) publications. For manageability, this study limited its search to contents bordering on cultism in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers state within this period.

Therefore, this research employed the purposive sampling technique. This technique was used to select all the editions that had cult related reports in order to achieve the research objectives. Headlines were grouped based on similarities and analyzed accordingly. The sample size was one hundred and eighty nine (189) publications published by the newspapers within the period. The unit of analysis for this study consisted of news stories, editorials, advertorials, columns/opinions, interviews, feature stories and others focusing on cultism as published by the three newspapers being studied. These newspapers were chosen due to their ownership structure, area of coverage and frequency of publication. Because the three newspapers are owned privately, it is expected that the contents they publish represent diverse points of view with a strong value for objectivity and neutrality.

IV. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Frequency of the Cult related stories published in *The Punch*, *Guardian* and *The Nation* Newspapers between June 2021 and April 2022

Newspaper	2021	2022	Total	%
<i>Punch</i>	12	56	68	36%
<i>Guardian</i>	8	43	51	27%
<i>Nation</i>	2	68	70	37%
Total	22	167	189	100

The above table shows that the Nation newspaper published more cult related stories than the rest. This shows that publishing cult related stories that emanated from Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State was a discretionary affair and not mandatory. The variation in the frequency of publication among the newspaper publishing houses goes to prove that there were other considerations to the publishing of such stories other than that of public interest.

Table 2. Categorization and Frequency of Story Genre on each Newspaper

Story Genre	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>The Nation</i>	Total	Percentage
Straight news	63	49	65	177	93.7%
Features	2	0	0	2	1%
Editorial	2	0	3	5	2.7%

Opinion	0	0	0	0	0
Letters to the Editor	0	0	0	0	0
Interview	1	2	0	3	1.6%
Comment	0	0	2	2	1
Total	68	51	70	189	100

The above table shows that straight news was the preferred genre for reporting cult related news by all the newspaper houses.

Table 3. Position of Cult related stories by page number

Newspaper	2021				Total	Percentage
	Front Page	Center Spread	Back Page	Others		
<i>Punch</i>	0	0	0	12	12	54.6
<i>Nation</i>	0	0	0	2	2	9
<i>Guardian</i>	1	0	0	7	8	36.4
Total	1	0	0	21	22	100
Percentage	4.5	0	0	95.5	100	
Newspaper	2022				Total	Percentage
	Front Page	Center Spread	Back Page	Others		
<i>Punch</i>	1	1	0	54	56	33.5
<i>Nation</i>	3	1	0	64	68	40.7
<i>Guardian</i>	9	0	0	34	43	25.8
Total	13	2	0	152	167	100
Percentage	7.8	1.2	0	91	100	

The above table shows that cult related stories never made it to the front page, back page or center spread of the newspapers in focus. This means that they never gave the story any real preference.

Table 4. Types of frames used for cult related stories in the newspapers

S/N	FRAMES	NATION	PUNCH	GUARDIAN	TOTAL	%
1	Attribution of responsibility frame	14	15	6	36	19.1
2	Conspiracy frame	0	1	1	2	1
3	Terrorism frame	2	0	1	3	1.6
4	Powerless frame	1	1	2	4	2.1
5	Ethnicity frame	1	2	1	4	2.1
6	Labeling frame	0	4	0	4	2.1
7	Emotional frame	4	2	1	7	3.7
8	Religious frame	1	1	3	5	2.7
9	Political frame	1	0	3	4	2.1
10	Attack frame	2	0	4	6	3.2
11	Response frame	6	5	5	16	8.5
12	Conditional frame	2	7	1	9	4.8
13	Solution frame	5	1	3	9	4.8
14	Action frame	21	28	15	64	33.9
15	Consequence frame	2	1	3	6	3.2
16	Challenge frame	2	0	2	4	2.1
17	Advice frame	2	0	0	2	1

18	Suspicion frame	1	0	0	1	0.5
19	Promise frame	2	0	0	2	1
20	Comparison frame	1	0	0	1	0.5
	Total	70	68	51	189	100

The table above shows that the action frame was the most utilized by the newspapers.

Discussion of Findings

The first objective was to find out the level of relevance or prominence given to cult related stories in Emohua Local Government Area by the newspapers in focus. The combined reading of tables 1, 2 and 3 prove that cult related stories were not given prominence as was supposed to be. This conclusion is because from table one, we see a variation in the frequency of publication of cult related stories among the newspapers. The variation in the frequency of publication among the newspaper publishing houses goes to prove that there are other competing considerations to the publishing of such stories other than that of public interest. Again, in table two, we noticed that straight news was the preferred genre for reporting cult related news by all the newspaper houses. This again shows the shabby treatment given to the issue by the newspaper. The third table also showed that none of the stories appeared on the cover, back or center spread pages of the various newspapers.

This positioning of the stories contradict what Ofuoku and Agumagu (2008) stated that the front page is used to present to readers all the salient, attractive, eye-catching and major headlines contained inside the newspaper. This becomes more contradictory considering the number of persons who died in the cult related clashes and other tragic events arising therefrom, within the study period and yet the stories didn't even merit front page positioning by most of the newspapers studied.

Several studies validate media's contribution to violence, instability, and fragmentation (Thompson, 1999; AgnezaBozic-Roberson, 2004). Olorunyomi (2000); Kalyango & Vultee (2012) blame the media for inciting the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. In present day Nigeria, the mass media are known to play sensational roles in crises situations, promote hasty stereotypes about ethnic groups and individuals, and even cause and enhance conflicts (Yusuf, 2002; Ahmed, 2002; Pate, 2011 & Omenugha, 2013).

The second objective was to look at the frames adopted reporting cult related activities in Emohua Local Government Area. Table 4 shows that the action frame was the most utilized frame within the period under review. This implies that even though the intention of the media houses can be said to be genuine, the combination of the action news frame with the straight news presentation category, meant that cult related activities in the area was just one of the events that kept happening in the area and therefore deserved no special treatment.

This finding aligns with the finding of Okon (2021) who averred that the media was complicit in not paying adequate attention to events in the society and therefore is plagued by journalistic inertia to the detriment of the society. Hence, depending on how reporters interpret or select how to represent reality, news framing of conflicts can have either escalatory or de-escalatory implications (Macdonald, 2003). This is because frames influence audience perception of reality. This is particularly peculiar to situations where frames (news stories) create categories of 'good' against 'evil' or 'us' against 'them' situation in a conflict (Shinar, 2002).

So news “frames serve multiple functions for different actors” (Norris, Kern, & Just, 2003, p. 11) and news framing offers as many techniques or possibilities to represent events, issues and situations and it is as complex and multifaceted as frames are dynamic (D’Angelo & Kuypers, 2010; Vladislavjević, 2015). Scholars therefore take frames and framing seriously. Cacciatore, Sheufele, and Iyengar (2016) distinguish between ‘equivalence’ framing and ‘emphasis’ framing. The latter is related to what Iyengar (2005) calls ‘episodic’ and ‘thematic’ framing.

Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) identify five generic news frames: attribution of responsibility, conflict, human interest, economic consequences and morality. Li, Lindsay, and Mogensen (2002) use eight frames in the analysis of September 9, 2011 attacks: disaster, crime, environment, economy, human interest, politics, safety and religious frames. In violent conflicts particularly, Kaufman, Elliott, and Shmueli (2013) suggest that many important frames usually include power, identity, conflict management/process, characterization, risk/information, and loss versus gain. These frames play different roles in different conflict situations.

V. Conclusion

One challenge that will continue to confront the journalist as well as the media in general is the level of attention to be given to societal violence. While some will argue that when so much attention is given to a crime, the chances for that crime to be reduced increases, others argue that the media sometimes give undue attention to crime thereby increasing the rate of that crime. These latter groups argue that because of the attention given to crime by the media, people sometimes indulge in crime to gain such attention. No matter the group or school of thought we belong to, it is important to note that the way crime is reported or ignored contributes to either the escalation or de-escalation of that crime. Every report is done through frames i.e. reporters’ emphasized perspectives. Frames are language dependent. Hence, the language reporters choose to use in reporting an issue matters because language carry with it different interpretations. When crime (no matter how little it looks) is condemned, no matter who is involved, such crime can die a natural death. Contrarily, when crime is ignored on either, ethnic, emotional, political or other grounds, such crime gradually grows to an extent that is hard to control. When issues are not properly reported from the beginning, it brings disaffection in the society and also misdirects the authorities on possible solution. This is because the government sometimes depends on media reports to take actions.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

1. Newspaper reports should pay more attention to the issue of cultism in Emohua Local Government Area by giving more prominence to it and propel societal action against it.
2. More frames should be utilized to avoid monotony of reading and therefore slack reaction from the audience.

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