Media Framing and Peace Advocacy in Mainstream Coverage of the Herder-Farmer Conflicts in Nigeria

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Abstract
The protracted conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria, characterised by recurring violence, displacement, and social unrest, remains a significant challenge to national cohesion. This study investigates media framing and peace advocacy in mainstream coverage of the herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria, using the framing theory as its analytical framework. A triangulated research approach was adopted, combining content analysis of 150 online reports from three purposively selected newspapers (*Punch, Daily Trust*, and *Vanguard*) with a survey of 251 members of the Nigerian Union of Journalists in Kwara State. Data were collected using coding sheets and structured questionnaires and analysed using descriptive statistics. The findings reveal that conflict reporting is predominantly framed using panic and fear-inducing narratives, with limited emphasis on peace-oriented frames such as solution or awareness frames. Although journalists expressed awareness of the influence of framing on peacebuilding efforts, their ability to reflect this awareness in practice is constrained by institutional and structural challenges. The study concludes that while peace-promoting frames are emerging, they remain underutilised. It recommends strategic partnerships between media organisations and peacebuilding bodies to promote conflict-sensitive journalism and enhance the media's role in fostering dialogue, understanding, and reconciliation in Nigeria.

Keywords
Farmer-herder conflicts, Framing Theory, conflict reporting, peace advocacy, mainstream media

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Introduction

Despite growing interest in framing analysis across multiple disciplines, significant theoretical and empirical gaps remain, particularly in identifying the presence of news frames in conflict reporting and peace advocacy contexts (Vladisavljevic, 2015). The nature of mass media operations makes conflict reporting a central focus in journalism. Adisa and Abdulraheem (2017) assert that "conflict reporting is the bread and butter of journalism" (p. 11), leading to intense competition among media houses in Nigeria to be the first to report conflicts. Journalists serve as key narrators of collective experiences, including the framing of conflicts and peace initiatives, particularly in the case of herders-farmers conflicts (Eyekpimi, 2016; Adisa, Mohammed, & Ahmad, 2015).

In line with this framing dynamic, studies on newspaper coverage of the herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria reveal a consistent reliance on emotive, conflict-driven frames that prioritise sensationalism over balanced, peace-oriented narratives. Content analysis of mainstream newspapers shows that coverage often amplifies violence, panic, and blame, thereby reinforcing stereotypes and heightening tensions (Adisa & Abdulraheem, 2017; Kugbayi, 2024). While solution and awareness frames do exist within some reports, they remain marginal compared to the dominant panic frame. This pattern reflects the intense competition among Nigerian media outlets, which often strive to capture public attention through dramatic headlines and emotionally charged storytelling (Adisa & Abdulraheem, 2017). The consequences of this framing are far-reaching, as it not only distorts public perception but also undermines peace advocacy efforts and escalates community mistrust (Popoola, 2015; Crisis Group, 2017). Thus, the nature of media framing in newspaper reports plays a critical role in either aggravating or mitigating the dynamics of the herder-farmer crisis in Nigeria.

The herders-farmers conflict has affected at least 22 of Nigeria's 36 states, with over 2,000 people killed and tens of thousands displaced in 2016 alone (Crisis Group, 2017). News framing often influences audience behaviour and reactions, sometimes contributing to unrest and retaliatory attacks in response to media coverage and editorial commentary (Adisa & Abdulraheem, 2017). Government efforts to address these conflicts have had limited success, partly due to the media's credibility and wide reach across diverse audiences (Abdulbaqi & Ariemu, 2017). Consequently, herders-farmers clashes persist, resulting in significant loss of lives and property.

Once news of these conflicts breaks, other regions often anticipate similar attacks and prepare defensively (Felix, Jigem, & Ngantem, 2025). States such as Kwara, Kogi, Benue, Enugu, Nasarawa, Kaduna, Taraba, Kebbi, Delta,

Ekiti, Oyo, and Niger have all experienced such tensions. This persistent violence underscores the media's influential role in shaping public perception and response through its framing of conflict (Felix, Jigem, & Ngantem, 2025).

According to the Global Terrorism Index, herders were ranked as the fourth deadliest militant group globally, with a record of 4,572 people killed in 2021 (Eyekpimi, 2023). Surprisingly, some scholars argue that media coverage often assigns blame, and once a perpetrator is identified, the process of constructing an enemy image begins (Popoola, 2015; Felix, Jigem, & Ngantem, 2025). This raises concerns about the supposed impartiality of the media in conflict reporting. It is debated whether the media's framing of conflicts such as the herders-farmers crisis escalates or de-escalates tensions (Popoola, 2015; Adisa, Mohammed & Ahmad, 2015). Therefore, peace advocacy requires the media to function responsibly as a tool for conflict intervention.

Paul and Rai (2021) posits that one of the primary duties of the mainstream media is to report objectively on conflicts and peace advocacy, particularly in contexts such as the herders-farmers clashes, with balanced framing that promotes understanding, dialogue, and resolution. Such practice contributes to peaceful coexistence and sustainable development by promoting accurate information, reducing biases, and encouraging reconciliation initiatives (Paul & Rai, 2021).

However, the Nigerian mainstream media often frames herders-farmers conflicts in ways that exacerbate tensions and perpetuate stereotypes (Kugbayi, 2024). Journalists have observed that media houses prioritise sensationalism and biased narratives to capture audience attention, resulting in a distorted portrayal of conflict (Adisa & Abdulraheem, 2017). This sensational framing undermines peace advocacy by emphasising division rather than shared interests.

Although measures such as ethical guidelines and training programs have been introduced to encourage responsible journalism, these efforts appear insufficient (Popoola, 2015). The persistence of biased conflict reporting reveals a disconnect between journalistic ideals and practice. Even when some media houses adopt codes of conduct promoting balanced reporting, adherence to such standards remains inconsistent (Popoola, 2015).

The continued prevalence of biased framing is driven by factors such as political influence, commercial pressures, and a limited understanding among journalists of the implications of their reporting (Kugbayi, 2024). This suggests that current interventions are inadequate in addressing the root causes of skewed media framing.

The consequences of biased reporting are profound. Misrepresentation and sensationalism in the media fuel mistrust and retaliation, hinder peacebuilding efforts, and perpetuate cycles of violence (Crisis Group, 2017). Moreover, public perception, shaped by these narratives, can influence societal attitudes and policy decisions in ways that are counterproductive (Abdulbaqi, 2012).

Although some studies have examined media framing of conflict and peace advocacy among herders and farmers in Nigeria (Eyekpimi, 2016; Adisa, Mohammed & Ahmad, 2015), there is a lack of comprehensive research on journalists' perceptions of these framing practices and their implications for peacebuilding. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring journalists' perceptions, the challenges they face, and strategies to align media practices with the objectives of peace advocacy. Such inquiry is crucial to addressing the disconnect between journalistic ethics and actual reporting practices (Eyekpimi, 2016).

Building on this premise, the study aims to: (i) identify the dominant frames employed in selected mainstream media coverage of the herder-farmer conflicts; (ii) assess the frequency with which peace advocacy efforts are featured in such reports; and (iii) examine journalists' perceptions of how media framing of these conflicts influences peace advocacy journalism.

Literature Review

Farmer-Herder Conflict in Context

Since Nigeria's independence in 1960, the country has witnessed persistent and widespread conflicts, with roots in ethnic, religious, and economic tensions (Orhero, 2020). These conflicts manifest differently across the six geopolitical zones, ranging from communal violence and resource disputes to secessionist agitations (Orhero, 2022). Among these, the farmer-herder conflict has emerged as one of the most enduring and deadly, reportedly resulting in more casualties in certain years than even the Boko Haram insurgency (Omotola, 2025).

The origins of many contemporary conflicts in Nigeria, including the farmer-herder crisis, can be traced to colonial policies that institutionalized divisions along ethnic lines. The British colonial strategy of indirect rule reinforced ethnic identities and hierarchies, entrenching inequalities that continue to shape Nigeria's political landscape (Falola & Agbo, 2018). This colonial legacy of favoritism and segmentation created systemic imbalances that post-independence governments have failed to redress. Instead, governance since independence has often aggravated these divisions through biased allocation of power and resources, leading to further mistrust and tension among Nigeria's diverse groups (Adenuga, Olajubu, Oyewole, & Omotola, 2023). As Abasili, Ezeneme and Nwokike (2023) note, the lingering effects of these historical policies have entrenched competition among ethnic groups, especially over land and political representation.

The farmer-herder conflict, in particular, has been significantly worsened by contemporary challenges such as population growth and climate change. As arable land becomes increasingly scarce and traditional grazing routes are altered or blocked, tensions between farmers and pastoralists escalate (Ohadiugha & Gado, 2025; Akinrinde, Osuwa, & Olawoyinn, 2021). The Middle Belt region has become a hotbed for these clashes, where ethnic and religious fault lines further complicate the conflict (Akinrinde *et al*., 2021). These underlying socio-environmental dynamics are compounded by weak governance, inadequate conflict resolution mechanisms, and politicization of the crisis, all of which hinder sustainable solutions (Acquah, Ezeanya, & Nweke, 2022).

Media and Conflict Reporting

The mass media play a significant role in shaping the trajectory of modern conflicts. According to (Felix, Jigem, & Ngantem, 2025), the media can either escalate conflict through biased reporting and incitement or foster peace by remaining impartial and committed to factual reporting. This dual role depends largely on the media's autonomy and its relationships with power holders and conflict actors. Abdulbaqi and Ariemu (2017) emphasise the centrality of communication and information flow to societal development, noting that effective communication systems support civil society and economic growth, both of which are crucial for peace and stability.

In conflict-prone societies, the media's responsibility is heightened. Rather than inflaming tensions, the press is expected to support conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives. However, Olomojobi and Ajilore (2018) argue that media coverage of conflicts in Nigeria is often selective. Certain conflict narratives receive extensive, often favourable framing, while others are downplayed or negatively framed, influenced by perceived audience interest and commercial considerations. Conflict itself is a strong news value, and media houses may exploit this to attract attention, dramatising conflict for entertainment and profit (Oso, 2017).

Ohaja (2021) stresses the role of conflict-sensitive communication by both journalists and citizens. She notes that objective and reliable media reporting can demystify the underlying issues and actors in a conflict, aiding in the search for peaceful solutions. Similarly, Ogbette, Attama and Okoh (2018) argues that the media should provide inclusive platforms for dialogue, while Chukwuma, Diri and Oginibo (2015) suggest that selective underreporting can sometimes minimize tensions by keeping divisive issues off the public agenda.

Importantly, Ohaja (2021) reiterates that media messages can either fuel or mitigate conflict, depending on their framing. She also notes in her analysis of Nigerian electoral coverage that balance, accuracy, and context are vital. Akanni (2017) concurs, recommending that conflict reporting should include historical and social contexts rather than merely outlining opposing positions.

Yet, empirical studies on farmer-herder conflict coverage in Nigeria reveal significant shortcomings. Akanni (2017) found that 81% of newspaper content focused solely on straight news, neglecting interpretive or analytical reporting. Gever and Essien (2017), in a study of Benue State coverage, also reported a dominance of straight news (64.5%), limited follow-up on victims, and minimal front-page prominence (only 28.7% of stories). Akanni (2017) further observed that such reporting is often driven by the drama of immediate events rather than deeper investigation, which limits the potential of the media to build trust and promote peace.

Theoretical Review

Framing Theory

Framing theory, initially conceptualized by Goffman (1974) in *Frame Analysis*, posits that the manner in which information is structured and presented (i.e., the "frame") significantly shapes audience interpretation and understanding (Wonuola & Adisa, 2023). Media organizations play a crucial role in this process by selectively emphasizing particular aspects of events or issues, thereby constructing specific narratives (Asemah, Nwammuo, & Nkwam-Uwaoma, 2017). While framing theory builds upon the foundations of agenda-setting theory, which asserts that media coverage determines the salience of public discourse, it extends this notion by arguing that the *way* an issue is framed influences public attitudes and evaluations (Ghanem, McCombs, & Chernov, 2009).

Beyond mere media influence, Brüggemann (2014) contends that news framing is also shaped by the priorities and editorial decisions of news providers, who determine which elements of a story are amplified or downplayed. Entman (1993) further elaborates that framing involves the deliberate selection and emphasis of certain facts to promote a particular interpretation, moral judgment, or solution. However, audience reception of these frames is not passive; rather, individuals are more likely to resonate with frames that align with their pre-existing cultural and ideological perspectives (Entman, Matthes, & Pellicano, 2009). Griffin (2012) reinforces this by arguing that media framing operates on two levels: first, by directing attention to specific issues (agenda-setting), and second, by shaping the interpretive lens through which audiences understand those issues (second-level agenda-setting).

Empirical research has identified various mechanisms through which frames manifest in news content. Tankard (2001) outlines eleven key indicators, including headlines, visual elements, source selection, and statistical

representations, all of which contribute to the construction of media frames. Additionally, Kugbayi (2024) notes that framing extends beyond media presentation to influence cognitive processing and decision-making among audiences. In the context of conflict reporting, the language and narrative strategies employed by journalists can profoundly shape public perceptions of the involved parties (Wonuola & Adisa, 2023).

The framing theory is particularly relevant to this study as it elucidates how media representations influence public understanding of socio-political issues. In the case of Nigeria's farmers-herders conflict, the manner in which journalists frame the crisis, through selective emphasis, lexical choices, and narrative structures, can shape audience perceptions, attitudes, and even policy responses. Given that media framing is not static but evolves in response to new developments (e.g., the Southern Taraba crisis), its impact on public sentiment remains a dynamic and critical area of inquiry. By examining journalists' framing choices, this study seeks to uncover how media narratives contribute to the broader discourse surrounding the conflict, ultimately affecting societal interpretations and potential resolutions.

Methodology

This study employs a triangulation methodological approach, integrating survey data with content analysis of news reports, to investigate journalists' perspectives on how mainstream media frames conflict reporting and peace advocacy concerning farmers and herders in Nigeria. The main purpose for utilizing this method is to fully understand the nature of the research problem. This is in the view of Tejumaye (2017) who also added that it allows time saving during the process of conducting the exercise of gathering data. Therefore, it combines both survey and content analysis to establish validity and credibility. This quality makes communication scholars to affirm that there are invaluable benefits it presents which far outweigh the difficulties it presents. Some of these benefits are: aiding in the confirmation of research findings, improving on credibility and validity of findings as well as more comprehension of the concept studied (Bans-Akutey & Tiimub, 2021).

Ajemba and Chinwe (2022) further expatiates on triangulation that the problems and impediments seen in research done with a single research method can be surmounted by the combination of different research methods, and in that manner explore the different strengths of the different research methods. In this way, biases in methodology, instrument used, and data collected can dealt with.

Therefore, for content analysis approach, the population involved three online local newspapers, which are: Punchng, DailyTrust, and Vanguardngr. Random and purposive sampling techniques were used to select a total of 150 online contents, 50 contents from each local newspaper. The duration selected for this purpose was 5 months, that is January to May, 2024. 10 online

publications were selected from each online newspaper, using random sampling to select every 3rd edition from each of them.

In addition, coding sheet was used to content analysed the selected three online local newspaper, using the following measures: story theme (main topic), geographic focus (local, state, national focus), treatment (narrative, inverted pyramid style), origin (staff vs. wire etc.), visual presentation, diversity of sources and photos, overall newspaper structure, content promotion and listings. This is to allow the study reflects in its findings how each local newspaper talk about the issue of farmers and herders in Nigeria, how the stories are run, how many have photographs and how many were taken off the wire and many other things. It is also geared to evaluate the overall proportion of different story types and how they focus on the prominence and thematic nature of stories.

To satisfy the objectives of this paper, a total of two hundred and fifty-one members of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) in Kwara state were selected as the sample size using the convenience sample size method to represent the total population of members of the Nigerian Union of Journalists. Convenience sampling also known as availability sampling was adopted because it was only two hundred and fifty-one members of the NUJ in Kwara state that were conveniently available for the study.

Structured questionnaires were used to collect data from the NUJ members in Kwara as the direct respondents for the study. The gathered data was analysed with statistical method indicating frequency, percentages, mean and standard deviation.

Although, it was rigorous to reach out to the NUJ members in the state but continuous visitation to the venue of their meeting ease-out the challenges of administering the questionnaires.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Table 1: Dominant Frames used in Selected Mainstream Media Coverage of the Herders-Farmers Conflicts

Dominant Frames.	Punch	Vanguard	Daily Trust	Total	Percentage
Responsibility Frame	29	30	28	87	(8.5%)
Economic Frame	40	32	29	101	(9.8%)
Misinformation Frame	9	11	9	29	(2.8%)
Awareness Frame	62	51	59	172	(16.7%)
Solution Frame	86	62	47	195	(19.1%)
Panic Frame	102	94	89	285	(27.7%)
Stigmatized Frame	11	10	5	26	(2.5%)
Support/Aids Frame	79	31	22	132	(12.9%)
Total	**418**	**321**	**288**	**1027**	**(100%)**

Source: Researcher's field work, 2024

The data in Table 1 gives a summary of *the Punch, Vanguard and Daily Trust* newspaper publications on the dominant frames in *the Punch, Vanguard and Daily Trust* newspapers used to report herders and farmers conflict news. Panic frame recorded the highest number of news frame used in the report of Herders vs. farmers' conflicts among selected newspapers; N=285 (27.7%). Followed by solution frame, which recorded N= 195 (19.1%). While the least frame is the stigmatization frame which has N=26 (2.5%) of the Herdsmen vs. Farmers conflicts in Nigeria. The summary of this table indicates that in all aspects of dominant frames *the Punch, Vanguard and Daily Trust* newspaper used to report herders and farmers conflict news such as responsibility frame, economic frame, misinformation frame, awareness frame, solution frame, panic frame, stigmatized frame, support/aids frame, *the Punch* newspapers reported the highest while *Vanguard* newspapers reported more pattern of frames than *Daily Trust* on the reportage of herders and farmers conflict from February to April, 2024. Details of these are presented in Table 1.

Table 2: Peace Advocacy Efforts Mentioned in Selected Mainstream Media reports on the Herders-Farmers Conflict?

Peace Advocacy	Punch	Vanguard	Daily Trust	Total	Percentage
Peace Advocacy	48 (38.4%)	36 (28.8)	41 (32.8%)	125	(100%)
Total	**48**	**36**	**41**	**125**	**(100%)**

Source: Researcher's field work, 2024

The date in Table 2 indicates that *The Punch* newspaper reported more of peace advocacy on the herders-farmers conflict, which accounted for 48 (38.4%), followed by Daily Trust newspaper which accounted for 41 (32.8%), and the least is Vanguard newspaper which accounted for 36 (28.8%). The implication of this is that *The Punch* newspaper is a leading advocate for peace in its coverage of the herders-farmers conflict, followed by Daily Trust and Vanguard. This information is valuable for understanding media influence on public perception and for strategic planning by peace advocates.

Table 3: Journalists' perception on the implication of selected mainstream media framing of Herders-farmers' conflicts on peace advocacy journalism

Journalists' perception	*Level of Agreement							Overall
	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD	%
The framing of the herders-farmers conflict in mainstream media effectively promotes peace advocacy.	17.4	14.3	20.2	26.4	21.7	3.21	1.39	64.2
The way mainstream media frames the herders-farmers conflict influences public perception in favor of peace advocacy.	18.6	15.1	18.2	29.8	18.2	3.14	1.38	62.8
Journalists have a responsibility to frame the herders-farmers conflict in a way that supports peace advocacy.	19.4	11.6	18.6	30.6	19.8	3.20	1.39	64.4
Mainstream media framing of the herders-farmers conflict has a significant impact on conflict resolution efforts.	12.4	14.3	24.8	26.4	22.1	3.31	1.39	66.2
The current coverage of the herders-farmers conflict in mainstream media is adequate for promoting peace advocacy.	15.1	14.7	20.9	29.1	20.2	3.24	1.34	64.8
Peace advocacy should play a larger role in journalism when reporting on conflicts like the herders-farmers dispute.	16.7	12.4	21.7	26.7	22.5	3.26	1.37	65.2
Mainstream media coverage of the herders-farmers conflict tends to be biased against peace advocacy efforts.	18.2	15.5	18.2	31.8	16.3	3.12	1.35	62.4
Total						**3.21**	**1.37**	**64.2**

Source: Researcher's field work 2024

*1=Strongly disagree (1-20), 2=Disagree (21-40), 3=Neutral (41-60), 4=Agree (61-80), 5=Strongly Agree (81-100)

The data in table 3 indicates that overall, journalists agreed that the framing of herders-farmers' conflicts reportage has an implication on peace advocacy with (M=3.21, SD=1.37). Specifically, journalists agreed that framing of the herders-farmers conflict in mainstream media effectively promotes peace advocacy (M=3.21, SD=1.39), influences public perception in favour of peace advocacy (M=3.14, SD=1.38), journalists have a responsibility to frame the herders-farmers conflict in a way that supports peace advocacy (M=3.20, SD=1.39), mainstream media framing of the herders-farmers conflict has a significant impact on conflict resolution efforts (M=3.31, SD=1.30), the current coverage of the herders-farmers conflict in mainstream media is adequate for promoting peace advocacy, (M=3.24, SD=1.34), peace advocacy play a larger role in journalism when reporting on conflicts like the herders-farmers dispute

(M=3.26, SD=1.37), and Mainstream media coverage of the herders-farmers conflict tends to be biased against peace advocacy efforts (M=3.12, SD=1.35).

The implication of the above indicates a unanimous recognition among journalists of their powerful role in promoting peace advocacy through media framing of the herders-farmers conflict. This consensus highlights an ethical commitment to unbiased, peace-oriented reporting. However, it also underscores a potential blind spot to the need for continuous improvement and critical self-evaluation in journalistic practices. Media organisations might need to address any complacency and actively pursue strategies to enhance their impact on peacebuilding. Lastly, this unanimity calls for robust policies and training to sustain and advance peace advocacy in conflict reporting.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide critical insights into how mainstream Nigerian newspapers report the herder-farmer conflicts, particularly through the frames they employ, the extent of peace advocacy represented in their coverage, and how journalists perceive the implications of media framing on peace journalism practices.

The first objective, which sought to identify the dominant frames employed in media coverage of the herder-farmer conflict, revealed that the coverage is largely framed through conflict-oriented and fear-inducing narratives. The most frequently used frames were those that emphasised panic, tension, and crisis. Such framing portrays the conflict in terms that often evoke fear and urgency, with a focus on attacks, destruction, casualties, and retaliation. These findings are in tandem with the submission of (Yoanita, Dwi-Nugroho, & Lesmana, 2015), who opined that media are strong forces in constructing social reality of conflicts and selectively represent these realities through the process of news framing. The reliance on these frames reflects the broader tendency within mainstream journalism to prioritise immediacy and attention-grabbing headlines over in-depth, solution-focused reportage.

In relation to the second objective, which focused on assessing the frequency of peace advocacy efforts featured in the reports, the study found that such efforts are featured inconsistently and often as a peripheral aspect of the broader coverage. While *The Punch* newspapers demonstrated a relatively higher tendency to highlight peacebuilding initiatives, government interventions, and community dialogues, these instances were generally overshadowed by the prevailing narratives of violence and destruction. This imbalance reinforces the notion that peace journalism remains a marginal practice within the Nigerian media landscape. The limited representation of peace advocacy efforts in other newspapers could be attributed to a combination of factors including editorial policy, commercial pressures to attract readership, and a traditional understanding of newsworthiness that favours conflict over resolution. This finding supports the findings of Okocha and Okejiri (2021) who submitted that *Punch* accords substantial importance to

this issue, playing a role in mitigating the conflict and promoting peace through its reporting.

The third objective examined the perceptions of journalists regarding how media framing of the herder-farmer conflict influences peace advocacy. The responses from journalists revealed a moderate awareness of the implications of media framing on conflict escalation or de-escalation. Many practitioners acknowledged that the way conflicts are framed in the media significantly shapes public perception, influences community relations, and affects the success or failure of peace initiatives. There was a general consensus that the media possesses immense power to either build or break trust among conflicting communities, and that journalists have a social responsibility to report in ways that support peace and mutual understanding.

However, despite this awareness, there remains a disconnection between journalistic ideals and actual practice. Several journalists admitted that structural challenges such as political influence, commercial pressure, and a lack of editorial independence often constrain their ability to report responsibly. Moreover, there appears to be a limited practical understanding among some journalists of the principles of peace journalism and how they can be integrated into daily reporting routines. This gap suggests a need for more targeted training and institutional reforms to align journalistic practice with peace-promoting frameworks. These findings are in consonance with the findings of Odunlami (2017) who opined that supports the findings that journalists agree on the implications of media framing on peace advocacy.

Conclusion

This study underscores the critical role of mainstream media in shaping public perception and constructing social realities of the herders-farmers conflict through the strategic use of news framing. It reveals that media outlets like *The Punch, Vanguard*, and *Daily Trust* adopt various frames that significantly impact how these conflicts are perceived and addressed by the public. The reliance on sensationalist frames, such as the panic frame, over solution-oriented frames indicates a tendency towards reporting that amplifies conflict rather than resolving it.

Moreover, the study highlights a marked disparity in how different newspapers emphasise peace advocacy. While *The Punch* is noted for its substantial focus on promoting peace, other outlets show less commitment, suggesting a need for a more unified approach towards peace journalism. This inconsistency in media framing can either exacerbate or alleviate the conflict, depending on the narratives presented. The consensus among journalists regarding the implications of media framing on peace advocacy further

emphasises the media's responsibility in conflict reporting. Journalists recognize that how conflicts are framed can either support or undermine peace efforts, which aligns with broader theories on the media's role in conflict resolution.

Therefore, the findings point to a crucial need for the media industry to adopt more balanced and solution-oriented reporting strategies. By shifting the focus from sensationalism to constructive conflict resolution, media outlets can play a more effective role in fostering societal peace and mitigating conflicts. This study calls for media practitioners and organisations to re-evaluate their reporting frameworks to better serve the public interest and contribute positively to national and community peace-building efforts.

Recommendations

The study recommends that:
1. Media organisations should prioritise balanced reporting that equally emphasises conflict realities and peace advocacy. This can be achieved by training journalists on conflict-sensitive journalism and encouraging the use of frames that highlight solutions and collaborative efforts to resolve conflicts.
2. Newspapers should increase the frequency and prominence of peace advocacy content. By dedicating more space and resources to stories that promote dialogue, reconciliation, and peaceful coexistence, media outlets can play a crucial role in mitigating conflicts.
3. Mainstream media should establish and enforce ethical guidelines that focus on responsible conflict reporting. These guidelines should discourage sensationalism and the use of panic frames, instead promoting accuracy, fairness, and a commitment to peace.
4. Media houses should collaborate with peacebuilding organisations and experts to ensure their reporting is informed by best practices in conflict resolution. Such partnerships can provide journalists with the necessary tools and perspectives to cover conflicts more constructively.
5. Implement regular training and workshops for journalists on the impact of media framing and the importance of peace-oriented journalism. These educational programmes can help journalists understand the broader implications of their work and how it can contribute to peacebuilding efforts.

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