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## **A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF BROADCAST MEDIA REPORTAGE OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper presents a content analysis of broadcast media reportage of religious conflict in Nigeria that focuses on events that led to the conflict. The research questions focused on the frequency of coverage, prominence, and direction of coverage. Agenda-setting theory and social responsibility theory were adopted for the study. Data was evaluated using Multi stage sampling technique. Arise TV and NTA broadcast stations were purposively selected to carry out research used for the study. News content on religious conflict was 72 days, out of 184 days (6 Months). According to the study's findings, the Nigerian broadcast media has been crucial in the formation of public perspectives of religious conflict and its causes by disseminating information. The direction of coverage of news reports on religious conflicts was favorable. This study recommended the broadcast media highlight more on the religious conflict on other programs aside from news reports.

**Keywords:** Reportage, religious conflict, broadcast media.

### **Introduction**

Religious conflict is viewed as a conflict between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria which existed before 1960. A great number of violence that has occurred in Nigeria's history is a result of ethnic violence and religious violence. Some of these include the Tiv riot (1960-1968), Anti Igbo Program (1966), the Kaduna riot (2000), the Yelwa massacre (2004), the Prophet Mohammed Cartoon Crisis (2006), the Jos riot (2008 and 2010), Boko Haram (2009), Killing of Biafrans (2015-2016), Zaria Massacre (2015), and the Lekki Massacre (2020), etc. Although these conflicts have led to the loss of lives, properties, and jobs, and have caused socioeconomic instability and disunity, this study would focus solely on religious conflict in Nigeria

According to Omotosho,(2003), religious conflicts in Nigeria could be categorized as intra-religious and inter-religious. The inter-religious conflict in Nigeria is usually between the two major religions in the country, which are: Christianity and Islam. Because of the nation's configuration, however, the strand of religion is often intertwined with ethnicity (Salawu, 2009).In all multi-faith societies, which exist over the history of mankind, religious intolerance has been acknowledged as the primary cause of religious strife. The hostility towards other religions as well as the inability of religious believers to strike a balance between the theories and the practical aspects regarding beliefs on topics such as diversity of opinions of doctrine, the acculturation process, and indoctrination are both referred to by Balogun,(1988) as examples of religious intolerance. So many of the religious conflicts which took place in Nigeria have not been addressed and justice has not been brought to the victims of this conflict, which has caused a lack of faith in the government as well as the law and enforcement agencies in Nigeria. The situation of Christians in Nigeria to "nothing short of a Jihad clothed in many names: terrorism, kidnappings, killer herdsmen, banditry, other militia groups," and he urged all nations to put a stop to what he termed a "conspiracy of silence" regarding the issue bishop (Wilfred Chikpa Anagbe, 2022).

The media however has a job to do when it comes to social responsibility, but how well has the media (broadcast) carried out its duties in ensuring justice is been brought to the victims? When it comes to broadcast media, visual content is sent to a large heterogeneous audience at the same time. Some studies believe that there is a relationship between the constant reporting of an event and its influence on the public (Gever, 2013, Okpanachi 2014; Uju & Etumnu, 2021).Nevertheless, professors and researchers frequently express worry about how stories are covered, framed, and reported, offering a legitimate basis for examination. Broadcasting has a responsibility to serve society's interests during times of conflict, insurgency, and war, regardless of a country's or region's boundaries. In a study by Gever (2014), "Broadcasting needs to capitalize on its strengths to join in the war against insurgency." However, it's uncertain as to the level this might be achievable without the support provided by global broadcast media.

However, the broadcast media in Nigeria has been tasked with the social responsibility of not just changing the negative perception other countries have towards Nigeria but serving as a watchdog, in delivering accurate and timely news about events that have occurred in Nigeria. In 1980, the media was heavily exploited during the time of religious conflict in Nigeria, each region had its own media broadcast station, they reported issues concerning religious conflict that was going on, and each broadcast station in Northern and Southern Nigeria took sides speaking against each religious group (Ibrahim pp 67-72). This study explored various television broadcast stations in Nigeria which include, Arise TV and NTA. These broadcast stations are the most Prominent stations in Nigeria which gets the attention of the attention of the public during a crisis. This study focuses on religious violence and how it is reported in Nigeria.

### **Statement of Problem**

Nigeria prides itself on being a diverse nation, which has existed alongside religious violence. As stated above in the introduction, the majority of the conflicts which has occurred in Nigeria are a result of religious conflict .Attention has been given to media content by the broadcast media, most

times the audience is moved by what they watch, which oftentimes causes a reaction. With access to broadcast media content from Arise TV and NTA; this study looks to find out how well-broadcast media covers reports on religious conflicts in Nigeria.

### **Objective of the Study**

The general objective of the study is to determine broadcast media reportage on religious conflict in Nigeria. Specifically, the study hopes to find answers to the following questions

- What is the frequency of the coverage of the religious conflict in Nigeria by the selected broadcast media?
- What is the prominence given to religious conflict in Nigeria by the broadcast media?
- What is the direction of coverage given to religious conflict by the broadcast media?

### **History of Religious Conflict in Nigeria**

The two main religious groups in Nigeria compete with each other for centuries, causing intolerance and social-political intolerance in Nigeria which goes as far as 1948 during the times of Tafawa Balewa (Augustine Adah, 2013). The move aggravated religious tensions in the country, particularly among the Christian community. Muslim extremists in Kano managed to use force to prevent the Anglican House Church from growing in numbers and influence, there were riots in October 1982. Even though the Anglican House Church predated the mosque by 40 years, they perceived it as a danger to the neighborhood mosque, (Ibrahim, 2011, pp. 65-66). In addition, the Muslim Student Society and the Fellowship of Christian Students in Nigeria entered the fray. One incident involved an FCS-organized evangelical campaign that questioned why one group should control the Kaduna State College of Education site in Kafanchan. The conflict intensified to the point when the Muslim students organized demonstrations throughout the city and set fire to a church on the college's campus. The Christian majority at the college retaliated and 12 people died, several Mosques were burnt, and these attacks caused panic. The revenge had been planned, (Ibrahim, 2011, pp. 65-68).

The media was biased in reporting, while places like the Federal Radio Corporation discussed the idea of defending Islam during this brief moment of terror, it did not report the deaths and damage caused by Muslims. Also, reports on damages and deaths caused by Christians were not reported by the Christian media, but they focused on Islamic terror caused by Muslims, (Ibrahim, 2011, pp. 67–70). Other leaders of the religious movements used the power of the media to spread fake news which slowly caused discrimination towards the other religious group, which has continued to be an issue in Nigeria to this day (Ibrahim 2011, pp. 72).

The democratically elected government-controlled Nigeria since the re-establishment of democracy in 1999, but the Muslim-dominated states in northern Nigeria enforced harsh Sharia law. Since 2000, there have been multiple instances of religious conflict between Muslims and Christians for various reasons. These conflicts frequently result in riots that claim hundreds of lives on both sides (Johannes Harnischfeger, Frankfurt am Main 2008). In Jos, Nigeria, in 2001, a conflict between Christians and Muslims erupted over Alhaji Muktar Mohammed's selection as the regional coordinator of the federal program to fight poverty (Obad Minchakpu, 2001). In 2002 16<sup>th</sup> November, a

Nigerian woman known as Isioma Daniel published a report in This Day Newspaper with claims against Prophet Mohammed. This claim led to the fatalities of over 200 individuals. Two days later, the deputy governor of Zamfara declared that despite multiple regrets from This-Day newspaper, the state government had issued a fatwa, or religious edict, against reporter Isioma Daniel, (BBC Reports, 2002).

In 2006, a riot erupted over a cartoon which was about Prophet Mohammed. It destroyed properties, churches, shops, and the death of 26 people in Borno and Katsinastates, Nigeria. The worst of the trouble, resulting in 15 deaths, was in Borno, which is mainly an Islamic state with a sizeable Christian population that is currently experiencing an increase in terrorism. The Nigerian unrest was the first demonstration in the African continent's most populated nation, which is divided equally among Christians and Muslims,(Amelia Hill and Anushka Asthana, 2006).In 2009, the Islamist group Boko Haram waged war against the Nigerian military, razing villages and towns and killing hundreds of people in fights and massacres against Christians, students, and other individuals deemed to be Islam's enemies, (Johannes Harnischfeger, Frankfurt am Main 2008).

In 2014, Channels Tv reported that Mukhtar Yero, who happened to be the governor of Kaduna state in 2014, canceled his trip to the United States, where he was meant to attend the peace symposium organized by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP). The meeting was meant for Northern governors who were experiencing insecurity in their states. Sadly, the governor of Kaduna state returned to Nigeria upon hearing the news that hoodlums had attacked several villages and killed many residents. This attack caused many residents to relocate out of Sabo Tasha because which is a Christian-dominated area, over the fear of reprisal attack by angry youth.

In 2018, when Donald Trump was still the President of the United States of America, he had a meeting with the President of Nigeria Muhammadu Buhari. The meeting was the first meeting with any President from the Sub-Saharan region of Africa, which took place in the White House. The former President expressed his concern about the conflict in Nigeria which destroyed houses, churches, and properties, and likewise the conflict between Fulani Herdsmen and Christian farmers,(Dr. Ewelina U. Ochab, 2018).

In 2021, Akinola Ajibola reported on Channels tv, that the DSS reported an alleged plot to incite religious violence in Nigeria. Dr. Peter Afunanya, who happened to be the DSS Public Relations Officer, stated that those involved were carrying out the plan with the aid of external forces, the act was to be carried out in various states which include Kano, Kaduna, Sokoto, Plateau, Rivers, Oyo, Lagos and some states in South Eastern Nigeria. He further reported that they had plans to attack religious leaders, places of worship, and some important personalities. He assured Nigerians that DSS is working in their best interest to ensure peace unity and stability in the country and he also warned those trying to perpetrate these acts to desist from it or face the consequence of their action.

Following the murder of Deborah Yakubu, a Christian student in Sokoto, by a Muslim mob in May 2022, there was an attack on other Christian sites, according to a statement issued by the Catholic Diocese of Sokoto. "During the period of the protest, groups of young people directed by certain adults in the background targeted the Holy Family Catholic Cathedral at Bello Way, destroying church glass windows, those of the Bishop Lawton Secretariat, and vandalizing vans," the

statement reads, (ACN International, 2022). Over 50 parishioners were killed in a massacre in June 2022 at the St. Francis Xavier Church in Owo. Although the perpetrators are still unknown, the government pointed the finger at ISWAP, while many locals pointed the finger at Fulani herdsmen). Bishop Wilfred Chikpa Anagbe of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Makurdi addressed the European Parliament in October 2022. He compared the situation of Christians in his country to "nothing short of a Jihad clothed in many names: terrorism, kidnappings, killer herdsmen, banditry, and other militia groups" and urged the international community to end its "conspiracy of silence" on the issue, (ACN International, 2022).

### **Television Broadcast Reports of Religious Conflict in Nigeria**

The broadcast media has a social responsibility to not only give timely information but entertain, educate, and change the negative perception of foreigners concerning Nigeria which is should be carried out within the laws of the country (Iheanacho, Jumbo, & Etumnu, 2021). It is the job of the media to call the government's attention to areas of religious conflict in the country. Arise TV (2022), reported that the State Governor of Bauchi State condemned religious violence which erupted because a woman in her 40s made a social media post denouncing Islam, which resulted in several houses and shops being burnt down and people being killed, and the police teams was called to restore order. But the damage had been done. According to Pauline Mark Lere(2009),It is important to remember that during moments of religious crisis, electronic media is used for programs that can aid in reducing tension and encouraging religious tolerance. In a report by Arise TV (2022), The Vice President of CAN in the 19 Northern State spoke called the attention of the public over the false allegation of blasphemy used to blackmail Christians, and well-mannered Christian young girls who refuse the sexual advances of opposite religion and gender. The media is expected to highlight the existing law on religious conflict to protect the lives and properties of citizens. Especially when there are lives of citizens are being threaten.

In 2022, according to a report by Bennett Oghifo on Arise TV, the US Senators demanded that Nigeria be listed on the Religious Freedom list for violence against Christians. With the religious crisis increasing over the years, it not only got the attention of external countries but still shows Nigeria in a bad review and it questions the ability of Security agencies and the credibility of the media in tackling religious violence in Nigeria. The media performing its job by helping in the fight against religious conflicts and not being used to insight conflict.

### **Empirical Review**

Akpan, Olofu-Adeoye, and Ering (2013) seemass media in general as a tool for communicating the language of peace and conflict. The media's coverage is essential for educating the people. However, news organizations take part in the creation, upkeep, and dissemination of specific narratives and discourses (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, Hanitzsch, & Nagar, 2016, pp. 152) in addition to disseminating information. Several studies were reviewed by this, an example is a study by Margaret Damola Jesuminure (2019) on "Media Coverage of Religion and Security: A Nigerian Case Study", she stated "that Nigeria is experiencing an increase in politics of identity based on religion and ethnicity, among other things, with an ongoing characteristic of a "we" against "them" mental map as a result of the

state's failure to act as an economic or emancipatory actor". This is true because religious and ethnic conflict has been the base of conflict uprise since the inception of Nigeria.

In another study by (Celestine Verlumun Gever 2018)“Analysis of Foreign and Local Broadcast Media Coverage of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria”, he cited Wilkinson (2002, p. 195) in Joogi,(n. d) stating that “there are some concrete ways that the broadcast media might monitor terrorist activity: Television channels can broadcast public warnings from the authorities as well as advice on behave in perilous circumstances; responsible and accurate reporting of occurrences would improve public awareness of strange packages, suspicious people, and suspicious behavior; Broadcasting networks have been the best platforms for in-depth discussions of both the political and social effects of terrorist activity in addition to for the development of suitable strategies as well as defensive measures. Broadcast media outlets as well as their print counterpart can remind authorities that the response to terrorism should comply with the rule of law, basic rights, and requirements of social justice”.This is true because it is the job of the media to work in favor of the people to ensure peace by reminding the government of what they should do in times of religious conflict.

According to (Pauline Mark Lere, 2009),It is important to note that the reports on religious conflicts paralyze the nation. Fearing a religious crisis, residents of the southern states who were previously residing in the north began to relocate south. The same applied to northerners who chose to remain in the South. Cases of relocation of religious has been reported and most cases affect the economic stability of the state as awhole. In a report by(Odo Emmanuel Nduka,Ogbonna Odinaka Doris, Ogwuche, Godwin Abu and Uzoka, Paul Ifeanyi, 2010) in a study on “Content Analytical Study of Ethno-Religious Crisis in Jos January to May (2010)” stated that religious conflict can lead to economic degradation, environmental degradation, loss of life, property, genocide, and torture, if not tackled by the government leads to bad governance which affects the image of the country.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theories selected for this study were agenda-setting theory and social responsibility theory. Agenda-setting theory was first introduced by Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald Shaw, in 1972 after observing the media during the 1968 US Presidential election. This theory analyses how the media sets the public agenda by giving prominence to a specific event or story by emphasizing and stressing over a particular topic which in turn indirectly tells you what to think(Iheanacho, Onwukwe, Damisa & Etumnu, 2023). This theory thinks that constant reports of religious conflict by the media give it prominence and it gives the public something to say by having an opinion about the religious conflict which is relevant to this study. According to Ukonu (2008,p.169), he stated that in social responsibility theory,the press must be permitted to carry out its customary societal roles, but it must do so within the bounds of the law. The theory means that the media should give comprehensive information on religious conflicts which include loss of lives, and properties. Also, the media should serve as a means of conflict resolution between both religious bodies to resolve their conflict. Which is why the theory is relevant to the study.

**Methodology**

Qualitative content analysis and multi-stage sampling method. The Two broadcast stations purposively selected are Arise TV a privately owned broadcast station, and NTA a public broadcast station. They were chosen because of the wide coverage of events happening in Nigeria. The unit of analysis includes news, documentaries, Soap Operas, and Advertisements. The population of the study covers the period of 6 months (May 2022, to October 2022) in total, 184 days. This period was chosen because there were elements of religious conflicts reported by the media which affected the socio-economic stability and security of the country, which includes loss of life, properties, and businesses, displacement of citizens, and poverty.

The sample size was gotten using Nwanna’s (1981) sample formula, the expected frequency value is 20% which is used in sample size when the population is less than 1000. The formula states

$$\frac{n = NV(p)}{100}$$

n= sample size, NV= population value, p= expected frequency value

$$84 \times 2 = 368, n = \frac{=368(20)}{100} = 73.6 = 74$$

The sample size is reduced to 72 to achieve uniformity which does not affect the sample represented. According to Okoro and Odomelam, it’s not about how large the sample size is that makes it valid for representation.

**Reliability of Research Instrument**

$$72 \div 100 = 0.72. \text{ Therefore, } 0.72 \times 10 = 7.2\%$$

$$\text{Reliability, } = \frac{2m}{N1+N2}, = \frac{2(34)}{36+36} = \frac{68}{72} = 0.94$$

$$\text{Therefore. } 0.94 \times 100 = 94\%$$

This means that the coefficient inter-coder reliability was 94% reliable. Wimmer and Dominick (2003, p.158) say that “As a general rule while implementing Holsti’s formula, several published content evaluations claim a minimum reliability coefficient of roughly 90% or above”.

**RESULTS**

**Research question 1:** What is the frequency of the coverage of the religious conflict in Nigeria by the selected broadcast media?

<b>BROADCAST STATION</b>	<b>STORIES</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
<b>ARISE TV</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>59.1%</b>



<b>NTA</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>40.9%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 1: Frequency of Coverage of religious conflict by the sampled**

Figure 1 shows that Arise TV shows more stories on religious conflict by 39 (59.1%) stories. While NTA has 27(40.9) stories on the religious conflict which is less than the reports given by Arise Tv. In both broadcast stations, the total number of stories on religious conflicts in the past six months is 66

**Research question 2:** What is the prominence given to religious conflict in Nigeria by the broadcast media?

<b>PROGRAMS</b>	<b>ARISE TV</b>	<b>NTA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
<b>NEWS</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>93.9%</b>
<b>DOCUMENTARY</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6.1%</b>
<b>SOAP OPERA</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>ADVERTS</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 2: The prominence given to reports on religious conflicts.**

The table shows that out of 66 reports on religious conflict by the broadcast station, 62(93.9%) stories were news reports on religious conflict by the selected broadcast media. Of all the categories of programs, News had the highest percentage, followed by documentaries having a total of 4 documentaries which is 6.1%. While soap opera and adverts had 0 reports on religious conflicts.

On a separate level, Arise TV covered more stories on religious conflicts than NTA have a total of 35 news, 4 documentaries with 0 reports from soap opera and adverts. Which summed up a total of 39 reports on religious conflicts while NTA had a total of 27 news reports on religious conflicts with no documentaries, soap operas, and adverts

**Research question 3:**What is the direction of coverage given religious conflict by the broadcast media?

<b>COVERAGE</b>	<b>ARISE TV</b>	<b>NTA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
<b>FAVORABLE</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>77.3</b>
<b>UNFAVORABLE</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12.1</b>
<b>NEUTRAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10.6</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Figure 3: Direction of coverage

The reports in Figure 3 shows that a total of 51 reports were favorable in their coverage of religious violence by 77.3%. 8 reports were deemed non-favorable by 12.1% in their coverage of religious conflict by the selected broadcast media. 7 reports were neutral in their report of coverage by the broadcast media by 10.6%.

A separate finding in Figure 3, shows that Arise TV had the highest favorable reports with 33, 2 non-favorable, and 4 neutral reports on the degree of coverage. NTA had a total of 18 favorable coverage, 6 neutral, and 3 neutral degrees of coverage on reports of religious conflicts in Nigeria.

### Discussion of Findings

The result shows that the two selected media houses covered events on religious conflicts in Nigeria. Arise TV gave a higher Frequency report on religious conflict than NTA because out of 66 reports, Arise Tv had the higher report by 59.9% to NTA which was 40.9%. The finding also revealed that both stations gave more prominence to reports on religious conflicts because News programs had a higher percentage of 93.9% followed by documentaries which were 6.1%. while soap operas and adverts gave 0% prominence to religious violence. The findings on prominence also show that despite the fact both broadcast stations gave prominence to religious conflict, Arise Tv gave more prominence than NTA with a total of 35 news programs, and 4 documentaries, while soap opera and advertisements had 0%. NTA had a total of 27 news programs while documentaries, soap operas, and adverts had 0% prominence. Furthermore, this study also showed that both broadcast stations on religious conflict were favorable in their reports by (51) 77.3%, although Arise Tv was more favorable in their reports by 33 reports while NTA had 18 reports. Some found the reports unfavorable by (8) 12.1%. Arise TV recorded 2 while NTA recorded 6 in their degree of coverage. 10.6% were neutral about the reports. Arise TV had a total of 4 while NTA had a total record of 3 reports.

### Conclusion

This study concludes that reports on religious conflicts have been covered mainly on news programs but not on other areas of the broadcast station. The broadcast stations have to constantly highlight the issues of religious conflicts in other areas of broadcast media such as adverts, tv shows, announcements, etc. This act will not only keep the public informed but will educate them on the issues of religious conflict and how it affects the socio-economic growth and stability of the country which is the duty of the media when it comes to social responsibility and setting an agenda for the public.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researcher thinks that broadcast media has to do more than give reports on religious conflicts in Nigeria, the researcher recommend that;

- More attention should be given to religious conflict and it should not be on the news reports alone but on others programs.

- Coverage of religious conflicts should call the government's attention for an action against the perpetrator of religious conflict.
- Media stations should take it upon themselves train correspondents who can cover critical issues like religious conflict and to educate people about the consequence of religious conflict and its early signs.

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