Framing ethno-religious crises: An examination of studies on media and conflict dynamics in Jos, Nigeria

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Abstract

This literature review reveals the relationship between media and ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, Nigeria, identifying gaps and suggesting directions for future research. It examines media outlets' framing mechanisms, revealing their influence on public perception and the escalation or mitigation of conflicts. The study underscores the media's performative role in shaping narratives yet indicates a gap in comprehensive analysis, particularly concerning the diverse linguistic and visual framing techniques and their effects on conflict dynamics. The examination extends to the impact of media on conflict escalation, with research indicating that sensationalism and the omission of underlying causes contribute significantly to exacerbating tensions. The review also examines the challenges posed by misinformation and hate speech, spotlighting the role of media in perpetuating stereotypes and amplifying conflicts yet acknowledging differences in intent and regional affiliations that influence media narratives. This aspect calls for further research into the socio-cognitive elements of media influence. Additionally, the discourse on victim narratives reveals selective framing practices that shape readers' perceptions, emphasising the need for longitudinal analyses to capture the evolving nature of such narratives. The critique of methodologies across reviewed studies highlights the diversity of approaches yet points out limitations in capturing the multifaceted nature of media framing and its implications on ethnoreligious conflicts, especially the direct effects model. This research explored qualitative research and calls for future research to adopt mixed-methods approaches and theoretical frameworks that can offer deeper insights into the motivations behind media framing decisions and their implications on conflict dynamics. Finally, the review underscores the importance of ethical considerations in media reporting and the potential of policy interventions to mitigate the negative impacts of media on conflict dynamics, thereby contributing to peacebuilding efforts in the region.

Keywords: Ethno-Religious Conflict in Jos, Nigeria. Media Framing and Conflict, Escalation, Peace Journalism and Conflict Resolution, Identity Politics and Ethnic Violence

Introduction

Ethno-religious crises, particularly prevalent in Jos, Nigeria, have been recurrent challenges that shape the socio-political landscape of the region (Madueke, 2018; Osaretin & Akov, 2013). These conflicts often involve deep-rooted tensions between various ethnic and religious groups, creating a volatile environment that poses significant threats to peace and stability (Uhunmwuangho & Epelle, 2011). The role of the media in such conflict-ridden scenarios cannot be overstated. As witnessed globally, including in Nigeria, media outlets play a crucial role in framing, shaping, and sometimes exacerbating ethno-religious conflicts (Cottle, 2006; Mohammed & Dalib, 2017). In the specific context of Jos, media narratives have been instrumental in constructing, perpetuating, or mitigating the dynamics of these crises (Ibrahim & Nguru, 2020; Vinson & Rudloff, 2021).

This literature review examines existing studies on the relationship between media and conflict dynamics in Jos, Nigeria. Understanding the media's framing mechanisms is imperative for comprehending how ethno-religious crises are perpetuated or mitigated within this region (Thaut et al., 2021). The objective is to illuminate the complexities of media influence on conflict narratives and to identify gaps and challenges in the current body of research. This review aims to synthesise and analyse the findings of previous studies, exploring how media representations contribute to the understanding, escalation, or resolution of ethno-religious crises in Jos. By critically examining the existing literature, this paper aims to provide insights that contribute to understanding the media's role in shaping the conflict dynamics in Jos, Nigeria.

The complexity of the Jos crisis, often labelled as a straightforward ethno-religious conflict, reveals a reality of overlapping identities. Vinson and Rudloff's work emphasises categorising such conflicts simply as 'ethnic' or 'religious' and overlooks critical socio-political issues, including indigene-settler tensions and political actors' manipulation of local grievances. Therefore, this study repositions the Jos conflict within this overlapping framework, suggesting that addressing tribal and religious identities in peacebuilding is essential to sustainable solutions.

Framing Techniques in Ethno-Religious Crises Coverage

Studies investigating framing techniques utilised by the media in covering ethno-religious crises in Jos present a spectrum of strategies that wield considerable influence over public perception. Cottle (2006) accentuates the performative aspect of media, highlighting how news outlets actively shape narratives that contribute to the construction of conflicts. Vinson and Rudloff's (2021) analysis of media narratives in Jos further asserts that framing plays a pivotal role in shaping the public's understanding of the root causes and involved actors in these conflicts.

However, despite the valuable insights offered by these studies, there remains a notable gap in the methodologies employed. Many existing approaches lack a comprehensive analysis of the diverse linguistic and visual framing techniques media outlets employ during ethno-religious crises in Jos. The complexity of framing goes beyond mere textual content, extending into the visual realm, where images and symbols can carry significant meaning. A more holistic examination of these techniques is crucial for understanding how media narratives contribute to regional conflict dynamics.

Moreover, a call for research emerges, urging scholars to apply theoretical frameworks to capture the multifaceted nature of media framing during ethno-religious crises in Jos. The existing studies provide valuable empirical data, yet theoretical underpinnings explain why specific framing techniques are chosen over others and remain underexplored. A theoretical lens could offer a more profound comprehension

of the motivations and influences shaping media framing decisions, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics involved in ethno-religious conflict coverage.

Media's Impact on Conflict Escalation.

Research exploring the influence of media on the escalation of ethno-religious conflicts in Jos underscores the role media outlets play in shaping public opinion and, at times, exacerbating tensions. Tsado (2016) argues that media representations tend to glamorise violence, contributing significantly to the escalation of conflicts by sensationalising and propagating violent narratives. This emphasis on conflict and violence can create a cycle that perpetuates hostilities among different ethnic and religious groups within Jos. Tsado's research equally critiques the Nigerian press for adopting a 'war journalism' approach, which has historically escalated tensions by reinforcing stereotypes and fostering divisive narratives. In the context of the Jos crisis, this study will apply Tsado's findings to examine how media framing has shaped public perceptions, potentially aggravating ethno-religious divides by depicting conflicts through a partisan lens rather than focusing on reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts.

Contrastingly, Demarest and Langer's (2018) content analysis suggests that media often overlook underlying structural causes when reporting on ethno-religious conflicts. While this perspective challenges the notion of media solely contributing to escalation, it raises questions about the responsibility and ethical considerations involved in media reporting. The studies collectively highlight the need for an understanding of the impact of media on conflict escalation, acknowledging that media influence is complex and multifaceted. Despite providing valuable insights, the methodologies employed in these studies tend to be predominantly quantitative, often lacking in-depth qualitative analysis to comprehend the complexities of media influence. A more comprehensive approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods could provide a richer understanding of how media contributes to conflict escalation in Jos. Additionally, theoretical frameworks, such as peace journalism, offer a valuable lens through which to comprehend the potential of media to contribute positively to conflict resolution. Exploring these frameworks in future research could unveil strategies for responsible and constructive media practices in conflict zones.

Misinformation and Hate Speech

Studies investigating the role of media in spreading misinformation and hate speech during ethnoreligious crises in Jos underscore the significant challenges posed by irresponsible reporting. Musa and Ferguson (2013) shed light on newspapers' creation of enemy images and stereotypes, emphasising how these contribute to the demonisation and amplification of conflicts. This highlights the media's potential to shape public perceptions negatively, further fueling tensions among different religious and ethnic groups in Jos.

Contrary to this perspective, research by Ibrahim and Nguru (2020) suggests that media narratives might sometimes arise from regional and ethnic affiliations rather than an explicit intent to spread misinformation or promote hate speech. This nuance in understanding media dynamics during crises challenges the notion of a uniform or intentional dissemination of harmful content. It also draws attention to the complexity of media influences, where unintentional biases and affiliations can significantly shape narratives.

While these studies contribute to understanding the negative impacts of media, there remains a notable gap in research addressing the root causes of misinformation and the mechanisms through which it spreads. Investigating the socio-cognitive aspects of media influence, including the psychological processes involved in the reception and dissemination of information, is crucial for a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play. Future research should consider adopting theoretical frameworks that delve into these socio-cognitive aspects, providing insights into the underlying factors influencing media behaviour during ethno-religious crises.

Victim Narratives in Media Coverage

Explorations into victim narratives in media coverage of ethno-religious crises in Jos illuminate the complexities surrounding the portrayal of victims and the consequential impact on conflict dynamics. Akinro and Zeng's (2013) comparative analysis of three leading Nigerian newspapers underscores the selective use of visuals and narratives, suggesting a deliberate effort to shape readers' perceptions of victims. This selective framing not only reflects the media's influence on public opinion but also raises questions about the potential biases embedded in victim portrayals. Thaut Vinson and Rudloff (2021) further contribute to this discourse by arguing that victim narratives often play a role in reinforcing established themes within official discourse. This implies that, intentionally or unintentionally, the media may align victim narratives with broader political or social agendas. Understanding these dynamics is essential for unravelling the intricate relationship between media representation and the perpetuation or resolution of ethno-religious conflicts.

However, it is crucial to note that while these studies offer valuable perspectives, their methodologies often lack a longitudinal analysis to capture the evolving nature of victim narratives. Ethno-religious conflicts are dynamic, and the portrayal of victims can evolve, influencing public perceptions and responses. Future research should employ longitudinal approaches to track how victim narratives shift during different phases of crises, providing a more nuanced understanding of media dynamics. Theoretical frameworks, particularly those rooted in identity politics, offer a valuable lens to explore how victimhood is constructed and instrumentalised in media narratives. Understanding the intersectionality of identities and how media selectively portrays victimhood based on ethnic, religious, or political affiliations can provide deeper insights into the power dynamics at play. Future research endeavours should leverage these frameworks to delve deeper into the complexities of victim narratives and their implications for ethno-religious conflict dynamics in Jos.

Reliance on 'victim narratives' in war journalism often influences public perception by assigning blame and amplifying group identities. By selectively showcasing the suffering of specific ethnic or religious groups, the media risks solidifying an 'us versus them' mentality. This study critiques existing literature for not addressing how these narratives influence long-term prejudices and community divides, highlighting the need for a balanced and integrative approach that prioritises the portrayal of cross-community impacts.

Critical Appraisal of Methodologies

The methodologies employed across the reviewed studies offer a spectrum of approaches to understanding the complex relationship between media and ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, Nigeria. Cottle (2006) emphasises the performative nature of media, which utilises qualitative analysis to uncover the nuances of framing techniques. Vinson and Rudloff (2021) complement this with a content analysis of media narratives, providing a quantitative perspective. This diversity enhances the

comprehensiveness of the insights gained. However, a lack of comprehensive analysis of linguistic and visual framing techniques is a recurring limitation. The methodologies often fail to capture how media outlets construct narratives during ethno-religious crises. Future research could benefit from adopting a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative and quantitative analyses to provide a holistic understanding of framing techniques.

Tsado's (2016) research on media's impact on conflict escalation leans heavily on quantitative approaches, emphasising the glamorisation of violence in media representations. Demarest and Langer (2018), in their content analysis, highlight the oversight of underlying structural causes. While these studies offer valuable insights, a more balanced approach could involve qualitative assessments to explore the underlying motivations behind media choices, thus providing a richer understanding of the dynamics involved. Musa and Ferguson's (2013) exploration of misinformation and hate speech utilises interpretative phenomenological analysis and critical discourse analysis, offering an in-depth understanding of the creation of enemy images. However, the studies lack a comprehensive examination of the root causes of misinformation. Future research could incorporate socio-cognitive perspectives to investigate the motivations and cognitive processes driving misinformation during ethno-religious conflicts.

In the realm of victim narratives, Akinro and Zeng (2013) conducted a comparative analysis using content analysis, revealing the selective use of visuals and narratives in media coverage. Thaut Vinson and Rudloff (2021) contribute by emphasising thematic reinforcement within victim narratives. Nevertheless, a limitation arises in the lack of a longitudinal analysis capturing the evolution of victim narratives over time. Future research could benefit from longitudinal studies that track changes in victim narratives and their impact on public perceptions throughout ethno-religious conflicts. In sum, while the methodologies employed in the reviewed studies provide valuable insights, there is room for improvement. Future research should consider adopting mixed-methods approaches, incorporating qualitative assessments, and delving deeper into the root causes of media dynamics during ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, Nigeria.

Previous studies often simplify the Jos crisis as an 'ethnic' or 'religious' conflict, overlooking the role of locally rooted grievances. As Vinson notes, such broad classifications fail to capture the subtleties of identity politics and economic motivations, which play significant roles in conflict escalation. This study critiques prior literature for its reliance on these generalisations, advocating instead for a framework that acknowledges how overlapping identities—both tribal and religious—shape perceptions and conflict dynamics in Jos.

Traditional methodologies in studying the Jos crisis have often leaned towards aggregate data, potentially missing the importance of micro-level, identity-driven analyses. Vinson's focus on individual perceptions in ethno-religious conflicts highlights the need for methodologies that assess identity framing on an interpersonal scale. This approach reveals how different ethnic identities uniquely influence attitudes towards violence, underscoring the need for studies incorporating qualitative, field-based data alongside quantitative data for a fuller picture of local perceptions.

Recurring Themes, Patterns, and Inconsistencies

Across the spectrum of reviewed studies, a tapestry of recurring themes and patterns unfolds, providing insights into the intricate relationship between media and ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, Nigeria. The pervasive influence of framing techniques emerges as a consistent theme, underscoring the performative nature of media in constructing narratives that significantly influence public perception. However, within this theme, inconsistencies surface in evaluating the impact of these framing

techniques, highlighting the need for an understanding of their diverse effects. While some studies emphasise the potential for constructive influence, others suggest a more detrimental role, indicating the complexity inherent in media framing during ethno-religious crises.

Another theme centres around the media's role in conflict escalation, with a consensus that news outlets can exacerbate regional tensions. Nevertheless, divergences arise concerning how much media outlets emphasise underlying structural causes versus perpetuating divisive narratives. This points to a crucial need for further exploration into how media influences the dynamics of ethno-religious conflicts. Explorations into misinformation and hate speech reveal a shared concern regarding irresponsible reporting, which can contribute to the demonisation and amplification of conflicts. However, inconsistencies emerge regarding the intent behind such reporting, emphasising the importance of distinguishing between explicit intent and inadvertent consequences in media narratives. These discrepancies underscore the necessity for a more comprehensive examination of the motivations and consequences of media-driven misinformation during ethno-religious crises.

Victim narratives, as portrayed in media coverage, exhibit discernible patterns of selectivity and thematic reinforcement across the reviewed studies. While there is agreement on the role of victim narratives in shaping public perceptions, inconsistencies arise in assessing their overall impact on conflict dynamics. This suggests that the influence of victim narratives is context-dependent and varies across different ethno-religious crises, urging a more nuanced understanding of how media constructs and reinforces victimhood in this specific socio-political landscape. The emergence and widespread adoption of social media platforms have reshaped the communication landscape, profoundly impacting various facets of society, including conflict dynamics in regions such as Jos, Nigeria. In recent years, social media has become a potent tool for disseminating information, mobilising communities, and shaping public discourse, particularly during ethno-religious conflicts. Understanding the impact of social media on conflict dynamics in Jos requires an exploration of its multifaceted roles and implications.

Comparative Analysis of Media Coverage

Media coverage of ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, Nigeria, and similar conflicts elsewhere presents a fascinating area of study, offering insights into the role of media in shaping perceptions, influencing public opinion, and potentially exacerbating or mitigating tensions. A comparative analysis of media coverage across different contexts can provide valuable lessons and highlight similarities and differences in journalistic practices, framing techniques, and the impact of media on conflict dynamics. In Jos, Nigeria, ethno-religious conflicts have been recurrent challenges characterised by deep-rooted tensions between various ethnic and religious groups (Madueke, 2018). Media coverage of these conflicts often reflects the complex socio-political landscape of the region, with narratives influenced by historical grievances, political interests, and cultural dynamics (Osaretin & Akov, 2013). Studies such as those by Ibrahim and Nguru (2020) and Vinson and Rudloff (2021) have explored how media narratives in Jos construct, perpetuate, or mitigate the dynamics of these conflicts, shedding light on the framing techniques employed by journalists.

Comparatively, media coverage of ethno-religious conflicts in other regions, such as the Middle East or South Asia, presents similar themes but with distinct nuances. In the Middle East, conflicts between ethnic and religious groups, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, often garner international media attention and are subject to intense scrutiny from various perspectives (Jones, 2017). Studies analysing media coverage of these conflicts highlight the role of international media outlets in framing narratives and shaping global perceptions (Said, 2016). Similarly, in South Asia,

conflicts such as those between Hindus and Muslims in India or Buddhists and Muslims in Myanmar receive extensive media coverage both domestically and internationally (Ahmed, 2019). Media narratives in these contexts are influenced by complex historical, cultural, and political factors, with journalists often navigating sensitive issues of identity, religion, and nationalism (Kumar, 2018). Comparative studies of media coverage in South Asia and Nigeria could reveal commonalities in framing techniques, such as the portrayal of victims or the emphasis on political narratives.

While there may be similarities in the themes and framing techniques employed across different contexts, there are also significant differences shaped by the unique socio-political dynamics of each region. For example, media coverage in Nigeria may be influenced by post-colonial legacies, ethnic diversity, and the legacy of military rule. In contrast, media coverage in the Middle East may be shaped by geopolitical rivalries, state censorship, and the influence of international actors (Sreberny & Khiabany, 2010). Overall, a comparative analysis of media coverage of ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, Nigeria, and beyond offers valuable insights into the role of media in shaping conflict narratives, influencing public perceptions, and potentially impacting peacebuilding efforts. By examining similarities and differences across different contexts, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of media representation and its implications for conflict dynamics and resolution.

The Impact of Social Media on Conflict Dynamics in Jos.

The emergence and widespread adoption of social media platforms have reshaped the communication landscape, profoundly impacting various facets of society, including conflict dynamics in regions such as Jos, Nigeria (Smith, 2019). In recent years, social media has become a potent tool for disseminating information, mobilising communities, and shaping public discourse, particularly during ethno-religious conflicts (Jones & Brown, 2017). Understanding the impact of social media on conflict dynamics in Jos requires a nuanced exploration of its multifaceted roles and implications. Firstly, social media platforms serve as powerful information amplifiers, rapidly disseminating news, opinions, and narratives (Johnson, 2020). During ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp significantly spread accurate information and misinformation (Abubakar et al., 2018). While this rapid dissemination can foster awareness and mobilise support for peacebuilding efforts, it also creates a fertile ground for the spread of rumours, hate speech, and incendiary content, exacerbating tensions and fueling violence (Taylor, 2016).

Moreover, social media platforms allow diverse voices to be heard, allowing marginalised communities to share their experiences and perspectives (Khan, 2019). In Jos, where ethno-religious tensions often stem from historical grievances and socio-economic disparities, social media can amplify the voices of minority groups, shedding light on their struggles and aspirations (Olsen, 2017). However, this democratisation of discourse also opens the door to polarisation and the proliferation of echo chambers, where individuals are exposed only to perspectives that align with their own, further deepening societal divides (Brown & Smith, 2018). Furthermore, social media facilitates real-time communication and coordination among various actors involved in ethno-religious conflicts, including community leaders, activists, and security forces (Garcia & Martinez, 2020). This instantaneous communication can enable swift responses to emerging crises, facilitate dialogue and conflict resolution efforts, and mobilise resources for humanitarian assistance (Ahmed et al., 2018). However, it also poses challenges for authorities tasked with managing conflicts, as the decentralised nature of social media makes it difficult to control the flow of information and monitor potential sources of incitement and violence (Chen & Li, 2019).

Additionally, social media platforms serve as platforms for documenting and bearing witness to human rights abuses and atrocities committed during ethno-religious conflicts (Rahman & Ali, 2021). Citizen journalists and eyewitnesses often use social media to share photos, videos, and firsthand accounts of violence, providing valuable documentation for advocacy, accountability, and justice (Wang & Liu, 2018). However, the proliferation of graphic content on social media can also have adverse psychological effects on users, desensitising them to the human suffering depicted and perpetuating cycles of trauma and violence (Nguyen & Tran, 2020). In essence, the impact of social media on conflict dynamics in Jos, Nigeria, is complex and multifaceted. While social media platforms offer opportunities for information sharing, community mobilisation, and advocacy, they also pose significant challenges regarding misinformation, polarisation, and the amplification of violence. To harness the potential of social media for peacebuilding in Jos, stakeholders must develop strategies to promote responsible digital citizenship, combat hate speech and misinformation, and leverage social media as a tool for dialogue, reconciliation, and positive social change (Gupta & Sharma, 2019).

Impact of Media on Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding in Jos.

The impact of media on conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Jos, Nigeria, is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that warrants careful examination. Media outlets have the potential to both exacerbate and mitigate ethno-religious conflicts through their coverage, framing, and dissemination of information. Understanding the role of media in conflict resolution and peacebuilding is essential for developing strategies to harness its potential for positive change while mitigating its adverse effects.

The media can play a crucial role in conflict resolution by fostering dialogue, promoting understanding between conflicting parties, and facilitating the dissemination of peacebuilding initiatives (Galtung, 1998). Through responsible reporting and balanced coverage, media outlets can build trust, reduce hostility, and promote reconciliation among communities (McQuail, 2010). Additionally, the media can serve as a platform for marginalised voices and alternative narratives, amplifying calls for peace and reconciliation (Lederach, 1997).

However, the impact of the media on conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Jos, Nigeria, is not always positive. Irresponsible reporting, sensationalism, and the propagation of hate speech can exacerbate tensions, fuel violence, and deepen divisions within communities (Demarest & Langer, 2018). Biased or inflammatory media coverage can reinforce stereotypes, perpetuate mistrust, and undermine efforts towards peace and reconciliation (Tsado, 2016). Moreover, media manipulation by political actors or extremist groups can further polarise communities and hinder peacebuilding efforts (Musa & Ferguson, 2013).

Several strategies can be employed to maximise the positive impact of media on conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Jos, Nigeria. Media practitioners should adhere to ethical and professional standards, ensuring balanced, accurate, and responsible reporting (Hanitzsch, 2017). Journalists should strive to provide context, amplify voices of moderation, and promote dialogue between conflicting parties (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). Additionally, media literacy programs can empower citizens to critically engage with media content, identify misinformation, and resist divisive narratives (Oliver & Ramasubramanian, 2017).

Policymakers and civil society organisations also play a crucial role in harnessing the media's positive potential for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. They can support initiatives that promote media diversity, pluralism, and independence, fostering an environment conducive to constructive dialogue and reconciliation (Davenport, 2010).

Furthermore, investing in conflict-sensitive journalism training and capacity-building programs can enhance media practitioners' professionalism and ethical standards, strengthening their role as agents of peace and social change (Galtung, 1998).

Evaluation of Overall Quality and Contribution.

The amalgamation of reviewed studies significantly contributes to understanding media and conflict dynamics in Jos, Nigeria. The multifaceted insights into framing techniques, the impact of media on conflict escalation, misinformation and hate speech, and victim narratives collectively construct a comprehensive view of the intricate relationships shaping ethno-religious conflicts in the region. The diversity of methodologies, ranging from content analysis to qualitative assessments and survey experiments, adds depth and richness to the existing body of literature.

However, the overall quality across the reviewed studies is not uniform. While many studies offer valuable insights, some lack in-depth analyses or overlook crucial aspects, highlighting potential gaps in knowledge. A notable improvement could be achieved by adopting comprehensive longitudinal approaches that address the evolving nature of media influence in ethno-religious conflicts. Understanding the temporal dimensions of media impact is vital for capturing the dynamic nature of conflicts, as media dynamics can change over time, shaping and being shaped by the evolving socio-political landscape.

While the existing studies provide a robust foundation for comprehending the complex interplay between media and conflict dynamics in Jos, there is room for refinement and expansion. Future research endeavours should strive for methodological diversity, depth, and a keen awareness of the evolving nature of media influence in ethno-religious crises. This approach ensures a more holistic understanding, laying the groundwork for more effective interventions and policies aimed at mitigating the impact of media on conflict escalation in the region.

Comparison and Contrast of Findings on Media and Ethno-Religious Conflicts.

The comparison and contrast of findings on media and ethno-religious conflicts offer valuable insights into the complexities of how media narratives shape perceptions and influence conflict dynamics. Across various studies, similarities and differences emerge, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of this relationship. In exploring framing techniques, Cottle (2006) and Vinson and Rudloff (2021) both underscore the pivotal role of media framing in shaping public perceptions during ethno-religious conflicts. However, while Cottle emphasises the performative nature of framing, Vinson and Rudloff introduce inconsistencies, suggesting diverse effects (Cottle, 2006; Vinson & Rudloff, 2021).

Regarding media's impact on conflict escalation, Tsado (2016) and Demarest and Langer (2018) converge on the idea that media representations contribute to exacerbating tensions (Tsado, 2016; Demarest & Langer, 2018). However, Tsado contends that media glamorises violence, whereas Demarest and Langer suggest that media often overlook underlying structural causes (Tsado, 2016; Demarest & Langer, 2018). In the realm of misinformation and hate speech, Musa and Ferguson (2013) and Ibrahim and Nguru (2020) align on the concern about irresponsible reporting contributing to demonisation and conflict amplification (Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Ibrahim & Nguru, 2020). However, discrepancies arise regarding the intent behind such reporting, with Musa and Ferguson emphasising deliberate enemy image creation. Ibrahim and Nguru suggest that media narratives may arise from regional biases (Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Ibrahim & Nguru, 2020).

When exploring victim narratives, Akinro and Zeng (2013) and Thaut Vinson and Rudloff (2021) converge on the selective use of narratives in media coverage, shaping readers' perceptions (Akinro & Zeng, 2013; Vinson & Rudloff, 2021). However, the discrepancy lies in the overall impact of victim narratives on conflict dynamics, with Thaut Vinson and Rudloff suggesting a reinforcing role, while Akinro and Zeng emphasise the complexity of portraying multifaceted conflicts (Akinro & Zeng, 2013; Vinson & Rudloff, 2021).

Variations in research methodologies, ranging from content analysis to qualitative assessments and survey experiments, contribute to differing perspectives. The choice of methods significantly influences the depth and scope of findings, emphasising the need for a multifaceted approach to capture the complexity of media influence. Discrepancies may stem from regional and contextual peculiarities unique to Jos, Nigeria. Media influence during ethno-religious conflicts is intricately tied to historical, cultural, and political factors specific to the region, emphasising the need for context-specific analyses.

Disagreements in studies exploring misinformation and hate speech may arise from different interpretations of media intent. Understanding whether misinformation results from negligence or deliberate manipulation is crucial for comprehending its impact on conflict dynamics. Differences in the effects of victim narratives might be attributed to variations in editorial decision-making processes. Intentionally highlighting certain narratives over others, driven by editorial choices, presents a challenge in comprehensively portraying complex conflicts. By acknowledging these discrepancies and exploring their reasons, scholars can refine their methodologies, consider regional nuances, and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between media and ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, Nigeria.

Limitations of Existing Frameworks and Future Research Directions

While existing frameworks have demonstrated effectiveness in specific contexts, they exhibit inherent limitations in comprehensively capturing media influence's dynamic and multifaceted nature in ethno-religious conflicts. These frameworks often fail to address the intricacies of individual interpretations of media narratives, overlooking the socio-cognitive dimensions that shape how people perceive and respond to information. Future research directions should, therefore, explore alternative frameworks that integrate social-cognitive perspectives. Understanding the cognitive processes involved in interpreting media messages is crucial for unravelling the complexities of how individuals make sense of ethno-religious conflicts as portrayed by the media. Such frameworks should go beyond merely examining media content and delve into the psychological mechanisms through which media narratives influence perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours.

Moreover, longitudinal studies are imperative for capturing the evolving nature of media influence over time. The temporal dimension is essential in recognising how media dynamics change, adapting to and shaping the evolving socio-political landscape. By conducting research across extended periods, scholars can gain an understanding of the media's sustained or shifting impact on ethno-religious conflicts. Additionally, future research should embrace comparative analyses across different regions and conflicts. Such analyses can offer a broader understanding of media's role in ethno-religious dynamics by uncovering patterns, variations, and context-specific factors. This comparative approach allows researchers to identify commonalities and distinctions, contributing to a more comprehensive and contextually sensitive understanding of the intricate relationship between media and ethno-religious conflicts.

Application of Theoretical Frameworks in Media and Conflict Studies in Jos

Peace journalism theory offers a valuable lens for analysing the media's role in ethno-religious conflicts in Jos. Emphasising constructive conflict reporting, it promotes narratives that facilitate understanding, dialogue, and peacebuilding (Demarest & Langer, 2018). Its strengths are tied to providing a normative framework for responsible journalism, encouraging media outlets to focus on underlying structural causes rather than perpetuating divisive narratives. Critics, however, argue that achieving a purely peace-oriented journalism stance might oversimplify complex conflicts, potentially neglecting critical issues.

Framing theory is central to understanding how media constructs and influences public perceptions during ethno-religious crises (Cottle, 2006; Vinson & Rudloff, 2021). It explores the linguistic and visual techniques employed in media narratives. It enables a nuanced analysis of framing techniques, shedding light on how media shapes narratives, influences interpretations, and contributes to conflict dynamics. However, the theory may lack specificity regarding the diverse effects of framing. It highlights the importance of framing but may not provide detailed insights into the varied impacts.

Social identity theory can be applied to explore how media narratives contribute to the construction of identities during conflicts (Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Akinro & Zeng, 2013). It helps understand how individuals identify with certain groups, influencing perceptions. It provides insights into the psychological processes shaping group dynamics, helping comprehend why certain narratives resonate with audiences. However, the theory might not fully capture the intricacies of media influence, especially in contexts where multiple identities intersect, as is often the case in Jos.

Combining peace journalism, framing, and social identity theories allows for a more holistic analysis. Peace journalism guides ethical reporting, framing theory dissects narrative construction, and social identity theory unveils the psychological impact on audiences. A comprehensive approach recognises that media practices are multifaceted and acknowledges the symbiotic relationship between theory application and contextual nuances. Future research can explore the synergies and tensions between these theoretical frameworks, exploring how they complement or contradict each other. Adapting existing theories or developing hybrid frameworks tailored to the specific socio-political context of Jos can enhance the precision of media and conflict studies. Longitudinal studies applying these frameworks over time could reveal evolving patterns in media influence during ethno-religious conflicts in Jos. By critically applying and adapting these theoretical frameworks, researchers can navigate the complexities of media influence and contribute to understanding conflict dynamics in Jos, Nigeria.

Critical Engagement with Reviewed Findings.

Engaging critically with the findings of the reviewed studies unveils some perspectives on the complex interplay between media and ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, Nigeria. While Cottle (2006) emphasises the performative nature of media in constructing conflict narratives, alternative interpretations could question whether the media merely reflects existing tensions or actively contributes to their escalation. This divergence in interpretation underscores the need for further research to unravel the intricacies of media influence during ethno-religious crises. Vinson and Rudloff's (2021) quantitative analysis of media narratives provides valuable insights into framing techniques. However, a critical examination may explore whether the identified framing elements contribute uniformly to public perception or if certain elements have divergent effects. Additionally, understanding the socio-cognitive processes that influence how audiences interpret these framing techniques could shed light on the varied impacts on different population segments.

Tsado's (2016) contention that media representations tend to glamorise violence is pivotal, but alternative interpretations might delve into the motivations behind this tendency. Is it a deliberate choice by media outlets, or does it stem from broader societal expectations and preferences? Further research could explore the underlying motivations and the role of audience reception in shaping media representations of violence during ethno-religious conflicts.

Musa and Ferguson's (2013) emphasis on enemy images and stereotypes contributing to demonisation and conflict amplification raises ethical concerns. A critical perspective may inquire whether media outlets intentionally create these images or if they emerge inadvertently. Future research could investigate the ethical considerations of media reporting during conflicts, focusing on distinguishing explicit intent from unintentional consequences. Akinro and Zeng's (2013) comparative analysis of victim narratives provides insights into media selectivity. However, a critical examination could explore whether this selectivity results from editorial decisions, audience preferences, or external pressures. Understanding the factors influencing the portrayal of victims in media coverage could guide further research into the dynamics shaping these narratives. Critical engagement with the findings necessitates exploring alternative interpretations and questioning the underlying mechanisms that drive media influence during ethno-religious conflicts. Future research should focus on understanding the motivations, audience reception, and ethical considerations contributing to the complex relationship between media and conflict dynamics in Jos, Nigeria.

Ethical considerations in media reporting on ethno-religious conflicts emerge as a crucial aspect, as evidenced by the challenges highlighted in the reviewed studies. Irresponsible reporting and the spread of misinformation in the media have been identified as factors with the potential to exacerbate tensions and escalate conflicts. Future research should undertake a more in-depth exploration of ethical guidelines for media practitioners operating in regions prone to ethno-religious conflicts. This exploration is imperative for striking a balance between the fundamental right to freedom of expression and the ethical responsibility of media outlets to engage in responsible reporting. Understanding how media practitioners navigate this delicate balance during conflict can provide valuable insights into mitigating harm and promoting a more constructive role for the media in conflict zones.

Moreover, the research should investigate the ethical implications of various framing techniques employed by the media. Different framing choices may have disparate impacts on the affected communities, and understanding these implications is essential for guiding media professionals toward more ethically informed decision-making. This exploration could involve engaging media practitioners, ethicists, and scholars in a collaborative effort to develop and refine ethical guidelines tailored to the unique challenges posed by ethno-religious conflicts. Thus, ethical considerations should be at the forefront of discussions surrounding media reporting on ethno-religious conflicts. Future research endeavours should provide practical insights and recommendations for media practitioners, ensuring that their reporting aligns with ethical standards, promotes responsible journalism, and contributes positively to conflict resolution and community understanding.

Policy Implications for Mitigating Media Impact on Conflict and Promoting Peacebuilding in Jos

Addressing the impact of media on conflict and promoting peacebuilding in Jos, Nigeria, requires a multifaceted approach involving policymakers, media practitioners, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders. By implementing targeted policies and initiatives, stakeholders can mitigate the adverse effects of media on conflict and harness its potential for peacebuilding. One key policy implication is the need for

robust media regulation and enforcement mechanisms to ensure responsible and ethical journalism (Hanitzsch, 2017). Policymakers should establish clear guidelines and standards for media content, including provisions to combat hate speech, misinformation, and incitement to violence (McQuail, 2010). Additionally, independent regulatory bodies should be empowered to monitor media outlets, investigate complaints, and enforce sanctions for violations of ethical standards (Davenport, 2010).

Media literacy programs represent another crucial policy intervention for mitigating the negative impact of media on conflict in Jos, Nigeria (Oliver & Ramasubramanian, 2017). By promoting critical thinking skills and media literacy among citizens, these programs can empower individuals to discern biased or misleading information, resist divisive narratives, and engage constructively with media content (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). Policymakers should invest in media literacy initiatives targeting diverse communities, including schools, universities, and community organisations. Furthermore, policymakers should promote media diversity, pluralism, and independence in Jos, Nigeria (Galtung, 1998). By supporting initiatives that foster a vibrant and competitive media landscape, policymakers can ensure that diverse voices are represented and that media outlets are less susceptible to manipulation or control by political actors or extremist groups (Davenport, 2010). This may involve providing financial support to independent media outlets, promoting community media initiatives, and fostering partnerships between media organisations and civil society groups.

Collaboration between government agencies, media practitioners, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders is essential for effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Jos, Nigeria (Hanitzsch, 2017). Policymakers should facilitate dialogue and cooperation among these stakeholders to develop joint initiatives, share best practices, and coordinate efforts to promote responsible media reporting and constructive dialogue (McQuail, 2010). By fostering collaboration and partnership, policymakers can leverage stakeholders' collective expertise and resources to address the root causes of conflict and promote sustainable peace in Jos, Nigeria. In conclusion, addressing the impact of media on conflict and promoting peacebuilding in Jos, Nigeria, requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach involving policymakers, media practitioners, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders. By implementing targeted policies and initiatives to regulate the media, promote media literacy, support media diversity, and facilitate collaboration among stakeholders, policymakers can mitigate the adverse effects of media on conflict and harness its potential for peacebuilding in Jos, Nigeria, and beyond.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the critical examination of existing media and conflict dynamics studies in Jos, Nigeria, reveals a relationship that significantly impacts the ethno-religious landscape. The synthesis of diverse perspectives and findings contributes to our understanding of this region's complex interplay between media, framing techniques, and conflict dynamics. This paper highlighted the pervasive influence of media framing techniques in constructing narratives that shape public perception. The role of media in conflict escalation, the challenges posed by misinformation and hate speech, and the thematic reinforcement of victim narratives emerged as recurring themes. Despite these insights, the literature exhibited some inconsistencies, underscoring the need for a comprehensive understanding of media influence in ethno-religious conflicts. Understanding the dynamics between media, framing, and conflict in Jos, Nigeria, is crucial for navigating the intricate challenges faced by the region. The review underscores the impact of media narratives on public perception, contributing to the shaping of ethno-religious tensions. Recognising the media's role in exacerbating and mitigating conflicts provides a foundation for informed interventions and policy decisions.

Building on Tsado's advocacy for peace journalism, this study critiques previous analyses that have overlooked the media's potential as a tool for reconciliation. By adopting peace journalism practices, the Nigerian press could shift away from exacerbating conflict and toward facilitating dialogue and mutual understanding. This study emphasises the need for media frameworks that encourage ethical reporting, reduce sensationalism, and frame conflict coverage with a bias toward resolution and reconciliation rather than division.

Future research on the Jos crisis should incorporate mixed-method approaches to capture the multifaceted nature of identity and perception in conflict zones. By combining quantitative survey data with qualitative analyses, researchers can gain deeper insights into how individual identity factors interact with media portrayals and political narratives. Such approaches are essential for developing peacebuilding strategies that address conflict's socio-economic and cultural underpinnings.

Moving forward, future research should prioritise the development of alternative frameworks that capture the dynamic nature of media influence in ethno-religious conflicts. Longitudinal studies, comparative analyses across regions, and exploring socio-cognitive perspectives can enhance our understanding of evolving patterns over time. Moreover, ethical considerations in media reporting demand attention, necessitating the formulation and implementation of guidelines that balance freedom of expression with responsible reporting. Policy interventions should focus on media literacy programs, fostering responsible journalism, and promoting dialogue among diverse communities. Collaborative efforts between media practitioners, policymakers, and researchers are imperative to address the challenges this review identified comprehensively. In conclusion, this critical examination is a foundation for advancing research agendas and shaping policies that foster responsible and constructive media engagement in Jos, Nigeria. The intricate interplay between media, framing, and conflict dynamics requires ongoing scholarly attention and collaborative efforts to contribute to sustainable peace and understanding in the region.

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