Original Article

How four Nigerian Elite Dailies Responded to the Challenge of Journalistic Objectivity in their Coverage of Militancy in the Niger Delta

Nduka N. Nwankpa[1], Gladys Robert Boniface[2], Agnes O. Ezeji[3]

[1]Department of Mass Communication, Obong University, Obong Ntak, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria,
ORCID: 0000-0002-3793-3512.
[2]Department of Mass Communication, National Open University of Nigeria, Uyo Study Centre, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
[3]Department of Mass Communication, Rhema University, Aba, Abia State, Nigeria.

Abstract - *Journalistic objectivity is a contested principle. Yet it is considered as one of the pillars of journalism across the globe. The study explores how four Nigerian elite newspapers (THISDAY, The Guardian, Vanguard and The Sun) applied journalistic objectivity in their coverage of militancy in Nigeria's Niger Delta region from 2006 to 2009. To provide journalists with a set of usable, practical and realizable principle, "sources" and "balance" are adopted as a moderated and modified version of objectivity in analyzing militancy coverage. Findings indicate the dailies used varied sources in their reports. Sixty-eight percent of news stories are balanced, suggesting the prevalence of objective reporting. By using varied sources, the newspapers provided a platform for the feuding factions to communicate with each other, thereby enhancing conflict resolution. The Vanguard, which incorporated a broader spectrum of sources and used more reports from non-governmental sources, manifested the greatest degree of journalistic objectivity.*

Keywords - Conflict, Journalistic objectivity, Militancy, Newspaper coverage, Nigeria's Niger Delta.

1. Introduction

Objectivity is a contested principle in journalism circles. It has received several knocks, sparking heated normative and ethical debates (Dennis & Merrill, 2002). While some consider it feasible, others argue that it is vague and unrealistic. Hall (1974) in particular dismissed it as an "operational fiction." In spite of whatever view one may hold, objectivity is not about to be deleted from journalism lexicon. It stays on, at least for now. Objectivity has been and still is accepted as a working credo by most journalists in America, Canada, Europe, and even in Nigeria and other African states (Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists, 1955; Mencher, 1996; Day, 2006; Barker, 2012; Hasan, 2013; Brooks et al., 2014, NBC Code, 2016). Hafez (2002) reported "a broad intercultural consensus that standards of truth and objectivity should be central values of journalism" (p. 1).

Reporting conflicts, especially violent conflicts, can be tasking. Even the best of journalists can goof. And some journalists and news sources have admitted taking sides in the conflict they covered (Vulliamy, 1993; *New York Times*, 2004; Kurtz, 2004). So where do we start?

Journalism is primarily the business of story-telling, keeping society informed in a timely, comprehensive and intelligent manner. The pressure can be much. It is even much more in conflict situations where most people depend on the media for accurate and timely situational analyses of events as they unfold. Events indeed unfold rapidly, and for journalists as humans, their sense of judgement can get hazy. To the extent that it is humanly possible, how can they cope? That's why journalists have set professional and ethical standards on which journalistic decisions can be based. From Hasan (2013, p. 183), only seven are reproduced here:

1. Use original sources of information, including interviews with people directly involved in a story, original documents and other direct sources of information, whenever possible, and cite the sources of this information;
2. Use multiple original sources of information, especially the subject if the subject of the report is controversial;
3. Check every fact reported;
4. Find and report every side of the story possible;
5. Report without bias, illustrating many aspects of a conflict rather than siding with one;
6. Approach research and reporting a story with a balance between objectivity and skepticism;
7. Use careful judgment when organizing and reporting information.

Dennis (2002, p. 130) argues that "objectivity in journalism or science does not mean that all decisions do not have underlying values, only that within the rules of the game is a systematic attempt made to achieve an impartial report," while maintaining that "impartiality is not beyond the capabilities of the modern journalist if procedures are followed providing for systematic decisions." Day (2006) insists that accusation of biased coverage has more damaging potential to media credibility than any other.

Inherent in journalistic objectivity is balance and adding perspective, that is, incorporating multiple sources in a single story, in our context, conflict coverage. Amanpour, CNN's award-winning War Correspondent of several years, argues that "journalists can be objective by giving all sides a fair hearing, but not by adopting neutrality and treating all sides the same way" (Amanpour, 1996, cited in Gilboa, 2009, p. 100) especially when all side are not the same. Have Nigerian newspapers achieved balance in their coverage of militancy by giving all sides a fair hearing?

Between 2006 and 2009 some restive youths in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria took to arms struggle against the federal government to protest what they described as institutionalized exclusion of the region by the government and oil-TNCs from Nigeria's development equation. Whereas the oil-rich Niger Delta region accounted for over 70% of the nation's revenue earnings, what the region got in return was environmental degradation and destruction of means of livelihood of an already impoverished region by long years of mindless oil mining (Niger Delta Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration Project Scoping Report, May 2006; Ibeanu & Luckham, 2006; Niger Delta Technical Committee Report, November 2008; Ibeanu, 2008; UNPO, 2008; Owugah, 2009; Amnesty International, 2009). Matters came to a head in 1995 when foremost Niger Delta environmentalist Ken Saro-Wiwa and his eight Ogoni kinsmen were extra-judicially murdered by the Sani Abacha military junta. The harsh realities of life and government's insensitivity have strengthened the resolve of militia groups fighting in the region for a fair share of the oil wealth (Aaron & George, 2010; Nwankpa & Onyekosor, 2015; Nwankpa, 2015a). The security crisis that erupted resulted in massive hostage-taking of expatriate oil-workers, bombing of oil installations, oil bunkering, killings, hijacking of oil vessels, car bombing, etc. While militancy lasted, Nigeria was besieged by terror!

After a preliminary analysis of Nigerian newspaper coverage of militancy and several years of active research into the Nigerian press and conflict coverage, we come to the conclusion that "balance" and use of multiple "sources" are more of what they adopt in their coverage (Nwankpa, 2011) instead of pure objectivity, which many argue is untenable (see for example, Massoquoi, 2016). From a survey of Brazilian journalists understanding of journalistic objectivity,

Henriques (2021, p. 826) came to the conclusion that, "The most adequate method to achieve this objectivity is one that minimizes the subject's arbitrary interference and gives space to and opportunity for different voices to be heard on the same topic, while always making the perspective from which the events are being interpreted clear." It is against this backdrop and in line with Day's (2006) suggestion, that "balance" and "sources" be used as a moderated and modified version of objectivity in order to provide journalists with a set of usable, practical and realizable principle that these two concepts have been adopted as a framework for analyzing the depth of journalistic objectivity applied in four Nigerian elite newspapers coverage of militancy in the Niger Delta between 2006 and 2009.

2. Stimulating Journalistic Objectivity in Conflict Coverage

Western philosophy identifies three variants of objectivity: ontological, epistemological and methodological or procedural (Guerra, 2008; Sponholz, 2009; Domeneck, 2009; Ward, 2019; Henriques, 2021). Much as journalistic objectivity is a contested notion, it is still one of the beacons of the journalism profession. Its critics admit the idea has survived several years of scathing attacks because "nothing better has replaced it and many of the journalists who are shinning lights in the profession believe in it, at least as a necessary goal" (Massoquoi, 2016, p. 23). Being journalistically objective remains a notoriously difficult concept to measure, and this has divided brothers of the same academic and professional family.

As some have argued, "All the expected neutrality or passivity of a journalist in the name of supposed 'objectivity' actually results in an opportunity for uncritical reports and, ultimately, for disinformation." (Henriques, 2021, p. 825); while others maintain that, "A journalism that is constrained by the slavish desire among its practitioners to be objective will never be able to adequately respond to the overriding public interest concerns that underpinned journalism since it came into being" (Massoquoi, 2016, p. 24). They say journalists won't be able to ask all the vital public interest questions for fear of being accused of bias. Yet it needs to be acknowledged that arguments of both proponents and critics have helped to advance our knowledge of this core value of journalism (see for example, Schudson & Anderson, 2009; Massoquoi, 2016; Frey, 2017; McNair, 2017; Martine & De Maeyer, 2018; Waisbord, 2018; Carlson, 2019; Mabrook, 2021). Mencher (1983, p. 174) points out that "…objective journalism attempts to present a complete report that is not colored by the opinion of the reporter or the requirements of the prevailing governments." He described an objective story as one that is balanced and impersonal, containing information that has been verified through the reporter's direct observation of the event or through documents and records the reporter can point to as proof of their account (Mencher, 1996). The philosopher of journalistic objectivity, Walter Lippmann,

"depicted journalism as an institution apart, charged with supplying society with reliable, impartial information" (cited in Mencher, 1996, p. 89). In his lifetime, Lippmann had always advocated that journalists strive for accurate, balanced and factual reporting, instead of taking sides or slanting the account of the day's event (Rossiter & Lare, 1963). It is a fact that public confidence in any news source is closely related to the degree to which the news source is genuinely objective. Therefore, news channels must not only deal with the news in a detached fashion, but also make their objectivity manifest (Westly, 1970; Nwankpa, 2015b). Editor must therefore be alive to their responsibility as important media gatekeepers. As Friend et al., (2000, pp: 42-43) argued:

> Reporters may write the stories and photographers may shoot the pictures, editors set the standards and provide the models for fairness…in the media. They determine patterns of coverage; they package and present the news; and they provide the final line of defense against biased, sensational, unbalanced and otherwise unfair stories and photos. Editors must have not only a right but a responsibility to ask hard questions of their colleagues.... Effective editors must serve as the conscience of the newsroom, and that is a role that should be taken very seriously.

While editing for objectivity, the sub-desk should ensure that the story incorporates facts that can be shown to correspond to objects, things the reporter can point to. Another way an editor can improve a story from the standpoint of objectivity is to ensure that all statements of fact are attributed to an appropriate source, except in circumstances where they might have been observed by anyone present at the right time and place. Appropriate word choice is also important, especially by avoiding the use of loaded words.

All sides to an argument must be present in a story. The accused and their accuser must have a voice in a story about their disagreement. The charge and the reply must be placed side by side as possible. This is fairness in news reporting. In addition, the editor should ensure completeness and relevance by giving the reader all pertinent information so that they can see the event in all its dimensions and reach an informed conclusion. The true facts must be there. By juxtaposing the facts in a certain way, the reporter illuminates the story for the readers. The editor must ensure that the inclusion of or omission of one fact doesn't result in inaccuracy or unfairness. Harrigan (1993) therefore, urges that editors include all the information readers need to judge the credibility of reports.

The issue of fairness even extends to who and what are covered and who and what are locked out; and the grounds for such inclusion or omission. In a newspaper, who are the sources often consulted? Are there more females than males? What about stereotypes? Does a newspaper's coverage strengthen or support stereotypes? What factors influence newspaper framing of a given conflict? All these issues and more need to be answered from the objectivity point of view in reporting conflicts. Following these principles will infuse into the story a reasonable degree of balance. Day (2006) writes that fairness and balance require that journalists accord recognition to those views that often enhance the understanding of the issue at stake. Every effort should be made to represent them fairly and in proportion to their significance to the issue. And reporters and editors should do well to keep their personal bias out of the story.

However, Schudson (2011, p. 49) has identified three occasions when journalists voluntarily set aside the notion of detached reporting: "moments of tragedy; situations of public danger; and threats to national security." He pointed out that all three aspects were present in the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the U. S., and the media worked hard to help the public overcome the trauma and tragedy by lending public grief a voice, as well as providing practical and emotional guidance. News sources did well to reject the terrorist messages and to restore society to normalcy (Nossek, 2008). In moments of national grief occasioned by terrorist attacks, journalist play a key role in the process of leading society away from trauma to recovery. The three-stage process includes, establishing safety; engaging in remembrance and mourning; and reconnecting with ordinary life (Herman, 1992, cited in Zelizer & Allan, 2011). As Jørndrup (2016) pointed out, only at the last stage, when the imminent threat seems to have passed and normalcy has been restored will journalists once more begin to interrogate what roles the authorities played in the event. Thus, critical and balanced reporting is usually the first victim in conflict situations.

3. Theoretical Framework
3.1. Social Responsibility Theory
The theory stems from the fact that given the influence of the press, it had responsibilities to society. These included serving the needs of the people by an accurate and unbiased presentation of the day's news. The press is expected to provide a truthful, comprehensive and an intelligent account of happenings in society. The theory canvasses for an all-inclusive press that serves as the voice of all the people – not just a mouthpiece of the elite power group or others with special interests or hidden agendas (DeFleur, 2010).

The theory calls for a public interest-driven media that provides a forum for a plurality of views on public affairs. According to Nwankpa and Onyekosor (2015), if Nigerian newspapers cover militancy in the Niger Delta in line with the social responsibility doctrine, they will "become an impartial third party committed to restoring peace" in the troubled Niger Delta region. They will report "only an accurate account" of each of the warring faction's claims (militants', host communities' and the Nigerian government's) "in a context that gives them meaning" (p. 57). In this way, they will mediate in the crisis by providing a voice for all parties in the

conflict and thus, contribute to the resolution of militancy. Responsible conflict reportage would, therefore, demand that newspapers cover the issues involved in such a way that they become more amenable to management.

3.2. Agenda-setting Theory

The agenda-setting function of the mass media rests on the assumption that, "The amount of attention the mass media give to social issues leads people to believe that these are important, whether or not the media influence people's opinion on them" (Wright, 1986, p. 155). From early works (Lippmann, 1922; Cohen, 1963; McCombs & Shaw, 1972), it was established "that there is an important relationship between media reports and people's ranking of public issues" (Baran & Davis, 2009, p. 280). From these works, it was found that the mass media force attention to certain issues in society by the prominence they confer on such issues.

Several communication scholars now consider agenda-building "as a more apt term than agenda-setting" (Lang & Lang, 1983, pp. 58 – 59). Lang and Lang define agenda-building as "a collective process in which media, government, and the citizenry reciprocally influence one another" (pp. 58 – 59). This is especially true given the interaction among media agenda, public agenda, and policy agenda (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008). In particular, agenda-building presumes that the "media can profoundly affect how a society (or nation or culture) determines what are its important concerns and therefore can mobilize its various institutions toward meeting them" (Baran & Davis, 2009, p. 281).

Drawing from the preceding analyses, militancy in the Niger Delta was one of society's major problems within the study period. The Nigerian dailies reported on it, thereby forcing attention to it, as well as raising its level of awareness among newspaper readers and, by extension, in society as a whole. Through an adequate coverage of militancy in a responsible manner, the Nigerian dailies can mobilize various stakeholders towards finding a peaceful solution for militancy in the Niger Delta. Was this the case?

4. Method

Content analysis was employed in the study to analyze the degree of journalistic objectivity displayed by four Nigerian elite newspapers in their coverage of militancy in Nigeria's Niger Delta region between 2006 and 2009. "Balance" and "sources" were used as a moderated and modified version of objectivity in order to provide journalists with a set of usable, practical and realizable principle for analyzing the depth of journalistic objectivity applied in the coverage (Day, 2006). By the "source" yardstick, a story was adjudged journalistically objective if it incorporated multiple voices, especially those of various stakeholders in the Niger Delta in a controversial issue. Similarly, we assessed a story as balanced if reflected a fair representation of the views of all sides to the issue it reported. For instance, in a story on militancy, were all sides of the story told by presenting the views (as much as possible) of the various parties involved? The dailies include the *THISDAY*, *The Guardian*, the *Vanguard* and *The Sun.* Within the study period, the total editions of the four dailies totalled 5,532. The study covers approximately a period of four years, spanning from January 1, 2006 to October 4, 2009, the day the period of grace provided by the Nigerian government for Niger Delta militants to embrace government's offer of amnesty elapsed. The systematic sampling technique was used in selecting the editions of each newspaper to be studied. From January 1, 2006 to October 4, 2009, the total editions of the four dailies published were 5,532. However, 10% of this population was studied, and this totalled 553 issues. Approximately, each of the four newspapers yielded 138 issues of the sample. A skip interval of 10 was adopted, which was obtained by dividing the population (5,532) by the sample size (553). Using the skip interval of 10, an issue was picked using the calendar for each year studied. To introduce randomness into the selection process, the starting point was often varied across the different months in each year. Straight news and feature articles on militancy were the units of analysis. Inter-coder reliability was 0.85 using Scott's pi. index. To compute frequencies, descriptive statistical analysis was done.

5. Results and Discussion

Objectivity is a highly contested notion in journalism. Our position is that pure objectivity is unattainable. As earlier pointed out, two criteria were used in the study to assess journalistic objectivity. They are "sources" and "balance". Both concepts were used as a moderated and modified version of objectivity in order to provide journalists with a set of usable, practical and realizable principle (Day, 2006). Table 1 and Fig. 1 present sources of reports on militancy while Table 2 displays data on balance.

From Table 1 (and Fig. 1), the FG/oil firms was the most utilized source of information. The Federal Government (FG) of Nigeria and oil firms were treated as one source, given that when it is about oil matters in Nigeria both entities are like Siamese twins, since they share a common interest, which is the uninterrupted flow of oil at all cost (Okonta & Douglas, 2001; Ibeanu, 2006; Owuga, 2009; Nwankpa, 2015a). It scored 27.74% compared to 22.50% for local residents/victims, the second most used source of information. Militants scored 14.52% behind other sources of information that polled 19.52%.

Table 1. Sources of reports on militancy

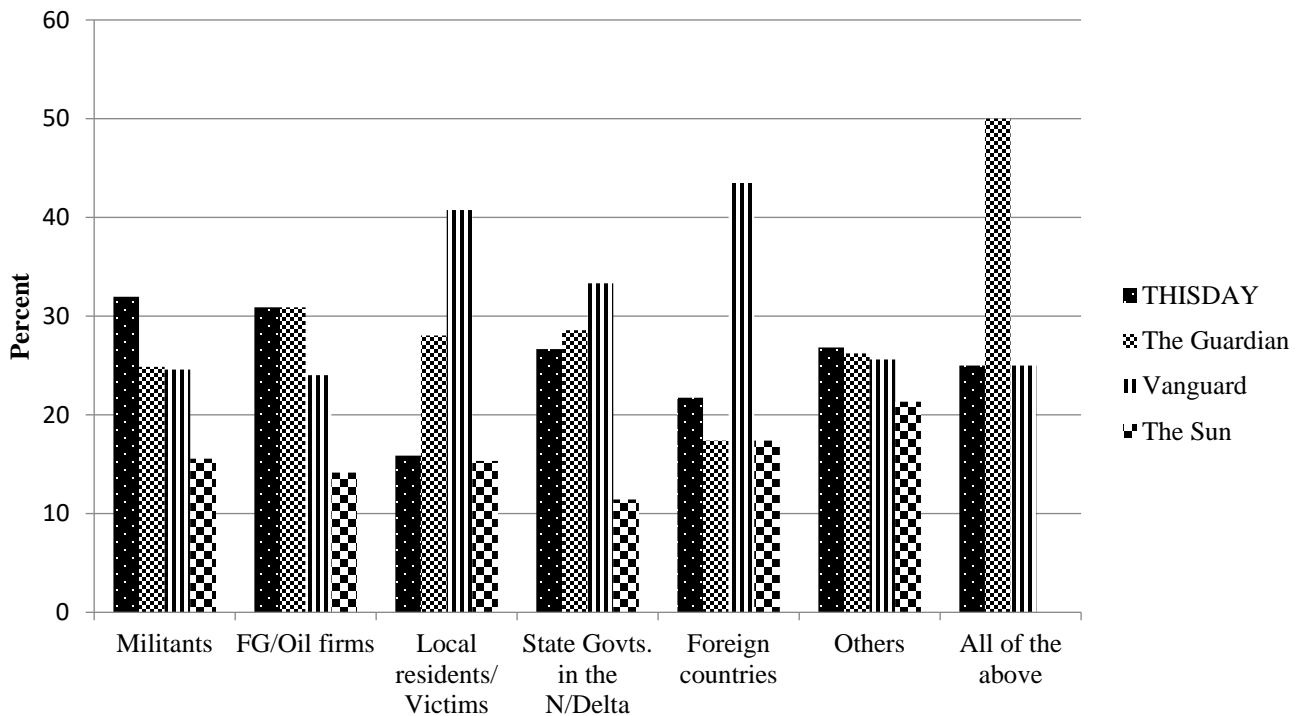| Newspaper	Militants	FG/Oil Firms	Local residents/ Victims	State Govts. in the Niger Delta	Foreign countries	Others	All of the above	Total
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
THISDAY	39(31.97)	72(30.90)	30 (15.87)	28 (26.67)	5 (21.74)	44(26.83)	1(25.00)	219(26.07)
The Guardian	34(24.87)	72(30.90)	53 (28.04)	30 (28.57)	4 (17.39)	43(26.22)	2(50.00)	238(28.33)
Vanguard	30(24.59)	56(24.03)	77 (40.74)	35 (33.33)	10(43.48)	42(25.61)	1(25.00)	251(29.88)
The Sun	19 (15.57)	33 (14.16)	29 (15.34)	12 (11.43)	4 (17.39)	35 (21.34)	0(0.00)	132(15.71)
	122(14.52)	**233(27.74)**	**189(22.50)**	**105(12.50)**	**23 (2.74)**	**164(19.52)**	**4(0.48)**	**840(100)**

Fig. 1 Sources of reports on militancy

The *Vanguard* is remarkable in its choice of news sources. The paper relied most on local residents/victims (40.74%) while the other three dailies relied more on the FG/oil firms in their reportage. By giving more voice to those often-ignored elements in news reports, the *Vanguard* has allowed them greater opportunity to ventilate pent-up emotions that usually aggravate conflict. It can be concluded from the analysis that the *Vanguard*, which incorporated a broader spectrum of sources and used more reports from non-governmental sources, manifested the greatest degree of journalistic objectivity in its coverage.

In the study, there are two major visible actors in the conflict: the FG and oil firms on one side and militants on the other. The FG/oil firms, which have enjoyed a long history of cosy alliance (Okonta & Douglas, 2001) had more representation (27.74%) in the news than militants (14.52%). It would be an illusion to expect equal representation of government and militants in all stories. First is the issue of accessibility. The militants operated from the creeks and swamps and the thick Mangrove Forests in the Niger Delta, hence they were not as accessible as government sources, for instance, the police public relations officer (PPRO), and the military spokesperson.

The most common form of communication between reporters and militants uncovered in the study was by e-mail messages and telephone calls originated by the militants' spokespersons, and the most prominent was one Gbomo Jomo of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). Militants chose reporters and media houses to send e-mail to or call on telephone. They also chose journalists to

allow a guided tour of their secret camps (Peel, 2010). Physical contacts between militants and reporters were very rare and limited. Given this circumstance, it is unrealistic to expect equal representation of the government and Niger Delta militants in reports on the conflict. Other works on conflict coverage (Goretti, 2007, IMS et al., 2009) have also established the prevalence of governmental sources in news stories.

An analysis of balance based on a fair representation of all sides to the conflict in the news was also done. For example, in a story on militancy were all sides of the story told by incorporating the views (as much as possible) of the various parties involved in the conflict? Table 2 indicates that of the 576 stories published in the four elite dailies, more than two-third were balanced.

Table 2. Balance of Stories

Newspaper	Balanced	Unbalanced	Total
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
THISDAY	107 (27.30)	52 (28.26)	159 (26.93)
The Guardian	100 (25.51)	46 (25.00)	146 (25.35)
Vanguard	120 (30.61)	51 (27.72)	171 (29.69)
The Sun	65 (16.58)	35 (19.02)	100 (17.36)
	392 (68.06)	**184 (31.94)**	**576 (100)**

The percentage score of balanced to unbalanced stories is 68.06% to 31.94%, an indication that the coverage is fair, balanced, and responsible to a very high degree. By presenting a balanced coverage, the newspapers have helped in setting the right agenda and mediating in the conflict. This may have contributed in some degree to the resolution of militancy.

The present result tallies with the results of Ikpe (2000) and Igboeli (2006) but varies from what was reported in Iwokwagh (2006). Iwokwagh's result on newspaper coverage of the 2001 Tiv-Jukun crisis in Nigeria shows that it was "sensational, misleading, inflammatory, inciting, half-truths and inaccurate" (p. 172).

In sum, all the four dailies used varied sources in their reports and printed a balanced account of the conflict, an indication that they were more on the side of journalistic objectivity. By using varied sources, they provided a platform for the feuding camps to communicate with each other, thus enhancing conflict resolution. It can be concluded that the level of journalistic objectivity displayed by the newspapers in their reports on militancy was significant.

6. Conclusion

The issue of journalistic objectivity will continue to attract the attention of journalism scholars, journalists and society. Irrespective of one's opinion, journalistic objectivity, which determines credibility of news reports, is of great value in conflict resolution. And journalists must continue to watch what role they play in their reporting of conflicts. Accusation of biased reporting puts media credibility in doubt. And it has severe implications for conflict resolution. Peace efforts can be hindered and journalists can become targets of reprisals (IMS, 2006).

Results of the present study further validates an earlier readership-based survey which adjudged Nigerian newspaper coverage of militancy as satisfactory (Nwankpa & Didiugwu, 2018). As the present study has demonstrated, the four elite dailies, by their responsible reporting, have helped in mediating in the conflict and thus contributed in some degree to the resolution of the hydra-headed problem of militancy in Nigeria's Niger Delta between 2006 and 2009.

References

[1] Aaron, K.K. and George, D. (Eds*.), Placebo as medicine: The poverty of development intervention and conflict resolution strategies in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.* Port Harcourt: Kemuela Publications.

[2] Amnesty International. (2009). Nigeria: Petroleum, pollution and poverty in the Niger Delta. London: Amnesty International Publications.

[3] Baran, S. J. and Davis, D. K. (2009). *Mass communication theory: Foundations, ferment, and future* (5th ed.). Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

[4] Barker, G. G. (2012). Cultural influences on the news: Portrayals of the Iraq War by Swedish and American media. *The International Communication Gazette* 74(1), 3-22.

[5] Brooks, B. S., Kennedy, G., Moen, D. R & Ranly, D. (2014). *News reporting and writing* (11th ed.). New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.

[6] Carlson, M. (2018). Automating judgment? Algorithmic judgment, news knowledge, and journalistic professionalism. *New Media & Society*, 20(5), 1755–1772. DOI: 10.1177/1461444817706684

[7] Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists, 1955.

[8] Cohen, M. (1963). *The press and foreign policy*. Princeton: Princeton University.

[9] Day, L. A. (2006). *Ethics in media communication* (5th ed.). Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

[10] DeFleur, M. L. (2010). *Mass communication theories: Explaining origins, processes, and effects*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

[11] Demeneck, B. (2009). *Objetividade jornalística: o debate contemporâneo do conceito* [master thesis, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina]. Repositório institucional UFSC.

[12] Dennis, E. E & Merrill, J. C. (2002). *Media debates: Great issues for the digital age* (3rd ed.). Canada: Wordsworth Group.

[13] Frey, E. (2017). Objectivity – An ideal or a misunderstanding? In E. Frey, M. Rhaman & H. El Bour (Eds.), *Negotiating journalism: Core values and cultural diversities* (pp. 41–53). Göteborg: Nordicom. Retrieved from www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1535783/FULLTEXT01.pdf

[14] Friend, C., Challenger D. & McAdams, K. C. (2000). *Contemporary editing.* Illinois: NTC/Contemporary Publishing Group.

[15] Gilboa, E. (2009). Media and conflict resolution: A framework for analysis. *Marquette Law Review* 93(1), 86-110.

[16] Goretti, L. N. (2007). Peace journalism applied: an assessment of media coverage of the conflict in Northern Uganda. *Conflict & Communication Online*, 6(2), 1-9.

[17] Guerra, J. (2008). *O percurso interpretativo na produção da notícia. Verdade e relevância como parâmetros de qualidade jornalística*. São Cristóvão: Editora da UFS; Aracaju: Fundação Oviêdo Teixeira.

[18] Hafez, K. (2002). Journalism ethics revisited: A comparison of ethics codes in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and Muslim Asia. *Political Communication* 19(2), 225-250.

[19] Hall, S. (1974). Media power: The double bind. *Journal of Communication*, 24(4), 19–26.

[20] Harrigan, J. T. (1993). *The editorial eye*. New York St. Martin's Press.

[21] Hasan, S. (2013). *Mass communication: Principles and concepts*. New Delhi: CBS Publishers and Distributors.

[22] Henriques, R. P. (2021). Understanding objectivity among Brazilian journalists: What you intend to be when you want to be objective. *Brazilian Journalism Research* 17(3): 792-831. DOI: 10.25200/BJR.v17n3.2021.1410

[23] Ibeanu, O. & Luckham, R. (2006). *Niger Delta political violence, governance and corporate responsibility in a petro-state*. Abuja: Centre for Democracy & Development (CDD).

[24] Ibeanu, O. (2008, February 20). Affluence and affliction: The Niger Delta as a critique of political science in Nigeria. An Inaugural Lecture of the University of Nigeria.

[25] Igboeli, C. (2006). Newspaper coverage of ethno-religious conflicts in Lagos and Osun States of Nigeria. *Mass Media Review*, 1(2), 197-213.

[26] Ikpe, E. H. (2000). The role of communication in the management of the 1993 conflict between the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Federal Government of Nigeria. PhD Dissertation, University of Uyo, Uyo, Nigeria.

[27] International Media Support (IMS), Amman Community Net, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies & Osservatorio di Pavia. (2009). A quantitative and qualitative analysis: Media coverage of the Dafur conflict in Sudanese and non-Sudanese media. *Report*. Denmark: IMS.

[28] International Media Support (IMS). (2006). Voices of war: Conflict and the role of the media. *Report*. Denmark: IMS.

[29] Iwokwagh, N. S. (2006). An appraisal of newspaper coverage of 2001 Tiv-Jukun Crisis. *Mass Media Review*, 1(2), 172-196.

[30] Jørndrup, H. (2016). News framing in a time of terror: A study of the media coverage of the Copenhagen shootings. *Nordicom Review* 37(special issue), 85-99.

[31] Kurtz, H. (2004, August 12). The post on WMDs: An inside story. *The Washington Post*, A01. http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wpdyn/A581272004Aug11?language=Printer

[32] Lang, K. & Lang, G. E. (1983). *The battle for public opinion: The president, the press, and the polls during Watergate*. New York: Columbia University Press.

[33] Lippmann, W. (1922). *Public opinion*. New York: Macmillan.

[34] Littlejohn, S. W. & Foss, K. A. (2008). *Theories of human communication* (9th ed.). Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

[35] Mabrook, R. (2021). Between journalist authorship and user agency: Exploring the concept of objectivity in VR journalism. *Journalism Studies*, 22(2), 209–224. DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2020.1813619

[36] Martine, T., & De Maeyer, J. (2018). Networks of reference: Rethinking objectivity theory in journalism. *Communication Theory*, 29(1), 1–23. DOI: 10.1093/ct/qty020

[37] Massaquoi, I. (2016). Ditch Objectivity and save journalism. In R. M'Bayo (Ed.), *State of the media report* (pp. 19–26). Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone. Retrieved from www.mrcgonline.org/media/ attachments/2018/12/08/state-of-the-media-2016.pdf#page=19

[38] McCombs, M. E. & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly,* 36:176-187.

[39] McNair, B. (2017). After Objectivity? Schudson's sociology of journalism in the era of post-factuality. *Journalism Studies*, 18(10), 1318–1333. DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2017.1347893

[40] Mencher, M. (1983). *Basic news writing*. USA: Wm.C Brown.

[41] Mencher, M. (1996). *Basic media writing* (5th ed.). Madison: Brown & Benchmark.

[42] National Broadcasting Commission. (2016). Nigerian Broadcasting Code (6th ed.).

[43]   *New York Times*. (2004, May 26). The times and Iraq. *New York Times,* p. A10.

[44]   Nigerian Conservation Foundation, WWF UK and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Commission on Environment, Economic and Social Policy, with Federal Ministry of Environment (Abuja). (2006, May). Niger Delta natural resources damage assessment and restoration project scoping report.

[45]   Nossek, H. (2008). "News media"-media events: Terrorist act as media events. *Communications: The European Journal of Communication Research* 33(3), 313-330.

[46]   Nwankpa, N. N. (2011). Nigerian newspaper coverage of militancy in the Niger Delta and readers' perception. PhD thesis, University of Uyo, Uyo, Nigeria.

[47]   Nwankpa, N. N. & Didiugwu, I. F. (2018). Readers' perception of newspaper coverage of militancy in the Niger Delta, Nigeria. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Review*, 4 (5) 18-31.

[48]   Nwankpa, N. N. & Onyekosor, A. I. (2015). Nigerian newspaper coverage of militancy in the Niger Delta. *New Media and Mass Communication*, 44, 51-63.

[49]   Nwankpa, N.N. (2015a). Taking to the gun as a last resort: The state, militancy, international oil companies and corporate social responsibility in the Niger Delta. *International Journal of Media, Security & Development,* 2(1) 106-113.

[50]   Nwankpa, N.N. (2015b). When emotions run high: An examination of journalistic objectivity in   conflict situations. In: O. O. Isola & M. Popoola (Eds.), *Journalism practice and terrorism in Nigeria: Issues, trends and techniques* (pp. 152-160). John Archers (Publishers) Limited: Ibadan, Nigeria.

[51]   Okonta, K & Douglas, O. (2001). *Where vultures feast: Fifty years of Shell in the Niger Delta*. Benin City: Environmental RightsAction/Friends of the Earth, Nigeria.

[52]   Owugah, L. (2009). The Niger Delta conflict: From litigation to revolutionary violence. *International Journal of African Culture, Politics and Development*, 4(2):13-22.

[53]   Peel, M. (2010). *A swamp full of dollars: Pipelines and paramilitaries at Nigeria's oil frontiers*. Ibadan: Bookcraft

[54]   Report of the Niger Delta Technical Committee (2008, November). Abuja, Nigeria.

[55]   Resenberry, J & Vicker, L. A. (2009). *Applied mass communication theory: A guide for media practitioners*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

[56]   Rossiter, C. & Lare, J. (1963). *The essential Lippmann: A political philosophy for liberal democracy*. New York: Random House.

[57]   Schudson, M. (2011). What's unusual about covering politics as unusual? In B. Zelizer & A. Stuart (Eds.), *Journalism after September 11*(pp. 44-54). New York: Routledge.

[58]   Schudson, M., & Anderson, C. (2009). Objectivity, professionalism, and truth seeking in journalism. In K Wahl-Jorgensen & T. Hanitzsch (Eds.), *The handbook of journalism studies* (pp. 108–121). Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781315167497

[59]   Severin, W. J & Tankard, Jr., J. W. (2001). *Communication theories: Origins, methods, and uses in the mass media* (5th ed.). New York: Addison Wesley Longman.

[60]   Sparks, G. G. (2002). *Mass media effects research*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Thomas Learning.

[61]   Sponholz, L. (2009). *Jornalismo, conhecimento e objetividade: além do espelho e das construções*. Florianópolis: Insular.

[62]   Unrepresented Nations and People's Organization (UNPO). (2008). Submission to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Universal Periodic Review: Nigeria Unrepresented Nations and People's Organization (UPR) Submission, Nigeria. Sept. 2008 (4th Session).

[63]   Vulliamy, Ed. (1993). This war has changed my life. *British Journalism Review*, 4 (2): 5.

[64]   *Waisbord, S. (2018).* Truth is what happens to news: On journalism, fake news, and post-truth*. Journalism Studies,* 19(13), 1866–1878. DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2018.1492881

[65]   Ward, S. (2019). *Disrupting journalism ethics*: *Radical change on the frontier of digital media*. London; New York: Routledge.

[66]   Westly, B. (1970). *News editing*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Publishers.

[67]   Zelizer, B. & Stuart, A. (2011). Introduction: When trauma shapes the news. In B. Zelizer & A. Stuart (Eds.), *Journalism after September 11*(pp. 1-31). New York: Routledge.