CHAPTER ELEVEN

COWERING THE VOICELESS MAJORITY: NIGERIA'S MEDIA FRAMING AND STAKEHOLDERS' REPRESENTATION ON THE ILORIN HIJAB CRISES

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Abstract
This research delves into the analysis of media portrayal surrounding the 2022 Ilorin hijab crisis in Nigeria, with a specific focus on how stakeholders are represented, and narratives are constructed across different news platforms. Utilizing a qualitative content analysis of news pieces sourced from Google News, complemented by quantitative data visualization, the study uncovers notable discrepancies in coverage between various media entities and biased framing of involved parties. Results suggest that conventional media channels offered more extensive reporting, with a predominant showcasing of Muslim viewpoints. Nonetheless, Christian perspectives prevailed in terms of vocal representation. The investigation exposes a tendency towards negative depiction of Muslim stakeholders and a more sympathetic portrayal of Christian participants. This study underscores the influential role of the media in shaping public perceptions of religious conflicts and stresses the importance of balanced and inclusive reporting to alleviate tensions and foster comprehension within Nigeria's intricate religious milieu.

Introduction

Nigeria's socio-political history has been marred by a consistent occurrence of religious crises and conflicts. The issues surrounding religious crises are intricate and multifaceted, encompassing various factors such as religious, political, economic, and social elements. Throughout the religious-oriented conflicts in Nigeria, the Nigerian press has been actively involved, often taking on a biased role. Scholars with a critical perspective view news as a constructed ideology aimed at upholding the interests of the powerful (Kellner & Durham, 2006; Chavez, 2009), wherein the newspaper itself is seen as a tool of class domination (Curran, cited in Aliagan, 2020). The portrayal of news related to religious crises unveils the press's hegemonic stance as an ideological weapon, positioning itself as a platform for competing parties engaged in sectarian religious disputes.

Nigeria is commonly regarded as a deeply religious country, with Islam and Christianity serving as dominant religions utilized by the elite in their struggle for socio-religious influence. Religious identities often take precedence over ethnic, regional, and national affiliations (Kukah, 1993; Falola, 1998). Since the restoration of democracy in 1999 following an extended period of military rule, there has been an escalation in competition among religious groups for control over resources, privileges, and power (Higazi, 2011). Various hypotheses have been proposed to elucidate the causes responsible for religious conflicts in Nigeria, including doctrinal discrepancies. The legitimate theological variances, beliefs, and religious commitments between Muslims and Christians frequently spark conflicts (Kukah, 1993; Omotosho, 2003). Additionally, the politicization of religion is highlighted as a factor, with political figures leveraging their religious affiliations for power negotiations (Falola, 1998; Kukah, 1993). The element of competition and economic disparity also plays a significant role, as the struggle for scarce resources fosters animosity that the elite exploit to stoke religious tensions (Basedau et al., 2011; Higazi, 2011).

In February 2021, a significant religious crisis unfolded in Ilorin, Kwara state, revolving around the controversy of female Muslim students wearing hijabs in government-funded schools. This incident provided a platform for the media to exhibit its influence as a tool of dominance, evident in its coverage of the clash between Muslim natives of Ilorin and Christian settlers. This study chose the hijab crisis of February 2022, even though there was an earlier occurrence in 2021 when the idea was first mooted. This study delves into the newspaper portrayal of the Ilorin hijab crisis of 2022 within the broader landscape of religious conflicts in Nigeria. It scrutinizes the media role in reporting on religious matters and fueling crises, illustrating that instead of being an impartial arbiter, the media occasionally aligns itself with one side of the conflict.

Some Major Religious Conflicts in Nigeria

The region commonly referred to as the "Middle Belt," situated between the northern and southern parts of Nigeria, is characterized by its rich ethnic and religious diversity. Historically, this area has been identified as the focal point of some of the most severe religious conflicts witnessed in the country. Particularly, the northern region of Nigeria, encompassing areas such as Jos, Kaduna, Bauchi, and Taraba, has been plagued by recurring incidents of sectarian violence as documented by scholars (Krause, 2011; Padiet, 2018). Noteworthy events include the Jos crises of 2001, 2008, and 2010, which resulted in significant loss of life and property. These conflicts often stemmed from tensions between Muslim ethnic groups like the Hausa-Fulani and Christian communities such as the Berom, revolving around issues of authority, land ownership, and the recognition of "indigenous" identities, as elucidated by Krause in 2011. Additionally, power struggles between followers of Islam and Christianity, coupled with allegations of blasphemy, triggered sectarian disturbances in Kaduna state during the years 2000, 2002, and 2011, as highlighted by Bodunrin's research in 2017.

A notable case exemplifying the extreme nature of religious violence is the emergence of the Boko Haram sect, initially a militant self-proclaimed jihadist organization operating in northeastern Nigeria, which subsequently evolved into a ruthless terrorist entity. The devastating impact of Boko Haram's terror activities is evidenced by the staggering death toll exceeding 30,000 individuals and the displacement of millions from their homes due to the group's relentless campaign of terror and insurgency against the Nigerian government since 2009, as extensively discussed by Campbell in 2021. Following the implementation of Sharia law in twelve states across northern Nigeria, the initial uproar witnessed in the early 2000s gradually subsided. Nevertheless, sporadic unrest, similar to the disturbances that erupted in Bauchi state in 2006 following a controversy over the dressing of a Christian woman, persists due to lingering apprehensions regarding the enforcement of Sharia laws, as noted by Falola's research in 1998. Furthermore, incidents related to conversions, blasphemy, and interfaith marriages have also fuelled tensions, exemplified by the 2006 riots in Jigawa state as reported by Ostein in 2009. The cumulative effect of religiously motivated violence has resulted in the loss of thousands of lives, and the displacement of entire communities, and posed significant challenges to the fragile democracy of Nigeria.

The Ilorin Hijab Crisis

The permission granted by the Kwara State government in February 2020 for female Muslim pupils to wear the hijab in government schools was directly identified as the primary catalyst for the hijab crisis that unfolded in Ilorin. The subsequent events that transpired in February 2021 when Muslim students sought to exercise their freedom to wear the hijab but faced opposition from Christian officials led to the eruption of a significant crisis. Specifically, at the Baptist Secondary School located in Surulere, Ilorin, violent altercations ensued between Muslim and Christian residents, resulting in the closure of

schools, destruction of property, and multiple individuals sustaining injuries. This contentious issue subsequently escalated to affects other parts of Kwara State and additional schools within the Ilorin region.

The unfolding of these events serves to underscore the profound significance that the hijab holds for Muslims as a religious symbol within society. Various Muslim organizations vehemently asserted that the government lacks the authority to prohibit Muslim girls from adorning the hijab in public educational institutions, citing it as an essential religious obligation (AbdulRaheem, 2021). Conversely, Christian organizations expressed dissent towards the regulation, contending that the wearing of the hijab posed a threat to Christian pupils and advocated for schools to maintain impartiality in such matters (Ojo, 2021). Furthermore, the economic dimension also comes into play in the discourse surrounding the hijab policy, with proponents arguing that allowing the headscarf would enhance educational access and opportunities for Muslim girls from low-income backgrounds (AbdulRaheem, 2021). However, critics of this perspective challenged the notion that wearing a hijab could lead to social exclusion within educational settings and the workforce (Ojo, 2021). The conflict in Ilorin serves as a poignant illustration of how local issues such as school dress codes, when amplified by political figures and media narratives as evidenced in the press, can be utilized as a tool for fostering discord, thereby fuelling broader religious identities and sectarian tensions (Falola, 1998).

The controversy surrounding the hijab has been a longstanding issue in Kwara state (Chinwokwu, 2021). Egbeyemi (2021) argued that a directive implemented in public schools during the 1970s prohibited female students from wearing the hijab, significantly impacting numerous Muslim girls attending state-run schools established by Christian missionaries. The ban on hijabs was perceived by many Muslim parents and religious leaders as a violation of their fundamental religious freedoms (Busari, 2021). Consequently, women's organizations within the Muslim community spearheaded advocacy efforts calling for the freedom to wear hijabs in public schools during the 2000s (Chinwokwu, 2021).

Key Events on the Crisis

Tensions rose when some schools refused to admit students wearing hijabs in January 2021, despite the new policy (*PM News*, 2021). On February 3, a violent crisis erupted at Baptist Secondary School in Surulere, Ilorin. Young Muslims and Christians battled with sticks and stones as weapons (*Vanguard*, 2021). Before the police came, several people had been injured. The school was closed for a spell. Over the next few weeks, similar clashes and tensions spread to other Ilorin institutions. On February 11, violence broke out at Victory College in Ilorin and C&S College Sabo-Oke (*Daily Post*, 2021). Christian parents and students organized protests against hijab.

On February 19, Muslim and Christian students gathered outside Cherubim and Seraphim College in Ilorin, resulting in a fierce conflict (*The Cable*, 2021). By the end of February, the Kwara state government had shuttered ten schools for a week due to violence (*Daily Trust*, 2021). The school closures harmed thousands of students. But, for a while, it did assist in relieving tensions.

The Ilorin hijab controversy involves several actors with varying agendas. The Governor Abdulrazaq administration justified the acceptance of hijabs in schools as defending religious freedom, while some saw it as the government confirming Muslim interests (Busari, 2021). The Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (MSSN) has fiercely lobbied for hijabs to be made obligatory for female Muslims. Many Muslim parents refuse to send their girls to school without wearing hijab (*Vanguard*, 2022). The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Christian parents opposed hijabs in schools, arguing that they harmed secularism. Some parents rallied to oppose the policy (Abdulraheem, 2021). The Emir of Ilorin released a statement endorsing hijabs in schools in accordance with Islamic principles, prompting criticism from certain Christian groups (*Daily Trust*, 2021).

The police and state administration emphasized law and order, although there were accusations of prejudice in how they handled confrontations (Abdulraheem, 2021).

The Ilorin hijab crisis had several causes. As a sign of asserting their respective religions, Christians and Muslims have come together around the hijab (Chinwokwu, 2021). Muslim organizations have argued that donning a hijab protects one's right to religious freedom. However, Christians argue that it jeopardizes the integrity of secular education (Busari, 2021). Diverse factions exploited the ambiguity created by the lack of explicit legislative endorsement or prohibition of hijabs in educational institutions (Egbeyemi, 2021). Religious leaders on both sides mobilized their followers around the hijab issue rather than easing tensions (Omilusi, 2021). Abdulraheem (2021) asserts that the state administration failed to successfully negotiate a settlement, include stakeholders, and implement the policy in a way that would avert conflict.

Media and Reporting of Religious Conflicts

In Nigeria, the media shapes religious debates in a contradictory and incredibly complex way. News organizations possess the ability to present their stories in a way that either defuses or heightens tensions. For example, the media have faced criticism for their biased reporting on Nigeria's religious crises. Studies reveal prejudices and overt and covert sectional interests in journalists' coverage of religious crises (Agbese, 2021; Ekwueme & Akpan, 2012). Among the newspapers' transgressions are their penchant for publishing contentious headlines and unsubstantiated allegations from unnamed sources (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018).

Television and radio have a significant impact on public opinion when it comes to religious issues. Because broadcast messages have an immediate and wide audience, prejudices can spread swiftly (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelhin, 2018). For example, panic and uncertainty were caused by fabricated allegations of fights during the Ilorin hijab issue. (Egbeyemi, 2021). Television broadcasts of controversial sermons by sectarian clerics have also contributed to the radicalization of young people (Ani & Ahmed, 2019). However, radio in particular enables the dissemination of peace messages in regional tongues. The Kaduna-based Peacebuilders Network used interactive radio programmes to settle religious disputes (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018). Radio stations like Nagarta Radio and Radio Nigeria Kaduna supported the perspectives of the corresponding Muslim and Christian populations despite conflicts (Desmond-Arias, 2021).

Nowadays, social media, along with radio, is the fastest way of spreading news of religious conflicts. According to Chiluwa and Ifukor (2015) and Egbeyemi (2021), social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp have made it easier for explosive conflict information to proliferate. For instance, social media platforms were used to spread false information during the violent occurrences in Kaduna and Ilorin (Egbeyemi, 2021). However, social media also offers fresh venues for promoting interfaith dialogue, organizing relief activities among affected communities, and stifling hate speech. The platforms are used by young activists to advance peacebuilding and accountability (Sampson, 2020).

The Ilorin hijab controversy made clear that, although the media occasionally adopts an ethnic or religious stance, it can also give victims a voice and provide an important, unbiased record of acts of religious violence. According to Ekwueme and Akpan (2012), the media monitors the government, security agencies, and places of worship during religious conflicts. It has been argued that misinformation that incites violence and exacerbates religious tensions can be spread by media sources, particularly the newspaper and social media, through biased and provocative reporting (Omotosho, 2003; Ekwueme & Akpan, 2012).

The intricate effects of media coverage on religious conflicts are clarified by several theories and notions. Perceptions are influenced by the way news is presented through

framing. The media commonly frames religious disputes with "us vs. them" religious dichotomies (Ekwueme & Akpan, 2012). Additionally, the media occasionally spreads misinformation and selective reporting that heightens tensions by presenting inaccurate or biased material. The debate around the Ilorin hijab dilemma grew more heated as rumours circulated on social media (Elombah, 2021). Media outlets' inflammatory speech has been known to actively instigate violence, as the 2006 Danish cartoon crisis showed (Ekwueme & Akpan, 2012).

Studies on media and religion

Several studies have been conducted on the intersection of media and religion in Nigeria. For example, Nwankwo (2024) explored the concept of "Mediatized Spirituality" by examining the intricate relationship between media and religion in present-day Nigeria. Through the utilization of mediatization theory, along with references to existing literature and personal observations, the author posited that religious engagement in Nigeria has increasingly become mediatized, offering a detached and portable spiritual encounter. The primary outcomes reveal that dominant religions in Nigeria, notably Christianity and Islam, have extensively utilized various media channels such as print, broadcast, digital platforms, and mobile devices to disseminate their teachings. This has led to the emergence of online religious practices and virtual spiritual occurrences. The study concluded that mediatized spirituality is now the prevailing norm in Nigeria, impacting both social unity and division. It suggested that stakeholders should promote responsible and balanced religious media content to mitigate instances of hate speech and extremist ideologies.

In a study by Demarest, Godefroidt, and Langer (2020) entitled "Understanding News Coverage of Religious-based Violence," an examination was conducted on how the Nigerian media portrayed the Boko Haram insurgency and highlighted the distinctions in coverage between Western and Nigerian media concerning Muslims in this context. The research methodology involved interviews with Nigerian journalists and a quantitative assessment of content comparing the reporting on Boko Haram in a Southern Nigerian newspaper (*The Guardian*) and a Northern one (*Daily Trust*). The main discoveries indicated that Nigerian newspapers generally refrained from linking the Boko Haram insurgency with Islam and the Muslim community, contrasting with the portrayal by Western media of violence associated with religion. Additionally, both Nigerian newspapers similarly presented news on Boko Haram, irrespective of their geographical location. The authors inferred that the political and religious demographics of a nation influence local news outlets to provide more unbiased coverage of religious conflicts through facilitating intergroup interactions, shaping newsroom dynamics, and distributing political authority. They proposed further investigations in different countries to examine the theoretical mechanisms connecting demography with media representations of religious violence.

Salawu (2013) conducted a study on the "Recall of Politics of Identity in the Narratives of the Nigerian Press", which delves into the selective recollection of past wrongdoings by various ethnic/religious factions in Nigeria as a propaganda strategy during periods of conflict. By applying the concept of selective retention and employing qualitative analysis of newspaper accounts from two ethno-religious crises, the research revealed that the Northern and Southern media outlets aligned themselves with their respective ethnic/religious affiliations, choosing to remember negative stereotypes and behaviours of rival groups to portray them negatively and rationalize acts of aggression. The author's ultimate assertion was that journalists need to approach conflict reporting with prudence and should receive training in peace journalism to highlight unity rather than discord. It was suggested that neutral, impartial, and equitable media coverage can contribute to the promotion of peace.

Abioje (2011) conducted a study entitled "A Critique of Commercialization of Religions in Nigeria via the Mass Media," which explored how African Traditional

Religion, Christianity, and Islam in Nigeria exploit mass media platforms such as print media, radio, and television for commercial ends. Employing a comparative approach involving participant observation, interviews, and analysis of written sources, Abioje observed that adherents of these three religions frequently exploit mass media channels for financial profit by commercializing religious products and services. The research also noted that some morally upright preachers, vocalists, and writers utilize mass media for positive purposes. Given the susceptibility to media manipulation, the author advised the public to be discerning of commercialized religious messages and instead rely more on their personal faith, prayer, and trust in a Divine Being. The study concluded that although the commercialization of religion through mass media has proven effective in Nigeria, the exposure of deceptive practices and unethical behaviours of merchants can ultimately impact their credibility negatively over time.

Salawu (2009) presented a paper titled "Media Narrative Construction of Ethno-religious Conflicts in Nigeria", which scrutinized the role of media in exacerbating ethno-religious tensions in Nigeria, with a focus on incidents such as riots instigated by newspaper reports on the Miss World pageant and the publication of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad. Through an analysis of Nigerian newspapers' portrayal and analysis of these events, the author demonstrated that the media can inadvertently contribute to conflict escalation incited by religious and community leaders, with news coverage often reflecting the biases of newspapers based on their ethnic affiliations. The paper concluded that the media must navigate the delicate balance between ethnic sentiments and national unity, as well as between press freedom and societal obligations. It was recommended that the media abstain from engaging in identity politics that may inflame social discord.

Lere's (2009) research, entitled "The Impact of Media Representation on Religious Conflicts in Nigeria: A Case Study of the Mohammed Cartoon Riots", delved into the influence wielded by the media in either fanning the flames or soothing the tensions surrounding religious issues in Nigeria. The study delved into the repercussions of media portrayal of religious disputes on the crises witnessed in Nigeria, with a specific focus on the Mohammed cartoon riots of 2005. Employing an examination of materials sourced from diverse Nigerian media platforms in conjunction with works by other researchers on religious crises, the study unearthed significant findings. These findings revealed that sensationalist media coverage of religious matters has served to exacerbate tensions, while concurrently highlighting the potential of the media to foster tolerance. The paper ultimately inferred that irresponsible media reporting has only served to deepen the existing religious fault lines, emphasizing the pivotal role of responsible reporting and the dissemination of accurate information in the process of conflict resolution. It went on to advocate for governmental oversight over media publications to curtail the spread of misinformation, the imposition of constraints on provocative content, and the initiation of efforts by religious entities and media outlets to champion interfaith comprehension.

Hackett's (2001) scholarly article, "Controlling or Influencing Religious Conflicts through the Nigerian Media", scrutinized the involvement of diverse media platforms in Nigeria in either exacerbating or alleviating interreligious tensions between adherents of Christianity and Islam. The article scrutinized the impact that both print and electronic media have had on religious conflicts dating back to the latter part of the 1970s. Employing an empirical approach, the author drew on historical analyses, personal insights garnered from extensive fieldwork in Nigeria over several decades, and the scholarly commentary of other experts in the field. The principal findings of the study suggest that imprudent media coverage has contributed to heightened tensions, with government regulation of the media also resulting in censorship practices that stifle open dialogue. In a broader sense, Hackett concluded that the deregulation and privatization of media have fostered an environment conducive to the proliferation of divisive religious discourse, although she notes that positive media coverage can catalyze promoting tolerance. The author advocated for further

research to unravel the intricate interplay between media establishments and religious conflicts.

Theoretical Framework

Framing theory delves into the presentation and framing of issues in the media and their impact on public discourse and perspectives. Utilizing the framing theory, this research scrutinized the coverage of the Ilorin hijab controversy in 2021 by Nigerian newspapers, radio and television, and online media platforms, arguing that the elite-centric and polarizing framing marginalized common voices and viewpoints.

Audiences' understanding of issues, as posited by the framing theory, is shaped by how they are presented or "framed" in the media (Entman, 1993). Frames, according to Entman (1993), define the narratives' content, reveal underlying causes, offer moral judgments, and advocate for solutions. Robust frames wield influence over policy debates and public perception. Through the use of victimization framing, demonization, and "us vs. them" narratives, media framing can escalate tensions in conflicts (Bratic & Schirch, 2007). Conversely, by employing humanizing, inclusive framing, and dispelling biases, it can mitigate conflicts. Framing theory critically assesses the media's depictions of conflicts and their societal impacts.

The clashes in Ilorin in February 2021 regarding the hijab issue in schools were predominantly depicted by Nigerian media outlets as a clash between Muslims and Christians (Adegoke, 2021; Egbeyemi, 2021). Headlines such as "Kwara Hijab Crisis has Exposed Danger of Harmony Between Christians and Muslims" (Daily Post, 2021) reinforced this religious rift. The discourse was narrowly framed as religious strife, largely disregarding the genuine concerns, perspectives of marginalized actors like parents and students, and reconciliation efforts. Coverage was dominated by figures from the political and religious elite, encompassing politicians, traditional leaders, and clergy, particularly in editorials that fueled discord (Chinwokwu, 2021).

This polarizing, elite-centric framing obscured the myriad factors contributing to the crisis, encompassing power struggles, identity politics, and educational rights (Egbeyemi, 2021). Biased narratives from publications with Christian or Muslim leanings supplanted nuanced perspectives. Provocative statements and unsubstantiated allegations escalated tensions (Chinwokwu, 2021). Such framing marginalized the majority of moderate voices advocating for compromise and reinforced simplistic dichotomies surrounding the hijab issue. There was a noticeable absence of solution-oriented framing (Egbeyemi, 2021).

Methodology

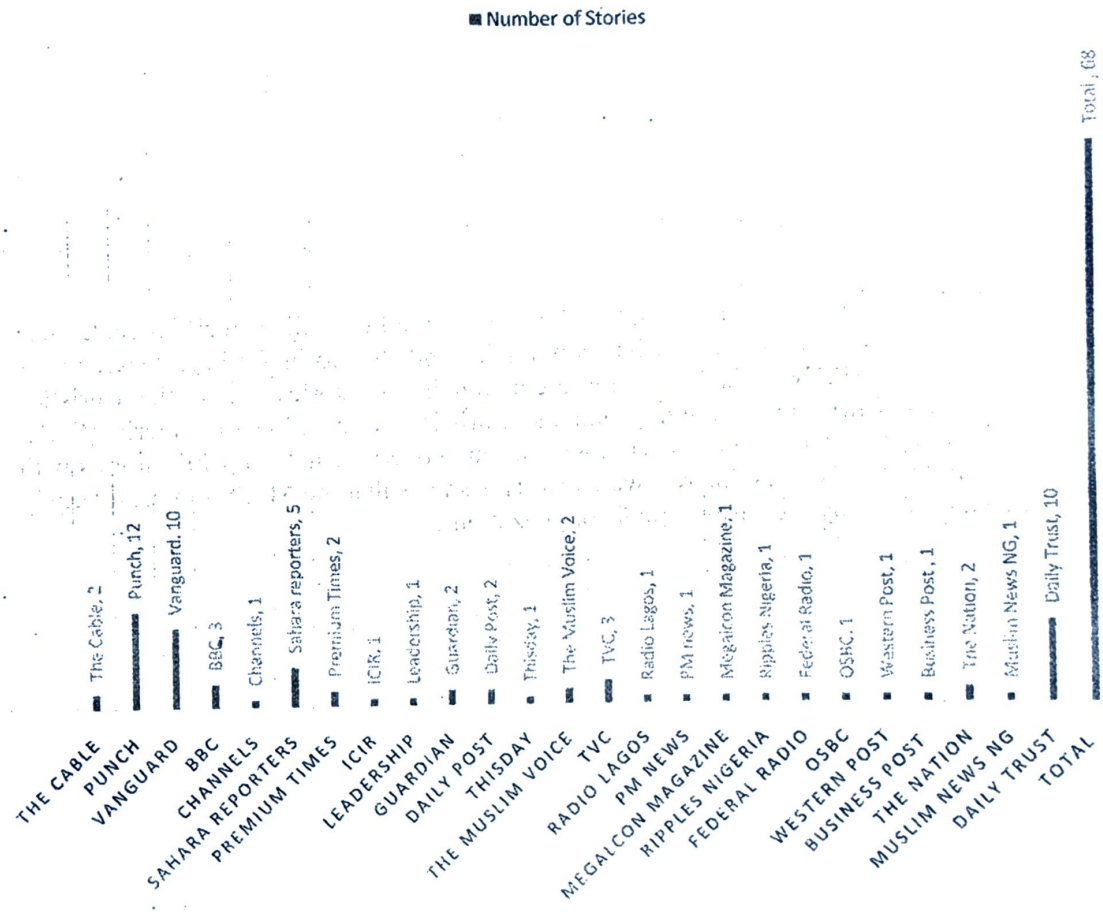
The methodology employed in this research encompassed a comprehensive approach to data collection and analysis aimed at enhancing comprehension of stakeholder representation in media coverage of the Ilorin Hijab crisis. Data collection involved utilizing Google News to search for the term "Ilorin Hijab Crisis," yielding a selection of relevant articles from diverse news outlets between February 2022 and July 2022. Subsequently, a manual qualitative content analysis was conducted to extract specific frames, frequencies, and other significant elements from these articles. This method involved the identification and categorization of various portrayals of stakeholders - such as the government, Muslims, and Christians—in the coverage. The collected data comprises the frequency of mentions for each stakeholder and the precise frames utilized to depict them.

The quantitative segment of the study utilized Microsoft Excel for the organization and examination of the acquired data. Excel facilitated data imputation, frequency analysis, and the generation of tables and visual representations to aid in the visualization of the results. These tables and charts provided a succinct summary of the data, highlighting the distribution of portrayals and the framing of stakeholders in news reports. By combining qualitative content analysis with quantitative data visualization, a comprehensive

exploration of the media's depiction of actors in the Ilorin Hijab dispute was achieved, yielding valuable insights into media representation and potential biases.

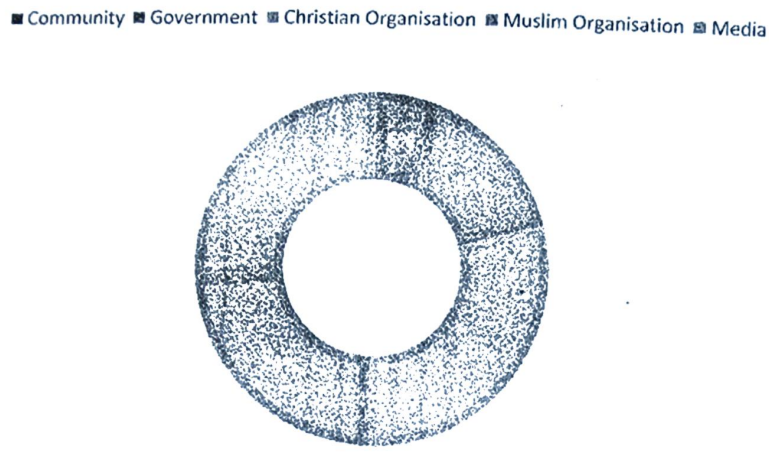
Findings

Chart 1: Number of Stories Published by each News Organization on the Ilorin Hijab Crisis

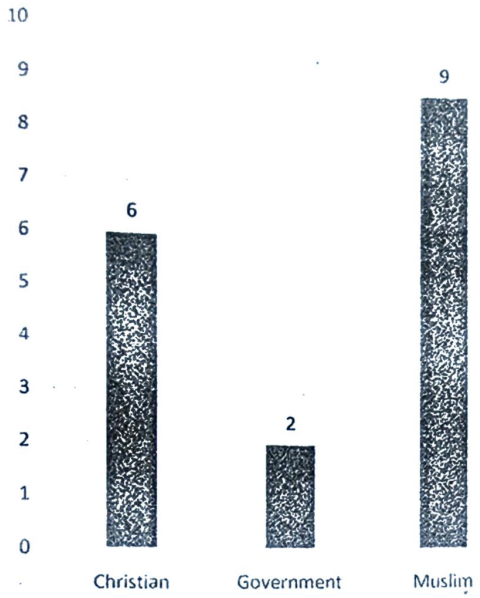


The data indicates that there is a significant variation in the number of stories published by different news organizations on the hijab crisis. In all, twenty-five news organizations were recorded as publishing stories on the Ilorin hijab crisis. Of this number, seven newspapers were recorded as publishing stories on the crisis. Six broadcast media (radio and television), including the BBC, aired stories on the crisis. Findings also revealed that 12 online and other media had stories on the crisis. Generally, 52% of the media that reported the crisis fall under the traditional media type. In all, 68 stories were recorded by all the media combined. Of these, Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust published the highest number of stories, 12, 10, and 10 respectively. The three newspapers polled 32 of the 68 stories, representing 47.05%. The next in terms of story contribution is Sahara Reporters which had 5 stories. News organizations with one story contribution are 13 (52%).

Table 2: Representation of the Voices of the stakeholders involved in the Ilorin Hijab Crisis in the news



A review of the treatment of the stakeholders' interest in the Ilorin hijab stories revealed that the Muslims represented by the Muslim community and the Ilorin Emirate Descendants Progressive Union (IEDPU) had 50% representation in the stories, while the Christian missionaries, the Christian community and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) recorded 29% representation in the stories, Kwara state government 15%, while stories with no attachment to stakeholders' interest were 6%. This shows that the Muslim interest largely dominated the stories by the various media organizations.

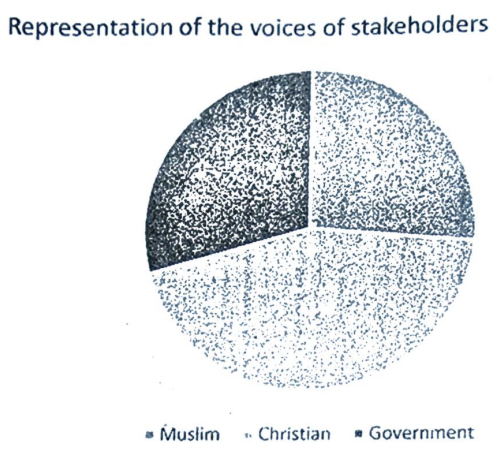


Type of Frame	Representative
Victim	Christian
Aggressive	Muslim
Intolerant	Muslim
Peaceful	Christian
Intimidator	Muslim
Grant aid-School	Christian
Public School	Muslim
Attacker	Muslim
Law Defaulter	Muslim
Defender	Christian
Instigator	Government
Biased	Government
Protester	Muslim
Barbarians	Christian
Fundamentalist	Muslim
Hoodlums	Muslim
Innocents	Christian

Table 4: Type of frame emanating from the stories on on the Ilorin hijab crisis

The representation of stakeholders in the news shows clear patterns. Christians were often projected as victims, peaceful, defenders, or innocent. Muslims, on the other hand, were predominantly framed negatively as aggressors, intolerant, intimidators, attackers, law defaulters, protesters, fundamentalists, or hoodlums. The government was typically portrayed as instigator or biased. While the Christians described the schools in contention as grant-aided schools, the Muslims described them as public schools. Vanguard's headline "How Muslims attacked Christians, vandalised church in presence of security officials-Baptist" and Cable's "The governor is insensitive' — CAN blames Kwara govt for hijab crisis" are examples of the headlines that are partisan reporting of the media on the crisis.

Table 4: Representation of the voices of stakeholders in the Hijab crisis in Ilorin in the news



The stories with dominant Christian voices were 30, representing 44.11%. Those with dominant Muslim voices were 18, representing 26.47% while those stories with dominant government voices were 20, representing 29.41%.

Discussion of the findings

According to the data presented in Table 1, it can be inferred that traditional media placed greater emphasis on the coverage of the Ilorin Hijab crisis, while others opted to provide minimal attention to the issue. The extensive reporting by Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust may indicate a heightened level of interest or a perceived significance of the matter for their target audience. Considering the geographical location of Ilorin as a frontier emirate, it is considered a sphere of influence in the north, hence the story of the hijab crisis is considered a matter of public interest for readers of the Daily Trust, while readers of the Punch and Vanguard are also more likely to be interested in the hijab crisis because Ilorin is the only Yoruba speaking emirate and an average reader of this newspapers would consider Ilorin's linguistic affinity to the southwest as Conversely, media outlets that published fewer articles on the subject may either consider it less crucial for their readership or prioritize other editorial topics over this particular issue.

For the portrayal of stakeholder perspectives as shown in Table 2, the abundance of representations suggests that the media wields a considerable influence in molding the narrative surrounding the crisis. This observation implies that media entities are actively engaged in the processes of reporting, analyzing, and potentially shaping public opinion regarding unfolding events. Given the intermediary role that the media plays between the general public and the incidents being reported on, their choices in representing the various stakeholders' interests and emphasis hold substantial power in determining how the crisis is perceived by society at large. In this particular instance, the Muslim community and their supporters appeared to have greater representation. When it is considered that the government's position was similar to the Muslims' perspective, their position was strengthened.

Analysis of the framing techniques employed as indicated in Table 3 revealed a notable prevalence of frames that depicted Muslims, particularly in a negative light, signaling a potentially partisan representation that could impact public perceptions. Such framing strategies have the potential to perpetuate unfavorable stereotypes about the Muslim

community and escalate existing tensions between religious groups. This reflects the framing pattern reported by Egbeyemi (2021). Furthermore, the limited focus on government-related frames may indicate a lesser degree of scrutiny of their actions or overshadowing of their role by the dominant emphasis on religious entities.

The disproportionate representation of Christian viewpoints as reflected in Table 4 hints at a potential bias toward highlighting one community over another, thereby risking the creation of a narrative that lacks diversity and sidelines the perspectives of the Muslim population. This skewed balance in representation can construct a uni-dimensional narrative that fails to incorporate the viewpoints of all relevant stakeholders, consequently shaping public understanding of the crisis in a potentially misleading manner. The relatively high representation of the government indicates that while their actions are reported, the framing might not be as extensive or critical as that of religious groups.

Findings from this study are limited by the data produced by Google News. Some other mainstream media and online media platforms may not have been captured in the data generated. Subsequent studies may look at this dimension to enrich the findings on media framing of the Ilorin hijab crisis of 2022.

Conclusion

The examination of media framing in the 2022 Ilorin hijab crisis illustrates the noteworthy impact of Nigerian media on shaping narratives concerning religious conflicts. The results indicate a distinct discrepancy in coverage among various media channels, with conventional media offering more extensive coverage on the subject. The investigation reveals a intricate pattern of stakeholder portrayal, in which Muslim viewpoints received greater overall representation, yet Christian perspectives prevailed in direct quotations and declarations.

Furthermore, the study uncovers a troubling tendency in the depiction of stakeholders, where Muslims are frequently depicted negatively as instigators or intolerant, while Christians are often portrayed as victims or peaceable actors. This partial framing could potentially heighten tensions and perpetuate prevailing stereotypes within Nigerian society.

These results underscore the pivotal role of media in either escalating or alleviating religious conflicts. They emphasize the necessity for more impartial, nuanced, and responsible reporting that affords equitable representation to all stakeholders and refrains from using provocative language or oversimplifying intricate matters.

The study advocates for heightened awareness among journalists and media entities regarding the repercussions of their framing choices on public perception and intercommunal relations. It also stresses the significance of endorsing diverse viewpoints and perspectives in media coverage of religious topics to cultivate enhanced comprehension and dialogue among distinct faith communities in Nigeria.

Subsequent research endeavors could elaborate on this analysis by exploring a wider array of media outlets, encompassing social media platforms, and by engaging in discussions with journalists and stakeholders to acquire deeper insights into the factors influencing media framing of religious conflicts in Nigeria.

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