

Nigerian Media Coverage of the Chibok Girls Kidnap: A Qualitative News Framing Analysis of the Nation Newspaper

Authors : Samuel O. Oduyela

Abstract : Over the last ten years, many studies have examined the media coverage of terrorism across the world. Nevertheless, most of these studies have been inclined to the western narrative, more so in relation to the international media. This study departs from that partiality to explore the Nigerian press and its coverage of the Boko Haram. The study intends to illustrate how the Nigerian press has reported its homegrown terrorism within its borders. On 14 April 2014, the Shekau-led Boko Haram kidnapped over 200 female students from Chibok in the Borno State. This study analyses a structured sample of news stories, feature articles, editorial comments, and opinions from the Nation newspaper. The study examined the representation of the Chibok girls kidnaps by concentrating on four main viewpoints. The news framing of the Chibok girls' kidnap under Presidents Goodluck Jonathan (2014) and Mohammadu Buhari (2016-2018), the sourcing model present in the news reporting of the kidnap and the challenges Nation reporters face in reporting Boko Haram. The study adopted the use of qualitative news framing analysis to provide further insights into significant developments established from the examination of news contents. The study found that the news reportage mainly focused on the government response to Chibok girls kidnap, international press and Boko Haram. Boko Haram was also framed, as a political conspiracy, as prevailing, and as instilling fear. Political, and economic influence appeared to be a significant determinant of the reportage. The study found that the Nation newspaper's portrayal of the crisis under President Jonathan differed significantly from under President Buhari. While the newspaper framed the action of President Jonathan as lacklustre, dismissive, and confusing, it was less critical of President Buhari's government's handling of the crisis. The Nation newspaper failed to promote or explore non-violent approaches. News reports of the kidnap, thus, were presented mainly from a political and ethnoreligious perspective. The study also raised questions of what roles should journalists play in covering conflicts? Should they merely report comments on and interpret it, or should they be actors in the resolution or, more importantly, the prevention of conflicts? The study underlined the need for the independence of the media, more training for journalists to advance a more nuanced and conflict-sensitive news coverage in the Nigerian context.

Keywords : boko haram, chibok girls kidnap, conflict in nigeria, media framing

Conference Title : ICMCF 2020 : International Conference on Media, Communication and Film

Conference Location : Tokyo, Japan

Conference Dates : January 06-07, 2020