



NIGERIAN MEDIA NARRATIVES ON SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN PARTS OF THE NORTH

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Nigerian Media Narratives on Security and Human Rights in Parts of the North


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**A Publication of the Centre for Peace, Diplomatic and
Development Studies (CPDDS), University of Maiduguri,
Maiduguri, Nigeria**

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Published in 2021 by CPDDS, University of Maiduguri

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ISBN 978_35474_8_8

Typeset and Printed by Clear Impressions Ltd, Kano

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Narrative Practices of State Broadcast Media on Security and Human Rights in Kwara and Kogi States

Lambe Kayode Mustapha

Abstract

Nigeria currently faces existential security challenges across its landscape, ranging from insurgency to banditry, kidnapping and cultism, to name a few. Expectedly, the mass media in general and broadcast media in particular provide people with understanding of the ramifications of the security challenges and attendant human rights consequences by offering narratives that crystallise the circumstances for people within and outside the country. The belief that media storytelling is never value-free calls for the exploration of how stories on security threats and human rights are being sourced and framed. Using theoretical bases of Agenda-Building and Framing, this study explores the sources of, and perspectives being weaved into broadcast media narratives on cultism, kidnapping, and human rights in Kogi and Kwara states, in North Central Nigeria. Using phenomenological design and in-depth interview, the study gathered data from 17 broadcast media professionals working in news and programmes departments of government and privately-owned radio and television organisations. The key findings reveals divergent sources of news and differing framing across media, journalists' recognition of and attention to human rights of victims and suspects as well as journalists' understanding of mechanisms to enhance better coverage of security and human rights issues. The study thus recommends that holistic approaches be deployed to incorporate actions of critical stakeholders in addressing the myriad of challenges facing the two states in particular and the nation in general.

Keywords: Broadcast media narratives, Agenda-building, framing cultism, kidnapping, human rights

Introduction

Globally, the broadcast media command tremendous followership given their vast reach, ease of access and compatibility with a vast array of digital technologies that enables it to mirror society to large heterogeneous audience.

Since the broadcast media space appeals to majority of the people who, as a result of certain socio-economic disparities, cannot access other sophisticated and elitist media like newspapers, magazines and social media, they (radio and television) have become conduits of choice for government and other non-governmental entities for creating and disseminating narratives about issues of public interest.

Historically, Nigerian broadcast media was at the epicentre of political rivalry and other healthy competition during the nation's First Republic (Abubakar & Hassan, 2017; Kur & Nyekwere, 2015); instruments of power struggles between civil and authoritarian regimes (Uche, 1989); and great sources of diffusing a plethora of developmental agenda. Hence, broadcast media performance in the midst of overabundant security challenges bedevilling parts of Northern Nigeria and other parts of the country, should be explored to catalogue their roles and crystallise the need for appropriate professional and policy direction.

Undoubtedly, the broadcast media faces internal and external pressure and constraints in the discharge of their role. The political economic constraints defining the survivability of broadcast media, are for example, great impediments that are capable of limiting professionalism, ethical and responsible performance (Ciboh, 2004; Olayiwola, 1991). It is, however, sacerdotal to demand accountability from the broadcast media, particularly in terms of their coverage and reportage of critical issues that have potential for retrogressive conflictual situations that numerous crises in Northern Nigeria typifies. As a critical region with numerous positive and negative indicators (Kimenyi et al., 2014), the northern geopolitical region requires progressive rather than divisive interventions given its rainbow nature in terms of ethno-religious differentiations. While it is a truism that the entire stretch of today's Northern Nigeria, like its southern counterpart, is bedevilled, with episodic internal conflicts (Chinwokwu & Michael, 2019), media narratives of

these conflicts can escalate rather than mediate the conflicts, due in part to mutual suspicion that has created a frame of a monolithic Muslim cum Hausa-Fulani north in the mental file of a typical southern Nigerian (USAID, 2014). As a result, crises in Nigeria's Northern region usually cascades into reprisal actions in states of Southern Nigeria, thus creating a spiral of unending divisive violence.

Today, most if not all the states in Northern Nigeria are battling with one form of crisis or the other. From terrorism in the Northeast, to cattle rusting, kidnapping and banditry in the North West and farmer-herder conflicts, as well as cultism in the North Central; the security crises with grave developmental and human rights consequences seem to have become a constant and dominant challenge (Chinwokwu & Michael, 2019; USAID, 2014). The North Central, that is focus of attention in this study, has, for instance, played and still playing host to ethno-religious conflicts, particularly in Plateau and Nassarawa states, farmer-herder conflicts in Benue while Niger, Kwara and Kogi states have been respectively ravaged by banditry, kidnapping and cultism in recent times.

In all these, the media in general and broadcast media in particular, plays the role of providing intelligence and perhaps, oxygenating the conflicts by their reportorial approaches and methods (Ezemenaka, 2018). The reportage of kidnapping and cultism in Kwara and Kogi states in the broadcast media has not only been episodic, but it also seems to be coloured with dominant source narratives that are oftentimes over dependent on government sources. The state broadcast media, expectedly under the yolk of government control, hardly offer alternative discourses that can counter those of their paymaster's. The private ones on the other hand, seem to be enamoured with sensationalism and adversarial coverage, particularly in line with their survival mandate and the antagonistic posture of their owners to the government in power.

Beside mere depiction of the anatomy of kidnapping and cultist activities, broadcast media hardly offer in-depth explanation of the nature and consequences of these criminalities for different actors and the larger society, particularly in terms of human rights and development. This mode of reportage portends danger to the understanding of the ramifications of criminalities and thus, calls for a stakeholders' re-appraisal to take measures that could result into consensus journalism for good cause that is desperately needed to halt the challenges ravaging some states in parts of Northern Nigeria and by extension the entire nation. Therefore, this study explores narrative practices of broadcast media on security and human rights challenges in Kogi and Kwara states Nigeria. The specific objectives are to: examine sources of broadcast media news coverage of kidnapping and cultism in Kogi and Kwara states; investigate the frames used in broadcast media presentation of news on kidnapping and cultism in the states; assess human rights issues associated with broadcast media coverage of kidnapping and cultism in the states; investigate challenges facing journalists in the coverage of kidnapping and cultism; and identify mechanisms for better broadcast media coverage of kidnapping and cultism in the two selected states.

Agenda-Building and Framing

The media are generally credited with the power to set agenda for the public and policy makers (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Mustapha, Owolabi & Abubakar, 2018), while the sources of media agenda are of major concern to scholars. The question of who sets the media agenda has thus triggered the agenda-building paradigm (Mustapha & Wok, 2015). The main thesis of agenda-building theory is that the salient issues that dovetail into media agenda are derived from credible political and corporate elites (Fahmy, Wanta, Johnson & Zhang, 2011; Kiouisis, Park, Kim, & Go, 2013). Therefore, while agenda-setting function is seen as an awesome media power of telling what issue to think about and how to think about the issue

(McCombs, 2004; Mustapha et al., 2018), agenda-building establishes the power of media sources (Cheng, Golan & Kioussis, 2015). Consequently, most news on insecurity are usually sourced secondarily from victims, family members, eyewitnesses, security agents and government officials; agenda-building can provide an insight into sources of broadcast media narratives on cultism and kidnapping in Kogi and Kwara states.

Moreover, the media goes beyond providing cognition about issues but offers mechanisms for comprehending the issues through interpretative perspective. Thus, framing theory helps explain how people understand insecurity reportage as a consequence of frames adopted in news packaging. Framing theory argues that the media, through selection, exclusion and emphasis, could alter the meaning of news by the audience (Baran & Davis, 2012; Entman, 1993). Understanding the perspectives woven into news by journalists covering cultism and kidnapping in Kogi and Kwara states will be of immense value in establishing the interpretations ascribed to these criminal acts by the audience and, by extension, help in deciphering ethical and social responsibility stance of the journalists.

Media Reportage of Insecurity

Traditionally, the media is expected to bring issues and events in the society to the knowledge of the people who cannot experience many happenings in their domains directly. The reportage of event in the media is usually based on certain fundamentals, including proximity, prominence, consequence, oddity, among others (Stovall, 2015). It is also a common saying in the media that 'if it bleeds, it leads' (Brooks, Kennedy, Moen, & Ranly, 2002). This means that events with grave consequences have high probability of making it to the news realm.

Insecurity of any hue, including cultism and kidnapping, features prominently whenever they occur. In reporting these

cases of insecurity, the media system performs surveillance role of providing the people with intelligence to make informed decisions, including navigation in search of opportunities and possibilities. As a consequence, however, the media confer status on the perpetrators of heinous crime inadvertently. This seeming popularisation of terror bestows on the criminals the legitimacy they need to flourish (Baran & Davis, 2012). In addition, the scheme employed in reporting crime and conflicts, in terms of depth and emphasis, as well as perspectives has implications for understanding the issue that is reported. Hence, media reportage has the potential to escalate or de-escalate tensions usually associated with security challenges (Ezemenaka, 2018).

In reporting the news, the media seeks credibility for their content through the use of third party in the mode of authoritative source (DeFleur, 2010). While this approach to news packaging is time-honoured, evidence abounds that source of news could lead media to engage in propaganda on behalf of political and corporate elites (Coban, 2016; Oso, 2003). To understand the entire ramifications of ebb and flow of the narratives woven into media narratives, knowing the source is crucial.

Media, Insecurity, Human Rights and Development

In the coverage of insecurity, alongside other issues that are attracting media attention, media routines and logic demand inclusion and exclusion of certain facts (Abba et al., 2021). Besides limitation in terms of space and air time, the consideration of humans' limitation to grapple with a sea of issues in their external environment leads the media to narrow audience attention to certain aspect – what agenda-setting scholars describe as media function of imbuing people with what to think about and how to think about the issue (McCombs, 2004; Mustapha et al., 2018). In view of this, no media chronicling of any event can be holistic and comprehensive, particularly through the news genre.

While cultism and kidnapping has become a common security challenges for the North Central states of Kogi and Kwara, the coverage of these incidences have been episodic, superficial and oftentimes, monolithic in perspective. In most instances, the reportage from the broadcast media is usually propagandistic, reinforcing government narratives of being in control of the situation, doing everything to bring culprits to justice and assuaging people to keep up with their activities without fear of intimidation (Abba et al., 2021). On the contrary broadcast media platforms of private orientation sensationalise the crisis and castigate government for doing little to secure people, particularly when their ownership opposes the government in power.

While there are no fixed rules on the coverage and reportage of issues coming under media treatment, it smacks of irresponsible journalism for fundamental issues to be sacrificed at the altar of propagandistic and adversarial approach to crisis reporting. It is not uncommon to wait on foreign broadcast and other media outlets to raise significant consequences of many security-challenged situations in Nigeria. For instance, elaboration of consequences of crimes like cultism and kidnapping for human rights and development are mostly accessed in the foreign media content.

These deleterious consequences of criminalities need attention of the media, given their power to raise the salience of issues in public and policy agenda. It is also important for the public to be exposed to the inimical effects of kidnapping and cultism on development since pervasive acts of crime deter current and potential economic actors from any investments that are required for growth and development (Kimenyi et al., 2014). Similarly, the fear of being victims of crime discourages people from offering services in crime-prone regions (Williams, 2015). This has been reported as the cause of low productivity and investment in agriculture, which is the economic vertebrae of northern states of Nigeria (Kimenyi, et al., 2014). The fact

that majority of people in Kogi and Kwara are based in the rural areas makes it imperative for the broadcast media to help diffuse tensions that are attributable to the twin crime of cultism and kidnapping that are now finding safe havens in the states. Additionally, as teachers of the masses, broadcasters need to unite in ensuring the safety and security of the people because survival is an imperative for all.

Methodology

This study adopted phenomenology, a qualitative research approach, because the issues of concern are peculiarly problematic, but they are also multi-dimensional, which needs in-depth understanding. Specifically, Key Informant Interview (KII) method was adopted to elicit data on key constructs of the research like ownership influence, sources of news, frames for reporting cultism and kidnapping, and how to improve journalistic practice for the nation's peace and progress.

Participants were drawn from government-owned and private owned TV and radio stations in Kogi and Kwara states, with emphasis on those who report/cover crime and judiciary beats, where narratives on cultism and kidnapping are often sourced and/or confirmed. In all, 17 (15 male and 2 female) broadcast journalists participated in the study.

The informants' identities are kept anonymous and responses were reported without revealing their identities to guarantee confidentiality, privacy and ensure that no harm comes to the participants or their families. It is instructive to note that the subject of interests (i.e. kidnapping and cultism) are clandestine in nature and revealing the identities of the respondents in the research report can endanger and put them in harm's way.

The interview schedule, consisting of a few questions on the key constructs was used for data collection while relevant follow-up questions were explored for elaborate responses. Data gathered during the interview sessions were transcribed in Microsoft

Word and organised using NVivo version 10.0 to generate meaningful themes, sub-themes and sub sub-themes that provide understanding of the phenomenon.

Findings and Discussion:

This study assessed and probed narrative practices of state broadcast media on security and human rights in Kogi and Kwara states and data was collected from in-depth interviews with 17 broadcast journalists in the two states. The research questions were coded as the main themes. The questions in the interview guide, which elicited data from the key informants were coded as sub-themes. Subsequently, information from the responses of key informants, which provided understanding about narrative practices used in the coverage of security challenges and human rights consequences, became the sub sub-themes. The association between the main themes, sub-themes and sub sub-themes on story-telling techniques about kidnapping and cultism, prevalent in episodic security challenges, in Kogi and Kwara states are presented in figure 3 below:

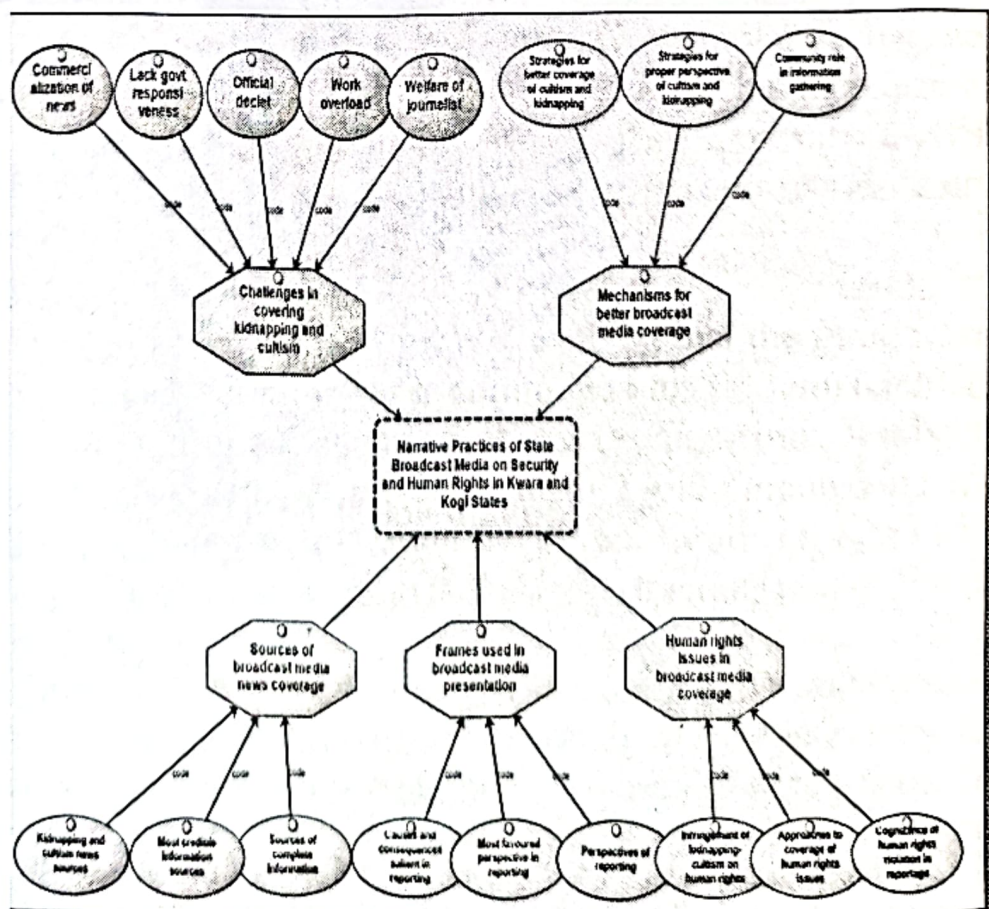


Figure 1: Broadcast media narrative practices on security and human rights in Kogi and Kwara(SOURCE: Field Data, 2021)

Sources of Broadcast Media News Coverage

The media relies on a plethora of sources to create narratives around any phenomenon and the first research question explored broadcast media professionals' sources of information about cultism and kidnapping in Kogi and Kwara states. The findings revealed that news on kidnapping and cultism are sourced through accidental occurrences, community sources, follow-up investigations, as well as the police and victims' family. Of these news sources, the consensus was that security agencies, particularly the police, offered most information about these security threats. A key informant said:

The first source of news on kidnapping and cultism comes/emanates from security agencies, especially the police. I said, especially the police because the police statutorily, that is constitutionally, are the ones that are saddled with the responsibility of maintaining internal security... (Informant HarmKWR).

The same views were expressed by DiamKWR who said that news of kidnapping and cultism are sourced from 'security personnel, by police or other security outfits'. Informant ChKGR also said 'when the case has been reported to the police, the police will now get the full information, which becomes the basis of our reportage'. Another means through which news on kidnapping and cultism are sourced is by following up on developments, which Informant AITKGR noted was based on the first report:

By following the trend between kidnapping and the victims, when they have demanded for ransom, when they are tracking them to be in touch with the family of the victims, when the victims are released...we also follow up to get story from the victims, how it happened, the module operandi. So majorly, that is how it happens because kidnapping and cultism are not daily conventional news routine that journalists would want to put his eyes on [sic] (Informant AITKGR).

Holding similar view, Informant GraceFMKGR said, 'when information is released on kidnapping, we most times follow up on the lead for more facts instead of relying on the police report'. This shows that there are variety of sources of news on cultism and kidnapping in Kogi and Kwara states. However, broadcast journalists chiefly rely on official sources, perhaps to meet the normal convention of sourcing news from authoritative avenues (Stovall, 2015).

Besides the primary sources of information, broadcast journalists need to know the credibility of information that will affect their narratives about cultism and kidnapping. On the sources, which offer the most credible information about kidnapping and cultism, the findings showed that the community, eyewitnesses, family of victims, multiple sources and security agencies are the key sources for broadcast media journalists. An informant, for example said:

The first most credible [sources] are the relations of the victims of kidnapping; the second is the police who have constitutional rights to deal with such civil issue. In the case of cultism, because cultism happens in tertiary institutions, information from the school might be the most credible (Informant AITKGR).

This perception was equally confirmed by Informant HarmKWR thus, 'the families of the victims or the victim, him or herself will'. Attesting further, KWTVR added that, '...the families of the victim, sometimes provide the most credible information'. Others who confirmed this are NTAKWR2 and NTAKWR3.

On the extent to which the sources of kidnapping and cultism offer complete information about the incidences, eyewitnesses, family of victims, police, and the community respectively were resounding. For instance, informant ChKGR notes thus, 'I want to believe that the eyewitnesses offer complete information'.

Similarly, informant UnilorinKWR said, 'reporters will go, connect with the source, may be unidentified persons, who know their faces and where they operate'.

Another finding is the claim on the family of victims which, according to NTAKWR2, is framed thus: 'information from the relative is always complete and more composed than those of the security agents, most of the time'. Similar perception about family of victims was expressed by Informant SobKWR thus: 'the family; if they are ready to talk'. These accounts indicate that agenda about narratives on cultism and kidnapping in Kogi and Kwara states are built by multiple sources. Experience and philosophy of individual medium may thus further determine the narratives that are prevalent on the security challenges.

Frames used in Broadcast Media Presentations

So many factors account for how journalists prepare their news which many audiences may not know. The most recurring frames in the reports of broadcast journalists' narratives on cultism and kidnapping incidences in Kogi and Kwara states are failures of government, society, or security; the agony of the family; corruption of security agents; and mutual mistrust. Most broadcast media journalists emphasised that agony of the victims' family is one of the most prominent perspectives as confirmed by Informant NTAKWR3 who said:

Well, we report mostly from the angle of the victim. We are all humans and no one wants their family or friends to be in that situation, so we input some empathy. Report is mostly from the side of the victim, rather than the failure of the government or security agency. Although, there are some other intervening factors, but reports are mostly from the angle of the victim (Informant NTAKWR3).

In relation to the perspectives used in reporting kidnapping and cultism, failure of government repeatedly appeared in the frames, as corroborated by Informant AITKGR thus:

On the point of the government, the enabling environment is not there for the people to do what they supposed to do. There is high rate of unemployment which is keeping a lot of young people out of job and they engage in crime (Informant AITKGR).

Similarly, Informant ChKGR noted that, 'we use the failure of the government, because we want to believe that, if the government has really worked on poverty in the community, there will be no kidnapping and armed banditry'.

However, the journalists differed along human interest perspectives that emphasises victims' agony; holistic approach, which considers systemic failure; government perspective that bothers on winning the war; and economic interest perspective with the belief that if there is no security, there will be no economy to cater to the needs of the citizens and the nation as a whole. Informant HarmKWR, for example holds that 'cultism and kidnapping are a product of the failure of government, security agencies and larger society'. A similar feeling was echoed by Informant ChKGR who said that his reportage of: 'criminalities like cultism and kidnapping shows a society in deep problem from endemic poverty, corruption, moral decadence and loss of values'.

In his view, Informant ChKWR claimed that the government frame of winning the war is common in his medium reportage of cultism and kidnapping cases. According to him, 'it is better to be on the side of government to avoid empowering and embolden those perpetrating the crime. Informant KWTVR1 also offered that 'pro-government gains traction' in his medium because 'he who pays the piper, dictates the tune', he emphasised.

Broadcast reporters in Kogi and Kwara states seemed to consider unemployment, corruption, lack of consequence,

family problems, among others as salient causes of cultism and kidnapping in their stories. For instance, Informant RadNigKGR said that in his reportage of criminalities, he documented how 'one of the causes of kidnappings is poverty. People want to make money, people are hungry, and they are dying of hunger and oppression from our leaders.' Other key informants (such as TVCKWR, NTAKGR2, ChKGR, HarmKWR), said that they frame government and parental failures as the causes of cultism and kidnapping in the states.

Human Rights Issues in Broadcast Media Coverage

The common human rights violations in Kwara and Kogi states according to the informants are media trials, extra-judicial activities and problems of fair and balanced reportage, particularly when they are given limited access to the suspects. Informant TVCKWR said that 'sometimes in an attempt to be the first to break the news, some media houses engage in media trials by condemning the suspects before being pronounced guilty by competent courts.' Similarly, HarKWR and AITKGR share the view that sensationalisation of crime reportage is common to reportage of cultism and kidnapping problems (See:).

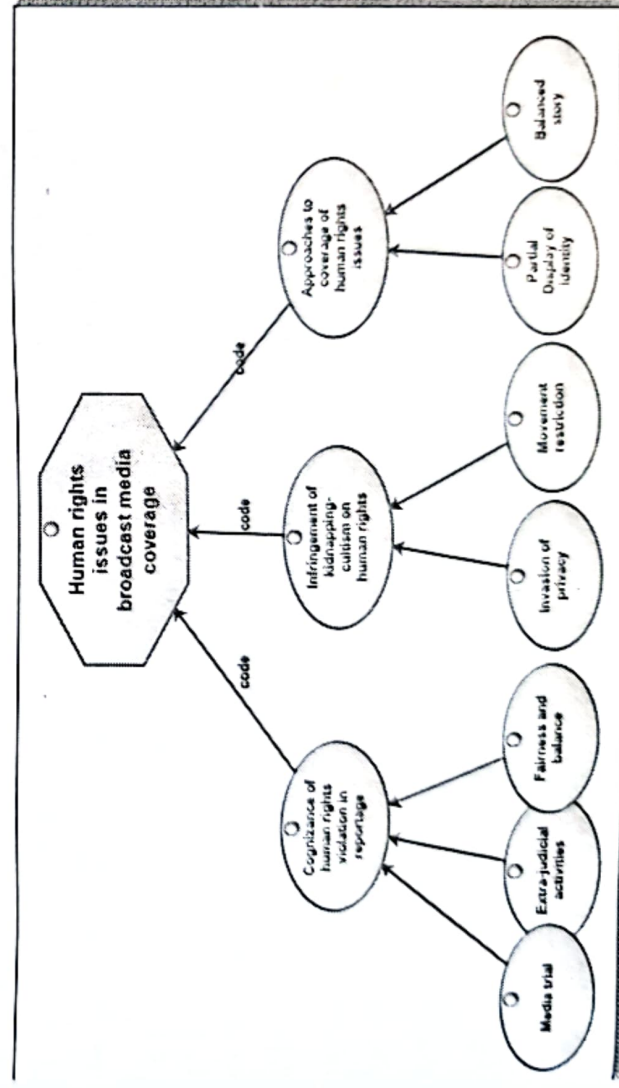


Figure 1: Human Rights Issues in Coverage of Cultism and Kidnapping in Kogi and Kwara states (SOURCE: Field Survey, 2021)

Some broadcast journalists believed that the broadcast media performance is below expectation in reporting extra-judicial treatment of suspects by the police who commonly brutalise suspects in cases of cultism and kidnapping. They emphasised that the human rights of suspects is as sacrosanct as those of the victims. According to Informant ChKWR, 'just like the victim is entitled to human rights, the culprit is also entitled to it. If he or she has not been found guilty... and even if found guilty, they are entitled to some rights according to the Constitution'.

Importantly, journalists also considered infringements on the rights of victims of cultism and kidnapping as important components of their narratives. Besides infringements on rights to life, property and restriction of movement, informants in the study felt that the post-traumatic disorder suffered by the victims could be eternal. For example, Informant KWTVR1 agreed to report on how cultism and kidnapping infringed on human rights by 'intimidating people, dispossessing them of their hard-earned properties; living and restricting freedom of biological functions'. Informant SobKWR also conceded to reporting how cultism and kidnapping 'denied people [the] freedom of movement, freedom of expression and denial of freedom to life'. ChKGR also said that 'cultism and kidnapping do not do any other thing except infringement on human rights; forcing someone to do what they do not want to do, holding them in captivity, brutalising them... [These] are all forms of infringements on human rights'.

On approaches towards providing narratives that take into cognizance the rights of the suspects, majority of the journalists held that they achieve this through partial disclosure and/or occasional concealment of the suspects, as well as striving to have their stories balanced by securing the suspects' side of the story. Regarding the parade of suspects in television coverage, many of the informants said that they blur the faces or display the rear views of the suspects to avoid criminalising them before pronouncements by courts of competent jurisdictions (DiamKWR, NTAKWR2, ChKWR, AITKGR). Additionally,

seeking to balance reportage is important to the informants. In the words of ChKWR, 'as a human being, we try to do what we call 'principle of objectivity and balance' and then you leave the audience, either your reader, viewer, or listener to judge. But we try as much as possible to put ourselves in that situation'. Similarly, AITKGR said that 'all you need to do as a journalist is to just look at the angle of whatever they said these people have done, try as much as possible to hear from the police, and when you hear from the police, you now try as much as possible to hear from the suspect. So, whatever you hear from the police and the suspect is what you report'.

Mechanisms for Enhanced Broadcast Media Coverage

This broadcast journalists use three main strategies: better perspective, better coverage and community roles in information gathering. The informants offered important clues on how cultism and kidnapping can be better engaged, to win the war holistically.

With regards to strategies for providing proper perspectives on reportage of cultism and kidnapping in Kogi and Kwara states, there was consensus around emphasis on the negative effects of these menaces; appeal to emotions; and injection of more programmes on crime in the content of broadcast media in the two selected states. Many of the informants concur on the need to increase the numbers of crime programmes because the nation is witnessing serious challenges that require all and sundry to play important roles for our survival as a nation. These findings are depicted in figure 5 thus:

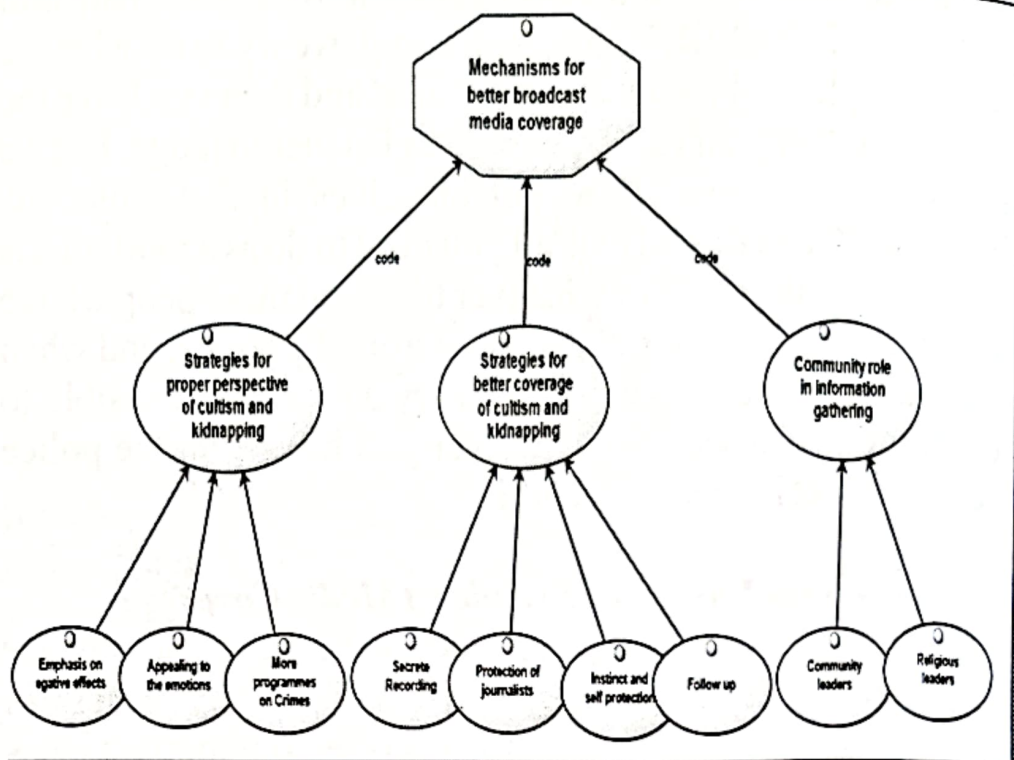


Figure 1: Mechanisms for better broadcast media coverage of cultism and kidnapping in Kogi and Kwara (SOURCE, Field Survey, 2021)

In view of the need to provide narratives that could diminish the tendencies that trigger culprits of cultism and kidnapping, informants suggested the need for secret recording, using various forms of gadgets like secret cameras, CCTV, drones, and so on. To them, cultism and kidnapping do not lend themselves to routine coverage of beat reporting and hence should be given the 'digital attention' they deserve. A number of the informants also harped on the need to protect journalists. To these informants, journalists with minimal, if any protection, in terms of insurance, personal protective equipment and security of lives cannot be daring in their coverage of crime, which is considered a deadly beat. The need for follow-up on stories was also raised. According to many informants, the episodic nature of crime reportage in Nigeria and delay in the delivery of justice to the victims limit the power of the journalists in putting the issues into proper perspectives and weaving the narratives that can attenuate the problems. Using crime story to corner audience patronage is common among media outlets that feed on sensational news to stay afloat. Hence, there is the need for

socially-responsible coverage of crime to enhance narratives that can help the media and society.

The informants also advocated on the need for community involvement in newsgathering on crime and in advocating for a peaceful society. According to one of the informants, the only way to stem the tides of criminality in society is community ownership of the campaign. There was concordance in the notion that if traditional and religious leaders condemn criminality and mobilise people to offer information to those who can bring justice to the perpetrators, society will be at peace. One informant said that 'in the past, when a person was noted as a threat to society, people revolted and put the person in check by various means (Informant HarmKWR). By being vigilant, the informants believed that the incidences of cultism and kidnapping will be ameliorated, if not totally curbed.

Challenges of Covering Cultism, Kidnapping and Human Rights

This was not part of the initial research design but the theme emerged from the data based on participants' responses. Five common challenges experienced by the informants are the role of news commercialisation, improper response by government, official deceptions, work overload and absence of welfare for journalists.

Many informants believed that commercialisation, which forces media organisations to go for news that offers great pecuniary returns is a major factor in giving lesser attention to crime reportage. The poor response of government, particularly security agencies, is also a major impediment. There are instances where incidences of crime demand swift response, yet security agencies give one excuse or the other for their slow responses. As a consequence, official deceit, for security reason, is common. There are times that government claim 'we are on top of the situation'; 'the culprits will be brought to book'; or 'we will leave no stone unturned'. However, records have shown that the

society gets the opposite of most of the claims, making journalists' narratives on crime mere propaganda.

Meanwhile, journalists' work overload was identified as another challenge. Many of the interviewed reporters are saddled with many responsibilities that require special attention. Besides covering crime and judiciary, they are also assigned to other important competing beats, which sometimes jeopardise their commitment. One informant offered that even if you tried to follow-up a crime case to the best of your ability, you might be sent on another errand the very day you should be in court to witness the proceedings (Informant ChKGR).

Additionally, the absence of welfare package was also identified as a great disincentive towards broadcast media commitment to crime reporting. Most of the informants said that they have never benefited from any training or supported in whatever form while covering crime beats. Some even submitted that their emoluments, which are their rights, are many times delayed. In order to survive, a lot of them have had to compromise professional conducts.

Conclusion

Based on the incessant crimes that have become a common features of virtually every region in Nigeria with varying typology and the role of journalists in providing appropriate narratives that can situate the criminal activities within the contexts of cause, symptoms and consequences, this study explored the sources of and perspectives for reporting incidences of cultism and kidnapping that is ravaging the North Central states of Kogi and Kwara.

The study revealed that journalists gathered news on cultism and kidnapping from many sources, considered various sources as credible at different levels in offering complete information, weaved different perspectives into the stories depending on experience and ownership influence; consider human rights

implications of their coverage on victims and suspects and provided experiences on challenges of reporting crime, as well as appropriate mechanisms for providing better coverage.

Policy Recommendations

In view of the findings, all critical stakeholders, from government to regulatory institutions, professional bodies, the media and civil society, individuals and groups across communities, among others must collectively see security threats as human rights challenges that could mar the development of the nation. Consequently, the following are recommended:

1. Government, with the support of the private sector should provide appropriate security infrastructure, digital security measures and employment opportunities to discourage involvement in criminalities.
2. The security apparatuses should be adequately funded, equipped and supported with incentives and comprehensive insurance and other related mechanisms to ensure total commitment to duty.
3. Broadcast media regulators like the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) should monitor broadcast content to ensure that media coverage promotes rather than violate human rights in compliance with extant broadcast regulatory laws.
4. Professional organisations should be strategic to ensure that the welfare of members, in terms of remuneration, insurance and provision of personal protective equipment, are adequately provided to engender quality, professional and ethically-sound broadcast media system in Nigeria.
5. News sources that feed journalists with information that are used to build narratives should be conscious of the agenda-building power while journalists should be alive to their responsibility of framing the issues from holistic perspectives that bring to the fore, the consequences and therapeutic intervention needed to curb the security threats that are worsening socio-economic conditions of Nigerians.
6. Community, religious or traditional leaders should be co-

opted into all interventions towards curbing crime, given their influence on the populace.

7. A mechanism should be created to ensure synergy between media professionals and security operatives in the fight against cultism, kidnapping and other security threats at all times.
8. Security Summits at national, regional, state and local government levels as well as community policing should be considered in evolving new security architecture for the country.

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