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Press Coverage of the Papiri Kidnapping Saga in Niger State, Nigeria - A Study of *Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust* Newspapers

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Abstract

This study investigates the coverage of the Papiri kidnapping incident by two prominent Nigerian national dailies, *Daily Trust* and *Daily Sun*. Aimed at finding out the dominant frame of the incident in the two selected newspapers, as well as the level of prominence given to the reportage, this study was anchored on the agenda-setting theory, and the social responsibility theory. The study adopted a quantitative content analysis approach, and examined the frequency, placement, framing, and sources of reports regarding the incident. A sample of 126 daily editions of the selected newspapers, were drawn for the study from a universe of 184 editions of the two newspapers, over a three-month study period. Data obtained from the survey were presented in simple frequency distribution tables and analysed. Preliminary analysis suggests that while both newspapers provided extensive, high-frequency coverage of the event, the reporting leaned heavily toward straight news, focusing on the informative and criminality frames aspects of the abduction and ransom demands rather than deep investigative reporting into the structural causes of the kidnapping. Again, results revealed that both newspapers accorded prominence to the reportage of the Papiri kidnapping incident. The study also notes potential differences in regional framing, with *Daily Trust* focusing heavily on insecurity in the North-West, and *Daily Sun* adopting a broader national security perspective. The findings indicate that the media prioritized reporting on the victims and perpetrators, leaving a gap in exploring the security measures needed to combat the trend.

Keywords: kidnapping, Daily Trust, Daily Sun, newspaper, coverage, Papiri, saga, Nigeria

Introduction

On November 21, 2025, gunmen kidnapped 315 persons (comprising 303 students and 12 teachers) from St. Mary's Catholic School, a boarding facility in Papiri village, Agwara Local Government Area, Niger State, Nigeria (Orjinmo, 2025; Shamin, 2025). The incident triggered a massive

security response and widespread concern over school safety in northern Nigeria. Dzirutwe & Ezeamalu (2025) posit that in response to the Papiri incident, the U.S. government considered sanctions and increased counterterrorism cooperation with Nigeria in response to this and other recurring school kidnappings.

According to Chason, Ombuor & Jamiu (2025), the Papiri incident was part of a broader, severe security crisis in Nigeria, often attributed to bandits, operating in the northwest and north-central regions, seeking ransom payments. Evidently, Nigeria has experienced an increase in incidents of insecurity. Issues around kidnapping, terrorism, communal and ethnic clashes, police violence/brutality, criminalities, militant groups, insurgencies, among other problems, have become rampant in Nigeria in the past two decades. The Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (NNBS 2022) corroborates the deteriorating experience of increased insecurity in Nigeria, pointing out that in the 2022 Global Power Peace Index, produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), Nigeria ranked 143 among 163 independent nations and territories, according to its level of peacefulness.

In a related development, the Lloyd's Register Foundation Safety Perception Index (SPI) has revealed that the deteriorating security situation in Nigeria has placed her at 75th position on the global safety perception index (Faminu, 2022). Produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), the SPI measures levels of worry, likelihood and experience of risk across five domains: food and water, violent crime, severe weather, mental health, and workplace safety (visionofhumanity.org, 2023). Safety Perception Index (SPI) 2023 showed that of the 121 countries assessed, Nigeria ranked 104 with a score of 0.367 (visionofhumanity.org, 2023).

Gavin (2023) states that Nigeria is one of the countries in the world with the highest security threat levels. According to Gavin (2023), terrorism is one of the security challenges in Nigeria, with its indicator standing at 8.23 points on a scale of zero (no impact) to 10 (highest impact). With several active militant groups that attack both civil and military targets, total deaths from terrorism in Nigeria have been on the increase since 2015. The Northern region is beset by waves of insurgency, previously from Boko Haram (BH), and more recently and vigorously from the Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP). In a related development, states within the South East and South South zones in the country experience the presence of vigilante and militia groups. Community clashes, kidnapping for ransom, are also on the increase in other parts of Nigeria.

Evaluating the role of the news media in the context of insecurity is critical. The news media are the major disseminators of information during periods of insecurity. Through their surveillance function, the media are responsible for surveying the society, gathering and disseminating information that are of significance to the public. Insecurity is of particular consideration in the media for its news value. The public is concerned about the safety and security of their environment and so when threats of insecurity arise, citizens readily turn to the media to keep them abreast of unfolding events. The heightened emotion of the public as a result of an ongoing security situation could be approached from a business perspective by the media. According to McWilliams and Nelson (2022, p. 94), "Bad news is good news", "if it bleeds, then it leads", are covert operational policy in several newsrooms because insecurity sells. Tumbler (2009, p. 6) argues that journalists place emphasis on violence and insecurity in order to produce and increase the value of "a commodity that is supposed to generate profit" (p. 396). Nevertheless, it is expected that the media's social responsibility to the public should compel a foremost commitment to minimise confusion and contribute to social order during insecurity situations (Daramola, 2005).

The media wield great influence on the audience in times of insecurity. The context, parties and shifting narratives of incidences of insecurity are brought closer to the public through the discursive forum the media create. Their selection of what becomes reported as news and framing of issues related to insecurity tend to shape public perception and opinion about the issues. Agenda set through media reporting can directly or indirectly determine the course a security situation would follow. The media, in essence, can play a role in engendering the mitigation and resolution of insecurity. Conversely, the media can also incite or escalate insecurity.

The tendency of the international media to complicate attempts to resolve insecurity has necessitated a growing recognition of the importance of the local media in shaping the course of insecurity within their immediate purview (Puddephatt, 2006). According to Gilboa (2009), investigating the functions and dysfunctions of the local media should be a research priority because the local media's coverage of the incidents of insecurity directly affects people engaged in the issue and its management. The coverage of incidents of insecurity by the Nigerian press is vital to what the perception and understanding of the Nigerian public would be about such issue. In view of this, it is important to analyse two Nigerian newspapers' (*Daily Sun and Daily Trust*) coverage of the incidents of Papiri Kidnapping saga in Nigeria from 25th November, 2025 to 24th February, 2026.

The main objective of the study is to analyse Nigerian newspaper coverage of the Papiri kidnapping saga, with focus on the coverage of the incidence by *Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust* newspapers. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To ascertain if *Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust* Newspapers published series of reports on the Papiri Kidnapping saga.
2. To find out the dominant frame of the newspaper reports on the Papiri Kidnapping saga as carried by the *Daily Sun* and the *Daily Trust*.
3. To find out the prominence given to the reportage of the Papiri kidnapping saga by *Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust*.
4. To determine the dominant direction of *Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust* newspapers in their reportage of the Papiri kidnapping saga.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Framing Theory and the Social Responsibility theory.

Framing Theory: The framing theory can be said to have derived its theoretical base from the precedent domain of the agenda-setting theory. The framing theory and the agenda-setting theory are generally being pitched by scholars, to borrow Oller-Alonso's (2014) phrasing, as either "competing theories or complementary ones". There is a school of thought that believes the framing theory should be nothing more than a subsection of the agenda-setting theory, while another school of thought takes the opposite stance that the framing theory deserves to stand as a distinct theory.

Historically, the concept of framing has its origin in cognitive psychology and anthropology before it was adopted in other disciplines, including communication (McQuail & Deuze, 2022). A foremost articulation of the concept of framing is attributed to the anthropologist, Gregory Bateson, who, in his book, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, published in 1972, defined a frame as "a spatial and temporal bounding of a set of interactive messages". Sequel to Bateson's conceptualisation, different definitions have been postulated by various scholars down the years, ranging from definitions with a general perspective to those with a specific perspective. To Goffman (1974), frames are cognitive structures that guide the

representation of events. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) defined a frame as "a central organising idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them. The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue" (p. 3). The multiple meanings given to "frames" and "framing", Gorp (2007) observes, have been responsible for the absence of an unequivocal conceptualisation, and due in part to the inconsistencies in conceptualisation and operationalisation, framing research has been characterised by theoretical and empirical vagueness (Scheufele, 1999).

In media framing theory, framing is viewed in the context of news production by the media and news interpretation by the audience (Gorp, 2007; Scheufele& Tewksbury, 2007; Scheufele, 1999); what de Vresse (2005, p. 51) refers to as an integrated process model of production, content and media use perspectives. The media framing theory is predicated on the thesis that the media, and more specifically journalists, give their own interpretations to news stories through the angle they choose to write or tell the news stories from; which in turn influences how the public understand, interpret and form opinions about social issues. D'Angelo (2002) encapsulates the core goals that have driven several empirical studies on news framing as follows:

> To identify thematic units called frames; to investigate antecedent conditions that produce frames; to examine how news frame activate, and interact with, an individual's prior knowledge to affect interpretation; recall of information, decision making, and evaluations; and to examine how news frames shapes social-level processes such as public opinion and policy issue debates (p. 873).

The media frame events or issues through selection and salience. To draw from Entman's (1993) assertion, the media engage in framing by selecting "certain facets of a perceived reality and making them more salient in such a way that endorses a specific problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or a treatment recommendation" (p. 52). This somewhat underscores the gate-keeping function of the media in that decision has to be taken by journalists and other media professionals on what to report from the flurry of information that jostle for attention daily. The media are not just constrained by what issues to report, but also by how to report such issues. The media framing theory suggests that the media, rather than present an issue in its raw multi-dimensional, all-inclusive structure, tend to streamline and spotlight an aspect or a few parts of the issue. In other words, the media uses the part of an issue to convey the whole. Further to this, the importance given certain facets of an

issue by the media tends to set or alter the narrative of public discourse. The direction of the public's interpretation of issues often transpires from how such issues are framed by the media. Indeed, the media's framing of news plays a significant role in the process "by which people develop a particular conceptualisation of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue" (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 104).

The relevance of the framing theory to this research study lies mainly in the assumption that the media set the agenda of issues that the public will consider to be important. The prominence the Nigerian press give to the coverage of the incidents of insecurity, which this study seeks to measure as part of its objective, would no doubt be a predictor to how serious the issue is considered by the Nigerian public. The salience (what aspects of an issue are majorly emphasised) the media attributes to an issue in their coverage of the incidents of insecurity would most likely shape the perception, understanding and opinion of the Nigerian public on the issue.

Social Responsibility Theory: The social responsibility theory shot into prominence around the period of the Second World War. Scholars specifically cite the year 1947, when the Hutchins Commission gave its report on the freedom and responsibility of the press, as the origin of the theory. The Hutchins Commission was set up in 1942 against the background of an American press widely criticised for its sensationalism, commercialism, political imbalance, and monopoly tendencies (McQuail, 2010), which increased the pressure for government regulation of the media (Baran & Davis, 2012). It was these criticisms and threatening possibility that led to the initiative to form an independent commission called Commission on Freedom of the Press, chaired by Robert Hutchins, then President of the Chicago University, and funded by Henry Luce, publisher of *Time* and *Life* magazines. Recommendations proffered by the Hutchins Commission from their inquiry would later form the tenets of the social responsibility theory.

The theory emphasises the need for the media to be self-regulated, but when the media fail to do this, compliance to standards must be enforced by certain social structures (Folarin, 1998). What this puts in perspective is the media's fundamental responsibility to discharge their duties within the boundaries of ethical standards. The media have to be objective, fair and accurate in their gathering and presentation of information. The theory, meanwhile, advocates that the media should not merely be concerned about objective reporting but also interpretative reporting. The goal of reporting, instead of being about the delivery of abundant information, then, becomes the need for news to be an agent of community formation

(Nordenstreng, 1997).

Dennis McQuail (1987), cited in Baran and Davis (2020), encapsulates the basic postulations of the social responsibility theory thus:

1. Media should accept and fulfil certain obligations to society.
2. These obligations are mainly to be met by setting high or professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity, and balance.
3. In accepting and applying these obligations, media should be self-regulating within the framework of law and established institutions.
4. The media should avoid whatever might lead to crime, violence, or civil disorder or give offence to minority groups.
5. The media as a whole should be pluralist and reflect the diversity of their society, giving access to various points of view and to rights of reply.
6. Society and the public have a right to expect high standards of performance, and intervention can be justified to secure the, or a, public good.
7. Journalists and media professionals should be accountable to a society as well as to employers and the market. (p. 137).

The postulation of the theory that requires the media to report information truthfully, objectively and accurately is germane to this study because the manner in which the Nigerian press present information about the incidents of insecurity in the country could determine the direction of the issue. While sensational and inaccurate reporting may escalate an insecurity situation to violent proportions, objective and balanced reporting by the press tend to act as a platform to commence resolution or management, not least because conflict is thereby risen to the plane of discussion, which, as Folarin (1998) states, is the chief duty of the media under the social responsibility theory.

Insecurity Conceptualized

Insecurity is a common feeling that nearly most people will experience at some point, and it can stem from numerous sources. Generally, it presents as a lack of confidence, anxiety, and uncertaint. By working to accurately identify and address insecurity, individuals can minimize its unwanted impact, find renewed security, stability, and a sense of worth that propels them towards happiness and improved well-being. Insecurity involves an overall sense of uncertainty or anxiety about your worth, abilities, skills,

and value as a person, conveying the message that you're at risk or in danger of something or someone. The negative impacts of insecurity could be physical, mental, or emotional. Without security, you can't accomplish full trust or function to your fullest potential. According to the Advanced Learners Dictionary, insecurity simply means: state of not being safe or protected.

In a broader or wider perspective, insecurity presupposes a state of general breakdown of law and order, or a situation where the citizens of a country are exposed to an uncontrollable danger whereby everyone lives in fear of whatever might happen the next moment. Insecurity, therefore, suggests a situation where a state of anarchy is unleashed on a general populace and human life becomes “nasty, brutish and short”, to borrow the language of Thomas Hobbes. Insecurity in Nigeria is not a new phenomenon.

Overview of Kidnapping in Nigeria

Armed banditry and kidnapping for ransom in Nigeria, particularly rampant in the Northwest and North-central regions, have become a major, daily security crisis, often eclipsing traditional crimes. Emerging from farmer-herder conflicts around 2011, banditry and kidnapping groups now engage in mass abduction, cattle rustling, and sexual violence, terrorizing rural communities and highways. Bandits specifically target rural communities, schools, and travellers, causing high fatalities, mass displacement (hundreds of thousands), and severe food insecurity. Kidnapping is a lucrative, organized crime, with victims held in forests until ransoms are paid. Reports indicate that between June 2011 and March 2020, Nigerian kidnappers extorted at least $18.34 million in confirmed ransom payments (ICIR, 2020). Major abductions include those of the 2014 Chibok girls, 2018 Dapchi girls, and numerous mass school kidnappings in 2021, such as the Kagara and Jangebe abductions.

The crisis, fueled by unemployed youth and criminals, is partially caused by poverty, illiteracy, and a desire for social empowerment and economic gain. While military operations are ongoing, the persistence of the menace has created a "captive population syndrome" in many areas, prompting calls for non-military, holistic approaches to end the violence. The security situation remains fragile, forcing many citizens to abandon their farms and homes due to the relentless attacks.

Kidnappings by jihadist terror group Boko Haram in Nigeria's northeast and northwest began in 2009 in concurrence with the conflicts in the region (The Cable, 2025). Abductions by Islamist terrorist Boko Haram

(The Guardian, 2025) are to further its agenda, recruit fighters, instil fear, gain more international popularity and force the government to negotiate with it for ransom which is one of the means of generating funds for its terrorist operation (Abubakar, 2025). Boko Haram have committed several mass kidnappings of students (Abubakar, 2025). Their 2014 kidnapping of 276 teenage girls from a secondary school in Chibok, Borno State, was covered extensively by the international media, making millions of people aware of that specific crime and of the insurgency (Abubakar, 2025). Boko Haram often demand that victims' families or the government pay them ransoms, or that the government release prisoners from their group. Boko Haram has brainwashed and forced some of the young people it has kidnapped into joining them and carrying out attacks, including suicide bombings. Boko Haram forced many young female victims to marry them.

Kidnapping for ransom on a commercial scale became rampant in Nigeria in 2011 when it was spread across all the 36 states and the country's capital, Abuja. In February 2021, Nigerian journalist Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani wrote for the *BBC News*, "The Nigerian government seems to have suggested that it can no longer be relied on to keep citizens safe." In 2020, it was reported that in the span of the decade covering 2011-2020, kidnappers have gotten at least $18.5 million in ransom payments. In 2022, that figure stood at $1.12 million while $387,179 was paid in 2023.

Review of Empirical Studies

Ehigiator (2023), in a study titled "*Newspaper Coverage of Kidnapping in Nigeria*", examined the extent of newspaper coverage of kidnapping in Nigeria. Content Analysis method was adopted to carefully collect data from the select newspaper stories published from September to December, 2022. A total of 71 editions of the *Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers were collated and analyzed. The objectives of the study were to examine the frequency; prominence, format and genre of the stories on kidnapping in the select newspapers so as to measure the extent the print media report kidnapping cases in Nigeria. Findings revealed that the two newspapers under study were fair enough in their coverage of stories on kidnapping. Straight news format took a major lead of the coverage. Findings also revealed that enough prominence were not given to the issue and that the select newspapers dwelt so much on attacks of kidnapping, neglecting security measures and government responses; only few of them were reported in the newspapers. The researcher recommended that media organizations, especially newspapers, should work closely with government in order to get detailed and credible information and that the print media should live up their role as the watchdog of the society by

engaging in ethical reporting in terms of investigative and interpretative journalism.

In the study of Abba, Abbasaniel, and Msughteranie (2021) on the "*Comparative Content Analysis of Press Coverage of Kidnapping Cases in Nigeria"*, they described kidnapping as a trend in the county noting that the country has been battling with diverse conflicts for more than two decades and the media are yet to report conflicts in a manner that will encourage the government and the governed to team together to tackle the problem, thereby implying that there is a possibility that the media frame news from a realists perspective. The study took a national scope in Nigeria and data were collected from selected Nigerian newspapers – the *Daily Trust* and *Guardian.* The content analysis method was adopted by the researchers to obtain data. The aim of the research was to determine the level of frequency and prominence given to kidnapping cases in *Daily Trust* and *Guardian* newspapers and to determine the direction of the kidnapping cases in the *Daily Trust* and *Guardian* newspapers from August to October, 2020. The findings of the study revealed that the two newspapers under investigation reported kidnapping cases more in form of news stories. From the findings also, the study discovered that the newspapers under investigation reported more stories on conflicts compare to kidnapping cases within the study period. The findings of the study revealed that the two papers were neutral in their investigative reporting of kidnapping cases. Considering the power of the media as the Fourth Estate of the Realm, reportage of issues should address societal problems, like kidnapping, beyond mere relaying of events.

Framing defines how the media can shape opinions by using specific framework to help their readers understand the situation (Cissel, 2012). Muobike (2017) illustrated how the media influence opinions in a study titled "*The Guardian* and *the Nation* Newspapers Framing of the Abduction of Chibok Girls". The media connect us to reality through a filter, selecting out parts of experience for special attention and closing off other aspects of experience, whether deliberately and systematically or not (Ndolo, 2006, p. 21), and the reality is placed into frame (Watson & Hill, 2006). The abduction of the Chibok Girls was widely reported by the media locally and internationally. According to the media, Nigerians took to social media to express their anger at the government's slow response to rescue the girls, and hundreds of Nigerians marched through Abuja to protest the government's indifference to the mass abduction. This paper therefore explored how and the extent to which the media framed the abduction of Chibok girls in a constructive manner and highlights the

urgent need to change established media practices (IAMCR, 2013).

According to a study by Nwammuo, Edegoh and Asemah (2016) on "*War against Kidnapping: Use of Indigenous Communication Systems by Vigilante Groups in Anambra State. Nigeria"*, armed robbery and kidnapping are the prominent security challenges faced by most developing countries and Nigeria is no exception. The youths seem to be behind all these vices and this could be attributed to the high rate of unemployment in the country. Measures on how to ensure security of lives and properties gave rise to the setting up of vigilante groups in most communities in the South Eastern part of the country in a bid to complement the efforts of the Nigerian Police Force and other security outfits. The youths are mainly recruited into vigilante groups to forestall kidnapping and other vices in these communities because they are the ones most likely to indulge in such crime. This study therefore was aimed at analysing the indigenous communication systems which vigilante groups in Anambra State use in the fight against kidnapping. Specifically, it focused on ascertaining the indigenous media forms vigilante groups use in discouraging youths from indulging in kidnapping in Anambra State.

Methodology

The research method adopted for this study was the content analysis method. Walizer and Wienir (1978), quoted in Wimmer and Dominick (2011, p. 156) defined content analysis "as any systematic procedure devised to examine the content of recorded information." Wimmer and Dominick (2011, p. 156) also cited Krippendorf (2004) as defining content analysis as "a research technique for making replicable and valid references from data to their context". The content analysis is therefore suitable for this study because the context of the paper requires the study of the manifest contents of published materials on the incidents of insecurity.

The period that will be covered by this study is three months (24th November, 2024 to 24th February, 2025), which amounted to 92 days. There were heightened incidents of insecurity within this period. Consequently, Nigerian newspapers reportage were awash with killings and destruction of properties associated with the incidents. The population of interest for the content analytical study was 184 daily editions of the two selected newspapers - *Daily Sun and Daily Trust* (92 days multiplied by two newspapers) for the period. The two newspapers selected for this study will be the *Daily Sun and Daily Trust.* These newspapers were purposively selected based on nationwide coverage, distribution, audience

preference, and daily circulation figure of between 80,000 and 100,000 copies. The two selected newspapers were among the top ten newspapers in Nigeria based on daily circulation figure.

A sample size of 126 was determined for the study. To arrive at the sample size for the study, Taro Yamane's statistical formula was used, as shown below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{184}{1 + 184\,(0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{184}{1 + 184\,(0.0025)}$$

$$= \frac{184}{1 + 0.46}$$

$$= \frac{184}{1.46}$$

$$= 126$$

$$\simeq 126$$

The composite week sampling strategy will be used to select the 126 editions of the newspapers for this study. The composite week sampling method, according to Wimmer and Domimck (2011), guarantees the chances of equal opportunity of selecting all the days of the week from the weeks in a month. Full calendar of each of the two years was produced. Since we have two newspaper editions to select each month, we then start with Monday in November, 2024 for example, we pick Monday in February, Tuesday in March and so on. If we get to Friday, we return to Monday in the succeeding month. This process continues until each of the months produces three editions.

The research instrument used for the collection of data was the coding sheet**.** In this study, units of analysis will include news reports, features, columns, cartoons and editorials about the conflict between herders and farmers in Nigeria**.** The data collected from the study using the coding sheets, were presented in simple frequency distribution, tables. Each of the variables in the coding sheet was presented separately and analyzed afterwards. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse data collected. The F-test was used to test the research hypotheses and compare

the occurrence of variables of interest among the selected national newspapers as stated in the four (4) hypotheses that guided this study. Results from the test were used to determine the acceptance or rejection of each of the four hypotheses.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presents and analysed the data garnered from the content analysis of two daily national newspapers (*Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust*) on their coverage of the Papiri kidnapping incident in Nigeria. A sample of 126 editions of the two selected newspapers, over a three-month study period, was content-analysed. The data generated from this analysis were presented in simple frequency distribution tables as presented below.

Table 1: Total Editions of the two selected newspapers by months of publication

Months	Newspapers		Total
	Daily Sun	*Daily Trust*	
November	30	30	60
December	31	31	62
January	31	31	62
Total	92	92	184

Source: Content Analysis, 2026

The data in the above table revealed that each of the days in the week and month for the three-month study period was studied and analysed for each of the two selected national newspapers. The summation of these days gave rise to the population of the study because newspapers are daily and weekend publications. Therefore the number of days in a month is equivalent to the number of publications in a month.

Table 2 Genre (story pattern) of the Reportage of Crimes and Kidnapping

Genre (Story Pattern)	**Newspapers**		**Total**
	Daily Sun	***Daily Trust***	
News	36	44	80
Articles/Features	12	16	28
Letters/Opinions	10	12	22
Cartoons	3	4	7
Advertorials	1	2	3
TOTAL	**62**	**78**	**140**

Source: Content Analysis, 2026

The implication of the data above is a lack of in-depth reportage of crimes

and kidnapping incidents by the two selected Nigerian Newspapers. The coverage was merely informative in nature.

Table 3: Direction of the coverage of the incidents of crimes and kidnapping by the two selected Nigerian newspapers

Direction of Coverage	Newspapers		Total
	Daily Sun	*The Punch*	
Favourable	0	0	0
Neutral	18	12	30
Unfavourable	54	56	110
TOTAL	**72**	**68**	**140**

Source: Content Analysis, 2026

The data apparently represented unbiased and objective reportage of situation by the two newspapers.

Table 4: Placement of the stories on the 2025 Papiri Kidnapping incident by the two selected Nigerian newspapers.

Placement	Newspapers		Total
	Daily Sun	*Daily Trust*	
Front pages	44	42	86
Inside page	14	16	30
Outside/Back page	12	12	24
TOTAL	**70**	**70**	**140**

Source: Content Analysis, 2026

This implies that that the papers accorded importance to Papiri kidnapping incidents and perceived reporting it as one of its key responsibilities and obligations to the public (citizens).

Table 5: Journalism Frames on the Coverage of the Papiri kidnapping incident by the two selected Nigerian newspapers

Frame	Newspapers		Total
	Daily Sun	*The Punch*	
Human interest	10	12	22
Criminality Frame	13	15	28
Informative Frame	36	40	76
Political Interest Frame	7	7	14
TOTAL	**66**	**74**	**140**

Source: Content Analysis, 2026

The data above revealed the leaning of journalists on the issues of crimes and kidnapping as seen in the two selected national newspapers being studied. This is considered necessary because journalism frames, to a significant extent, determine audience perception of events. It is, also, a common fact that coverage of certain issues, such as crime or elections, should not be laden with subjective views. Therefore, the above table, with

54% and 20% of the editorial contents on the subject matter having informative frames and human-interest frames, respectively, implied a sufficient objective coverage.

Findings

Results from this study revealed that there is a significant relationship between the pattern of the coverage of incidents of crimes and kidnapping and the direction given to it by *Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust* newspapers. This result is consistent with the agenda-setting theory of the press, which is one of the theories that formed the foundation for the study. The result is an indication that publications on the subject matter of this project were sufficient to guide and direct the readers. This is so because, theoretically, salience is being given to an issue through positioning, framing, and schema. That is, if a news item is covered frequently and prominently, the audience will regard the issue as more important. Newspaper, no doubt, elevates an issue to prominence. By enhancing and remarkably uplifting the degree of the dangers of crimes and kidnapping in a number of ways, through larger headlines and/or more lead stories, the selected newspapers, to a very significant level, attached importance to the incidents.

The above findings align with the study by Nwaoboli, Asemah, & Ehigiator (2023), which examined the frequency; prominence, format and genre of the stories on kidnapping in the *Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers to measure the extent the print media report kidnapping cases in Nigeria. Findings of this study revealed that straight news format took a major lead of the coverage.

Our second finding revealed that prominence was given to the reportage on the Papiri kidnapping by the two selected newspapers. Again, this finding aligns with the study by Adekoya, Ifidon, and Chioma (2016), which examined "Newspaper Coverage of the Chibok Girls Abduction in North-East Nigeria." The study revealed that both newspapers gave prominence to the Chibok girls abduction in their coverage. Again, our second finding is in tandem with the study by Nwammuo, Edegoh and Asemah (2016), which examined the issue of "War against Kidnapping: Use of Indigenous Communication Systems by Vigilante Groups in Anambra State, Nigeria".

On the direction of reportage on incidents of crimes and kidnapping by *Daily Sun* and *Daily Trust*, findings revealed unfavourable reportage by the newspapers. This aligns with the study of Ekechukwu and Osaat (2021), which found out that kidnapping has the potential of creating

social tension, psychological trauma (mental and emotional problems), insecurity, untimely death and others in the society.

Conclusion

Against the foregoing summary, it is therefore concluded that newspapers' coverage of crimes and kidnapping is a statutory responsibility of the press in a democratic society. This is consistent with the surveillance and the correlations functions of the press. It is also consistent with the agenda-setting theory of the press. The agenda-setting theory and the surveillance-correlations functions are suitable explanations of the relationship between the press and politics, hence the term political communications. Against this backdrop, therefore, it is also concluded that newspapers are veritable channels for achieving the goals of checkmating crimes and kidnapping, because continuous coverage of the incidents will lead to necessary actions.

Recommendations

This study recommends as follows:

1. Newspapers should use their reportage on crimes and kidnapping to deepen the agenda setting theory.
2. Newspapers should use their reportage of crimes and kidnapping to facilitate the role of communication in crimes control.
3. The coverage of crimes and kidnapping by the selected Nigerian newspapers should be used to promote interface between the citizens, security agencies and the government.

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