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Depth and prominence of newspaper coverage and ethical framing of farmer-herder crises in Nasarawa and Benue states of Nigeria (2017-2021)

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This study, Depth and Prominence of Newspaper Coverage and Ethical Framing of Farmer-Herder Crises in Nasarawa and Benue States of Nigeria (2017-2021) looked at the frequency in which the select newspapers reported the crises between farmers and herders in the select Nigerian newspapers and how prominence was given to articles that escalated or de-escalated the crises. The study was anchored on the Resource Conflict Theory, Frustration-Aggression Theory, and the Social Responsibility Theory. This paper seeks to examine two objectives, among which are: to determine the frequency of newspaper reportage of farmer-herder crises in Nasarawa and Benue States, Examine the prominence and depth of of coverage of farmer-herder crises in the select states. Quantitative Research Design was adopted for the research and Content Analysis was used as a data collection method from published newspapers. A coding sheet was used for analysis as an instrument. The newspapers studied were Daily Trust, Vanguard, Leadership, and The Nation with a population of 7,300 editions for five years and the sample size was purposively determined at 451. The research result showed that 39% of the newspapers were exacerbating the crises, 37% were neither seeking solutions nor escalating the crises and 22% sought solutions to the crises through their reportage. 37% of the reportage of the selected newspapers did not seek solutions to the crises rather they were passive and this means that they were also contributing to the escalation of the crises. Therefore, 76% of the newspaper reportage escalated the crises. This implies that the newspapers were more concerned about sensational reports that escalated the crises rather than seeking solutions between farmers and herders in Nasarawa and Benue States.

Keywords: Depth and Prominence, Newspaper Coverage, Ethical Framing, Farmer-Herder Crises

Introduction

Background to the Study

Over the years, violent dispute between indigenous farmers and rival groups have caused the deaths and displacements thousand across Africa. Throughout the colonial era, crises between local farmers and herdsmen have occurred in several African countries, including Nigeria. The urgent necessity for livestock farmers to boost the productivity of their animal farming in the face of adversity has compelled the hunt for suitable pastures for cattle grazing. The Cattle Herders are one of the most geographically scattered and culturally varied groups of people, primarily residing in Nigeria, Sudan, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Chad and Cameroon.

While many Nigerians rely on agriculture for their livelihood, only a small percentage of the country's population benefits from the riches created by oil. This is because local farmers in many rural communities are making a lot of effort

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to boost the yield of food crops and agricultural products despite unfavorable weather conditions. Despite the country's reliance on oil as an elitist corporate enterprise and the mainstay of the economy, farming is a popular activity among Nigerians. It continues to play a significant part in the survival of many rural Nigerians, serving as a source of livelihood for many families in villages and cities and a large-scale profitable endeavour for others. The majority of food crops in the urban market today are the result of Nigerian rural communities' productive efforts.

The skirmishes between farmers and herders have persisted for years. Herdsmen have always invaded farmers' fields with their flocks, resulting in one form of strife or another. But in the past, there were communal ways of resolving conflicts, unlike what is obtainable in recent times, when most conflicts result in violent confrontations. Agande (2017) postulated that conflict is beneficial to human existence; however, violent confrontations should be avoided. This indicates that disputes can aid in the greater understanding of warring parties. They allow people to learn about their other countrymen's likes and dislikes. Conflicts between farmers and herders were not as prominent or as common in the 1980s as they are now. This is because most of these issues were settled earlier on and not allowed to escalate into full-fledged crises.

In the 1980s, most northern states had grazing routes. Herders graze along these paths without invading anyone's farmland. This helped to alleviate tensions between farmers and herders. Most of these grazing pathways, however, have been obliterated by urbanization and industrialization, leaving the herders with little or no choice but to graze their cattle on any leaf that appears to be green. Herdsmen's movement and consequent battles with farmers and host communities have increased insecurity in Nigeria in recent years, particularly in the North Central area and, by extension, throughout the country. The rivalry for available resources, particularly grazing areas, is the reason behind the confrontations.

The North Central states of Nasarawa and Benue are the worst hit of these crises between farmers and herders. Farmland has been destroyed, thousands of cattle have been rustled, houses worth millions of naira have been burnt to ashes and most importantly, thousands of people have been killed and maimed in their ancestral homes. Most public schools in the affected states have been converted to Internally Displaced Persons Camps to accommodate hundreds of thousands of people displaced from their ancestral homes. This has grave consequences on food security in the country because both states experiencing this, are the centre of crop production in the country.

The Invasion of killer herdsmen in communities across the middle belt in particular and other parts of the country has assumed a genocidal, ethnic cleansing scale. These attacks have left in their trail, mind-boggling massacres, devastation in our communities, and displacement of indigenous people in various IDP camps (Tauna, 2021). Nasarawa and Benue states which the study focused on, have had their fair share of Farmer-Herder Crises resulting in the displacement of thousands of rural dwellers and the deaths of many as a result of the struggle for limited land resources to graze and farm.

The southern part of Nasarawa state which shares a border with Benue state is largely an agrarian area with an abundance of green vegetation just like it is in its border state of Benue. This is largely due to the water-log nature of the areas which allows the cultivation of crops even during dry season. The vegetation around the Benue borders has continued to attract herdsmen from across the country especially in the far north to graze with their herds. The refusal of these farmers to avail their lands for grazing and the insistence of the herders to graze the land has resulted in perennial crises in both states.

The depth and prominence given to events determines the level of attention such report

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would get from relevant authorities. This research seeks to examine whether adequate depths and prominence was given to coverage of farmer-herder crises in Benue and Nasarawa States within the period under review.

Statement of the Problem

The placement of stories and frequency in which stories are reported on newspapers is essential to the attention such stories get.This research seeks to examine whether newspaper coverage of the crises helps to bring a solution, escalate it or were neautral and whether the newspapers were responsible or not the placement of the news stories.

Aim and Objectives

This research aims to investigate how newspaper coverage of farmer-herder crises in Nasarawa and Benue states escalate or de-escalate the crises. The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the frequency of newspaper reportage of farmer/herder crises in Nasarawa and Benue States.
2. Determine the prominence and depth of coverage of farmer/herder crises in Nigerian Newspapers in select states.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

i. What is the frequency of newspaper coverage of farmer/herder crises in Nasarawa and Benue States?

ii. What is the prominence and depth of coverage given to Farmer/herder Crises in the select Nigerian Newspapers?

Scope of Research

This study is restricted to newspaper coverage of farmer/herder crises in Nasarawa and Benue States between 2017 and 2021. This is because this period was the heat of the crises in both states. *Daily Trust*, *Leadership*, *The Nation*, and *Vanguard* newspapers were used as our source of secondary data because of the wide coverage that these media outlets gave to the crises and their national appeal.

Significance of Study

It is not gainsaid that farmer-herder crises have claimed many lives and impacted negatively on Nigeria's economy (Ofem & Inyang, 2014). This study becomes very vital because it will help newspaper publishing houses to reexamine their roles in the coverage of farmer-herders crises to reduce the reprisal effects of such reports for a stable and prosperous society. The government will find this research work useful as it will help it to re-assess its approach towards resolving these crises.

Theoretical Framework

This research is anchored on the Resource Conflict Theory, Frustration Aggression Theory, and Social Responsibility Theory. It used more than one theory because of many related issues, on the newspaper coverage of the incessant bloody crises between the Nomadic herdsmen and local farmers in Nigeria, and this cut across different dimensions and contexts, therefore, a single theory would not suffice for rigorous analysis.

Resource Conflicts Theory

According to Karl Marx's resource conflicts theory, conflicts between the parties involved typically arise when land resources are scarce, which is typically brought on by population growth, climate change, and the government's inefficient land tenure systems (Becca, 2015). Both sides typically have complaints as a result of these. Internal conflicts, however, always force society to create rules to control violent disputes. Laws and regulations that manage tension are examples of these standards.

The resource conflict theory is based on four assumptions: competition, structural inequality, revolution, and war. The federal and state governments have also developed a number of ways to deal with the ongoing bloody crises between local farmers and herdsmen, but poor

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implementation of their solutions will make violent conflicts over resources inevitable.

A primary critique of the resource conflict theory is that it fails to acknowledge the ways in which many social institutions, including as the family, education, politics, religion, and others, serve essential roles in society and can cooperate to establish equilibrium. We call this alternative perspective functionalism. For example, a functionalist would contend that more businesses are being compelled to implement anti-discrimination and anti-sexual harassment policies as more women join the workforce. According to this book, despite attempts by the government and other pertinent groups to put an end to the pogrom, the long-standing farmer/herder crises have persisted unabated. This is because there is a shortage of land for both crop producers and cattle herders due to urbanization and other pertinent considerations. The herder needs the land for cattle grazing just as much as the farmer does for growing crops. They violate one other's personal space in the process of accomplishing their objectives, which frequently leads to violent conflict.

Frustration Aggression Theory

Another significant idea that is pertinent to this investigation is the Frustration Aggression theory, which is referenced in Bello & Abdullahi (2021). In 1939, John Dollard, Leonard Doob, Neal Miller, Robert Sears, and Orval Mowers presented the theory. In 1941 and 1969, respectively, Neal Miller and Leonard Berkowitz added to it. According to the hypothesis, denying someone access to their objectives and aspirations might lead to hostility. According to the notion, frustration is a prerequisite for aggression and can result in conduct that is either aggressive or not.

According to Dollard et'al, aggression is "an act whose goal-response is an injury to an organism (or an organism surrogate)" and frustration is "a condition which exists when a goal-response suffers interference."

This theory applies to this work because both farmers and herders want total control of the scarce resources; land, and water. Nevertheless, these resources are under the control of either the farmers or the herders who denied the other the opportunity to access them. The denial eventually prompted frustration which results in aggression. These aggressions could be seen in the wanton destruction of lives and properties of farmers and herders in Nasarawa and Benue states.

Social Responsibility Theory

This theory was developed in the United States of America in the middle of the 20th century. The libertarian press theory is advanced by it. The American Commission on the "Freedom of the Press" was the source of this media ideology. According to this notion, social responsibility and independence can coexist. Since it is assumed that the media plays a significant role in society, particularly in democratic politics, they ought to be required to carry out these duties.

They should also offer a platform for a range of opinions. The established norm for media work should be adhered to. Media ownership and control should be viewed as a form of stewardship, meaning that the public interest should be served and advanced. Thus, everybody with something to say should be able to express themselves through the press. More significant than press freedom is the press's societal responsibility. Community viewpoints, certain social organizations (through their code of ethics), and media/press councils are in charge of controlling the press in this instance. Here, media ownership is private, but government intervention to guarantee public service is a possibility.

The main principles are:

The media should acknowledge and carry out its societal responsibilities. Setting high professional standards in formativeness, truth, correctness, objectivity, and balance will help fulfill these responsibilities. When doing their tasks, the media should exercise self-regulation.

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Anything that could incite violence or civil unrest or denigrate any racial or religious minorities should not be published by the media. In order to represent the diversity of other societies and to provide access to a range of viewpoints and the right to respond, the media should be pluralistic. The public and society have the right to demand high performance standards, so they can step in whenever necessary to protect the general welfare.This argument is applicable to this work because, to the extent that the media is free to publish any narrative they think appropriate, they ought to do so with the safety and unity of society in mind. For such a media outlet to continue publishing, society must first survive. Because of this, when reporting on farmer/herder crises, publications will first adhere to the social responsibility theory's tenets.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A methodical approach is required for any study of a social phenomenon in order to produce fruitful findings. Therefore, the research describes the methodology that would be used to gather information in order to address the formulated research questions in this section. It consists of the research design, sampling, sampling procedure, methods, and tools for data collection and analysis.

3.1 Research Design

Using a quantitative study approach, a content analysis design was used to determine the role that newspapers played in reporting the crises during the period under review. Data was collected from the chosen newspapers using a coding sheet, and content analysis was deemed appropriate because it allowed the researchers to examine how the newspapers covered the farmers-herdsmen crises. The study areas in this research are Nasarawa and Benue States.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of the study was determined by the summation of newspapers published between 2017 and 2021 for *Daily Trust, Vanguard, Leadership,* and *The Nation newspaper*s. The editions were summed up from daily publications from January to December for each newspaper for the five years under review. Therefore, newspapers published for 365 days for each newspaper for five years amounted to 1,825 editions of newspapers. 1,825 multiplied by 4 newspapers of *Daily Trust, Vanguard, Leadership,* and *The Nation newspaper*s gave us 7,300 editions of newspapers. Therefore, the population of the study is 7,300 editions of newspapers.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

Four newspapers were sampled for this study. The newspapers sampled are: *Daily Trust, Leadership, The Nation,* and *Vanguard* newspapers. These papers were selected because of their national coverage, wide coverage of the crises, accessibility, and presence in the new media. The newspapers were chosen to give the Northern and Southern parts of the country a representation. The research work covered the period from 2017 to 2021, when the heat of the crisis was at its peak. This enabled the researcher to determine whether the newspapers gave voices to both farmers and herders in their various reportages. The purposive sampling method was adopted to get stories that were related to the farmer/herder crises. Out of the 7,300 editions of newspapers studied, 451 stories were related to the farmer-herder crises. Therefore, the sample size was 451.

3.4 Method of Data Collection

A coding sheet was used in collecting data from the newspaper. The variables we assigned numbers to enable the researcher to enter the results into the coding sheet. For example, killing/maiming was assigned 1, Internally Displaced Persons 2, and so on. Two Corp members from Benue State University serving in Nasarawa State served as research assistants. They assisted in purposively sampling the newspapers in the years under review.

3.4.1 Coding

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According to Wimmer & Dominick (2000), coding entails placing a unit of analysis into a content category. This was achieved in this research by having two coders examine the two newspapers under study and identify all news stories, features, cartoons, pictures, and so on that made reference to farmer/herder crises in Nasarawa and Benue states. Numbers will be assigned to each of the items**.**

3.4.2 Reliability of Research Instrument

The Validity of every research is based on the reliability of the research instrument. Wimmer and Domnick (2000, P.150) say inter-coder reliability is the level of agreement among independent coders who code the same content using the same coding instrument. Two corps members Victor Achope and Sende Fabian Fanen from the Benue State University, Makurdi were trained on how to code the data. After coding, a pilot study was provided to each of them for coding. This involves the placement of the unit of analysis into the content categories. After comparing the results of the coders, it aligned with the researcher's result.

3.4.3 Validity of Research Instrument

The Validity of the research instrument-Newspaper Coverage of Farmer/herder Crises in Nasarawa and Benue States: 2017-2021, was achieved via face validity by an informal evaluation of the instrument with a team of experts (a professor from the Federal University of Technology Minna, Professor Nicholas Iwokwagh and one lecturer of mass communication from Benue State University, Makurdi Dr. Degarr Hangeior). The instrument was also subjected to scrutiny by my supervisors in the Department of Theatre and Media Arts, Federal University of Lafia. The Instrument is then restructured following the corrections made by my supervisors and other mass communication experts.

3.5 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is essential to the success of content analysis. For Wimmer & Dominick (2000, p.134), the unit of analysis is the smallest element of a content analysis, but also one of the most important. The essence of the unit of analysis stems from the fact that it represents the individual units about which or whom descriptive and explanatory statements are made (Babbie, 1990,). In this research, the units of analysis are spelt out below:

Story Focus: Killing/Maiming, Internally Displaced Persons, Destruction/Burning of Houses, Cattle Rustling, Destruction of Farmlands/Crops, Rape of Victims, Reprisal Attacks, Open Grazing/Anti-Open Grazing.

Story types: News, Editorials, Features, Cartoons, photographs, Letters to the Editor/Opinion, Interview.

Story location: Front page, Back page, inside cover page, centre spread, inside back cover, Other Placements.

Direction of Story: Favourable (Positive), Unfavourable (Negative), Neutral.

Balance of Story: Biased (Farmers), Biased (Herders), Unbiased (Neutral)

Tone of Language: Simple, Harsh

3.6 Content Categories

Content categories could be described as the engine room for content analysis. The content categories for this study are designed to provide information that would answer the research questions. Categories are exhaustive because they ensure that items are placed in their relevant category. They are mutually exclusive in that no content item is placed in more than one content category.

Therefore, it is important to state that eight content categories will be adopted for this study. They are Killing/Maiming, Displacement of persons, Destruction/Burning of Houses, Cattle rustling, and Destruction of farmlands/Crops, Rape of Victims, Reprisal Attacks, Open Grazing/Anti-Open Grazing.

3.6.1 Killing/Maiming

The killing could be described as an act of causing death deliberately. In the context of this

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study killing and maiming could be seen as an act of deliberately taking the life of a farmer or herder in the course of a pre-planned attack. Thus, any news story, editorial, feature, and cartoon that talks about the killing of a farmer/herder as expressed in different forms will be classified in this category.

3.6.2 Internally Displaced Persons

According to the UN Human Right Office, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border". Internally displaced persons in this study are farmers who have been displaced from their ancestral homes as a result of the attacks occasioned by the crises between farmers and herders. It is apparent that herders are nomadic and could be described as being displaced, as ordinarily they hardly settle in a locality for a long period. So any news story, editorial, cartoon, or picture that implies Internally Displaced Persons will be captured in this category.

3.6.3 Destruction/Burning of Houses

Destruction of property is a subtype of property damage that involves more intentional and severe physical damage to property that is irreparable or extremely expensive to repair. In this study, the research shall look at the contents that carry the destruction and burning of farmer/herder homes. Therefore, any news story, editorial, feature, or cartoon that features the destruction of houses or the burning of houses of farmers/herders who are locals of communities would be captured.

3.6.4 Cattle Rustling

Cattle rustling majorly affects herdsmen. Cattle rustling occurs when a group of individuals plans, organizes, and steals livestock forcefully from another person or the grazing field. In this study, it would be narrowed down to the stealing of livestock belonging to a herdsman. So, any news story, editorial, feature, or cartoon that implies cattle rustling would be captured under this category.

3.6.5 Destruction of Farmlands/Crops

Destruction of farmland/crops is the deliberate damage of crops or agricultural products to render it useless for consumption or processing and distribution. In this context, the study looks at how herders have deliberately destroyed farmlands and crops that would be used for subsistence or commercial purposes. Therefore, news story, editorial, feature, and cartoon that depicts this aforementioned term would be categorized under this content.

It is worthy of note that frequency, depth of coverage, prominence, direction, and ethical dimension oflanguage used would be examined in the above content categories.

3.6.6 Open Grazing/Anti-Open Grazing Law

Open grazing refers to the traditional means of livestock feeding practice. It requires the herders to maraud with their cattle in search of greener pastures. Anti-Open grazing law is an order prohibiting herders from practicing the traditional means of livestock feeding. This was enacted by the Benue State House of Assembly in 2017 and was implemented by Governor Samuel Ortom. In this context, the study looks at how the firm belief in open grazing and the stand of the Benue government on the anti-open grazing law has snowballed into a full-blown crises, leading to the deaths and displacements of thousands of people.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data gathered from newspapers was codified. The data was sorted and classified into meaningful sets and recurring themes. The essence is to code and identify theory-related material, as well as recurring themes (Bryman, 2012, p.577). Finally, the interconnections between the themes and theories were analysed concerning the existing literature and theories.

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Quantitative content analysis was used in analysing the documents. The quantitative analysis involved tabulation of the figures derived from the coding and calculated with statistical tools.

SPSS software version 16 was used to analyse the data gathered from the newspaper reports

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This data presentation and analysis section of this study focuses on the coverage of Farmer/herder crises in Nasarawa and Benue States by select Nigerian newspapers. The section aims to systematically present the findings derived from the content analysis conducted on various newspapers, highlighting key patterns and trends in reporting. By examining both the depth and prominence of coverage, the analysis seeks to uncover potential biases and differences in how these events are portrayed across different media outlets. The data collected encompasses a range of variables, including adherence to journalistic ethics and the framing of the crises, providing a comprehensive overview of the media landscape surrounding this critical issue. Through this analysis, the study aims to contribute to the understanding of media influence on public perception and discourse regarding the Farmer/herder Crises in Nasarawa and Benue states within the period under review.

Table 4.1.1: Front Page

		Story Location 1		
	Newspapers	0	1	**Total**
	Daily trust	107	29	136
	Leadership	63	1	64
	Nation	47	25	72
	Vanguard	148	31	179
	Total	365	86	451

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table shows that out of 451 articles only 86 articles appeared in front page. The front page in newspapers are usually the point of attraction. Stories published on front page gain more attention than those published randomly on other pages of newspaper. The number of articles published on front page across the select newspapers indicates a low use of articles on front page. *Vanguard* newspaper appears to have the highest proportion of articles published on the front page suggesting that it gives more prominence to the topic than other newspapers. Out of 86 articles, Daily *Trust* had 29 on the front page; *Leadership* had 1 on the front page; *The Nation* had 25 on the front page while 31 articles on *Vanguard* appeared on the front page.

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Journal of Journalism, Media Science and Creative Arts
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Table 4.1.2: Back Page

	Story Location 2	
Newspapers	0	**Total**
Daily	136	136
Leadership	64	64
Nation	72	72
Vanguard	179	179
Total	451	451

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table shows that on the story location of Farmer/herder crises coverage, none of the newspapers had their content on farmer/herder crises on the back page. This indicates low prominence given to the farmer-herder crises because the back page is another important page of newspaper that attracts attention to a story.

Table 4.1.3: Inside cover page

	Story Location 3		
NEWSPAPERS	0	3	Total
DAILY	135	1	136
LEADERSHIP	62	2	64
NATION	72	0	72
VANGUARD	165	14	179
Total	434	17	451

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table shows *that Vanguard* has the highest number of articles appearing on the inside cover page. The inside cover page is another point of attraction in newspapers that gives prominence to a story. Out of 17 article, *Daily Trust* had1 article in the inside cover page; *Leadership* had 2 in the inside cover page; *The Nation* had none while 14 articles on *Vanguard* appeared on the inside cover page.

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Journal of Journalism, Media Science and Creative Arts
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Table 4.1.4: Centre Spread

		Story Location 4		
	Newspapers	0	4	Total
	Daily trust	129	7	136
	Leadership	60	4	64
	Nation	66	6	72
	Vanguard	155	24	179
	Total	410	41	451

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table shows that there is an appreciable number of articles on the centre spread, indicating a slight increase in the prominence given to the farmer-herder crises by the newspapers. Out of 41 articles, *Daily Trust* had 7 articles the centre spread; *Leadership* had 4 at the center spread; *The Nation* had 6 while 24 articles on *Vanguard* appeared on the center spread.

Table 4.1.5: Inside Back Cover

		Story Location 5		
	Newspapers	0	5	**Total**
	Daily trust	128	8	136
	Leadership	64	0	64
	Nation	64	8	72
	Vanguard	176	3	179
Total		432	19	451

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table shows that a total of 19 articles appeared on the inside back cover suggesting that inside back cover is not a frequently used location for reporting farmer/herder crises. The inside back cover is another page that gives prominence to a story. The low use of the page for farmer-herder crises indicates poor prominence given to the issue on the page. Out of 19 articles, *Daily*

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Trust had 8; *Leadership* had none; *The Nation* had 8 while 3 articles on *Vanguard* appeared in the Inside cover page

Table 4.1.6: Other Placement

		Story Location 6		
	Newspapers	0	6	Total
	Daily trust	44	92	136
	Leadership	8	56	64
	Nation	37	35	72
	Vanguard	71	108	179
	Total	**160**	**291**	**451**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above table shows that *Leadership* newspaper appears to have the highest proportion of articles published on other locations. *Vanguard* has the highest number of articles appearing on other locations. There is a total of 291 articles (about 64.5% of the total articles) published on other locations suggesting that "other locations" is a common place of publishing farmer/herder crises among the four newspapers. This indicates a general low prominence given to Farmer/herder crises coverage. Out of 291 articles, *Daily Trust* had 92 articles on other location; *Leadership* had 56 on other location; *The Nation* had 35 while 108 articles on *Vanguard* appeared on other location.

Research Question 2: What is the prominence and depth of coverage given to Farmer/herder Crises in the select Nigerian Newspapers?

Table 4.1.7: Prominence

		Prominence									**Total**
Daily Trust	Count										
	% within Newspaper	0	1	3	4	5	6	7	8	10	
Daily Trust	% within	0	28	0	8	8	92	0	0	0	136
Leadership	Prominence										
	% of Total	.0%	20.6%	.0%	5.9%	5.9%	67.6%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%

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	Count	.0%	34.6%	.0%	19.5%	44.4%	32.1%	.0%	.0%	.0%	30.2%
	% within Newspapers	**.0%**	**6.2%**	**.0%**	**1.8%**	**1.8%**	**20.4%**	**.0%**	**.0%**	**.0%**	**30.2%**
Leadership	% within Prominence	1	1	2	4	0	56	0	0	0	64
Nation	**% of Total**	1.6%	1.6%	3.1%	6.2%	.0%	87.5%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Count	25.0%	1.2%	13.3%	9.8%	.0%	19.5%	.0%	.0%	.0%	14.2%
	% within Newspapers	**.2%**	**.2%**	**.4%**	**.9%**	**.0%**	**12.4%**	**.0%**	**.0%**	**.0%**	**14.2%**
Nation	% within Prominence	1	23	0	5	8	32	2	0	1	72
Vanguard	**% of Total**	1.4%	31.9%	.0%	6.9%	11.1%	44.4%	2.8%	.0%	1.4%	100.0%
	Count	25.0%	28.4%	.0%	12.2%	44.4%	11.1%	66.7%	.0%	100.0%	16.0%
	% within Newspapers	**.2%**	**5.1%**	**.0%**	**1.1%**	**1.8%**	**7.1%**	**.4%**	**.0%**	**.2%**	**16.0%**
Vanguard	% within Prominence	2	29	13	24	2	107	1	1	0	179
Total	**% of Total**	1.1%	16.2%	7.3%	13.4%	1.1%	59.8%	.6%	.6%	.0%	100.0%
	Count	50.0%	35.8%	86.7%	58.5%	11.1%	37.3%	33.3%	100.0%	.0%	39.7%
	% within Newspapers	**.4%**	**6.4%**	**2.9%**	**5.3%**	**.4%**	**23.7%**	**.2%**	**.2%**	**.0%**	**39.7%**
Total	% within Prominence	4	81	15	41	18	287	3	1	1	451
	% of Total	.9%	18.0%	3.3%	9.1%	4.0%	63.6%	.7%	.2%	.2%	100.0%
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		.9%	**18.0%**	**3.3%**	**9.1%**	**4.0%**	**63.6%**	**.7%**	**.2%**	**.2%**	**100.0%**

The table above shows the prominence given to the coverage of farmer/herder crises by the selected Nigerian newspapers. From the data, the "other placement" story location made the most prominent in the coverage of farmer/herder crises among the selected newspapers. The analysis indicates that adequate prominence was not given to the coverage of the crises in the select newspaper. Stories relating to farmer-herder crises were placed randomly on the pages of newspaper. Only few of the articles made it to front page, back page and other important pages of the newspaper.

The "other placements" has 63.6%; "inside back cover" has 4%; "centre spread" has 9.1%; "inside cover page" has 3.3%; "Back page" has 18.0% and "front page" has 18%. The other entries are not relevant.

Discussion of Finding

The research revealed that despite the intensity of the crises, it did not get adequate prominence. Most important stories did not get a space on the front page, Centre spread, and back cover, rather they were published randomly on other pages. Some stories that deserve a place on the front page but were not given prominence are: "Nasarawa Residents Decry Attacks, Influx of Armed Herdsmen" (*Leadership*, 2-5-2021), and War Drums in Benue over Anti Open Grazing

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Law (*Vanguard,* 5-7-2017). In other words, the findings from this research is in line with Gever & Essien (2019) findings on Newspaper coverage of the herdsmen/farmers conflict in central Tiv Land, Benue State, Nigeria**.** The result of the study showed that 71.3% of the stories on the conflict were published on the inside page, depicting that enough prominence was not given to the crises.

Conclusion

The research also revealed that there is a significant difference in the depth and prominence of the coverage of the crises. This shows that much prominence was not given to the coverage of the crises despite the high frequency at which the crises were reported within the period studied.

Recommendations

- Going by the findings from this research work, the following are recommended to address gaps in the coverage of farmer/herder crises in Nasarawa and Benue States.
- Newspaper houses should channel their report towards seeking solutions to crises rather than exacerbating the crises.
- Aside from private interventions, government regulatory bodies like the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) should establish a grant/award for newspaper houses with the best ethical standards. This will encourage more newspaper firms to stick to ethical standards.
- There should be an emphasis on teaching ethical journalism and conflict reporting to shape public discourse and reporting.
- More prominence should be given to the coverage of crises in the affected areas to draw government attention in order to address the challenges.

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