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# Journalism Practice in a Country Facing Division Threats : Newspaper Framing of Secession Agitations in Nigeria

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**Journalism Practice in a Country Facing Division Threats : Newspaper Framing of  
Secession Agitations in Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

Violent agitations for the secession of South-East from Nigeria is one of the conflict situations that has continued to persist, even after the civil war. The conflict is shredded in political and ethnic alignments, thus threatening to drive the country into a second civil war. This study examined media framing of secession agitations pioneered by Indigenous People of Biafra. In doing so, a total of four newspapers- *The Vanguard*, *The Punch*, *The Guardian* and *This Day*- were content analysed while the study duration was June 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 to June 1<sup>st</sup> 2018. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for the study. The result showed that most of the newspapers examined cited official sources. It was also found that less attention was paid to causes of the agitations as well as solutions. The implications of these results on the frustration aggression and media framing theories are also explored.

**Keywords: agitation, conflict, framing, IPOB, media and secession**

**Introduction**

One of the conflict situations in Nigeria's existence is the clamour by some parts of the country to exit from the federation and form their republics. Such agitations have at one point or the other resulted to issuance of quit notices to some ethnic groups of the country. Some of the secessionist groups in Nigeria include The Movements for Survival Ogoni People (MOSOP) in South-south who are agitating for self-determination justice and resource control. The Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) also from South-South, equally campaigning for self-determination, justice and resource control. Their dream state is Niger Delta Republic and their method of

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operation is use of violence, destruction of oil installations and businesses as well as attacking of government forces. The middle Birth Federation (MBF) is agitating for autonomy on grounds of the “unfair provisions of the 1999 Constitution, and the Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB from South-East are agitating for the creation of Sovereign State of Biafra, among some other agitations that breed conflict in Nigeria. See also Asogwa, Ojih, Mohammed 2017).

Although the agitation for the creation of Biafra dates back to the 1970s and was part of the reason Nigeria fought a civil war of between 1967-1973, the agitation was hardly heard when former President Goodluck Jonathan from South-South Nigeria was in power. Jonathan enjoyed the overwhelming support of South-East zone some of whom took him as part of them. However, in recent times, IPOB has intensified efforts for the attainment of sovereign State of Biafra because of alleged injustice against the zone by President Muhammadu Buhari of Hausa/ Fulani extraction. This is, perhaps, a fall out of the 2015 presidential election were South-East supported and voted the defeated Goodluck Jonathan en mass. The South East is made up of five states namely Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi and Imo. Buhari lost in all these States (INEC, 2015). A similar situation played out during the 2019 general election in the country.

This result made the South-East suspicious of Buhari’s government as they felt he could marginalized them in political appointments and infrastructural development. The *Punch* editorial of August 1, 2016 captioned ‘Buhari’s parochial appointments’ described Buhari’s political appointments as lopsided in favour of the north. Part of the editorial reads:

it is a sad reality of the Nigerian experience that when crisis –political or economic-hits, segments of the populace retreat into ethnic and sectarian cocoons. It is in this combustible mix that Buhari stubbornly presses ahead with appointments that weigh heavily in favour of his northern regional base.

As a response to the perceived manipulation, some south-Eastern Nigeria have launched a campaign under the name Indigenous People of Biafra IPOB, with a mandate to separate from Nigeria and maintain an independent entity. The Nigerian Government on the other hand sees the group as a threat to Nigeria’s unity and has since proscribe it. The activities of the group have often resulted to clashes between its members and security forces. The activities of IPOB reached to a point of issuing quit notice and counter quit notice by some parts of the country against the other. One of such that gained much attention in the media was the quite notice from northern youths to Igbo resident in the area. Part of the quit notice read:

We are hereby placing the Nigerian authorities and the entire nation on notice, that as from the 1st October 2017, we shall commence the implementation of visible actions to prove to the whole world that we are no longer part of any federal union that should do with the Igbos. From that date, active, peaceful and safe mop-up of all the remnants of the stubborn Igbos that neglect to heed this quit notice shall commence to eject them from every part of the North finally. And finally, all authorities, individuals or groups are hereby advised against attempting to undermine this declaration by insisting on this union with the Igbos who have thus far proved to be unnecessary baggage carried too far and for too long (Rabiu, 2017).

The Southern part of Nigeria could not take such a threat for granted as they also responded with a counter quit notice from Niger Delta agitator who issued a quit notice to northern and Yoruba

people. IPOB on its part responded by asking all Igbos in the North to relocate. Its members were also coming up with different orders for other citizens to obey. One of such orders is 'seat at home order' and the call for Igbos not to take part in the 2017 Anambra Governorship election. *Sahara Reporters* in a story entitled: 'Vote and Die, IPOB Threatens Anambra Residents' paints a gory picture of the situation in the following words: 'one week to the governorship election in Anambra State, the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra has threatened voters with death if they vote. They also vowed to disrupt the election (*Sahara Reporters*, 2017).' Such a situation paved the way for a conflict between members of the group and security agencies who were working hard to maintain peace. The media on its part was highlighting the issue in its reports. A study of media framing of the IPOB secession agitations is essential because it will yield relevant data for understanding the role of the media in peace building particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. Examining media framing of IPOB activities could also provide useful insight in understanding the role that the Nigerian media have played in resolving or escalating the conflict.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to examine media framing of IPOB agitations. In specific terms, this study sought to achieve the following:

1. To determine media sources of stories on IPOB.
2. To determine how the media frame the causes of IPOB violent agitations
3. To examine media frames of solutions to IPOB violent agitations
4. To ascertain the relationship between the newspapers and the frames used.

### **Media Framing of Conflict**

Media framing is one of the essential models of media effect. In media framing, the point of interest is not how frequent an issue is reported, but how it is reported. Over the past many years, scholars from different disciplines such as, communication (Entman, 1991), economics (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), sociology (Goffman, 1974), psychology (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984) and cognitive linguistics (Lakoff, 2004), admitted that the core of what makes a message to have effect on people is not the message per se, but how the message is crafted. Luntz (2008) in apparent reference to the power of framing notes that what a person says is not as essential as the way people hear it.

In media scholarship, framing describes the ways that media practitioners present stories, project what is figure and ground, and impute meaning and motives. "Figure" is what occupies the center stage regarding how one sees a situation, while elements that form "ground" fall to the background or the periphery of a situation. Areas of a story that become figure usually influence how media practitioners cast the definition of an issue, problem, or event. Framing a situation as a conflict highlights incompatibilities, disagreements, or oppositional tensions between individuals, groups, and institutions (Anyadike, 2015; Yang, & Ishak, 2012; Dimitrova, & Strömbäck, 2008). It will be difficult for media scholars to stop investigating media framing of issues chiefly because of two reasons. First, the media are regarded as opinion moulders. Therefore, they direct public views on issues based on how they present their reports. Consequently, scholars are always interested in knowing how the media attempt to influence public views on issues. In the second place, mass communication studies strive on currency.

Current issues often attract the attention of media scholars and in doing so, the interest is usually on how the media construct such issues through framing. See also Asogwa, Iyere, and Attah, 2012, Asemah and Asogwa, (2012).

Framing of media contents has been rigorously investigated, especially among media scholars. Angelo (2002) reveals that more than a decade's worth of investigations of framing reveals three major processes: frame construction, framing effects, and frame definition. Frame construction focuses on the way that journalists cast the elements of news stories, especially the formats that they use, newsmakers' intentions and values, and the devices that journalists use in their work. For instance, a researcher can investigate frame construction like what stories get reported, which sources are cited or not cited, and where a story appears in the layout of the news. Framing effects research centers on the outcomes of news framing and the interaction between the media and audiences. Thus, the research encompasses studies of two-way flow among media, discourses of public opinion, and prior knowledge of audience members (Angelo, 2002). On the other hand, frame definition centers on the content of news stories that arise from how the media contribute to defining the situation. This process focuses on the discourse units that convey news frames. Thus, the media construct particular views of reality through limiting the range of information, selecting sources strategically, and setting parameters for policy debates (Putnam & Shoemaker, 2007).

One of the areas where media framing has been examined is conflict. In every society, there may be one conflict or the other. This could be political conflict, communal conflict, chieftaincy conflict, among others. Vliegenthart, Boomgaarden, and Boumans (2011) say that the importance of conflict also translates into news-framing research, and “conflict frames” are one of the most frequently used frames in political communication research. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000, p. 95) argue that conflict frames are of critical consideration because they “emphasize conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interest.” It will be difficult for human beings to interact without conflict cropping up. This perhaps, explains why evidence in literature suggests that the definition of conflict has been resulted to issues like disagreement, tension between different sides, incompatibility between viewpoints and politicians attacking each other in the media (Putnam & Shoemaker 2007).

In the study of media framing of conflict, the source of stories has been identified as cardinal in determining the frames used. Gever (2018) in commenting on the importance of source in framing of conflict, argues that the source is the frame. Gever further reported that there exists a significant relationship between source of stories and frame adopted. Similar result was earlier reported by Carragee and Roefs, (2004) Fahmy,( 2005). The source of media information in conflict situation is particularly essential because of the power of the media to influence public opinion. Allgaier (2011) corroborates that media accounts of reality has a corresponding propensity to influence public opinion and decision making processes. Consequently, who has and who does not have access to the media and can make their voice heard is a crucial question with serious consequences. When information about conflicts are sourced from biased angles, it could also influenced solutions to the conflict. It may even escalate the conflict. See also Asogwa, and Ojih, (2012), Asogwa and Atuluku, (2018). Albaek (2011) differentiates between different types of sources. Like ordinary and experts sources. In the case of ordinary source, vox pops could be used for identification of the readers with some statements. However, ‘expert sources’ may be used to provide ‘compensatory legitimation’, that

is journalists can draw upon the authority of experts, but also serve as ‘sparring partners’ in developing interesting news stories with sufficient depth and breadth (Albaek 2011). This classification when viewed within the perspective of conflict reporting, people are involved in the conflict could be classified as ordinary sources while security personnel will be classified as experts sources. Takahashi (2011) examined mass media coverage of climate change in Peru and reported that the sources cited were mostly government, thus giving little or no room for opposing voices. Hallin, Manoff and Weddle (1993) say that the reliance on official sources in the context of national security issues is ‘one of the most consistently replicated findings in American journalism.’ The basic point is that media source is essential consideration in studying media framing of conflicts.

Another useful aspect of media framing of conflict is how the media frame causes and solutions to such conflicts. For every conflict, there are remote and immediate causes. There is also the search for solutions to such a conflict. Vladislavjević, (2015) says that the causes of conflict and rationale for war are given much less attention and space in media coverage. Hallin, (1986, p.146) in a study found that the United States military actions in the early stages of the Vietnam War were regularly represented on television as setting the pace of war (58%) and the assessments of their overall ‘war effort’ as favourable (79%), which hardly reflected facts on the ground. Evidence in literature (Aday, Livingston, & Hebert 2005; Goddard, Robinson, Parry, 2008) also suggest that the American and British media coverage of the 2003 Iraq War provided a considerably more space for ‘battle stories’ and stories about war strategy and tactics than for any other theme. Somerville (2017) examined a five decade of conflict in Angola and media framing and found that the media did little to inform or educate the public on the conflict reported. The media have the ability to frame the causes and solutions to conflict. Entman (1993) corroborates that framing has four core functions which are: describing problems, identifying causes, making proper judgments, and then proposing remedies. This suggests that the media could also frame the causes of IPOB agitations and proffer solutions with a view to maintaining the unity of Nigeria.

### **A young Country Goes to War: Nigeria’s Civil War**

When Nigeria got her independence from Britain in 1960, people may have thought that the birth of a new nation could trigger celebration among its people and its citizens will be united to protect her nascent independence. However, that was not the case as internal wrangling commenced almost immediately after the independence. The nation was divided along religious and ethnic lines. In less than ten years after Nigeria got independent from Britain on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1960, the country went into a civil war that began on July 7, 1967 and ended on January 15, 1970. Perceived injustices and biased treatment of the Igbos are thought to have been remote causes of the civil war. Egbejule (2017) traced the cause of the war to the massacre of the ethnic Igbos of Southern Nigeria in northern Nigeria which took place in 1953 and in 1966. It is noteworthy that the 1953 massacre of the Igbos living in northern Nigeria took place at a time Nigeria was yet to gain independence from Britain, however, there was still the thinking among Igbos that it was an ethnic cleansing. The massacre of 1966 was after the independence of Nigeria from Great Britain, and its triggered the agitation for Biafra secession in 1967 (Egbejule (2017).

It is argued that the Coups of the 1960s also served as a factor that led to the war. Ugorji (2017) recalled that the January 15, 1966 coup d’état championed by a group of military officers

mainly of Igbo extraction which resulted to the killing of top civilian government and military officials mostly from the northern Nigeria including a few south-westerners was one of the key drivers of the civil war. According to him, the impact of this military coup on the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group in the northern Nigeria and the negative emotional stimuli – anger and sadness – fueled by the killing of their leaders were the motivations for the counter coup of July 1966. The July 29, 1966 counter-coup that was planned and carried out by the Hausa-Fulani military officials from the northern Nigeria led to the death of the Nigerian head of state (of Igbo extraction) and top military Igbo leaders dead. Also, in revenge for the killing of the northern military leaders in January 1966, many Igbo civilians who were residing in northern Nigeria at a time were massacred in cold blood and their bodies were brought back to the eastern Nigeria. (Ugorji, 2017). Offodile (2016) in a book entitled: *The Politics of Biafra And The Future of Nigeria* blamed the civil war on the inability of the then head of State, General Yakubu Gowon to respect the Aburi Accord. The Accord, which was reached between January 4 and 5, 1967 at a meeting attended by delegates of both the Federal Government of Nigeria, led by General Gowon, and the Eastern Region’s leader, Emeka Ojukwu, at a small town in Ghana, presented a last chance of avoiding an all-out war between Eastern Nigeria and the rest of Nigeria. The civil war was spearheaded by Late Major General Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, the then military governor of the eastern region who decided to declare the independence of Biafra.

After the civil war, Nigeria remained one indivisible country but the consequences of the civil war remained with Nigeria up to this point. There is also no evidence that the issues that led to the outbreak of the war have been addressed. General Yakubu Gowon, declared “no victor, no vanquished but victory for common sense and the unity of Nigeria.” Included in this declaration was a transitional justice programme called the “3Rs” - Reconciliation (Reintegration), Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (Ugorji, 2017). The Igbos have often complained of political marginalization in power sharing. The Igbos want to produce the President of Nigeria, but that has not been possible since return to democratic rule in 1999. The South-West, South-South and North-West have all produced the president of the country. The Igbos also feel that they have been marginalized in political appointments, infrastructure and social programmes of government. Ugorji (2017) recalls that beginning in the early 2000s, new waves of agitation started. The first non-violent social movement to gain public attention is the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) formed by Ralph Uwazuruike, a lawyer who was trained in India. The agitation for the creation of the Republic of Biafra resurface immediately after the 2015 general election this time, championed by a group called the Indigenous People of Biafra.

### **The Emergence of IPOB and the ‘Python Dance’ Slogan**

IPOB was found by Nnamdi Kanu, a Nigerian-British based in London and who was born at the end of the Nigeria-Biafra war in 1970. Najakku (2017) says that the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) was created as a breakaway faction of the “compromised” Movement for the Actualisation of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). Najakku adds that IPOB has powerful patrons who generously funded it. Accordingly, the group has enough money for memorabilia and other emblems evoking Biafra – flags, T-shirts, hand fans, bracelets, etc. Ugorji (2017) corroborates that its leader, Nnamdi Kanu leveraged on the emerging mode of communication, social media, and online radio to drive millions of pro-Biafra independence activists, supporters

and sympathizers to his Biafran cause. IPOB also at some points used Radio Biafra to promote its goal.

The Federal government of Nigeria responded swiftly to the threat posed by IPOB using both military and legal measures. Legally, the government approached the Federal High Court, Abuja for the proscription of IPOB and the judge granted the order thus: “That an order, declaring the activities of the respondent – Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) – in any part of Nigeria, especially in the South-East and South-South regions of Nigeria amount to acts of terrorism and illegality, is granted (Ikhilae,2017).” Also, as part of the legal approach, the leader (Nnamdi Kanu) of IPOB was arrested in Lagos on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015 by agents of the Federal Government but detained and released on April 28, 2017 on bail. As at the time of this study, the case was still in court while Nnamdi Kanu was at large. The government also adopted the military option through what it called ‘Operation Python Dance.’ The Operation Python dance was first launched in 2016. In launching the operation, the Army authority was quoted thus: ‘Exercise Python Dance has been planned for the South East Region from 27 November-27 December, 2016. The prevalent security issues such as armed robbery, kidnapping, abduction, herdsmen-farmers clashes, communal clashes and violent secessionist attacks, among others, would be targeted (Eleke,2016).’ Again in 2017, the Army launched another Operation Python Dance II that lasted between September 15 to October 15, 2017. As at the time of this study, operation Python Dance III was also being contemplated. The python Dance, led to cases of clash between the armed forces and members of IPOB which ended bloody. The Python Dance also created anxiety among the civilian public who felt uncomfortable with such military operations. IPOB, though proscribed, is still operating in Nigeria, issuing sit-at-home order to citizens of South-East Nigeria and at some point, clashing with security agencies.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The researcher adopted media framing and frustration aggression theories for this study. Media framing theory was first suggested in 1974 by Goffman (Gever, 2018). Goffman had argued that people interpret what is going on around their world with the use of primary framework. Entman (1993, p. 52) observes that to frame is to “Promote a particular problem definition and/or treatment recommendation.” The focus of the theory is that the media can promote and project certain aspects of a story in its coverage as important while also making other aspects appear less important. Framing theory has been found useful by researchers studying media construction of conflict because it provides the framework for understanding the contribution of the media in resolving conflict. This is partly because of the power that the media have in either resolving or escalating conflict. Only one poorly framed media story is enough to set a whole country on fire. For example, the IPOB agitations is promoted by mainly Igbos who see Hausa/Fulani as their enemies. Therefore, if the media frame Igbos as attacking Hausas in the East or Hausas as attacking Igbos in the North, it could trigger a reprisal attack and blood will spill.

The frustration aggression theory was developed in 1939 by psychologist John Dollard and his associates. Expansion to the theory was subsequently carried out by scholars such as Leonard Berkowitz (1962) and Aubrey Yates (1962) (Olley & Ekareafu 2013). The theory focuses on “Want and get ratio” and the difference between expected need and satisfaction

and the actual need satisfaction. The basic assumption of the theory is that people are likely to express aggression if they do not get what they want. Shedding more lights Olley and Ekareafu write; “Often times ,when people are unable to get what they deserve, frustration sets in and this could result in violence or protests against those they consider responsible for their state of deprivation.(p,34).” This theory was found useful to explain the likely causes of the IPOB violent agitations. IPOB members have expectations as Nigerians, but feel frustrated that such expectation are not being met, hence, the resort to violent agitations and the call for separatism so as to address perceived injustice.

## **Methodology**

The researcher adopted content analysis to achieve the objectives of this study. Content analysis was used to examine newspaper stories on IPOB. The International Media Newspapers (2016) says there are a total of 28 national dailies in Nigeria. The sample size of this study was made up of four newspapers. They are *The Vanguard*, *The Punch*, *The Guardian* and *This Day* newspapers. These newspapers were selected based on the 2016 newspapers web ranking which ranked these newspapers as the top four in Nigeria. The researcher used content analysis because it is often the best approach when the goal is to examine written contents. The duration of this study was June 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 to June 1<sup>st</sup> 2018. This period was chosen because it marked the time IPOB activities were most pronounced including the arrest, detention and trial of its leader. The motif approach was used to select the newspaper articles. This was done with the use of the key words like Biafra, IPOB and Indigenous People of Biafra. In each case, only stories that were within the study duration were selected for analysis.

## **Measurements**

The researcher used the following measures:

**Story Source:** The essence was to understand to origin of stories on IPOB.

Therefore, the following sources were considered

**Official sources:** These were **sources** from government agents including security personnel.

**Unofficial Sources:** Sources from people who were not in government. This include IPOB members, their supporters, analysts, etc.

## **Framing of Causes of the agitations**

**The following were used:**

**Marginalization:** Frames that project the agitations as being caused by marginalization of Igbos by the North.

**Political opponents:** Frames that project the agitation as caused by political enemies.

**Biased political appointments:** Frames that project the agitations as fueled by biased political appointments by the Buhari led government.

**Others:** Frames that did not belong to any of the above.

**Framing of Solution**

The following were used:

**Restructuring:** Frames that showed restructuring as a solution to the problem.

**Fair political appointments:** Frames that suggest improvements in political appointments as a solution to the agitations

**Job creation:** Frames that suggest job creation as the solution.

**Others:** Frames that did not belong to any of the above.

**Unit of Analysis/Reliability**

The article such as news, editorials, columns, opinions, and letters to the editor was the unit of analysis for this study. The researcher assessed the intercoder reliability with the use of two coders who tested 15% of the stories as recommended by Wimmer and Dominick (2013). The Holsti’s formula (cited in Wimmer & Dominick, 2006) was used to determine the inter-coder reliability and the result revealed the inter-coder reliability of 0.82 for story source, 0.78 for framing causes and 0.88 for framing recommendations. In the analysis of the data, simple percentages and Chi-Square test of independence were used for the study.

**Results**

A total of 338 newspaper stories were generated through the motif approach. These newspaper stories were screened to ensure that they meet the study criteria regarding the time they were published and the issues they focused on. The result of the analysis is presented in the following tables.

**Table 1: Sources of Stories on IPOB**

		Source of story			
		Official	Unofficial	Total	
Newspaper	<i>The Vanguard</i>	Count	72	25	97
		% of Total	21.3%	7.4%	28.7%
	<i>The Punch</i>	Count	91	38	129
		% of Total	26.9%	11.2%	38.2%
	<i>The Guardian</i>	Count	34	32	66
		% of Total	10.1%	9.5%	19.5%
	<i>ThisDay</i>	Count	32	14	46
		% of Total	9.5%	4.1%	13.6%

Total	Count	229	109	338
	% of Total	67.8%	32.2%	100.0%

The table above sought to ascertain the sources of newspaper stories on IPOB. The result showed that most of the newspapers depended on official sources. The researcher further subjected the result to Chi-Square test of independence and the result yielded  $X^2$  value of 10.354 at 3 df and 1.6 p-value. This implies that there exists a significant relationship between the various newspapers and the sources of stories they used. The extent of the relationship was, however, low as the eta value was 9.7 % which is approximately 10%. To ascertain newspaper framing of the causes of IPOB agitations, table two was computed. It is essential to add here that although there were up to 338 stories on IPOB that were examined, only 135 stories, which was less than 50% of the stories mentioned the causes of the agitations. Therefore, table II is based on the 135 stories.

**Table II: Newspaper framing of the causes of IPOB agitations**

		Causes					Total
		Marginalization	Political opponents	Biased pol. Appointment	4.00		
Newspaper	<i>The Vanguard</i>	Count	6	5	37	7	55
		% of Total	4.4%	3.7%	27.4%	5.2%	40.7%
	<i>The Punch</i>	Count	5	5	11	4	25
		% of Total	3.7%	3.7%	8.1%	3.0%	18.5%
	<i>The Guardian</i>	Count	5	8	15	4	32
		% of Total	3.7%	5.9%	11.1%	3.0%	23.7%
	<i>ThisDay</i>	Count	6	5	8	4	23
		% of Total	4.4%	3.7%	5.9%	3.0%	17.0%
Total		Count	22	23	71	19	135
		% of Total	16.3%	17.0%	52.6%	14.1%	100.0%

The table above sought to ascertain newspaper framing of the causes of IPOB agitations. The result showed that generally, there was low attention to the causes of the agitations, however, the newspapers reports framed the agitations as fuelled by biased political appointments by president Muhammadu Buhari. The result was further subjected to Chi-square of independence and the result yielded  $X^2$  value of 10.772 at 9 df and 0.0292, an indication that no significant relationship exists between the newspapers studied and their framing of IPOB agitations. The researcher also sought to ascertain the solution suggested by the newspapers. It was observed that only 118 stories proffered solutions on how to address the IPOB issue.

**Table III: Newspaper framing of the Solutions to IPOB agitations**

Newspaper			Solution				Total
			Restructuring	appointment	job creation	Others	
<i>The Vanguard</i>	Count		17	10	3	5	35
	% of Total		14.4%	8.5%	2.5%	4.2%	29.7%
<i>The Punch</i>	Count		6	8	9	2	25
	% of Total		5.1%	6.8%	7.6%	1.7%	21.2%
<i>The Guardian</i>	Count		10	5	4	2	21
	% of Total		8.5%	4.2%	3.4%	1.7%	17.8%
<i>ThisDay</i>	Count		28	9	0	0	37
	% of Total		23.7%	7.6%	0.0%	0.0%	31.4%
Total	Count		61	32	16	9	118
	% of Total		51.7%	27.1%	13.6%	7.6%	100.0%

The table above sought to determine newspaper framing of solution to IPOB agitations. Based on the result, it was found that most of the newspapers suggested the restructuring of Nigeria as a solution to the agitations. The result was further subjected to Chi-Square analysis and the result a  $X^2$  value 28.768 at 9 df and p-value of .001. This result suggests that significant relationship exists between the newspapers and the solutions suggested. Based on the result, it can be seen that while *the Punch* newspaper suggested job creation, the other three suggested restructuring of Nigeria.

### Discussion of Findings

This study examined newspaper framing of IPOB agitation for secession with special attention to sources of stories, framing of causes as well as solution to the agitation. The result showed that most of the newspapers cited mainly official sources in their framing of IPOB agitation for secession. This result runs similar to that of Takahashi (2011), Wittebols (1995), Reid and Chen (2007), Riegler (2010) and Miller and Mills (2009). The use of mostly official sources could be as a result of the efforts that the Federal government of Nigeria and the States

government from South-East Nigeria were taken to address the agitations. For example, state government from the South-East Nigeria and the Federal Government were constantly holding meetings and suggesting ways of handling the violent agitations. In some instances, while the state governors from South-East Nigeria were using both negotiation and appeal to calm down the situation, the Federal Government of Nigeria combined force with legal options. This, perhaps, explains why official sources dominate the coverage. For example, one major event by IPOB could lead to many meetings, official statements from government officials among other responses.

The researcher also paid attention to the framing of causes and solution to the violent agitation. Overall, it was found that less than 50% of the stories focused on causes and solutions to the violent agitations. The dominant themes were government responses to IPOB threats and casualties in IPOB activities. The result of this study regarding less attention to the causes and solutions to IPOB violent agitation is consistent with that of Vladislavjević, (2015) who documented that the causes of conflict and rationale for war are given much less attention and space in media coverage. The result of this study is also consistent with those of Aday, Livingston, & Hebert (2005) Goddard, Robinson, Parry, (2008) who suggest that the American and British media coverage of the 2003 Iraq War provided a considerably more space for 'battle stories' and stories about war strategy and tactics than for any other theme. The result of this study equally agrees with a recent study by Somerville (2017) who reported that Angolan media did little to educate the public about the conflict reported. The result showed that perceived bias in political appointment, is the leading cause of the current violent secession agitation in Nigeria. The result also showed that restructuring of Nigeria was proffered by the newspapers as a solution to the violent agitations. This result has implications on frustration aggression theory and media framing theory. The former theory hinges on the fact that "Want and get ratio" could lead to aggression. Therefore, our result has contributed to the understanding of this theory by revealing how perceived injustice on the part of some Igbos have led to IPOB violent agitations. Incidentally, the 1967 civil war in Nigeria was also fuelled by perceived injustice. Regarding the framing theory, the result has shown how the newspapers studied highlighted some aspects of IPOB agitations while paying less attention to others like causes and solutions to the issue.

### **Conclusion/Recommendation**

This study examined media framing of the resurgence of secession agitation in Nigeria as championed by IPOB. Over forty years after Nigeria's civil war, the issue of secession has continued to come up at one time or the other. In the early 2000s, it was MOSSOB and immediately after the 2015 election, IPOB came still with the same purpose of separating the South-East from Nigeria. Each time such agitations come up, people are killed, especially Igbos doing business in the North and Hausas who are resident in the South-East. The agitations for the creation of Biafra has become a hidden ideology in the history of Nigeria that triggers conflict at regular intervals. The manner in which the media frame these agitations is essential in promoting peace, building consensus, and promoting the unity of Nigeria. At the moment, media frames of this conflict are lacking in terms of highlighting the causes and suggesting ways of addressing it. Therefore, this study recommends that newspapers should highlight the remote and immediate causes of IPOB secession agitations. It is also recommended that Nigeria newspapers should highlight solutions to IPOB agitations. Finally, the researcher recommends that

newspapers should moderate over reliance on official sources in their reportage of IPOB agitations. This is to give room for many voices to be heard.

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