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A Theoretical Discourse on the Mediatisation and Framing of Jos Ethno-Religious Conflicts

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ABSTRACT

Studies on the role of journalists in the Jos ethno- religious conflicts are enormous, but none examines this phenomenon through the theoretical lenses of mediatisation and news framing to understand the logic that underpins the construction of conflict narratives. While mediatisation describes media logic in news production, news framing suggests the way the narratives which constitute news are constructed. Both theories explain journalistic practices in many respects. For instance, understanding media logic is the first step in identifying journalists' role in the Jos conflicts which in turn determines the brand of journalism they adopt. The Jos conflicts involve a 'settler' group craving for recognition and legitimacy on the one hand, and a group of 'indigenes' that insists the territory is its inheritance on the other. Based on critical analysis, this paper argues that journalists impose media logic on their audiences through news framing and make them to understand reality from their own point of view. This effort is a new thinking towards understanding theoretical dimensions to media and/or journalistic interventions in the Jos violent conflicts so that researchers may build on these frameworks.

Keywords: Mediatisation, framing, ethno-religious conflicts, indigenes, settlers.

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1.0 Introduction

This article is a departure from the 'blame game' tradition that dominates research on journalistic role in violent conflicts whereby journalists and their media are believed to reinforce conflicts rather than contribute to peacebuilding efforts (Hummel, 2013). The involvement of journalists in intrastate, interstate and global conflicts was, and still is, the focus of much research (Backholm & Björkqvist, 2010; Fahmy & Johnson, 2005; Gilboa, 2002; Novak & Davidson, 2013; Rodgers, 2013; Seib, 2013). However, crucial as mediatisation and news framing models are to understanding journalistic role in social phenomena such as politics, culture and conflict, scholars have not adequately utilised these frameworks to explain the logic underpinning journalists' performance in the Jos violent conflicts. The ongoing debates on these theories suggest that they can be used to explain journalistic practices, especially in terms of articulating the factors that influence media logic and news framing. This paper, based on critical analysis, provides explanations on how journalists and the media are 'doing

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something' beyond their routines of disseminating information (Cottle, 2006). Their output constitutes news for their audiences.

As opposed to the positivist epistemology, realist ontology and value-free axiology associated with quantitative research, which emphasises statistical measurement (Blaikie, 2010; May, 2011), this paper aligns with constructivism – the logic that supports interpretation of phenomena to make meaning (Creswell, 2014; Crotty, 1998; Gill & Johnson, 2002; Pathirage, Amaratunga, & Haigh, 2008). It examines the characteristics of mediatisation and news framing in the context of the Jos conflicts. Since conflict reporting involves news construction (framing) emanating from media logic (mediatisation) - the process that is subjective – it requires a great deal of analysis about how it works. The frameworks of the theories are employed to explain how conflict narratives evolve. Based on this analysis, this paper argues that journalists impose media logic on their audiences through news framing and make them to understand reality from their own point of view.

This effort is a new thinking towards understanding theoretical dimensions to media and/or journalistic interventions in the Jos violent conflicts so that researchers may build on these frameworks.

In sequence, this article establishes the knowledge gap – the non-utilisation of mediatisation and news framing models to explain the role of journalists in the Jos conflicts. It discusses the origins of the conflicts and the circumstances under which social groups express their frustrations resulting in violence. It also, systematically, examines the theories to explain why and how conflict narratives have tended to pitch Christian 'indigenes' against Muslim 'settlers'. This paper concludes that media logic is inevitable, and it is employed by journalists reporting conflicts.

2.0 Background/origins of the Jos conflicts

Jos is a cosmopolitan city of ancient tin mines that occupied a niche as Nigeria's most peaceful city because its mining industry attracted a legion of ethnic groups and foreigners who also found its weather conducive, rock formations captivating and people receptive. It covers about 8,600 square kilometres of land, much of which is surrounded by hills that serve as resort destinations for tourists. It also serves as the political hub of the Middle Belt – a concept which the colonial government had adapted to describe the southern segment of northern Nigeria (Crisis Group Africa Report, 2012), or what is also known as a region consisting of "the states between northern and southern Nigeria" (Cline, 2011, p. 279). The region is often separated from the 'core' north, or Muslim Hausa-Fulani dominated north, because most of the minority ethnic groups of the Middle Belt had been converted to Christianity after their encounter with the British colonial administrators hence their quest for ethnoreligious identity (Cline, 2011).

The scenic beauty of the city and its temperate climate are comparable to Europe thereby making tourism a viable sector of the Plateau State economy. As revealed by Krause (2011, p. 16), the city "has long attracted both foreign visitors and retired elites".

Jos was founded in 1915 as a camp for tin mining and later grew into a cosmopolitan city with a population of about 1,000,000 people (Danfulani, 2006; Krause, 2011), but it was preceded by two settlements – Naraguta and Guash. The indigenous ethnic groups of Afizere, Anaguta and Berom (AAB) were joined by migrants from the south who found the city attractive for trade as it had become the most important tin mining centre in the world (Best & Rakodi, 2011).

The name 'Jos' emerged from a mispronunciation of 'Guash' by the Hausa traders who also migrated to the area. Since the new migrants took to trade and commerce, and Hausa language dominated commercial interactions because other ethnic groups including the AAB engaged with the traders, the name of this settlement changed to 'Jos'. It replaced 'Guash', and the non-speakers of indigenous languages – the Igbo, Urhobo, Yoruba and the Hausa ethnic groups found it most convenient. A recent

research quoted a European document on this development as follows: "[....] A small hill village called Guash, occupied the present location of Jos. Hausa traders who arrived supposedly mispronounced Guash for Jos and the name stuck (Nyam & Ayuba, 2016, p. 364).

The notion that Jos is 'home for all' stemmed from the communality of its inhabitants – the indigenous groups coexisting with the migrant groups, which, until 2001 when the first armed conflict erupted, had earned the city (and the state) a national recognition of 'home of peace and tourism' (Danfulani, 2006, p. 2). Nyam and Ayuba (2016, p. 364) give an account of how the city recorded an unprecedented influx of people across diverse cultures:

Since the imposition of the colonial rule and following the development of the tin industry, commerce and administration, Jos has continued to be populated by people of diverse cultural, linguistic, religious and other traditions, in a wave of endless migration from various parts of Nigeria and beyond

Jos also became a 'safe haven' for victims of Nigerian civil war who fled their homes for fear of further attacks. They joined other citizens from various parts of the country whose interest in tin mines, commerce and the railway industry had attracted them to the area. While the city of Jos remained peaceful under this arrangement, the struggle for group identity emerged, and the people began to pitch camps. There was contestation over the ownership of Jos between the AAB and the Hausa-Fulani 'settlers', a situation that further raised the issue about who a citizen or an indigene is among the diverse ethnic groups that had 'settled' in the area. It transited to the struggle for power as those who qualified as 'indigenes' had the right of governance while the 'settlers' were excluded. Religion also became a big issue. The ethnic groups in conflict were also identified by their profound expression of faith, either as Muslims or Christians; and this identity had great influence on them. These factors manifested in the conflict for over two decades and have not changed.

Generally, the preoccupation of the people of Plateau State is faming and many of them are public servants who profess Christianity. Other ethnic groups that coexist with them include Hausa farmers and traders, Fulani herdsmen as well as traders from the south. Danfulani (2006, p. 3) explains this composition explicitly:

Majority of Plateau State indigenes are Christians tied to the land as peasant farmers or workers in the civil service, while the Muslim minorities are Hausa dry-season farmers and cattle rearing Fulani, with the Igbo, Urhobo, Yoruba and Hausa dominating the business life of the metropolis.

The major conflict that occurred in Jos after the 1945 civil unrest was on April 12, 1994. Residents had lived in fear as there were signs of impending attacks on communities. The major trigger was the tension arising from the creation of Jos North Local Government Area by the military government. The creation was widely criticized by the Afizere, Anaguta and Berom ethnic groups which alleged that it was a grand plan by the Hausa-Fulani to edge them out by confining them to smaller settlements thereby paving way for the 'settlers' to claim their land. The AAB claimed that,

they were not consulted in the exercise [...] the local government boundaries were arbitrarily fixed to their disadvantage [....] The creation of wards favoured the Hausa/Jasawa dominated areas as those areas had more wards but which were small in population while the indigenes had fewer but larger populated wards (Nyam & Ayuba, 2016, p. 367).

The animosity between the two camps deepened overtime. On September 7, 2001 the first violent conflict erupted in which many people were killed and churches and mosques were burnt. In November 2008, the cancellation of Jos North Local Government election led to another armed conflict in the city. By 2010, the conflict had assumed another dimension – the bombing of Christian dominated areas (Kabong and Angwan Rukuba) and recreation centres on Christmas Eve. While this conflict still occurs

intermittently, the 2001, 2008 and 2010 episodes are considered to be the most violent in the history of the city (Taft & Haken, 2015).

3.0 Methodology

As a qualitative research that analyses journalistic role in conflicts through theoretical lenses, the paper identifies key thinkers in the mediatisation and news framing debates whose arguments suggest media involvement in Jos conflicts. The uniqueness of this paper is its critical examination of how this role come about – what characterises media practices that produce news frames. Patton (2015, p. 522) explains that "because each qualitative study is unique, the analytical approach used will be unique". As such, Saldana (2016) adds that "no one [...] can claim final authority on the 'best' way to code qualitative data" (p. 69). In this article, a rather simplistic coding procedure which enables the use of theoretical frameworks in explaining journalistic role in the Jos conflicts has been adopted. The analyst applies the models to conflict reporting and explains their functions in this process.

For a givren phenomenon to be analysed theoretically, Corbin and Strauss (2015) argue that it should be done systematically, that is, the analyst can adopt any approach that would serve the purpose of the exercise. In that sense, this paper uses theoretical frameworks (which describe the functions of mediatisation and news framing in the conflicts) to understand media/journalists' relationship with the conflicts.

4.0 Theoretical framework underpinning the context: The frustration – aggression logic

This paper is understood from the theoretical lenses of mediatisation and news framing. While mediatisation describes media logic in news production, news framing suggests the way the narratives which constitute news are constructed. Both theories explain journalistic practices in many respects. For instance, understanding media logic is the first step in identifying journalists' role in the Jos conflict which in turn determines the brand of journalism they adopt. The Frustration-Aggression Theory of conflict precedes the two media theories employed in this paper. It explains the context of conflict in which social groups express their frustration through aggressive means when their expectations are not met.

This holds that people whose needs or expectations are not met feel a sense of frustration leading to behaviour change. Maier describes it as "frustration –instigated behaviour" (Maier, 1961, cited in Shorkey & Crocker, 1981, p. 376; Young, 2009) because exhibiting this new behaviour stems from frustration. The individual who is frustrated tries to depart from his state by taking an action that may offer him some relief. Sigmund Freud was said to have used the concept "frustration" to explain the external and internal factors that inhibit needs satisfaction (Shorkey & Crocker, 1981). He noted that there were obstacles to attaining satisfaction which results in the change in behaviour that is being translated in aggression, regression, fixation and resignation (Norman & Ryan, 2008; Shorkey & Crocker, 1981; Young, 2009). Young maintains that "each of the four characteristics illustrates a continued state of experienced interpersonal conflict, and none of the feelings associated with the characteristics directly helps an individual to attain a goal or meet a need" (2009, p. 286).

The Frustration – Aggression theory was adapted by John Dollard and his colleagues in 1939 to explain the violent behaviour – aggression – that emerges from frustration (Ademola, 2006). Scholars such as Young (2009), Hornik (1977), Anifowose (1982) and Feierabends (1969) have distinguished what people desire and what they get in the long run. According to Ademola (2006, p. 47),

Where expectation does not meet attainment, the tendency is for people to confront those they hold responsible for frustrating their ambitions [....] It is the outcome of frustration and [...] in a situation where the legitimate desires of an individual is denied either directly or by the indirect consequence of the way the society is structured, the feeling of disappointment may lead such a

person to express his anger through violence that will be directed at those he holds responsible or people who are directly or indirectly related to them.

This theory suggests a terrain of hostility, conflict, violence, disorder and despair; all of which are rooted in frustration and aggression. Our study presents the same scenario, a society characterized by ethnic and religious divides – where 'natives' and 'foreigners', 'Muslim North' and 'Christian South', 'Majority and Minority' ethnic groups have expressed their frustrations on account of alienation and denial of legitimacy. Their Frustration – Aggression antecedents have led to organized violence that has consumed the warring groups and other casualties.

Lerner (1958) had predicted that the mass media, as definers of the Frustration – Aggression model would create expectations that would not be met, as they make people to "imagine themselves as strange persons in strange situations, places and times" (p.52). In other words, Lerner maintains that the media's portrayal of events (in our circumstance – conflicts) can trigger a desire (want) which may not be achieved and could lead to frustration and fierce action- aggression.

The criticisms that have trailed the media coverage of the Jos crises – that they have instigated groups against one another rather than support peace initiatives aimed at uniting them (Galadima, 2011; Galadima, 2010; Golwa, 2011; Musa & Ferguson, 2013), hinged on Lerner's argument. The media have planted a seed of discord among the people who now feel that their ideologies, beliefs and cultures are at variance and cannot blend.

5.0 Mediatisation: Media involvement in conflict

'Mediatisation' has gained acceptance in communication studies in the last decade as researchers have coined it – notwithstanding grammatical rule of native English – to describe media influence on society. Recent research explains that the adoption of certain terms in institutionalized disciplines, such as communication, is necessary to provide a framework for solving problems across geo-linguistic boundaries (Couldry & Hepp, 2013). This somewhat ambiguous concept – like scientific inventions and the modus operandi of many disciplines – places the media at the heart of every human endeavour – culture, politics, economy, religion, conflict and so on. It suggests that the ongoing transformations in the world have absorbed the media into all aspects of human life in that the global community can no longer exist outside the media. Many years ago, the media were believed to perform the role of mediation which implied that they disseminated information to their audiences objectively without any form of attachment to the events they covered. They simply conveyed or transmitted messages but their involvement in this process of 'conveyance' or 'transmission' was not substantially significant. However, the research community has long past this tradition. Rather than situate mediation at the heart of the communication process, scholars are now researching media's capability of constructing issues and events (Cottle, 2006) or how they have infiltrated all domains of the society. Looking beyond mediation, therefore, translates to mediatisation.

Mediatisation is not easily defined. This explains the absence of a single definition of the concept by scholars (Deacon & Stanyer, 2014; Knoblauch, 2013). It also accounts for the current debate in which researchers have moved from analysing the mediating potentials of the media that make them channels of communication to explaining the complexities which characterize their new influential status of "a standalone institution with its own logic"(Nie, Kee, & Ahmad, 2014, p. 363). But fundamentally, there is a seeming common ground on the adoption of this concept in the purview of communication research; namely, that the media institutions and technologies exert some degree of influence on society which may be responsible for the changes that take place in the society (Christensen & Jansson, 2014; Deacon & Stanyer, 2014, 2015; Falasca, 2014; Hepp, 2013; Hepp, Hjarvard, & Lundby, 2015; Hepp & Krotz, 2014; Knoblauch, 2013; Krotz, 2014; Landerer, 2013; Livingstone & Lunt, 2014; Lundby, 2014). Going further to demonstrate this consensus, Falasca (2014, p. 583), for instance, refers to mediatisation as "a process in society where media have become increasingly influential", that

is, "the process of increasing dependency of society upon media and its logic" (Nie, et al., 2014, p. 363). Again, the issue of media logic expands the debate in mediatisation research. This is because there is a growing concern that the society is shaped by media logic and standards, rather than other actors and institutions – a notion which has been criticized (Deacon & Stanyer, 2014, 2015) as there may be other variables that lead to change.

Mediatisation has a German origin – mediatisierung (Couldry & Hepp, 2013; Livingstone, 2009; Nie et al., 2014) that emphasized the dominance of the media in nearly all aspects of life during the 20th century (Hepp, 2013). With evolving media technologies, individuals and institutions have increasingly relied on the media because media offerings have become convenient, affordable and dynamic (Nie, et al., 2014). There is a robust critique of this standpoint – not in terms of failure to recognize that the media are change agents but "this media-centric narrative of change" would require "full appreciation of joint sufficiency" (Deacon &Stanyer, 2014, p. 1041). The 'joint sufficiency', in their view, encompasses the media and other variables that transmit change. Thus, Hepp (2013) introduces two traditions of mediatisation - the institutionalist and social constructivist traditions. He argues that "while the 'institutionalist tradition' has until recently mainly been interested in traditional mass media, whose influence is described as 'media logic', the 'social construtivist tradition' is more interested in everyday communication practices - especially related to digital media and personal communication - and focuses on changing communicative construction of culture and society" (2013, p. 616). This categorization has implications. The institutionalist tradition places the media in the capacity of influential behaviour driven by 'media logic'. In the social constructivist tradition, other actors in the digital media space contribute to the change.

There are key thinkers of differing orientations in mediatisation research that are crucial to this research. First, Deacon & Stanyer (2014) articulate the view that agents of transformation should include non-media actors and that the notion of 'powerful media influence' advanced in mediatisation literature (Hepp, 2013; Hjarvard, 2008, 2009; Stromback & Esser, 2014) has been exaggerated. The common catchphrases of these authors include the ability of the media to "exert an influence on culture and society" (2013, p.615), or "how media exert influence" (2014, p.4) and how they "mould the way people communicate, act and sustain relationships with each other" (2009, p.175). Although Deacon & Stanyer (2014) do not dismiss this potential influence of the media, they argue that different causes of change, other than media agents, could be identified. In their view, the notion of mediatisation suggests "an account of change that is driven by narrow set of causal variables - the mass media and/or ICTs - which are seen as powerful enough on their own to bring about change overtime [...], there is a tendency to see these agents of mediatisation as both necessary and sufficient to bring about change in all contexts" (Deacon & Stanyer, 2014, p. 1041). These scholars insist that since media logic is not sufficient to change communicative practice, mediatisation, in which media logic is embedded, is incapable of providing a theoretical framework for advancing research on cultural changes influenced by the media. In their defence emerging from a critique by Hepp et al., (2015), Deacon & Stanyer (2015, p. 655) admit that media "role and power may be changing in profound and predictable ways", however, they criticize "the rise of a concept (mediatisation – my emphasis) that claims to provide a 'holistic' theoretical framework for explaining and analysing such processes". But whether the argument by Deacon and Stanyer is substantive or lacks merit, the mediatisation debate demonstrates commitment to scholarship. As researchers engage in this debate, and as they gain understanding about media involvement in everyday life, there may be consensus in literature on mediatisation research. As explained by Knoblauch (2013, p. 297), "the notion of mediatisation lacks certainly an exact definition [...,] there is quite substantial disagreement as to what the word may mean in theoretical terms and in terms of empirical research. The disagreement is not so much routed in the lack of definition or ambiguity of definition but rather in the lack of a theoretical framework in which the two most divergent aspects of its meaning can be understood". Despite the uncertainty emerging from mediatisation discourse with scholars giving this field of research labels such as 'word/term' (Knoblauch, 2013) or 'concept' (Christensen & Jansson, 2014; Deacon & Stanyer, 2014, Falasca, 2014; Falasca 2014; Nie, et al., 2014), it is introduced as a theory by Hepp et al., (2015) who argue

that "the research field's understanding of mediatisation has matured, theoretically as well as empirically" (p.315). They maintain that there is a growing conceptual and empirical research which explains mediatisation processes in different aspects of life-politics, religion, culture, education, commerce, even conflicts. Thus, it has helped to provide the framework for several empirical studies in mediatisation and the efforts at theorizing this field of research are "still in the early stages" (2015, p. 315). These scholars argue that if much is being done in this regard; that is, current effort at providing conceptual and empirical support to mediatisation research, the emerging 'concept' or 'term' should assume the status of a theory. In their own rights as contributors to the debate, they dismiss the claim by Deacon & Stanyer (2014, 2015) and, perhaps, their supporters that 'mediatisation theory' focuses on media role as sole agents of change. Hepp et al., (2015) maintain that Deacon and Stanyer's critique of mediatisation research has an erroneous bearing, as the authors are blind to the fact that 'mediacentric' and 'media-centred' approaches to understanding mediatisation discourse have differing meanings. As a result of this perceived misconception, they offer this explanation:

Being 'media-centric' is a one-sided approach to understanding the underplay between media communications, culture and society, whereas being 'media-centred' involves a holistic understanding of the various intersecting social forces at the same time as we allow ourselves to have a particular perspective and emphasize on the role of the media in these processes (Hepp et al., (2015, p. 316).

Hepp et al.'s, (2015) view suggests that while the media are at the heart of all human endeavours, the holistic understanding of these endeavours and how media logic is embedded in them underscores this 'media-centred' pathway. Perhaps, if this is recognized in mediatisation debate, then the standalone (media-centric) notion which excludes the intersection of social groups would not be contemplated. Also, while recognizing the influential position the media occupy in everyday life as documented in communication literature (Deacon & Stanyer 2014) which implies that news about 'everyday life' – politics, religion, health etc., is shaped by journalists (Falasca 2014), it provides a theoretical foundation for interdisciplinary engagement in mediatisation since the process involves analysis at different levels (Stromback, 2011). Going a step further, scholars from all disciplines will find this evolving theory useful for examining media impact on such disciplines. This is why Hepp et al., (2015) have recommended that "what we can bring to such an interdisciplinary dialogue is our experience as experts in researching processes of mediated communication ('mediation') and their transforming potential ('mediatisation')" (p.316).

Drawing on Hepp et al.'s, (2015) mediatisation theory, as they recall that "mediatisation has emerged as an important concept and theoretical framework for considering the interplay between media, culture and society" (2015, p.314), this paper explores how the intermittent Jos ethnic and religious conflicts have been 'mediatized'. First, it recognizes the media logic that could influence conflict reporting in the area which may involve journalists' strategies of constructing news frames that reveal the interests they serve. Second, it considers other factors such as cumulative exposure to violence, ethnic or religious alliance etc., (various intersecting social forces) that may influence journalistic practices in that context. Conflict, like any social, political or religious activity in which human beings are participants, attracts the media which, in turn, employ their logic to report such conflict. Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2015, p. 1323) have pointed out that war and conflict "are reliant or dependent upon media and, consequently, have been transformed to increasingly follow media logics; they are mediatized". The narratives of the Jos conflicts presumably conform to media logic and the reality about the conflicts which this logic produces, most probably, constitutes the reality of the audience.

Cottle (2006) has theorised mediatised conflict for an engaged discourse drawing attention to how the media have been implicated in conflicts. He notes:

The media are capable of enacting and performing conflicts as well as reporting and representing them; that is to say, they are 'doing something' over and above disseminating ideas, images and information. The media's relationship to conflict, therefore, is often not best thought of in

terms of 'reflection' or even 'representation' given its more active performative involvement and constitutive role within them (2006, p.9).

The metaphor of enactment described above suggests the way in which the media portray conflicts – their active construction of the narratives of conflicts because, rather than provide the accounts, they align with social groups thereby 'doing something' beyond mediation. Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2015) have admitted that the media are active participants in conflicts because their contents tend to "emerge from nowhere" (p.1320) which often leads to one social group pitching camp against the other.

One of Cottle's (2006) three paradigms that explain mediatised conflicts in the context of current research is manufacturing consent. It emphasizes the overarching political economy orientation being examined by media and communication scholars. It holds that the media have vested interests in the subjects they cover, as a result of which the views of the political class dominate their contents while other social groups are marginalized. This, unarguably, is a departure from the perceived tradition of the media as an institution that serves common interests. Herman and Chomsky (1988) have postulated a propaganda model which aptly illustrates this scenario. They argue that the media resort to propaganda when they carry out their functions in the society where wealth and conflicts of class interest take the centre stage. They explain the model as follows:

A propaganda model focuses on this inequality of wealth and power and its multilevel effects on mass media interests and choices. It traces the routes by which money and power are able to filter out the news to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public (1988, p.2).

Herman and Chomsky identify five 'news filters' that propel the propaganda model. Although this model explains US media report on 'worthy' and 'unworthy' victims of war (Cottle 2006), it implies that news materials pass through filters that are structured on political economy. First, the large media companies that withstand the harsh economic reality of society are profit driven, owned and controlled by those with enormous wealth. Second, the media rely on advertising revenues generated from wealthy individuals and their corporations. Third, the media rely on the information provided by the political class and the business community. Fourth, the 'flak' regime, which the authors describe as negative comments on media contents (e.g., phone calls, law suits, emails, petitions), largely emerges from people with great financial influence. Fifth, their analogy of 'anticommunism as a national religion and control mechanism' which was geared toward weakening the ruling class during communism established the struggle against 'the enemy'. In that sense, the media helped in enacting this ideology. These filters define news worthy contents of the media because "the news material must pass through successful filters, leaving only the cleansed residue fit to print" (Herman and Chomsky 1988, p. 2).

Apparently, the theory of mediatised conflict, in which the propaganda model is embedded, has helped us to understand how media 'do things' with conflicts. The prolonged ethnic and religious conflicts in Jos border on the struggle for identity involving the perceived 'indigenes' and 'settlers' as well as 'Christians' and 'Muslims'.

6.0 News framing of conflict

Framing is at the heart of conflict reporting. It describes the journalistic process of communicating perspectives of reality to consumers of news and making them think and act in a particular way. Its classification as a theory (e.g., D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010; Scheufele, 1999), an approach (e.g., Pan & Kosicki, 1993) or a paradigm (e.g., Entman, 1993) is a subject of debate in communication studies. The narratives of events are constructed or coded to serve a purpose beginning with selection from a plurality of 'newsworthy' elements. This demonstrates the alteration of a portion of the perceived reality which gives way to manipulation of the audience. For example, at the heart of a large body of research on media coverage of international affairs is the creation of a negative worldview about the

developing world, especially the Middle East and Africa that have long been thought to have high conflict prevalence in the lastdecades (Wallensteen & Sollenberg, 1996, 1997). As a result of this "predominantly negative coverage of the developing world" which demonstrates that "international news coverage is Western-centric" (Beaudoin & Thorson, 2002, p. 48), the Western media are said to be flawed. The reason for this criticism is that the media of the West consistently choose to emphasize the negative and exclude the positive elements of the news on developing world which, in turn, influence the perceptions of their audiences. The choice to include and exclude the variety of media contents constitutes framing.

Recent research has recognized that Walter Lippmann's postulation about the power of the media to put "pictures in our heads" provided the platform for scholarship on news framing (Coleman, 2010). Further studies (e.g., D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010) have maintained that framing is the most utilized theory and "a rapidly growing area of study in communication studies" (2010, p.1), even though it has been criticized for lack of standardized system of analysis which is synonymous with science research (Giles, 2010).

A common definition of news framing which runs through a number of studies (e.g., Archetti, 2007; Brewer & Gross, 2010; Coleman, 2010; Houston, Pfefferbaum, & Rosenholtz, 2012; Kuypers, 2010; Scheufele, 1999) is by Robert Entman (1993). It states that framing is to "select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way to provide a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

The theory of framing was developed by social psychologist Goffman who discovered that public perception about social reality is influenced by media frames (Falkheimer & Olsson, 2015). This explanation is taken a step further. For example, two media sociologists have described this news making process as a "strategic action involving a conscious choice of words and other devices to achieve desired effects" (Vincze, 2014, p. 568); "rhetorical and stylistic choices, reliably identified in news, that offer the interpretations of the topics treated and are a consistent part of the news environment" (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997, pp. 39-40). Their views echo the view of Yoon and Gwangho (2002, p. 92) that "news making is not random but patterned activities of reporters", which implies that frames "are conscious or unconscious sets of journalists' perceived opinions on issues" (Hong, 2013, p. 89). In this sense, the construction of reality rests squarely with the journalists whose actions define their audiences' perceptions of reality. As noted at the outset about Western media frames 'against' the developing world, journalists tend to be economical with truth; as such, news making process is flawed because it does not reflect reality of the world as it is often presumed (Hong, 2013; Schudson, 2011). Their work entails making 'hard' decisions by choosing from a plethora of ideas or facts about the conditions of the world and assembling them in a certain manner that they become the narratives of the real world (Phillips, 2015). This inclusion and exclusion strategy employed by the journalists is geared toward making their audiences to think in a particular way – their own way. Scholars of decision making discipline tend to agree that good decisions evolve from logic and objectivity whereas bad ones are as a result of the decision maker's emotional involvement (Frame, 2013) However, Frame is opposed to this tradition and proposes a new paradigm that transcends logic and objectivity. He argues that detaching oneself from decision making is itself illogical because of the human and social elements of the process. This argument seems relevant to news framing discourse which provides a theoretical base for current research. The reason is that in journalism what constitutes news is a matter of choice by the news makers. Journalists prioritize alternatives by constructing texts 'suitable' for their audiences which their decisions have gained. They immerse themselves in the events they cover (Seib, 2013) - a paradigm shift from traditional good decision making. News, therefore, "is not a mirror of reality. It is a representation of the world, and all representations are selective" (Schudson, 2011, p. 26). This explanation lies at the heart of Frame's (2013) idea of decision making. He rejects the rationality of decision making or its objective coloration. As journalists' news construction emerges from decision making – a social activity, Frame argues that such cannot be detached from human influence because

people are naturally selfish. This view supports the reasoning that journalists make framing decisions based on human subjectivity (Ewart& McLean, 2015; Fuller, 2010; Giles, 2010). The assertion is further hinged on the reality that "people [journalists –italics researcher's emphasis] have personal perspectives and agendas and possess dramatic variations and capabilities. Quite often a decision is made by one set of people, executed by another set, is beneficial to yet another set, and is resisted by still another set" (Frame, 2013, p. 8). For journalists, the inclusion and exclusion criteria upon which news frames are coded suggest that their actions are well thought-out, and aimed at achieving a goal. They weigh the prevailing options and decide on the portions that meet these criteria – what they want their audiences to know at a given time and the impact it would have on them. They determine news tastes by formulating words, catchphrases and sentences that advertise the news to make it meaningful to their audiences. This journalistic tradition is synonymous with Frame's (2013) concept of making mindful decisions that are deliberate and consequential. For him, anyone who engages in this decision making has an aim – in the context of current research – it is to pacify media audiences.

Frames could be 'issue-specific' – coded in specific contexts – or 'generic' which deals with general contexts (Hong, 2013). Recent research reveals that many media frames focus on general issues and are representative of journalists' reality which influences the perceptions of the audience (Shahin, 2015). Shahin discovers that in these frames, human actors are identified as being responsible for the actions in which they are mentioned. In other words, the frames emphasize identification of subjects. For example, in his study of the coverage of terrorism, victims and aggressors were identified in the frames, ascribing to his Blame Frame and Explain Frame paradigm. The criteria postulated above are significant to the current research. Drawing from Shahin's (2015) model, the strategies of journalists reporting the Jos conflicts and the reports about the conflicts should be examined in terms of who is responsible for the conflicts (Blame Frame) and what the journalists or their reports tend to convey (Explain Frame).

These conditions under which this analysis is undertaken point to framing analysis. As Giles and Shaw (2009)have noted that analysing media frames entails identifying the story and its character, examining its narrative form and language use as well as making generalisations and final analysis. The authors, here, have articulated Shahin's (2015) Blame Frame – Explain Frame model in great detail. Meanings of the different frames can be derived from the components embedded in this model. The strategies of reporting (how journalists construct news) and the function of that construction (the role each communication plays in a given context) are at the heart of conflict reporting which explains journalistic role conception and performance. In that sense, this paper suggests that the perceived reality of the violent conflicts in Jos emerges from the framing of news by journalists reporting the conflicts. How they assemble and publish or broadcast 'facts' about conflicts to their audiences constitutes framing.

7.0 Implications and conclusion

Journalists use the media to achieve goals set by religious groups to which they have pledged their allegiance. For example, where a dominant ethnic group is made up of Christian majority and Muslim minority or vice versa, the minority voice would be silenced in the media, even if such media are public funded. This ethnic and religious motivated media logic has made Oso (2011, p.127) to point out that "critical analysis, investigative depth journalism has more or less disappeared in Nigerian journalism. Ponderous essays and opinion articles now fill the pages of the newspapers. In-house productions and documentaries have been replaced by talk-shows, phone-in-programmes and video drama on air". All these express the journalists' interests and tend to direct their audiences on the path to follow. A study that was conducted to examine the pattern of coverage of southern and northern newspapers in the country has established that religious, ethnic and regional interests reflected in all the media (Galadima, 2010).

From the foregoing, a major feature of mediatisation theory – media logic – has been employed by journalists to re-enact conflict narratives. It means that the 'reality' which this logic produces is defined

by a number of interests implying that reality about the conflicts is yet to emerge. The reports are not necessarily credible. The journalists represent these identities of Muslim 'settler' and Christian 'indigene', as such; their audiences are fed with enemy images and stereotypes. To some extent, media choices are influenced by the ideology of 'ours' and 'theirs' and the superimposition of the ideology by the journalists has become a routine. This is why the media have come under public scrutiny and are believed to be biased.

Reporting ethnic and religious conflict is complex especially when content providers or those who manage the media share membership of warring social groups. The output of conflict journalists reflects this diversity as their ethnic and religious identities are entrenched. They impose media logic on their audiences through news framing and make them have a common understanding of reality from their own point of view. Essentially, media involvement in ethnic and religious conflicts – the mediatized conflicts – continues to stimulate research in media and communication discipline, which suggests that media logic has interfered with reality about the conflicts in Jos. While there seems to be a consensus on how this logic has played out; that is, journalists' reporting of conflicts along ethnic or religious lines, the point to note is that they can neither detach themselves from, nor provide substantially objective narratives of the conflicts. The ideal would be to do otherwise, but media logic dictates journalistic practices throughout the world. There is no alternative to mediatisation of ethnic and religious conflicts in Jos.

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