

## REPORTAGE OF SECURITY CHALLENGES IN *ALAROYE* NEWSPAPER

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### **Abstract**

Security challenges ranging from activities of the Islamic sect – Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, ritual killings, the menace of Fulani herders, violent protests, to mention just a few, are the foremost security challenges to Nigerian citizens and government in recent times. These menaces have led to a massive loss of lives and properties in the country. Typically, the mass media exercises observation of the environment to inform their heterogeneous audiences, readers, viewers and listeners of the reality of their environment and put them on the awareness of necessary precautions and adjustments that need to be made. This paper examines the coverage of these menaces in *Alaroye*, a foremost Yoruba medium newspaper. The study, relying on agenda setting, media framing and corporate social responsibility theories, content analysed *Alaroye* from January 2021 to December 2021. The study found that indigenous newspapers do not give adequate attention to coverage of security challenges.

**Keywords:** *Banditry, Boko- Haram, Indigenous Newspaper, Kidnapping, Ritual Killings, Security Challenges.*

### **Introduction**

Nigeria, in recent years has witnessed several security challenges ranging from violent crises between herders and farmers in various parts of the country to incessant kidnappings for ransom, killings, terrorism by Boko Haram Islamic sect,

and violent protests, to mention just a few. These activities have resulted in massive dislocation of the fabrics of our national lives. Talabi and Adefemi (2018:61-62) point out that Boko Haram's violent activities in the Northern zone have caused Fulani herders to move to other streets in most Nigerian cities, farmlands, and remote villages. They emphasised that Nigerian media occupies a vantage position in resolving/reducing security challenges through publications that help shape the minds of their readers while calling for the attention of those in positions of authority to such issues. In support of this, Munir (2013) suggests that media mediation is important in resolving crisis by promoting discussion through communication.

### **Review of Security and Insecurity in Nigeria**

The concept of security foresees a situation where appropriate plans of action are put in place to protect the lives and properties of citizens and infrastructures of the state from aggressive tendencies. In other words, it is a situation that enables citizens to live normal lives in peace and safety without undue threat, harm and intimidation from any quarter. Security envisages protection from all forms of destruction concerning citizens' economic, physical, social and psychological well-being. Insecurity, on the other hand, refers to the absence of security. In the opinion of Ezemonye (2011), it is “a state of being not secure ...”. According to Ofomegbe and Orittesesan (2012), insecurity involves acts of violence to create trepidation in the society.

Security is a state doctrinal principle from ancient times that imposes the duty of protecting people from violence and harm to governments and enhancing their welfare. This principle is captured as *Salus Populi suprema lex* (the supreme law is the safety of people) in Latin dictum. The Nigerian 1999 constitution as amended captures this sacred principle in its Fundamental Objective Principle and Directive Principles of State Policy (S.14(2)(b)). The section states, "The security and welfare of the people is the primary purpose of government."

### **Insecurity in Nigeria**

Insecurity has been a grave matter of concern for the Nigerian citizens and governmental authorities since Nigeria gained independence in 1960. Efforts of successive governments to prioritise and explore solutions to the menace have been to no avail. Expectedly, the challenge has increased in recent times. Williams (2015) sees insecurity not only as fear of every Nigerian but as a theme of discussion whenever and wherever two or more Nigerians converge.

Some of these activities include the wanton loss of lives and properties in nearly all the states in Northern Nigeria due to Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, bombing, ritual killings, stealing, sporadic shooting of unarmed and innocent

citizens, burning of churches, mosques, police stations, kidnapping of women and school children, rape, murder, armed robbery, political crises, Fulani herdsmen terror attacks in almost all parts of the country, destruction of oil facilities by Niger Delta militants, etc. Many families have lost their loved ones and properties and many citizens have been rendered homeless. These have had grave consequences on Nigeria's national image and development. Consequently, Nigeria has been listed among the most terrorised nations in the world.

Ujomu (2021), Onifade *et al.* (2013), Acholonu (2012) and Afowowe (2012) have all contributed to the discourse on insecurity in Nigeria. Ujomu (2021) analyses insecurity in reference to its unpleasant effects on economic and industrial development remarking that insecurity is an ethical and moral condition of the state and if the country is going to achieve a secure and flourishing society with a strong economy capable of realising its full developmental potentials, the state must redefine the ethical basis for social action. Onifade *et al.* (2013) agree with Ujomu. They opine that morals constitute the bedrock that breeds and fosters security and insecurity in the country. They affirm the country's insecurity has left her industrially stagnant and economically backward. Acholonu (2012) sees insecurity as a global affair. He argues that the incidence of insecurity across the globe is an indicator of worldwide risk. The incidences of insecurity indicate that today's world is growing more insecure for humans. According to Afowowe (2012), insecurity has persistently claimed lives of millions and destroyed material goods running into billions of naira.

### **The Place of Media in Securing the Nation**

As a means of information dissemination, the mass media consistently surveys the environment and informs the community's people about the realities of their environment. More frequently, the media documents news about society's realities in mediated messages such as news, editorials, features, pictures, and letters to the editor, among other contents, to inform and keep its heterogeneous audience(s) aware of such realities. Olagunju (1992), as cited by Olayede (2011), posits that the mass media has helped create public awareness and campaigns against social menaces and vices.

The mass media plays an essential role in upholding proper functioning of the society by performing the Harold Lasswell ascribed functions of the media: transmission of socio-cultural heritage, correlation of parts and surveillance. All these functions and other functions of the media provide an opportunity to help secure the citizens and, by extension, the nation.

Every class of readers can find some significant, current, and interesting information in newspapers. Contemporary newspapers adopt design elements that

make information easily accessible to the readers. For example, lead stories have large and bold headlines, while graphics complement stories. A study on the dissemination of information concerning insecurity in rural communities in Nigeria established that newspapers are generally more effective than radio and television.

Newspapers are classified using multifarious templates such as coverage, language, content, etc. Indigenous newspapers are classified based on their coverage and the language of publication. The indigenous newspapers are not left out in performing these roles. Over the years, newspapers have performed a noteworthy role by disseminating varied information. Newspapers can reach large, far-flung, and heterogeneous audiences. They have the advantage of permanence and multi-exposure. They disseminate information daily, covering nearly every aspect of human endeavours ranging from religion, socio-economy, politics, entertainment, and education, among others. Igbeka and Ola (2010) opine that indigenous newspapers provide current information on local, state/provincial, national, and global issues. They are part of well-read periodicals that are available and accessible to most people of all ages and callings.

### ***Alaroye as a Yoruba Indigenous Newspaper***

*Alaroye* is a Yoruba medium newspaper published weekly by the World Information Agents, Lagos, Nigeria. The paper was first published in 1985 (Fasan, 2018). The newspaper's primary objective is to preserve Yoruba culture and literacy. The newspaper emphasis insightful, investigative and balanced journalism in contemporary issues, most especially politics.

*Alaroye* is an innovation in community journalism with strict adherence to the basic canons of professional journalism. These attributes, perhaps, earned it a call by the Federal Government for partnership for the publication of her policies at the grassroots tier of governance. Not only that, but those attributes have also made it survive the volatile and competitive newspaper market in the country. Salawu (2006:7) describes *Alaroye* as the prime local language newspaper with a circulation figure of about 150,000 per week. The paper is available in Nigeria and anywhere in the world where Yoruba speakers reside. In the opinion of Fasan (2018), *Alaroye* is currently the most successful indigenous-language newspaper of all time.

### **The Current Study**

The current study aims to determine the coverage of security challenges in *Alaroye*, a Yoruba language newspaper. To achieve the aim of the study, the following specific objectives were set:

(a) Identify the volume of coverage by *Alaroye* in reporting insecurity issues in Nigeria.

- (b) Unravel the story types in which insecurity stories are presented in *Alaroye*.
- (c) Know the prominence given to insecurity reports by *Alaroye*.
- (d) Find out the direction of the stories on insecurity by *Alaroye*.

### **Research Questions**

The study will interrogate the following:

- 1: What is the volume of coverage by *Alaroye* in reporting insecurity issues in Nigeria?
- 2: In which story types are insecurity stories presented in *Alaroye*?
- 3: What is the prominence given to insecurity news reports by *Alaroye*?
- 4: What is the direction of insecurity stories in *Alaroye*?

### **Theoretical framework**

Theories are important to research work as they provide ground for understanding the phenomena of the study. Therefore, this study is driven by three theories: agenda-setting, framing and social responsibility theories.

#### **Agenda Setting Theory**

This theory is premised on the idea that the media determines what people think about while the media's audience is said to set their agenda on daily information for conversation based on what the media wants the public to talk about (Talabi & Adefemi, 2017). According to Aririguzoh (2014), the theory emanated from McCombs and Shaw in 1974 and established that the mass media influences the audience. The agenda-setting theory is premised on two basic assumptions. First, the media filters and shapes what we see rather than just reflecting stories. The second is that the more attention is given to an issue by media, the more the likelihood of the public considering such issue as important.

McCombs and Shaw (1974), cited in Aririguzoh (2014), view agenda setting as the impact of mass media on individuals in shaping their cognition about change by structuring their world. This makes McCombs and Shaw assert that there is an affirmative relationship between what the media emphasises and what the individuals see as significant. This implies that what the media sees as important is also seen by the members of the public as cogent. Thus, the media not only tells the people what to do but can and what to think about through the coverage the media gives or refuses to give to events. People's behaviour and attitudes can be affected by what the media feeds them (Aririgu, bold). Folarin (2002) identifies the following as elements involved in agenda setting:

- The quantity or frequency of reporting by the media
- Prominence given to the reporting.

- The degree of the conflict generated in the reports.
- Cumulative media-specific effects over time

### **Social Responsibility Theory**

According to Baran and Davis (2010:11), as cited in Talabi and Adefemi (2017:65), social responsibility theory calls on the media to be responsible for fostering productive and creative communities. The theory suggests that media should engage in prioritising cultural pluralism - by becoming the voice of the people not just the elite groups or dominant groups in the society. The theory is premised on a system of ethics that emphasises that decisions and actions must be ethically validated. In a situation where the actions or decisions of the media cause harm to society or the environment, then the media would be considered socially irresponsible. Moral values that are intrinsic in society produce a distinction between what is right and what is wrong. In this way, social fairness is believed (by most) to be in the “right,” but more frequently than not, this “fairness” is absent. Every individual has a responsibility to act in a way that is positive to society and not exclusively to the individual.

Indigenous newspapers have developed a system of social responsibility that is modified to their immediate environment. If social responsibility is maintained within an organisation, the employees and the environment are held equal to the company’s economy. Maintaining social responsibility within a company ensures the integrity of the society and the environment are protected. Often, the ethical implications of a decision/action are overlooked for personal gain and the benefits are usually material. This frequently manifests itself in companies that attempt to cheat environmental regulations. When this happens, government interference is necessary.

### **Framing Theory**

Kalu (2010) notes that the fundamental principle of framing theory is that the media focuses on certain events and then places them within a field of meaning. The media organises and presents events and issues in the way audiences interpret what they imply. In this case, how an issue is presented (the frame) influences people's choices. This affects people’s attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour because it connects a particular meaning or interpretation to an issue.

### **Research Methodology**

This study adopted content analysis as research method. Wimmer and Dominick (2012) posit that the choice of content analysis as a research design rests on its systematic, objective, and quantitative nature. It is also favoured for its unbiased and heuristic tendencies in describing communication contents. The population of

the study is the entire newspaper issue for one year, from January 2021 to December 2021. The rationale for selecting *Alaroye* is because it is the most famous indigenous newspaper circulated in the Southwest. It is also the most frequently published newspaper available on the stand. According to Fasan (2018), *Alaroye* is currently the most successful indigenous-language newspaper ever. On this background, the *Alaroye Newspaper* is the choice for this study. *Alaroye* is published weekly; hence, the total population of the study is 48 editions published in the year. The entire population was sampled.

**Content Category and Unit of Analysis**

The content categories of this study are prominence and frame. The units of analysis for the study are news stories, features, pictures, and editorials.

**Inter-coder Reliability**

For validity and reliability, the researchers employed two coders to independently code the newspapers' contents using the same coding sheet. This is to ensure the legitimacy of the findings and curtail errors. This aligns with Bello's (2019) view while citing Wimmer (2003). He suggests that reliability and validity will be ensured if coders use the same coding, evaluation, and analysis procedure. Bello (2019), citing Hosti (1969), observes that inter-coder reliability can be calculated using different methods.

This study adopted Hosti's formula in determining the percentage between two coders.

$$ICR = \frac{2M}{N1+N2}$$

Therefore, M = Number of coding decisions on which both coders agree N1&N2 = total number of coding decision by first and second coders.

**Table 1: Weekly Sample of *Alaroye Newspaper* for the year 2021**

	<b>Week 1-16</b>	<b>Week 17-32</b>	<b>Week 33-48</b>	<b>Total</b>
Story type	46	48	53	147
Theme	37	25	31	93
Prominence	31	24	29	84
Geographical locations	2	1	1	4
Total	116	98	114	<b>328</b>

**Source:** *Content Analysis 2022*

Table 1 shows that 328 news stories were published on security and insecurity between January and December 2021.

**Table 2: Geographical Coverage of Insecurity News Reported from January to December 2021 by *Alaroye Newspaper***

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
South	3	1	7	2	3	3	1	4	2	1	4	2	33(10.1%)
South west	22	14	10	7	26	15	18	16	11	6	9	18	172(26.2%)
South east	5	1	3	4	2	3	2	1	1	3	7	3	35(10.7%)
North	3	1	9	3	5	2	2	4	3	2	1	5	40(12.2%)
North central	2	-	1	2	-	2	5	3	2	-	-	2	19(5.8%)
North west	2	-	-	5		1	1	2	2	-	-	5	18(5.5%)
North east	1	1	2	2		1	-	1	1	-	-	2	11(3.4%)
Total	22 (6.7%)	18 (5.5%)	32 (9.8%)	25 (7.6%)	36 (10.9%)	27 (8.2%)	29 (8.8%)	31 (9.4%)	38 (11.6%)	12 (3.6%)	21 (6.4%)	37 (11.2%)	328 (100%)

**Source:** *Content Analysis 2022*

Table 2 shows the geographical coverage of *Alaroye Newspaper* report from January to December 2020, where 6.7% of insecurity-related news were reported in January, with 5.5% reported in February, 9.8% in March, 7.6% in April, 10.9% in May, 8.2% in June, 5.4% in July, 9.4% in August, 11.6% in September, 3.6% in October, 6.4% in November, 11.2% coverage in December, respectively. However, the table revealed that the highest coverage of insecurity was presented in September with 11.6%, with news focusing on southwest which constitutes 26.2% of the entire coverage, followed by North which constitutes 12.2%.

**Table 3: Volume of Monthly Coverage by *Alaroye Newspaper* on Insecurity News**

Volume of coverage	January-April	May-August	September-December	Total
Lead story	18	22	30	70(21.3%)
Features	27	11	4	42(12.8%)
Straight news	51	66	53	170(51.8%)
Picture stories	11	14	7	32(9.7%)
Center spread	3	9	2	14(4.3%)
Total	110	122	96	328(100%)

**Source:** *Content Analysis 2022*

Table 3 shows the volume of coverage given to insecurity news in Nigeria. From the analysis presented in the table, out of 328 news gathered, 21.3% of the coverage was reported through the lead stories, 12.8% was reported as features

stories, 51.8% of the news report were straight news, 9.7% were covered with picture stories while 4.3% were presented in the centre spread of the newspapers.

**Table 4: The Types of Story in which *Insecurity* Activities are Presented in *Alaroye Newspaper***

Story types	January-April	May-August	September-December	Total
Straight News	45	29	52	126(38.4%)
Features	29	15	32	76(23.1%)
Picture Stories	23	31	41	95(28.9%)
Editorials	9	14	8	31(9.4%)
Total	106	89	133	328

*Source: Content Analysis 2022*

Table 4 indicates that 38.4% of straight news reports were recorded, 23.1% were feature news stories, 28.9% were picture stories, while 9.4% were recorded in editorials. The table suggests that a higher percentage of news on insecurity was reported as straight news, representing 38.4%.

**Table 5: Prominence Given to *Insecurity* News Report by *Alaroye Newspaper***

	January-April	May-August	September-December	Total
Frontpage	72	36	55	163(49.6%)
Inside page	31	47	49	127(38.7%)
Back page	13	15	10	38(11.5%)
Total	116	98	114	328(100%)

*Source: Content Analysis 2022*

Table 5 shows that out of the 328 (100%) insecurity news reported, 49.6% were found on the front pages of the newspapers, 38.7% were recorded on the inside pages, while 11.5 % were placed on the back pages. Since prominence is the function of placement of news on front pages, inside pages, or back pages, insecurity issues were given adequate prominence by *Alaroye Newspaper* with 61.1% of the coverage.

**Table 6: The Direction of *Insecurity* Stories in *Alaroye***

Direction	January-April	May-August	September-December	Total
Positive	6	11	4	21 (6.4%)
Negative	77	81	72	230 (70.1%)
Neutral	21	30	16	67 (20.4%)
Total	104	132	92	328 (100%)

*Source: Content Analysis 2022*

Table 6 presents the direction of insecurity stories in Nigeria. The table shows that 6.4% of the reportage was positive, 70.1% negative, while 20.4% of the report constituted neutral news.

### **Discussion of Findings**

In this section, the researchers discussed the findings of the study in relation to the following research questions:

#### **Research Question 1: What is the volume of coverage by *Alaroye Newspaper* in reporting insecurity issues in Nigeria?**

The analysis made from tables 2, 3 and 4 above described the volume of coverage on insecurity-related news by *Alaroye Newspaper* whereby table 2 shows the geographical coverage of insecurity in *Alaroye Newspaper* and indicates that the highest coverage was made within the southwest region with 26.2% of the total news reported in 2021, followed by the North with 12.2%. Table 5 analysed the frequency at which *Alaroye Newspaper* reported insecurity-related issues in accordance with the selected weeks of publication of the news. However, it was revealed from the table that the highest coverage of insecurity news was reported within the 1st and 16<sup>th</sup>, i.e., January -April 2020 with the highest frequency of 35.4%. Table 4 shows the volume of coverage given to insecurity news in Nigeria. From the analysis presented in the table, out of 328 (100%) news gathered, 21.3% of the coverage was reported through the lead stories which was the highest recorded volume of the analysis.

The volume of coverage of insecurity news by *Alaroye Newspaper* was praiseworthy. All stories in the volumes got consideration in the newspapers. This aligns with the position of Griffin (1991) in Ngoan (2002:2), which suggests that media coverage may reflect existing public concern. However, the rate at which *Alaroye* covers matters of insecurity is very high and alarming.

#### **Research question 2: In which story types are insecurity stories presented in *Alaroye*?**

This research question was answered with table 4 of the above analysis on story types in which *insecurity* activities were reported in *Alaroye Newspaper*. The table revealed that 38.4% of the reports on the subject matter 'insecurity' were presented as straight news, 23.1% were of feature news stories, 28.9% were picture stories, while 9.4% were recorded in editorials. The table suggested a higher percentage of news on insecurity was reported as straight news, representing 38.4% having more stories than other story types.

Nwabueze (2009:32) opines that, unlike feature stories, straight news reports do not contain interpretations, forecasts, or any information outside what has happened, except the views of people interviewed while gathering facts for the

story. Feature stories on insecurity in Nigeria were not many in the selected newspapers. Nwanze (1999:48) in Ofor and Obiorah (2012:41) states that feature stories extended the horizon of news through explanations and other attractions that might have slipped the thoughts and pens of reporters. Feature stories contain background information and news behind the news. Editorials on insecurity were very few.

**Research question 3: What is the prominence given to insecurity news reports by *Alaroye*?**

This research question was answered with table 5, which shows that out of the 328 (100%) insecurity news reported, 49.6% were found on the front pages of the newspapers, 38.7% were recorded on the inside pages, while 11.5 % were placed on the back pages. Therefore, the highest level of prominence of insecurity news can be found in the front pages of all the *Alaroye* newspapers published during the period studied. This is in support of social responsibility theory of the press.

**Research question 4: What is the direction of insecurity stories in *Alaroye*?**

The direction of stories about insecurity news reportage in *Alaroye Newspaper* was classified as positive, negative and neutral stories. Neutral stories cannot be used to ascertain an actual state of insecurity. Hence, there were more negative stories than positive stories. Although most stories on insecurity were reported on the front pages, *Alaroye Newspaper* gave prominence to insecurity news regarding the coverage volume. This shows why McCombs and Shaw (1972) in Ngoa (2012:5) insist that for newspapers, the emphasis is on front page lead or headline stories. To a reasonable extent, the above presentation and data analysis have answered the research questions and satisfied the objectives stated at the study's inception. However, the research questions that have been serving as a guide in directing this study served as a good platform for the discussion.

The findings indicate that *Alaroye Newspaper*, as an indigenous newspaper has given relatively significant attention to coverage of security issues in Nigeria. Do other indigenous newspapers give prominence to the issue of insecurity in Nigeria? The answer to this question can be the focus of another paper.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

The essence of this study is to ascertain coverage of security and insecurity in the Nigerian indigenous newspaper. It is a content analysis of *Alaroye* news reports from January to December 2021. To elicit the relevant data, the quantitative research method (content analysis) was deployed using coding sheet as the data gathering instrument. The result showed that *Alaroye Newspaper* substantially covered insecurity news, especially in the southwest region and some other regions in Nigeria, supported by 172 (26.2%) coverage of the total analysis. The

results of this study show that insecurity news coverage in Nigeria is a serious topic of interest to *Alaroye* indigenous newspaper, and it has been proven that the newspaper gave matters of insecurity wide coverage and the direction of reports of insecurity is negative. This is a pointer to the commitment of the medium to discouraging vices in society.

According to Udoudo and Diriyai (2012:91), mass media use in revealing rising insecurity in Nigeria is a way of exploring one of the trending issues of the country. However, it is pertinent to note that most crimes that breed insecurity have been classified into one form of terrorism or the other.

What this study shows so far is that the reporting of insecurity in *Alaroye Newspaper* is viral and estimable. From the findings of the study, the following recommendations are considered pertinent:

1. *Alaroye Newspaper*'s coverage of other critical issues should be reported.
2. *Alaroye Newspaper* should attach more value to insecurity issues by giving prominence to them.
3. Newspapers' coverage of insecurity issues should be balanced, and such security issues should be frequently reported.
4. Other indigenous newspapers should also cover insecurity issues in Nigeria.
5. The Nigerian government should pay more attention to the reportage of insecurity in the country.

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