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## **Journalistic Responsibilities amid Primordial Pressure in Reporting Conflict in Benue State, Nigeria**

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**Abstract:** *Conflict is a dangerous situation but when it is properly managed and reported, it becomes a blessing to the parties experiencing it. This study examined the responsibilities of journalists and the pressure they encounter while reporting conflicts in Benue State of Nigeria. The study adopted qualitative research method with 20 journalists purposefully selected from Radio Benue, Makurdi; NTA Makurdi; Sun Rays FM, Korinya and The Pavilion Newspaper, Makurdi including male and female journalists. Research questions focusing on the purpose of the investigation guided the study. A standardized open-ended interview format was used to collect data. The data collected were analyzed using explanation building model. The result of the research questions showed that the factors that influence journalists, pressure that influence framing of news by journalists, strategies journalists employ in reporting conflicts are many. The study revealed that journalists are contributors of peace building before, during, and after crises. The study recommended among others that journalists should be peace-oriented when reporting conflict especially those of cross-border nature. And journalists can do this by providing a forum for a critical analysis of issues in a conflict through incisive, informed and critical comments from editorialists, columnists, opinion and feature writers among others so as to open up the space for discussion from all fronts which would enlighten the reading public and possibly, the official negotiators in a conflict.*

**KEYWORDS:** journalistic responsibilities, primordial pressure, conflict, Benue, state, Nigeria

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The mass media has been identified globally as a communication platforms and strategy that is used in resolving most conflicts all over the world and Nigeria in particular. Mass media consists of Newspapers, Magazines, Radio, Television, Films, etc. The media either print or electronic or both can be used to create a conducive atmosphere for effective persuasion in a given community. For instance, an effective media campaign would allow a conflicting community to see a reason on why they should resolve their differences. This is possible if the media can resolve conflict situation by avoiding inflammatory reports, sensation captions or playing to the gallery by maintaining a neutral position and reporting conflict as it is without allowing emotion to be judged.

When conflict rages, the mass media is expected to be objective, interpretative and investigative in its reports of the conflict. These reports create room for proper understanding of the remote and immediate causes, nature and dimensions of the conflict which by extension motivate some concerned citizens to wade into the matter and broker lasting peace in the affected areas. This is in tendon with Chakchouk (2020) as he argues that the role of journalists in informing the public during the ongoing conflict is absolutely pivotal, journalistic work can save lives in the current emergency situation. Media organizations should make sure that journalists are trained on safety precautions during conflict and equipped with protective material such as safety jackets, first aid box etc.

It is not an exaggeration to say that reports of conflicts fill the mass media houses as conflict is naturally attractive and a source of news for the mass media. Indeed, these types of reports are it is seen as “the bread and butter” of journalism (Owens-Ibie, 2002). Conflict sells, thus, the profitmaking motif, our media organizations to find ready-made “raw materials” in conflict. According to this, Agaba (2006) confirms that past researches have pointed out that conflict reporting is often sensationalized for the sake of boosting circulations and ratings.

Similarly, Owens-Ibie (2002) observes that the media in homogeneous societies tend to air conflict less than those in pluralistic societies like Nigeria. He argues that conflict coverage reflects the socio-cultural and other diversities in the country.-Since conflicting parties always attempt to use the news media to gain legitimacy and public support, conflict reporting can also involve political and ideological purposes. Yet, Igbashangev & Ogunyemi (2021) notified that the media content does not merely reflect the level of conflict but has a functional relationship to it: the news media are themselves actors in the conflict situations they report. Put another way, they are participants in the conflict as a third party. In many cases, the media actor is seen as a beneficiary of conflict situations by stimulating interest and readership (Igbashangev & Ogunyemi, 2021).

Meanwhile, at the stage of national conflicts, Adeoye (2017) suggests a more active role for the press in which it either intensifies or diminishes the conflict. During a time of national conflicts, many media professionals strive to maintain journalistic norms and values such as the search for objectivity, fact-based reporting and neutrality, while some others advocate that the media should play a more significant role in defusing tensions and forging peace. At the same time however, it is noticeable that the ingredients of war such as nationalism, national interest, anger, censorship and propaganda often conspire to prevent objective reporting (Adegbami & Uche, 2015). In other words, many news organizations function as a propaganda tools and an advocates for the perceived national interest of the system of which they are part of. Such third-party functions may present a professional dilemma between the traditional journalism ethics code and the journalist’s patriotic and nationalistic sentiments, and their ethnic and cultural identity (Anastasiou, 2002; Al-Najjar, 2011; Bello & Olukolajo, 2016). When journalists are caught between nation and profession like that, the contradictory interests involved might discredit the news media as a credible source of information.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Journalists have devoted time and space to reporting and commenting on conflicts in the country. There are also many content analytical studies on media coverage and reportage of conflicts in the country. However, going by available literature, these existing studies are limited in their methodological approaches, and their findings may, therefore, lack generalizability. For example, Adisa (2012) suggested the study of more representative samples of newspapers in Nigeria, as his findings are based on only 10 editions of two newspapers. In Olomjobi (2017), weekend editions of the newspapers are omitted in the sample selection. Yet none of the available few studies on media coverage focused particularly on the recent menace of conflicts which is becoming unbearable in frequency of occurrence and death toll. It therefore becomes imperative to investigate the responsibilities of journalists and the pressure they encounter while reporting conflicts with a view to ascertaining how it has enhanced the mitigation of the conflict in the country.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is to find out the responsibilities of journalists amid primordial pressure in reporting conflict. Hence, the objectives of the research are as follows:

- i. To find out the factors that influence journalists who in reporting conflicts;
- ii. To establish the extent to which journalistic pressure influences framing of news on the conflict;
- iii. To explore some strategies journalists employ in reporting conflicts.
- iv. To identify some ways by which journalists can contribute to peace building before, during, and after a crisis.

### **Research Questions**

This study is set to answer the following research questions:

- i. What are the factors that influence journalists in reporting conflicts?
- ii. To what extent does a journalistic pressure influences framing of news on conflict?
- iii. What are strategies journalists employ in reporting conflicts?
- iv. How can the journalists contribute to peace building before, during, and after a crisis?

### **Concept of Mass Media/ Journalism**

There is no gainsaying that the terms mass media and journalism are used interchangeably as the former is used to refer to media organizations that disseminate information to the and the later stands to mean the art of reporting or writing for newspaper, magazine, radio and television, and also today's online journalism. In most intellectual discourses, both concepts are used interchangeably.

Mass media concept is also understood in terms of mass communication but connotes the institution of mass communication which includes the new media platforms. The underlying distinction - as adopted in this study and used by scholars as well as those engaged in this art – is that journalism is the practice which places responsibility on journalists (writers, reporters, editors,

photographers, news presenters, producers, etc.) to process and disseminate information in the right form and quality.

### **Concept of Conflict**

Conflict is considered to be a global and normal part of social living. It can be an expressed disagreement between “at least two interdependent parties who perceive conflicting goals, limited resources and interference from others in reaching their goals” (Hocker & Wilmot, 2003, p. 22). Conflict can be caused by the struggle for power or authority, chieftaincy, land or boundary, dominance, exclusion or marginalization as well as superiority and recognition.

Conflict basically involves disagreement, clash, collision or a struggle or contest between two or more parties. There are many technical definitions of the term depending on the understanding of the person making it. For instance, Hocker and Wilmot in Pate (2009, p. 4) consider conflict as “an expressed struggle between two or more interdependent parties who perceive scarce resources, incompatible goals and interference.” Another definition from Laue (2002, p.33) describe conflict as “an escalated competition at any system level between groups whose aim is to gain advantage in the area of power, resources, interest, and needs and at least one of the groups believes that this dimension of the relationship is mutually incompatible”.

Inuwa (2021) submits that conflict is, simply, an expression of the failure of individuals or groups to accommodate their differences. It involves incongruity, clash, collision and disagreement, between two or more parties, which can engender violence. Note, in these various attempts at defining conflict, Jean Monnet Group (2006) notes that, no limiting definition should be allowed, in order not to predetermine the analysis of conflicts; and that we should be aware of the need to not reduce conflicts’ contextual characteristics, since this would not suit the complexity of the notion.

No matter how many definitions of the term conflict, there is a common thread containing elements of disagreement, either on points of principle, perception, policy, ideology, culture or expectation. But beyond this, a very important element in the discussion of conflict is that it occurs and progresses in stages. It is a cycle that can be broken or divided into a number of stages.

### **Conflict Resolution**

From a scholarly perspective, Miller (2008, p. 8) sees conflict resolution as “a variety of approaches aimed at terminating conflicts through the constructive solving of problems as distinct from a transformation of conflict”. In the contemporary world, emphasis is placed more on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) which stresses mediation, reconciliation, negotiation, adjudication, etc., in preference to war in resolving conflicts. As pointed out earlier, the media could be instrumental in the nexus of factors that engender a peaceful conflict resolution.

### **Conflict Reporting**

Conflict has been seen as “the bread and butter of journalism” (Owens-Ibie, in Pate, 2011). Pate adds that studies have shown that the media have remained the most credible source of news and

information to most people in conflict periods. He offers what could be a panacea to the problem of conflict reporting in the media when he declares that there is a growing interest in what is referred to as “peace journalism” which in his view entails “balance news coverage, positive education of 34 people about what is going on in a divided society, controlling dangerous rumors and providing a trusted source of information for all parties in a conflict.” (p. 6).

Contributing to the discussion, Batta (2009) says that the media have the power to inform the public on issues and can somehow influence peace and conflict resolving behaviors of the public. He believes that the Nigerian media have not failed to report and provide coverage for conflict situations in the country but beyond this are the questions of what sort of coverage is given by the media and whether such can build peace and help to resolve conflicts or one that fans conflicts and endangers peace. Unfortunately, many scholars berate the Nigerian media for poor coverage of conflict as earlier cited in this study. The same observation has been made about media coverage of conflict in Africa. For instance, Esuh (2006, p.143) reports that:

After a thorough assessment of media coverage of conflicts in the African Continent, panelists at the ACCE (2004) Regional Conference in Nairobi, Kenya came to the conclusion that ‘the media are partly to blame for the condition Africa finds itself today. Coverage of conflicts is weak. At best, it comes in form of western perspective and viewpoints. There is very little that is African in content and context, hence the lack of direction.

Very instructively, Anyadike (2009, pp.328-331) identifies seven approaches the media could use in facilitating conflict resolution as follows:

- i) Media acting as sources of information;
- ii) Objective reporting;
- iii) Dialogue;
- iv) Countering misinformation;
- v) Transformatory role;
- vi) Interpretative role; and
- vii) De-emphasizing profit motive.

### **Media and Conflict: The Relationship**

Conflict is naturally attractive and a source of news for the media, Indeed, it is seen as “the bread and butter” of journalism.

Conflict sells. Thus, with the drive for profit by the private media and the commercialization policy in government owned outfits, our media organizations “find ready raw material” in conflict.

As reported by Owens-Ibie (2002), the media in homogeneous societies tend to air conflict less than those in pluralistic societies like Nigeria. He argued that conflict coverage reflects the socio-cultural and other diversities in the country.

### **The Relationships.**

Mass media often plays a key role in today's conflict. Basically, their role can take two different and opposed forms.

1. Either the media takes an active part in the conflict and has responsibility for increased violence,
2. Or stays independent and out of the conflict, thereby contributing to the resolution of conflict and alleviation of violence.

Which role the media takes in a given conflict, and in the phases before and after, depends on a complex set of factors, including the relationship the media has to actors in the conflict and the independence the media has to the power holders in society

### **The Relationship.**

People turn to the media for relevant information during conflict or crisis periods. The importance of the media goes beyond just providing information per se. For most of the times we also use such information to form opinion on very serious issues in material life. Earlier studies have long established a relationship between issues considered important and issues that the public also consider important. Even though they do not tell us what to think, the media are found to direct our minds on what to think about. A number of attempts have been made to analyze the pattern of media coverage of diversity and conflict issues in the country. One can easily summarize the common professional errors that are often found in the media.

### **Role of the Media in Conflict**

The media play a wide range of roles in our lives. Some of these roles are constructive and some are destructive. Recognizing the diversity within media professionals is a first step in critically analyzing how best to use the media to support conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

#### **1. Media as Information Provider**

The media provide information and make clarification in order to clear doubt and make people to understand the implication of their activities on themselves and their neighbouring communities. The media are potentially equipped not to only inform the parties in conflict, but also to inform and educate governments, international organisations, ethnic, religious and national communities.

#### **2. Media as Bridge Builder**

The media serve as platforms for conflict resolution. These are achieved as the media provide forum where parties to the conflict come together and discuss issues with a view to fostering peace and harmony within the factions.

#### **3. Media as Watchdog**

The media serve as watchdog to mischievous activities that are done by enemies of peace and progress in a society. The media do so as they dig dip to explore the excesses and immoralities, by any public figure, which have tendency of leading to a public disturbance and/or social disorder, and make comment on the illness that action or statement might have caused to society if it allowed to go that way.

#### 4. **Media as Early Warning System**

The media caution factions about the danger and consequences of a war that particular groups wanted to involve themselves into. The role of the media here is seen more at the level of proactive measure as conflict is always manage “at different levels, including those efforts made to prevent conflict by being proactive.”

Here, the media give history, examples and make references to diverse occurrences where a particular nation, state or region had suffered as a result of a war or conflict.

#### 5. **Media as Emotional Outlet**

The media provide emotion and arouse public feeling on vulnerable groups who are mostly victims of conflict. The authority concern and anxious citizens are appealed to for their intervention towards resolving the conflict at stake.

#### 6. **Media as Peace Motivator**

Media promote peace with their different programmes that preach peace and unity, patriotism, good governance, appreciation of culture and diversity, religious tolerance, etc. “By examining the ideologies of key protagonists and spoilers, the media can often flag aspects of the peace process that are important and cannot be ignored” (Hottutuwa, 2002, par. 14).

#### **Challenges of Reporting Conflict in Nigeria**

A number of problems have been identified in the nature and pattern of covering diversity and conflict issues in the Nigerian media, and by extension, Africa. A number of attempts have been made to analyze the pattern of media coverage of diversity and conflict issues in Nigeria and Africa (Albert, 2002; Nyabola, 2014; Pate, 2010). The common professional errors found from these studies show that: the media promotes prejudicial stereotypes about groups and individuals through selective reporting while inter-group conflicts are mostly reported out of fundamental sociological, economic, political and other contexts. In summary, the major challenges are:

1. Promoting, by selective reporting, prejudicial stereotypes about groups and individuals.
2. Reporting inter-group conflicts out of their fundamental sociological, economic, political and other contexts. In many cases, media persons merely respond to statements of politicians, ethnic champions, religious zealots and other interested party rather than initiate their own independent inquiries about specific social conflict.
3. Making generalized statements not supported by concrete facts and figures.
4. Attribute statements by individuals to collectives.
5. Publishing of rumours as facts.
6. Publishing unfair and discriminating adverts.
7. Use of inflammatory language in news reporting.
8. The problem of editors allowing the letters column and opinion pages to be used to make inflammatory statements against some people or groups.
9. The use of inflammatory, misleading and sensational headlines to attract sales.
10. Demonization of certain ethnic, religious or political groups in an already divided and tensed society.
11. The use of cartoons to malign a community, group or individual.
12. Use of unrepresentative pictures
13. Un-objective and clearly biased reporting against some groups, individuals or communities.

14. Inappropriate usage of language in reporting conflict stories.
15. Total blackout on some groups, individuals or community
16. Expression of ill-informed opinions by columnists, writers, etc. on issues that affect certain groups of people in the country.
17. Shallow and episodic coverage.

### **Peace Building**

Peace building is what the entire world is yearning for. It is never a one-sided affair. People must come together and recognise the value of every other person in the society. Hence, “Peace building requires a vision of relationships and the capacity of individuals and communities to imagine themselves in a web of relationships even with their enemies. It must experience, envision, and give birth to the web of relationships” (Lederach 2005).

### **Media and Peace Building**

Access to media changes peoples’ perception and build a peace-living environment. This is why different types of media are recognised worldwide to mete out knowledge and create a well-informed society. There must be a free and healthy system of media that promotes fundamental human right and one that can stand to represent different views in a heterogeneous society. Stressing on this point, Betz (2018, par. 2) says: “To function properly, the public sphere must have free access to information and enable ordinary citizens’ views to be heard.”

Kuusik (2010, par.1) asserts that:

*Free mass media is a tool of and signpost for democracy. Freedom of expression is not only the core of a healthy media but also a fundamental human right and vital for a democratic structure. It stands for freedom of speech, the right to information and the representation of different opinions in a heterogeneous society. In any culture of prevention, effective and democratic media are an essential part and indispensable for societies trying to make a transition towards peace and democracy.*

Media system that is pluralistic, free and independent can be used to air divergent opinion and promote understanding and foster peace, harmony and tranquility within heterogeneous audiences. On the other hand, if people cannot have access to information, especially during crisis, they can easily be more aggressive. Peace building, therefore, can be accomplished with free, democratic, balanced, and unbiased media system. This is because appreciating the interaction between media and conflict can facilitate further understanding of the media’s roles in conflict

The influence media have on peace building cannot be over emphasized. The media’s role in conflict resolution has been increasingly recognised by academics and researchers arguing that the news media can be an instrument to facilitate peace building.

According to Hottotuwa (2002), the news media can have four inputs on any peace process.

1. First, they help in defining the political atmosphere in which the peace process takes place.
2. The media has an active influence on the strategy and behaviour of the stakeholders to the conflict.
3. The media has an important influence on the nature of debate about a peace process.



A key to understanding how each of the above Four listed processes interlink is to make reference to any society where a successful media campaign was used to foster, inform and shape the peace process. Since the incidence of September 11 in the United State, media men got extra impetus to use media propaganda to influence peace processes and conflict resolution in many Media is globally recognised as an effective tool for peace building especially one that is free and responsibly set to operate for peace to reign in a society where it operates.

### **Journalistic Strategies of Reporting Conflicts**

A number of journalistic strategies emerged which entailed moderation of some sort suggesting the journalists' neutrality, or support for a certain social group in conflict. The analysis showed that the journalists' affiliation with ethnic and/or religious communities, influenced by residential segregation and other factors, made them to adopt strategies which produced conflict narratives that supported the goals of these communities.

To start with, there is an implanting strategy which journalists use whenever violent conflict occurred. Their aim is to introduce the readers to the conflict environment and draw their attention to what they perceived as the causes of the conflict so that their readers may think alike and act based on that orientation. This is crucial for the attainment of the goals set by the conflicting parties as they grapple with identity crisis.

Another strategy is a community-aided strategy is always introduced. In order to substantiate their claims and earn readers' confidence, journalists identify news sources who shared community membership with them. These individuals and groups provide information which journalists relied upon for their news. As Phillips (2015) argued that the choice of news sources rested on the journalists, they interacted with eye-witnesses that endorsed what they set out to achieve.

Also there is a strategy that is pertained to reinforcement. Most conflicts, the journalists maintained two positions.

Notably, the message-laden strategy is also employ by the journalists. This strategy allows the journalists to construct the conflict narratives that conveys less obvious information intended to give meaning to the readers. Thus, the less obvious message is embed in the lead message.

To conclude with, there is a strategy of framing emerged – the strategy of 'inventing' casualty figures. As documented in literature that the conditions of victims of conflict often attract media audiences (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001; Hartley, 2013; Harcup, 2015; Naanlang Godfrey Danaan, 2016), journalists reported huge numbers of deaths without sufficient evidence to show how certain ethnic/religious groups had been attacked. This invention is borne out of the journalists' desperation to attract readership and reinforce the notion that certain groups were the targets of the attacks.

### **Journalists and Conflict Reporting**

Without mincing words, it is good to note that reporting of conflict is another issue that constitutes ambiguity in scholarly discussions, essentially because the circumstances under which journalists perform their duty in difficulty. It is a challenging terrain in journalism. The journalists on this

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beat are aware that in the era of sophisticated wars and information technology as well as multi-channels, ‘news dies faster now than ever before’ (Gowing, in Seaton, 1999, p. 58). The traditional deadlines which they try to beat for their catchy headlines and breaking news on war to sell, sometimes, make them disregard ethical standards because such pressure would make them receive news ingredients from easily accessible sources.

Records have it that there is a reasonable amount of literature is available on conflict reporting across the world. What is evident in the accounts is that journalists’ experiences of conflict influence their reporting decisions (Fahmy & Johnson, 2005; Backholm & Björkqvist, 2010; Novak & Davidson, 2013; Seib, 2013). Tumber and Prentoulis (2003) claim that while all journalists experience physical and psychological challenges, those who report conflict face the most severe conditions as their assignment, which demands diligence and the ability to withstand social isolation, stress and other conditions, poses greater risks. When they survive the physical attacks which could result from organized violence by the actors, they may be infected with diseases or, in many cases, they are traumatized. Research also reveals that people who witness acute violence are likely to experience trauma (Declercq, Vanheule, Markey, & Willemsen, 2007; Obilom & Thacher, 2008), as a result of ‘exposure to an event that provokes fear, helplessness, or terror in response to the threat of injury or death’ (American Psychiatric Association, 1994); Obilom & Thacher, 2008, p. 1108). In their study, Keats and Buchanan (2013, p. 221), assert that since their work exposes them to risk and are often physically close to victims and survivors of conflict, ‘the cumulative effects of witnessing the trauma of others can potentially put the observer at risk for developing traumatic stress symptoms’. The effect of this exposure to violence on the traumatized journalists is a possible adoption of a series of strategies in reporting the conflict as a way of overcoming the trauma. This implies that the way and manner in which the violence may be reported could be influenced by that exposure. Also, their sentiments – based on the traumatic conditions (for example, seeing how their ‘fellow’ Muslims or Christians are killed) – can make them come up with new ways of reporting the violence.

Contributing to the discussion, Novak & Davidson (2013) note that for journalists reporting conflict, theirs is to disseminate the distressing details to their audience as such, they make observation a yardstick for framing the news in the right form and quality. This is crucial if they must succeed on the job; yet it contradicts the principle that being distant from those gory scenes is a defense mechanism against distress (Rose et al., in Novak & Davidson, 2013). The news on war is heart-piercing and once it occurs, journalism demands that the public should know. Advocates of ‘ideal’ journalistic principle argue that reporting the war about what you see without putting it in context to aid understanding of the audience constitutes bad journalism (Novak & Davidson, 2013; Seib, 2013). They believe that both the what (observed at warfare) and why (an insight into the war or personal interpretation of the scene of war) would make much meaning.

Further studies support the incorporation of ideas into war stories by the journalists. They admit that ‘objectivity’ is a good principle but it is unattainable in the journalistic process (Post, 2014; Mothes, 2016). While objectivity demands some degree of detachment from the subject being reported, the practice itself is influenced by personal bias which means that it is difficult to be

objective (H. Tumber & Prentoulis, 2003). The implication is that the process of selecting and constructing the news is subjective. There is no single pathway to explaining journalistic objectivity as scholars vary in their evaluation of the concept. Some scholars have argued that embedding journalism, a practice in which journalists were integrated in the events they covered in order to provide perspectives about their subjects, followed the criticisms that trailed objectivity theory (Russ-Mohl, 2013; Seib, 2013; Wilke, 2013). They believe that the bias of the journalists must prevail in the framing process.

Supporting the above argument, B. Zelizer and Allan (2011) submit that journalists who report conflict – whether embedded or unilateral – experience trauma which necessarily influences their framing of news. Once they observe human’s cruelty, the trauma inherent in it hardly varnishes because it ‘does not disappear lightly. It lingers, seems to fade, and then re-emerges when least expected’ (2011, p.2). When these war observers construct the news that depicts violence and the audience consumes this reality, it is said to traumatize the consumer who, in devastation, may switch over to another medium or turn off the medium that produced such violence. If the consuming audience is traumatized by listening, viewing or reading, what would become of the journalists whose experience of the war is translated into reality of the consumer? Some journalists who were traumatized by the attacks on the World Trade Centre in America soon became patriotic by framing media contents that expressed nationalistic sentiments which implied that the terrorist attacks they witnessed were horrifying (Waisbord, 2011). They saw America as ‘their’ nation and as a part of the cultural community, they used their media to ‘sing a unity song’ in their editorial columns and on the airwaves.

### **Responsibilities of Journalists in Reporting Conflicts**

Conflicts pose various constraints and difficulties for journalism. They are hostile environments for journalists who are faced with risks and dangers including death, injury, harassment and imprisonment. Conflicts also present situations that contest the normative understanding of journalism that is based on the impartiality of journalists. When the media become a part of propaganda instruments for conflicting parties, journalists are expected to support their own sides, which undermines their autonomy. Journalists could also experience tension between detachment and emotional involvement, and feel the pressures of professional and moral dilemmas (Boudana, 2015; McLaughlin, 2016).

Covering a conflict for journalists when they are members of one of the conflicting parties has added professional and moral dilemmas. In times of conflict, voluntarily or involuntarily, they become part of the conflict and find themselves having to deal with the values that are at odds with each other (Waisbord, 2002; Zandberg & Neiger, 2005). On the one hand, their professional role requires them to maintain autonomy and stay neutral despite various pressures from the state, military and public. On the other hand, they are members of their communities and their attachment makes it difficult to be impartial towards the conflict, such as foreign correspondents when they report on other people’s conflicts (Zandberg & Neiger, 2005; Nygren et al., 2018). In other words, journalists are in a ‘crossfire’ as they try to balance professional autonomy with pressures from

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political leadership and military as well as audience expectations of patriotism (Nygren et al., 2018, p. 1059).

In times of national conflicts, patriotic sentiments can overcome professional ones and journalists take sides with their national/ethnic community. The key to understanding journalists' shifting allegiance from professional to national/ethnic community is to recognize that journalists' identities are not fixed but fluid. Depending on the situation, journalists negotiate and choose which role to adopt, thus moving between identities (Zandberg & Neiger, 2005; Hallin, 2017). That is why 'while muted during "normal circumstances" under the observance of professional rules, sheer patriotism emerges in situations in which the "national community" is considered to be at risk' (Waisbord, 2002, p. 206). In cases in which patriotism becomes a dominant public sentiment, individual journalists find it hard to stay outside the patriotic manifestations (Waisbord, 2002; Zelizer & Allan, 2002; Elliot, 2004; Neiger and Rimmer-Tsory, 2012). In some cases, as in the Arab media, patriotism can be considered 'a virtue and not a breach of journalism ethics' (Al-Najjar, 2011, p. 754).

In conflict-affected zones, journalists experience external or internal and covert and overt pressures that force them to apply self-censorship. These pressures restrain them from either reporting on certain events or covering them in a way that would not cause any harm to themselves and others (Jungblut and Hoxha, 2017). Such pressures limit journalists' autonomy, making it difficult for them to put their professional role perceptions into practice. Even in post-conflict situations or, as in Libya, when the violence ends, censorship or self-censorship does not immediately disappear. Depending on how democratic the transition from conflict to peace is, journalists could still be under pressure from authorities, media owners or other actors and self-censor themselves (Jungblut & Hoxha, 2017; Nygren et al., 2018).

There are many responsibilities journalists have to perform amid primordial pressure of reporting conflicts. They are:

### **Upholding the Truth through Verification**

Conflict is a challenging situation but when properly managed, it will become a blessings to the communities facing it. During conflict, a journalist is responsible for reporting the truth, not because he is inherently unbiased but because he upholds the importance of objective verification. This means that he should consistently test every fact used in his story while reporting conflict, including researching all information shared with him by his sources, according to. A strict adherence to verification ensures that personal and cultural biases don't sneak in and take over reporting. Many a journalist reports rumors as facts while reporting conflict and this has been escalating conflicts in our societies.

### **Unbiased Reporting**

Journalistic objectivity requires that a journalist not be on either side of an argument. The journalist must report only the facts and not a personal attitude toward the facts. Essentially, reporters should not only approach issues in an unbiased manner but also with a dispassionate and emotionless attitude. A journalist's report should be unbiased, according to Pew's Principles of Journalism. This

means that if he has a financial interest in his subject, he should give the report to someone else. If the company that owns a news agency has a financial interest in a story, the agency should take extra care to ensure its reporting is not affected. A journalist's report should present all sides and all viewpoints on a matter. He should seek more than one source for a story to ensure that multiple sides are represented. If someone comments on a person, he should seek to get the other person's response.

Reporting conflict is never a straightforward task and often a journalist will have only partial information because of the physical difficulties and dangers involved. However, the basic journalistic instinct to question whatever they are told and look for evidence to support or devalue what is being said must remain the touchstone.

### **Serving the Public as a Watchdog**

In the course of their work, watchdog journalists gather information about wrongdoings of people in power and deliver it to the public so the public can understand what happens in society and stop wrongdoings. Due to watchdog journalism's unique features, it also often works as the fourth estate. A journalist is a watchdog who is supposed to bark and possibly bite at ugly situation and influencers of conflicts in our society. The journalist's duty is to the public, not the government. Journalists are sometimes referred to as the Fourth Estate of the Realm of many governments for this very reason. They should hold the government and others in power accountable to the citizens. By being independent from the government, they can monitor power and serve as an information source and not a propaganda mouth. Journalists serve as a watchdog to balance government power and hold it accountable to its citizens. Journalists can hold the government, public figures and prominent sons and daughters accountable when conflicts linger and nobody seems to bring a lasting solution.

### **Serving as a Forum for Public Comment**

During conflict, a journalist provides a forum for public comment, according to Nygren, et al. (2018). It allows an avenue for criticizing the government and corporations. Journalists help stir up discussions that might later lead to change and problem solving. But by serving as a point of public discussion, journalists must strive to represent all sides of the discussion, not only the richest or loudest voices.

### **Comprehensive Reporting devoid of Factual Errors**

Şahin & Karayianni (2020) state that journalists create a type of map of events, making it easier for citizens to navigate through the important research. They must strive for proportion in reporting, not overly sensationalizing stories or neglecting important issues for the purpose of getting more viewers. A news agency that hires a diverse staff can more easily achieve such diverse reporting. In conflict reporting, journalists are advised to avoid reporting rumors as facts.

### **Making Important News Interesting**

A journalist must engage his audience to get them to tune in. But he also must find ways to make significant stories interesting, so that readers and viewers don't miss out on what they need to

know, Vos, (2017) submits. A journalist should frame important world events in ways that will be relevant to its audience, while still getting the most important messages across during conflict reporting.

### **Personal Conscience in Reporting**

The overarching ethics of journalism should not override each individual journalist's personal ethics and conscience. A good media house should allow reporters to have differences of opinion, as this can lead to more diverse reporting of conflict, according to Zandberg & Neiger (2005). Individuals should be able to voice their concerns in the newsroom and be governed by their personal conscience. Diversity should be sought in this way without simply trying to get higher ratings from day to day.

Members of the press have a duty to inform the public about current events and insist on transparency in government activities. In the fulfillment of this duty, every journalist has responsibility to preserve the integrity of the news, respect sources and maintain independence.

### **Reporting the Truth**

Journalistic truth is a process that begins with the professional discipline of assembling and verifying facts. Then journalists try to convey a fair and reliable account of their meaning, subject to further investigation.

Journalists should be as transparent as possible about sources and methods so audiences can make their own assessment of the information. Even in a world of expanding voices, “getting it right” is the foundation upon which everything else is built – context, interpretation, comment, criticism, analysis and debate. The larger truth, over time, emerges from this forum. Journalists have a duty to report factual information, and there should be a consistent system for separating facts from opinion. For example, there should be at least two witnesses of an event if it is reported as fact, because a single witness is often unreliable. Journalists should be careful to avoid unintended errors by checking facts and only using reliable sources whom they trust. If inaccuracies are realized after publication, the author should correct them as soon as possible (Prager & Hameleers, 2018).

### **Preserving Journalistic Integrity**

Members of the press have a responsibility to protect their publication's integrity, which means reporting impartial and honest news stories. It is critical that every journalist's position as an honorable, trustworthy reporter remain intact so the public can count on a reliable news source. Stories labeled as news should be free of the author's personal views, and no reporter should alter or dismiss parts of the story to protect any group, including their own publication.

### **Respecting Professional Sources**

Journalists should obey promissory estoppel, they should treat sources with respect, and should not harass or threaten sources just to get a news story. Journalists should avoid favoritism or biased reporting by maintaining a purely professional relationship and avoiding personal connections with sources. A reporter also has a duty to disclose sources whenever possible so the public can assess

the source's reliability. Before reporting identifying information, journalists should discuss expectations of anonymity with the source. If the source prefers to remain anonymous, the reporter should explain why.

### **Maintaining Independence**

Any news organization should diligently guard against conflicts of interest that could influence reporting. Journalists should not accept gifts from news sources and they should not work for the people or groups about whom they write stories, because these activities threaten impartial reporting. If there is a conflict of interest, such as political involvement or community activism, reporters should disclose it as a potential source of bias.

Contributing to the discussion, Pate (2009) says for the media to be eminently respected and trusted, its personnel must demonstrate professional competence in dealing with issues of diversity and conflict. Of course, the starting point is for the media environment to be diverse by reflecting in their structure and content the various social, economic and cultural realities of the society in which they operate, in a more or less proportional way. For instance, a diverse newsroom would be expected to reflect staff and content diversity to reflect its area of coverage.

Secondly, it is important to note that there is a growing interest in what is referred to as “peace journalism”. Scholars like Galtung (1998), Albert (2000) and Akinfeleye (2003) advocate for peace journalism by insisting that diversity and conflict issue should be professionally reported with peace building objectives being the guiding principle. Major requirements of peace journalism include “balance news coverage, positive education of people about what is going on in a divided society, controlling dangerous rumours and providing a trusted source of information for all parties in a conflict”. In the words of Albert (2002, p. 66) peace journalism is:

... “Journalism of attachment” to all actual and potential victims. It stands for the truth as opposed to incitements, lies and propaganda that often dominate war journalism. The peace journalist thus has eyes for the essential; the devotion both to fact and hope... it takes right training, determination, environment and exposure...

In conclusion, journalists combine Western ideals of professionalism with their societies’ needs. Sometimes, they cannot follow certain professional values, such as impartiality, or roles such as advocacy, for example the watchdog role, can be more prominent than others. That is because these journalists practice journalism not just within the political, economic and media structures of their societies but also the constraints and pressures of conflict. They frequently renegotiate their relations with various forces that affect their work during the conflict and transition periods. During the negotiation process, new norms, ideas and practices can be legitimized so that journalists will identify their role as peace journalism. However, as each conflict and transition process is different, further research is needed to better understand how journalism adapts to the changing conditions in societies during the conflict and post-conflict periods.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was anchored on two journalistic models: objectivity and news framing, all of which examined the topic from the constructivist worldview situating conflict reporting in the realm of the making of meaning.

### **Journalistic Objectivity**

Journalistic objectivity is a significant principle of journalistic professionalism. Journalistic objectivity can refer to fairness, disinterestedness, factuality, and nonpartisanship, but most often encompasses all of these qualities.

Journalism needs to be more objective, accurate and investigative in the way it presents information and relays facts to the public while reporting conflicts. This objectivity in journalism helps the audience to make up their own mind about a story and decide what they want to believe. There is a necessity for reporters to present the honesty regarding the facts instead of always reporting information in an honest format. In addition, to maintain objectivity in journalism, journalists need to present the facts whether or not they like or agree with those facts. Objective journalism needs to remain neutral and unbiased regardless of the writers' opinion or personal beliefs

Journalists must acknowledge, humbly and publicly, that what they do is far more subjective and far less detached than the aura of "objectivity" implies. This will not end the charges of bias, but will allow journalists to defend what they do from a more realistic, less hypocritical position.

### **Application of the Theory**

Journalists need to be freed and encouraged to develop expertise and to use it to sort through competing claims, identify and explain the underlying assumptions of those claims, and make judgments about what readers and viewers need to know to understand what is happening. In short, journalists need to be more willing to judge factual disputes

### **News Framing Theory**

The concept of framing is related to the agenda-setting tradition but expands the research by focusing on the essence of the issues at hand rather than on a particular topic. The basis of framing theory is that the media focuses attention on certain events and then places them within a field of meaning. Framing is an important topic since it can have a big influence and therefore the concept of framing expanded to organizations as well.

In essence, framing theory suggests that how something is presented to the audience (called "the frame") influences the choices people make about how to process that information. Frames are abstractions that work to organize or structure message meaning. The most common use of frames is in terms of the frame the news or media place on the information they convey. They are thought to influence the perception of the news by the audience, in this way it could be construed as a form of second level agenda-setting – they not only tell the audience what to think about (agenda-setting



theory), but also how to think about that issue (second level agenda setting, framing theory)(Fairhurst, G. & Sarr, R. 1996).

The theory emerged from anthropology and sociology and it is ‘a critical activity in the construction of social reality because it helps shape the perspectives through which people see the world’ (Hallahan, 1999, p. 207). The process involves an action to implant ideas in the audience, or put ‘pictures in our heads’ using a series of strategies (Lippmann, 1922, p. 3). Its adoption in this research was crucial as the journalists’ strategies were identified in the frames that made up the conflict narratives. It was used to examine valence framing – the direction of news (positive or negative angles to conflict narratives), semantic framing – the choice of phrases or words to achieve a certain goal; and story framing – the central idea of the story (Hallahan, 1999).

### **Application of the Theory**

News framing theory was also utilized in this research because it explains how journalists make reporting decisions (based on their strategies) to produce realities.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The qualitative research method was adopted. In-depth interview method has been adopted thereby hinging on qualitative data which are more elaborate and interactive. Scholars have viewed in-depth interview as an intensive interview scheduled in advance, takes place in a private setting conducive to trust and candour, and requires careful preparation (Fontana & Frey 1994; McCracken, 1998, Weiss, 1994 cited in Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). In-depth interview uses small sample to get more information, it provides detailed background about the reasons respondents give specific answers. Elaborate data concerning respondents’ opinions, values, motivations, recollections, experiences, and feelings are obtained (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). The population is made up of all conceivable elements, subjects or observation relating to particular phenomenon of interest to the researcher (Asika, 2009). Journalists from Radio Benue, NTA Makurdi, Sun Rays FM, Korinya and The Pavilion Newspaper formed the population of this study. The rationale for this population is that the journalists are the ones handling matters regarding how the media report issues on conflicts. Purposive sampling which belongs to non-probability sampling has been adopted.

Radio Benue, NTA Makurdi, Sun Rays FM, Korinya and The Pavilion Newspaper were sampled because of their closeness to the media under study and their knowledge of issues relating to the framing of issues on conflicts by the press, as their responses will give more information to the topic under study. The researchers adopted standardized open-ended interview format, where the same questions were asked by the researchers to all the reporters. The researchers used interview guide schedule as the instrument of data collection, while explanation building model was used to analyze the data.

### **Answering Research Questions**

#### **Research Question 1: What are the factors that influence journalists in reporting conflicts?**

From the beginning, the researcher recognized that probing the participants' strategies of reporting conflict required the formulation of 'what' and 'how' questions to gain a deeper understanding about their attitudes (Goldberg & Allen, 2015). The 'what' in research question 1, interrogated the factors that influenced the practices of the conflict journalists? The response to this question was given by journalists from Radio Benue, Makurdi. The journalists identified three main factors that inhibited their practice: the residential segregation in their work environment, pressure from conflict actors, editors and news sources (those who interfered with editorial independence), and the constant witness to violence (everyday encounter with violence which made journalists vulnerable or participants in the conflict rather than disinterested observers). The answer generated from the interview showed that many journalists use to take side with conflicting parties that belong to their ethnic and/or religious communities, either because such communities harboured them, or the media they work for, and their news sources, prevail on them to report the conflict in a particular way.

The answers given by journalists from Radio Benue, Makurdi revealed that their membership of ethnic/religious community had greater influence on them over their membership of professional community. Based on the interview data, it is evident that the journalists' role conception and role performance are influenced by their ethnic/religious community. This correlation of data, used as a methodological strategy (Saldana, 2015, 2016) established the journalists' role conception (what they claimed to have influenced their work – the interview data) and their role performance (what they actually produced) with corresponding outcomes. Particularly, in the data, the journalists' reliance on ethnic and/or religious community for news interfere with their editorial independence. Their membership of this community define their news tastes as manifest in their conflict narratives.

Although studies have revealed that people who perpetually observed violence were likely to be traumatized and their actions were being influenced by that exposure to violence (Obilom & Thacher, 2008; Rasaq, 2012; Keats & Buchanan, 2013).

From the foregoing, the interview answered research question 1, which interrogated the factors that influenced the practices of journalists in conflict. The factors included the residential segregation, the pressure from the media themselves and their sources, and journalists' continued encounter with violence.

#### **Research Question 2: To what extent does a journalistic pressure influences framing of news on conflict?**

Based on the answers of the interview from NTA Makurdi journalists, the journalists lack of access to information due to residential segregation and the pressure from their organizations and news sources have impact on their work. The communities in which the journalists live and the pressure they face within and outside their organizations largely influence the way they constructed their conflict narratives.

The narrative on their experiences of violence was twofold: the ‘fieldwork’ and ‘newsroom’ experiences. The first refer to how they witnessed acts of violence (the clash between rival groups), while the second pertained to the actual news construction –how they make choices of words and organize them to describe what they witness. The interview data supported the data in literature that conflict sensitive reporting remained crucial in preventing and managing conflict (Howard, 2009, 2015; Lynch & Galtung, 2010; Singh, 2013). Most of the participants claimed that they ensured that what they reported did not escalate violence or heighten tension among the communities.

In order not to be economical with the truth, a major challenge associated with journalists’ fieldwork experiences was the fear of attack on them by some conflict actors who often felt that the journalists would be biased in their reports by portraying them in a bad light. Whenever the journalists were identified at conflict scenes – by the way they dressed because it said a lot about their cultures and faiths, or if they were heavily accented speakers who could be ‘indigenes’ or ‘settlers’ - they would not be spared. They believed that the journalists’ reports on the conflict might not be objective hence the attack. A certain rival group of a particular ethnic or religious identity could express this frustration by physically attacking the journalists whose personal and organizational identities might have suggested that they belonged to the ‘other’. This data has confirmed existing research that constant witness to violence could lead to trauma (Keats & Buchanan, 2013; Obilom & Thacher, 2008; B. Zelizer & Allan, 2011).

The analysis of the data revealed that the fieldwork experience and newsroom experience were interrelated – the former ‘midwived’ the latter, and both had a great impact on news contents. Having observed violence in which ‘their own’ ethnic/religious communities were participants (fieldwork), many journalists disregarded their much acclaimed standard of objectivity during news construction (newsroom activity). They were non-objective. They pursued the goals of their communities. In their newsrooms, the journalists identified news angles from which they wrote their stories focusing on the meaning they attached to the fieldwork. As documented in literature that ‘truth can change’ (Stolley, 2010, p. 267), the narratives which emerged from the newsroom often changed the ‘truth’ obtained from fieldwork. For example, when constructing conflict narratives, endeavored to ‘moderate’ the contents in order to achieve certain goals – one of which was to prevent further spread of the violence. Another goal was to attract the audience through the portrayal of an aggressive settler community and a victimized indigenous group, or vice versa.

### **Research Question 3: What are strategies journalists employ in reporting conflicts?**

Journalists have unique ways of engaging with conflict narratives (D. Barker, 2007; Perrin, 2011; Magen, 2015; Robinson, 2015). This research question was, therefore, formulated to probe the practices of journalists in conflict reporting.

Journalists from Sun Rays FM, Korinya and The Pavilion Newspaper, Makurdi said they employed the strategy of moderation which implied that certain portions of their reports that seemed to indict some social groups in conflict, or pose a threat to peace in the city were reassessed, modified or eliminated. They believed that doing so would reduce human suffering resulting from the violence.

Their view is grounded in conflict sensitive reporting literature which argues that journalists should demonstrate restraint by ensuring that media contents on conflicts were safe for consumption by their audiences (S. T. Lee, 2010; Singh, 2013; Pintak, 2014). It means that journalists are required to be sensitive to their society by reporting responsibly.

This strategy of moderation, for them, had contributed to the escalation of violence because, rather than expose the culprits of violence so that sanctions may be meted out to them they are being shielded under journalistic moderation. Like Shaw (2016) who proposed a human rights journalism which identifies with the victims of conflict, the journalists said whenever they report conflict, they ensure that the perpetrators were exposed.

With the interview with journalists from Sun Rays FM, Korinya and The Pavilion Newspaper, Makurdi it was discovered what it termed as the neutral-to-goal-focused strategy of framing which manifested, mainly, in the interview. It is double-edged. The journalists, first and foremost, endeared their readers by a seeming neutral disposition which is grounded in objectivity theory (Rosen, 1993; Muñoz-Torres, 2012; Blaagaard, 2013; Tong, 2015). They showed capacity to ensure 'fair' news judgment and to sustain it throughout the reporting process. From being neutral they moved to being non-objective and goal-focused thereby providing contexts which they intended for their readers. They tried to attract and sustain their readers' interests by coding words/phrases that did not suggest support for any group in the first instance. The journalists' self-imposed image of neutrality was meant to earn readers' confidence as they (readers) were not likely to recognize any transition in the conflict narratives that would occur. The journalists believed that once their readers were blinded by the initial 'fair' outlook of the story, such readers would fail to see the elements of bias that evolved hence the neutral-to-goal-focused framing. In the end, the actual message which was intended to achieve a goal sufficed.

#### **Research Question 4: How can journalists contribute to peace building before, during, and after a crises?**

From the answers generated from journalists from Radio Benue, NTA Makurdi, Sun Rays FM and The Pavilion Newspaper in the course of in-depth interview, it was revealed that lack of information can, at any stage of a conflict, make people desperate, restless and easy to manipulate. The ability to make informed decisions strengthens societies and fosters economic growth, democratic structures and the positive outlook on the future. For this very reason, there is a need to ensure the freedom of the media to perform their essential role and the right of the public to have access to information.

Journalists can contribute to peace building before, during, and after a crises through conflict prevention; conflict management; conflict resolution and transformation, and post-conflict reconciliation. Peace building becomes strategic when it works over the long run and at all levels of society to establish and sustain relationships among people locally and globally.

From the interview the followings were considered as ways journalists can contribute to peace building before, during, and after a crisis

### **Through Mediation**

Mediation is another journalistic strategy used in resolving conflicts. Mediation involves the use of third party in settling of the conflict. It is the duty of journalists to encourage the contending parties to come to settlement. The communication expert will make frantic efforts to influence and persuade the opposing sides to enter into negotiation. Through efficient application of public relations by the mediating parties which usually comprise of the journalists and the influential community or religious leaders from both communities, the conflict will come to an end.

### **Through Inquiry**

Inquiry is one of the journalistic strategies used in resolving community conflicts. Where differences in opinion on factual matters underline a conflict between parties, the logical solution is to institute a commission of inquiry to be conducted by reputable observers such as journalists and other experts from other disciplines to ascertain precisely the facts in contention. The commission will probe deeply the cause of the conflict and make concrete recommendations on how to terminate the conflicts and through such process, community conflict can be resolved.

### **Through Conciliation**

Conciliation is also a journalistic strategy used in resolving community conflicts. It involves a third party investigation of the causes of the dispute and the submission of report embodying suggestions on how to resolve the conflict.

Conciliation involves elements of both inquiry and mediation and in fact, the process of conciliation emerged from treaties providing for permanent inquiry commissions. The report of conciliation may stimulate negotiations between the parties concerned. The Public Relations consultant serves the third party. They carry out research by investigating on the causes of the conflict. They also make recommendations which can stimulate negotiation between the parties involved.

### **Through Arbitration**

Arbitration is one of the journalistic strategies used in resolving community conflicts. It involves resolving a conflict between two parties by a neutral body, panel or tribunal. This body is usually composed of legal luminaries and journalist who know how to handle proceedings.

Journalists use public relations to appeal and persuade the opposing parties to cooperate by attending to the proceedings of the arbitration. Through this process, a decision is reached which is binding on the both parties concerned.

### **Through Mass Media**

Use of the media is another journalistic strategy used in resolving conflict. Mass media consist of Newspapers, Magazines, Radio, Television, Films etc. According to Ogbuoshi (2002) "Film is the effective medium of passing important information to the target audience, the audience hear and see facts being discussed." When the media report conflict resolution, they leave serious impact for good or for ill, directly or indirectly. The media can resolve conflict situation by avoiding

inflammatory reports, sensation captions or playing to the gallery by maintaining a neutral position and reporting conflict as it is without allowing emotion to be judged.

The media either print or electronic or both can be used to create a conducive atmosphere for effective persuasion of the conflicting communities to see reason on why they should resolve their differences. While the crisis rages, the mass media in the country were awash objective, interpretative and investigative reports of the crisis. These reports created room for proper understanding of the remote and immediate causes, nature and dimensions of the crisis which by extension motivated some concerned citizens to wade into the matter and broker lasting peace in the area.

### **Through Public Opinion**

Public opinion is one of the journalistic strategies used in resolving conflicts. Public opinion is expression of views held in common by members of the community on controversial or salient issues. Journalists use public relations are used to monitor public opinions in a community so as to know their feelings and views on the matter under dispute. Knowing the views or feelings of the parties disputing will help immediately in resolving any conflict.

### **Through the use of Propaganda Devices**

Propaganda is one of the journalistic strategies used in resolving conflicts. Propaganda is a conscious effort on the part of journalists to influence the formation of attitudes. It is an organized effort to spread a particular doctrine or information to change people's attitudes or opinions. The journalist uses various propaganda techniques such as glittering generalities, plain folk device, bandwagon effects and name calling to achieve their motive.

Propaganda is effectively used in conflict resolution. It is used to change beliefs or views of the parties making them to change their mind or agree to negotiate their differences.

## **CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS**

In order not to be economical with the truth, every conflict is unique. Any general recommendations made in this paper need to take account of the specific circumstances of each conflict. It is clear that the media plays a central role in resolving conflict or at the very least, moving from a violent to non-violent phase.

Journalists should be peace-oriented when reporting conflict especially those of cross-border nature. Particularly where the home government embraces a non-violent disposition in conflict resolution, the media should back up such approach without sentiments.

The press can do this by providing a forum for a critical analysis of issues in a conflict through incisive, informed and critical comments from editorialists, columnists, opinion and feature writers among others so as to open up the space for discussion from all fronts which would enlighten the reading public and possibly, the official negotiators in a conflict. By so doing, press coverage of conflicts could provide a pedestal and guide to the government of any country on the direction to face especially in interstate conflicts as a collaborative strategy of sustainable development.

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