Media Perspectives on *Boko Haram* Insurgency and Herdsmen-Farmers' Crises in Nigeria.
An Analysis of Transitivity in Newspaper Editorials

Bukola Alfred (Ile-Ife), Folajimi Oyebola (Münster)

Abstract

The focus of the study is media perspectives on *Boko Haram* insurgency and herdsmen-farmers clashes in Nigeria. These security issues have been commented on, in Nigerian newspapers. In order to show the social attitudes of different news organisations in Nigeria to the operations of *Boko Haram* insurgents and nomadic herdsmen, the study analysed news editorials from *The Punch* and *The Guardian* (South-Western region), *Vanguard* and *The Sun* (East) and *Leadership* and *Daily Trust* (Northern Region). The editorials were those published in the heat of the conflicts between 2014 and 2016. The analysis focused on the representations of *Agents* and activities and media's perspectives on both security issues through the analysis of process options. Our findings show that all the newspapers syntactically positioned the *Boko Haram* insurgents and cattle herders as *Agents* of destruction and death and syntactically portrayed Nigerians and farmers as the victims /*affecteds* of these security issues. The process options show that the newspapers did not, in any way, try to obscure the activities of these groups, rather, they decry such.

1 Introduction

Incidents of terrorism have been reported frequently by newspapers organisations in Nigeria and such reports are dominated by those on *Boko Haram* insurgency and Fulani herdsmen attacks. The activities of Boko Haram insurgents began around 2002, in northern Nigeria, when they functioned as a local Islamic group. Nigerians hold the assumption that the word 'Boko Haram' points to the group's opposition to western education. The activities of Boko Haram insurgents in the country underwent two phases: a) (2002 to 2009) when the group mainly organised teachings and philanthropic visits to the needy); and b) (2009 to date) the period of violent movement (cf. Shuaibu/Salleh/Shehu 2015: 254-255). It is believed that the activities of *Boko Haram* was initiated by Muhammed Marwa, an Islamic purist, who believed that Islamic religion had been contaminated by westernisation and all that is associated with it (cf. Danjibo 2009; Walker 2012; Shehu 2014). According to Voll (2015), attacks from the Boko Haram sect have been frequent and callous due to the killing of Muhammad Yusuf, a perceived leader of the sect, by Nigerian military forces. *Boko Haram* insurgents have thus been driven by a desire for vengeance against the Nigerian government, Nigerian military forces, schools

and religious authorities. *Boko Haram* insurgents kill at will and abduct unsuspecting victims in northern Nigeria and this has resulted in inhabitants of these communities, living in grave fear and uncertainty as regards who the next target would be.

Conversely, land use between herders and farmers has resulted in various clashes because of the prominence of these two groups on national food security in the country. Both land-users claim ownership of farmlands and this has led to incessant clashes. The inability of the Nigerian government to wade in on peaceful co-existence between the agricultural land users has aggravated the crises (Abbas 2012). These clashes are fast becoming a major security threat as herdsmen launch attacks on various communities (especially villages) in different parts of the country, murdering families. In January 2018, for example, 73 villagers were reported killed by herdsmen in Guma and Logo Local Government Areas of Benue state.

Boko Haram insurgency and herdsmen-farmers' clashes in Nigeria have claimed several lives and made haunted communities, shadows of themselves, as people flee for safety. These menaces have resulted in the creation and increase of Internally Displaced Persons' Camps (IDPs) in the country and have constantly defied all forms of reactionary strategies employed by the government and the military to prevent further attacks. The devastating effects of these situations have prompted newspaper organisations to express their feelings and suggest solutions through editorials.

Because of the underlying ideologies that news items are laced with, the news discourse becomes one of the significant platforms to control and redirect the opinion and judgements of people on issues around them. Fowler (1991) opines that the news is never a neutral piece of writing and it is thus usually laced with underlying ideological assumptions. In the author's words, news is "the end product of a complex process which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories" (Fowler 1991: 11). Various newspapers, depending on the intentions, may represent the same reality in different ways in order to project their feelings or ideologies to certain segments of a discourse. In addition, scholars like Taiwo (2007) and Youssefi/Alireza/Amir (2013), have stated that news reports are laced with ideology and cannot be referred to as a neutral genre. News reports go through stages, and it is eventually the sifted ones that are presented to the members of the public. Fairclough (1995: 4) says news reporters grapple with the challenge of making decisions on "what to include and what to exclude" in their stories.

The next section of the study reviews literature on news editorials, their nature and appropriation for media biases. Thereafter, we provide information on the system of transitivity, after which we espouse the theoretical orientation. The section is followed by the analysis and discussion, which leads to the concluding remarks.

2   News Editorials as a Genre of Media Writing

An editorial is an opinionated news story and it relates to a persuasive writing by or under the supervision of an editor of a news organisation or media company on legal, social, economic or political issues that are of utmost concern or importance to the members of the public and expressed through electronic media (radio, television) or print media (newspaper). Editorials are the viewpoints, thoughts or ideas of the newspaper towards certain issues prevalent at a

particular moment (van Dijk, 1996). Newspaper editorials evaluate what has already been reported in the newspapers and proffer solutions where necessary.

Jegede (2015: 77) has described the editorials as the "widest circulated opinion discourses of society." Editorial columns in newspapers are the only authorised pages where news organisations are at liberty to express opinions concerning happenings in news reports. The choices and manipulation of linguistic structures are linked with media's ideological representation and attitude to issues. These manipulations occur because the linguistic choices are not "ideologically neutral" (Igwebuike/Taiwo 2015: 30). Caffarel-Cayron/Rechniewsk (2014) opine that editorials should highlight the ideologies and opinions of news organisation on particular issues. This is considered necessary in order to facilitate the persuasion of readers through valid arguments. A writing of this nature could be the majority opinion of news editors, or those of the board of directors or governing bodies of a news organisation. Thus a news editorial functions as the mouth-piece of a social class, elite group and gives life/interpretation to what is reported in the news.

According to Olowe (1995: 239), newspaper editorials display the "ideational leanings" of the newspapers. The underlying intention of this kind of writing is to persuade the readers and eventually lead them to agree with the writers' views as long as there are facts and valid arguments to back such up. The target audience are usually elites and not the general public and most of the times, stand-points in editorials written in notable or widely-read newspapers are adjudged right, wrong, or controversial by the reading public. News editorial relates to the disposition of the media to issues and these dispositions are usually considered through the categories of processes, participants and circumstances in the transitivity system.

3   Transitivity System in English

The transitivity system focuses on the ways ideas are transmitted, showing for example, how language users (speakers or writers) represent their mental or physical realities of the world around them. Transitivity relies on trying to relate the sense in a particular clausal element – the Verb Group (the Process). Thompson (1994) opines that transitivity relates to the description of an entire clause. It uses functional labels as Process (to express what is/was going-on in the verbal phrase), Participants (who is/was involved in an activity) and Circumstances (under what conditions do/did such take place).

According to Koussouhon/Dossoumou (2014: 2431), the transitivity system construes human experience through language, making sense of "reality". Halliday/Mathiessen (2014: 213) point out that "all figures consist of a process unfolding through time and of participants being directly involved in the process in some way, and in addition, there may be circumstances of time, space, cause, manner or one of a few other types."

The transitivity system helps to categorise daily events into different process types through the verbal phrase. Bloor/Bloor (1995: 110) point out that Halliday's sense of process in Systemic Functional Grammar refers to:

(i)   what is going on in the whole clause
(ii)   that part of the proposition encoded in the verbal group

Downing/Locke (2006: 123) describe process as "an action, a state, a meteorological phenomenon, a process of sensing, saying or simply existing". Halliday (1994) lists the six process types as material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioural and existential. Material process involves the occurrence of physical activity by one or more participants. It is the process of doing something and something happening. Mental process emphasises an experiencer's psychological reaction to situation. Relational process has to do with attribution, characterisation and identification and expresses both outer and inner worlds of experience. The verbal process expresses verbal actions and encodes all synonyms involving symbolic exchanges of meaning and makes it possible to be able to recount what has been earlier said. Existential process explicates that there was/is something or that something exists or occurs. In other words, it is a process of existing and occurring. The behavioural process can be viewed as that which involves acting out the inner consciousness.

In the words of Medubi (2007: 105), "there is no denying the fundamental curiosity in man to know something about himself, his environment, and the people who inhabit the world he lives in". Most of the times, readers are not physically present where these attacks occur; they therefore merely rely on the media's reports and disposition to these security issues. The ideational function, therefore, affords the editorial writers the opportunity to inject their biases to the readers.

4   Review of Relevant Studies on Security Discourse in Nigeria

Earlier studies have been conducted on security discourse in Nigeria media from various linguistic points of view. Ayoola (2010) examined the Nigerian newspapers' ideological perspectives on Niger-Delta discourse. Pam (2012) did a linguo-stylistic study of Nigerian newspaper reportage on the 2010 and 2011 crisis in Jos. Igwebuike/Taiwo (2015) examined the representation of the Bakassi Peninsula Conflict in Nigeria and Cameroon print media. Osisanwo (2016) studied linguistic and discourse strategies deployed in Nigerian news reports on the representation of *Boko Haram* terrorism.

Although these works have examined security discourse in Nigeria media, there is little or nothing that we know of transitivity system being used to project media's perspectives on, and representations of the *Boko Haram* insurgency and Herdsmen-farmers crises in Nigerian newspaper editorials. The objective of this study is to examine the newspaper's discursive representation of social participants in relation to these security challenges in Nigeria. Different news organisations make comments on these security issues almost on a daily basis, especially in the heat of the crises. This study sought to show, through the sub-categories of transitivity (process, participants and circumstance), how news organisations from three geo-political regions of the country project these security issues, through characterisation and representation of the major participants in the crises. The overall objective is to demonstrate how ideologies or social attitudes are expressed in the editorials on *Boko Haram* insurgency and Herdsmen-farmers clashes in Nigeria.

5   Methodology

The corpus for this study comprises eighteen (18) editorials from six Nigerian newspapers namely *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, *The Vanguard*, *The Sun*, *Leadership* and *Daily Trust*. Each editorial has a number of words ranging from 334–1034. Specifically, the shortest of the

editorials (from *The Vanguard*) has three hundred and thirty four (334) words while the longest (from *The Punch*) has one thousand, one hundred and thirty four (1034) words. The newspapers represent different ethnic divisions and thus are likely to impact on the perception and disposition of the different new organisations to the various security issues. The editorials were those published in the heat of the crises (2014 and 2016).

This analysis is focused on the organisation of the texts and how such serves as a resource for encoding meanings in the editorials. The study is concerned with the way different news organisations adjust their grammatical constructions to suit the biases that are projected in the discourse. This will reveal how the security issues are linguistically encoded, especially in relation to participants' semantic roles. The participants in the study are Boko Haram insurgents, herdsmen, farmers, Nigerians, security agencies and the Nigerian government. For the purpose of analysis in this study, our focus will be on three major representation issues: the representation of participants and activities through material process; media's judgement of participants' activities in relation to the security issues through mental and relational processes and the levels of authentication of the news agencies' judgements through the verbal process. The instances of transitivity were tagged TRN.

6   Data Analysis

In the analysis, 357 processes were identified in the 18 editorials analysed. Material process occurred 196 times, relational process 99 times, while verbal process and mental process accounted for 29 and 33 respectively. The existential and behavioural processes were not accounted for because their usages were not considered in the study. All occurrences are illustrated in the table below.

Process Type		LNEs	VEs	TGEs	TPEs	TSEs	DTEs	Total
Material		40	36	5	42	26	47	196
Mental		9	3	2	8	6	5	33
Relational	Attributive	31	14	3	9	4	3	64
	Possessive	6	1	1	1	3	1	13
	Identifying	3	4	1	5	3	6	22
Verbal		7	4	2	8	3	5	29
Total		96	62	14	73	45	67	357

Table 1: Frequency of Occurrences of the Different Process Types Used Across the Editorials

The verbal phrase (Predicator) plays a key role in the analysis of the transitivity system because it shows the relationship that exists between other syntactic elements (Subject, Complement and Adjunct). The newspapers' choices of processes connect with other aspects of the clause structures (participant and circumstance) to serve as resources for exchanging meanings and conveying ideological positioning of news agencies on the afore-mentioned security issues.

6.1   Material Process Options and Representation of Participants and Activities

TRN1: Groups that claim their belief support their actions {ACTOR}, **have been killing** {MATERIAL PROCESS}thousands of Nigerians – men, women and children{GOAL} – with

brutalities that indicate the attacks are staged by people trained for the purpose{CIRCUMSTANCE}.

<div align="right">*The Punch*, Winning Against Terror, 08.01.2014</div>

TRN2: Judging by their countenance, the girls they have used for suicide bombing were not willing to do the deed. They {ACTOR} **were kidnapped** {MATERIAL PROCESS}, **indoctrinated** {MATERIAL PROCESS} with false beliefs {CIRCUMSTANCE} and then **drugged** {MATERIAL PROCESS} before bombs were strapped on their young bodies {CIRCUMSTANCE}.

<div align="right">*Leadership*, Cowardly Fighters and Female Suicide Bombers, 06.08.2014</div>

In the analysis above, the instances of material processes enabled the media to either foreground or background Agents, as the case may be, in a bid to represent participants positively or negatively in the security-related issues. TRN1 and TRN2 are excerpts from the editorials that focus on *Boko Haram* insurgency and the verbal options in the material processes, "have been killing", "were kidnapped", "indoctrinated", "drugged", were employed to provide vivid images of how the *Boko Haram* sect has been carrying out its ruthless activities in the country. In TRN1, *The Punch* explicitly positioned the *Boko Haram* sect as ruthless and unfeeling by predominantly positioning them as (Agent) initiators of the process of "killing" thousands of Nigerians. The nominal phrase "groups that claim their belief support their actions" is ideological, as it was used to express the print media's scepticism about whether any religion supports the undeserved killings and religious injunctions upheld by the sects. In TRN2, *Leadership* adopted a passivised construction to drive readers' empathetic feeling towards young female suicide bombers. The passivised agency of the girls being "kidnapped", "indoctrinated" and "drugged" were ideological in portraying them as simply being used against their will to intensify the nefarious activities of the sect. The print media's empathetic intention is further heightened by the circumstantial option "before bombs were strapped on their young bodies" and further used to confirm the claim that the girls were unwilling and thus innocent. Both newspapers depicted the insurgents as wicked, neither having value for human lives nor any religious backing for their activities. The linguistic choices in the excerpts above were used to arouse a negative attitude to the activities of the sect.

TRN3: In their latest atrocity {CIRCUMSTANCE}, hundreds of cattle herders {ACTOR} **descended on** {MATERIAL PROCESS} UkpabiNimbo, Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State last week {CIRCUMSTANCE}... In all, the herdsmen {ACTOR} **killed** {MATERIAL PROCESS} 46 people {GOAL}... They {ACTOR} **burnt down** {MATERIAL PROCESS} houses and vehicles {GOAL} in the village {CIRCUMSTANCE}… The herders {ACTOR} **have** recently **perpetrated** {MATERIAL PROCESS} similar crimes {GOAL} in Lagelu, Oyo State {CIRCUMSTANCE}. In January {CIRCUMSTANCE}, herdsmen{ACTOR} **killed** {MATERIAL PROCESS}30 people {GOAL} in Adamawa State {CIRCUMSTANCE}, including OkezieOkoroafor, the Divisional Police Officer in Girei LGA.

<div align="right">*The Punch*, Treating Violent Herdsmen as Terrorists, 06.05.2016</div>

TRN4: Many times {CIRCUMSTANCE}, the attackers {ACTOR} **massacre** {MATERIAL PROCESS}the farmers {GOAL} at will, with no hope at all of help from security operatives {CIRCUMSTANCE}.

<div align="right">*The Sun*, Stop the Killings Now, 28.04.2016)</div>

TRN5: Over 50 people {GOAL} **were** reportedly **killed** {MATERIAL PROCESS**}** and property worth millions of naira {GOAL} **destroyed** {MATERIAL PROCESS} last week in a renewed attack on Tiv communities in Benue State by nomadic herdsmen{CIRCUMSTANCE}.

Leadership, Killings in Defence of Cattle, Crop, 29.01.2014

TRN3, TRN4 and TRN5 are excerpts from editorials that focus on the herdsmen attacks across different regions in Nigeria. The excerpts expressed the violent acts of these cattle herders in different parts of the country. In TRN3 and TRN4, the herdsmen were made to assume the participant role of Agents, while farmers and communities generally became the Goals. The three newspapers *The Punch*, *The Sun* and *Leadership* syntactically positioned nomadic herdsmen as destructive beings. The choices of the material processes "descended on", "killed", "burnt down", "perpetrated" and "massacre" were ideological in that they were intended to draw both the attention and emotions of Nigerians to the brutalities of the herdsmen. *The Punch*'s metaphorical use of "descended on" depicted herdsmen as trespassers and oppressors who launch surprise ambush on host communities whether or not they meet with the slightest resistance from the inhabitants or farmers in those communities. In TRN 4, the circumstantial option "at will" showed that the attacks and killings by the nomads, most of the times, are unprovoked and undeserved. In TRN5, *Leadership* explicitly foregrounded the affected (over 50 people and properties worth millions of naira) in the crisis involving the nomadic herdsmen. The print media's intent to project a perception of callousness of the nomadic herdsmen dictated the passivised constructions. The circumstances "In their latest atrocity", "In January" and "Many times" were intended to confirm the newspapers' claim that the herders have caused irrevocable wreckages, at different times, across several states in Nigeria and thus this group could be considered terrorists. The linguistic structures above expressed the print media's negative attitude towards the operations of herders in Nigeria and substantiated the perception that their visits often leave a trail of blood in host communities. Ideological assumptions were constructed in these excerpts through what was said and what was left unsaid. What was left unsaid is that everybody, as a matter of urgency, must actively get involved in fighting this cruel group. The three newspapers in the excerpts above, despite being published in different regions (South West, Eastern and Northern regions respectively), condemned the activities of the herdsmen and characterise them as nothing but agents of mass destruction.

The excerpts below signalled clear-cut opinions of the news organisations to activities and statements of certain groups.

TRN6: According to the Acting Director, Army Public Relations, Colonel Sani KukashekaUsman {CIRCUMSTANCE}, the Joint Army Air Force operations {ACTOR} **have led to {**MATERIAL PROCESS} the killing of scores of terrorists and the destruction of their camps and weapons {GOAL}. Several Nigerians held hostage by the terrorists [ACTOR} **were** also **rescued** {MATERIAL PROCESS}.

Vanguard, End-game Strategies against Terror, 17.11.2015

TRN7: In developed parts of the world, anti-terrorism units are elite military outfits that have become a nemesis to terrorists. They {ACTOR} **preempt** {MATERIAL PROCESS} terror attacks {GOAL}, just as they respond swiftly to exigencies with Prussian efficiency, as their operations are underpinned by robust intelligence gathering. They {ACTOR} **dig out** {MATERIAL PROCESS} enemy secrets {GOAL}, **perform** {MATERIAL PROCESS} daring rescue operations and stealth missions, and {GOAL} **take on** {MATERIAL PROCESS} tasks no one can do {GOAL}.

Vanguard employed the verbal options "have led to" and "were rescued" in TRN6 to present, in a positive light, the efforts of the Nigerian Joint Army-Air Force operations in curtailing *Boko Haram* insurgency. The narrative frame is ideological in that it implicitly expressed the *Vanguard's* belief in the efficiency of the Nigerian security force in dealing with the terrorists as opposed to the general beliefs of Nigerians that the Nigerian Army is lethargic and incapable of handling the sect. The phrases "killing of scores of terrorists" and "destruction of their camps" portrayed them as a fearless, intelligent and experienced force who have succeeded in subduing the deadly sect and liberating the hostages effortlessly. The linguistic structures were used to both heighten the trust and allay the fears of Nigerians about the insurgents. Also, in TRN7, *The Punch* maintained a positive disposition towards the Federal Government's proposal on the incorporation of an anti-terrorism unit in the collective fight against *Boko Haram* insurgency. To concretise its stance, *The Punch* explicitly positioned the anti-terrorism units as Agents who are specially equipped to "pre-empt" impending attacks, "dig out" hidden secrets and "perform" daring operations to achieve the mission of wiping out the insurgents. The verbal options projected a strong confidence in anti-terrorism units and portrayed them as die-hard operatives whose activities will tremendously contribute to overpowering the dreaded *Boko Haram* sect.

> TRN8: Other than hidden individual or group agenda, the Kano bombings and killings {ACTOR} clearly **defy** {MATERIAL PROCESS} the teachings of Islam and other religion {GOAL}.
> *The Guardian*, The Terror Attack in Kano Mosque, 12.12.2014.

The excerpts above signalled clear-cut opinions of the news organisations to activities and statements of certain groups. In TRN8, *The Guardian* used the material process "defy" to show a clear-cut condemnation of *Boko Haram* activities in the northern part of the country. The verbal option in the process clearly linked the activities of the sect to concealed individual/group motive and detached such from any Islamic injunction or religious tie. *The Guardian* portrayed *Boko Haram* as agonistic and labelled it as a group which is not conscientious-stricken. Initially, Nigerians believed that this group of people were promoters of the Islamic practices. However, the newspaper's opinion of the *Boko Haram* sect is that it does not necessarily represent Islam. The process option aimed to embitter the minds of the readers towards the group and portray them as a group which merely delights in gratuitous violence. The process positioned many more Nigerians as vulnerable to death if the activities of this group are allowed to fester in the country.

6.2 Mental and Relational Process Options and Media's Judgement of Participants' Activities in Relation to the Security Issues

Findings revealed that these cognitive verbs were used in the data: *expect, hope, think, know, ponder, believe, wonder, view, worry, imagine, convince, agree, appreciate, witness, aware, construe/misconstrue, understand, feel, forget, see, want, recall, ignore, remember, assume, remind,* and *realise.* However, in all the appearances of cognitive verbs, *believe* appeared the most and combined only with the pronoun "we" or nominal group "this newspaper" in order to signal the newspapers' commitment, conviction and conclusion on certain segments of the discourse.

TRN9: The president and commander in chief of the armed forces recently called for the vetting of vigilante groups; though this was not well received in some quarters, we {SENSER} **believe** {MENTAL PROCESS} in this case, that the president does have a point worth considering {PHENOMENON}.

Leadership, The Rise of Vigilantes, 26.11.2014

TRN10: We {SENSER} **believe** {MENTAL PROCESS} that the escalation of herdsmen/farmers' clashes is a result of the failure of the Federal Government, past and present, to address the problem {PHENOMENON}.

The Sun, Time to Build Cattle Ranches, 15.10.2015

TRN9 is drawn from an editorial on *Boko Haram* insurgency and *Leadership* used the cognitive verb "believe" to express the commitment of the newspaper institutions to the propositional contents. The print media made a personal commitment to the vetting of vigilante groups in Nigeria. The use of the cognitive verb was ideological as it was the newspaper's attempt to stir up the possibility of a formidable anti-terrorism team if the vigilante group are vetted and brought in. *Leadership's* belief is premised on the fact that such an act would equip the vigilantes with the right skills and trainings needed to fight the *Boko Haram* sect, prevent them from switching loyalties in cases where they may be tempted to, and ultimately reinforce the anti-terrorism team. The cognitive verb is a tactical way of preventing Nigerians from disparaging this decision made by the president. In TRN10, *The Sun* used the verbal options in the material process to express strong conviction in the fact that the herdsmen attacks have succeeded over the years due to the laxity of the government. The editorial implied that despite the incessant attacks from herders, the Federal government had not attempted to proffer any solution. The cognitive verb depicted the federal government as negligent on matters concerning national peace. The mental process was an attack on the government's lack of responsiveness to this menace. While the newspaper's choice of mental process unapologetically blamed the government, it was a tactical way to spur it to redeem its image and do something to curb further attacks by the herdsmen.

TRN11: Going forward, we {SENSER} **think** {MENTAL PROCESS} the time has come for herdsmen to develop ranches for their cattle {PHENOMENON}.

The Sun, Time to Build Cattle Ranches, 15.10.2015

In TRN11, the expression *we think* was used to introduce the conclusion drawn by the newspaper. The conclusion was based on the various clashes between the herdsmen and villagers when they engage in open grazing of their cattle. The ideological implication of the verbal process was to end the incessant attacks from the herders especially when they meet with the slightest confrontations from host communities. The frequency of *think* is at variance with previous studies conducted on emotive writings (cf. Taiwo, 2016; Baumgarten/House, 2010; Kaltenbock, 2013; Zhang/Sabet, 2014). The other cognitive verbs were mostly used to mark the feelings of Nigerians (*e.g., wonder, feel, worry*), advise or tactically redirect participants (e.g., *realise, forget, ignore*), express anticipations or desires (*e.g., hope, expect, yearn, want*), express experiences (*e.g., witness, suffer*), demand cognition from other participants (*e.g., ponder, see, recall, remember, react*), signal perception (*e.g., agree, appreciate, view, imagine*) among other functions.

TRN12: For female and child suicide bombing, the logic is simple: There is more reluctance to search women and children, considered to be "vulnerable", which gives such attackers an

advantage over men. They {PHENOMENON} **are** also **assumed** {MENTAL PROCESS} to be potentially less dangerous …

<div align="right">*The Punch*, Female Suicide Bombers on the Prowl, 05.08.2014</div>

In writing an editorial, editors guard against giving erroneous judgments. This determines the weight that is placed on propositions. In TRN 12, *The Punch* hedged its judgments on women and children in order to avoid the fallacy of hasty generalisations. The newspaper withheld its complete commitment and weakened the extent of its belief through the choice of the mental process "are also assumed". It was observed that the state of knowledge was expressed in a passivised form. The Senser was not explicitly stated but could also be implied as "by everyone" or "by Nigerians". Olowe (1995: 243) observes that passivisation is used mostly to "play down an ideologically uncomfortable aspect of the reality being mediated", especially at the expense of danger or criticism. In this syntactic expression, *The Punch* took up the implicit role of Senser and presents a common perception on the way women and children are viewed in Nigeria. *The Punch* is of the opinion that *Boko Haram*'s choice of children and women as suicide bombers is as a result of their perceived vulnerability, which this sect finds advantageous and instrumental to fuelling their unrepentant activities. The editorial is also of the opinion that another reason why this group of individuals (women and children) have succeeded in the north in suicide bombing is because they are generally considered "potentially less dangerous". However, the newspaper was careful not to generalise, as such a statement seemed neither scientifically proven nor backed by research and is likely to be faulted.

TRN13: The terrorists {SENSER} **want** {MENTAL PROCESS} attention, and bigger headlines {PHENOMENON}.

<div align="right">*Vanguard*, Nothing Shocks Again, 30.06.2014</div>

Vanguard in TRN13, adopted the verbal group to express the plights of the insurgents. The succeeding pronominal item was implicitly used to condemn the reason for the *Boko Haram* activities as baseless and mere gratuitous violence and to dissuade the public from giving them the attention they seek.

TRN14: More ominous {ATTRIBUTE} **is** {ATTRIBUTIVE PROCESS} the arrest of Hadiza Musa, a 10-year old girl, who was discovered to be wearing an explosive-fitted belt in Funtua, Katsina State by security agents {CARRIER}.

<div align="right">*The Punch*, Female Suicide Bombers on the Prowl, 05.08.2014</div>

The excerpt above is culled from editorials on *Boko Haram* insurgency. In the excerpt, the newspaper preposed the Attribute to express shock and worry over the actions of suicide bombers. The attribute "more ominous" was fronted to perform an informative role and correct the impression that *Boko Haram* insurgents are all grown-up men who have mastered the acts of killing. *The Punch* employed this attribution to indirectly sensitise Nigerians on the need to be more security conscious about strange faces in their environs (regardless of the age). Ideologically, the print media sought to awaken vigilance in Nigerians and enlighten them on the need to keep close checks on everyone, especially children who loiter around particular locations.

TRN15: It {CARRIER} **is** {ATTRIBUTIVE PROCESS} crucial {ATTRIBUTE} to note that a policy intervention would not only generate economic advantages, but would also engender peace and healthy coexistence among our disparate ethnic nationalities.

<div align="right">*Leadership*, Killing in Defence of Cattles, Crops, 29.01.2014</div>

TRN15 is an instance of attributive relational option expressed in an extraposed version. Quirk/Greenbaum (1973) observe that extraposed versions place weighty subjects (in this case, Carriers) at the end of a clause and replace the elements with an empty *It*. *Leadership* expressed a disposition towards the proposed policy intervention meant to prevent subsequent herders/farmers clashes. The extraposed attributed clause option was *Leadership's* attempts to persuade readers to see the proposition as a central strategy in achieving economic development and peace in various parts of the nation.

> TRN16: These terrifying incidents clearly expose the undiluted evil being spread by Boko Haram. It {CARRIER} **shows** {ATTRIBUTIVE PROCESS} also that the terrorists are running short of male fighters {ATTRIBUTE}.
>
> *Leadership*, Cowardly Fighters and Female Suicide Bombers, 06.08.2014

> TRN17: Apart from the vague promise of the Minister of the Interior, General Abdulrahman Danbazzau, that his ministry would do more to tackle the menace, the Federal Government {CARRIER} **appears** {ATTRIBUTIVE PROCESS} unperturbed {ATTRIBUTE} over these brazen acts of aggression by these armed bandits, who the Police Inspector General, Solomon Arase describes as aliens. These attacks are well publicised.
>
> *Vanguard*, Fulani Herdsmen: Presidency must Act, 15.03.2016

In TRN16, *Leadership* unequivocally stated a strong commitment to the attribute of the excerpt. The attributive process "shows" was used by the newspaper to express unwavering facts that *Boko Haram's* deployment of females as suicide bombers indicates their shortage of males and projects the feeling that the insurgents were being surmounted. In TRN17, *Vanguard* withheld its commitment in relation to the claim made on the government's seemingly "unperturbed" attitude to security challenges in Nigeria, through a hedging expression "appears". In order to avoid relating false information which may daunt the credibility of the editorials, the attributive process was used since there was no valid evidence to back up such a claim. However, the verbal group encoded an attack on the slackness of the Federal government over herdsmen attacks in the country.

> TRN18: The primary responsibility of the government {IDENTIFIER} **is** {IDENTIFYING PROCESS} the protection of life and property {IDENTIFIED}.
>
> *The Sun*, Time to Build Cattle Ranches, 15.10.2016

> TRN19: The only way to defeat an insurgency, one with various elements and motivations {IDENTIFIER}, **is** {IDENTIFYING PROCESS} to drain it of this support {IDENTIFIED}.
>
> *Daily Trust*, Final Military Operation in Sambisa, 13.10.2016

The excerpts above are instances of identifying relational clauses. In TRN18, *The Sun* intensively associated the sole essence of any government to the protection of the lives and properties of its citizens. In other words, the newspaper attempted to use the intensive relational clause to mock the existence of the Buhari-led administration and project an image of incompetence and insensitivity on the part of the President in fulfilling its commitment on safeguarding the lives and properties of the citizens it swore to protect. *The Sun*'s overriding intention here was to charge the government toward its responsibility and likely depict Goodluck Jonathan as a better President. In TRN19, *Daily Trust* placed, in a close-ended class, its own recommendation to resolving insurgency in Nigeria. The editorial equated the Identifier "the only way to defeat an insurgency, one with various elements and motivations" to draining "it of this support". The emphatic use of *only* presupposed that nothing else aside this approach

is likely to yield a positive result in combating insurgency. Thus, *Daily Trust* projected its suggestion as most superior or authentic over several other possible alternatives.

6.3   Verbal Process Options and the Levels of Authentication of the News Agencies' Claims

TRN20: Already, the United States government {SAYER} **has**, as part of efforts to contain the insurgency, **declared** {VERBAL PROCESS} Boko Haram as a terrorist group with a bounty on the head of its leader {VERBIAGE}.

Leadership, The North as War Theatre? 24.02.2014

TRN21: For the government, the military and other efforts, local and international, that had set the stage for this obviously happy moment, we {SAYER} **can** only **say** {VERBAL PROCESS} that there is no rest until the other girls come home to their parents and other relations{VERBIAGE}.

Leadership, As we welcome home the 21 Chibok Girls, 15.10.2016

The excerpts above have Sayers and Verbiages with no Receivers. The use of the verbal processes was the newspapers' attempt to illustrate what certain persons or bodies have said at one time or the other on security-related issues. The verbal options "has declared" and "can say" were used to express the submissions of certain key participants in the editorials analysed. The verbal processes were tactically used to reinvigorate the views of the editorials through the testimonies of other participants. In TRN20, the declaration of the United States' government about the *Boko Haram* insurgents suited that of *Leadership*'s, thus the verbal process "has declared" helped to give credence to the newspaper's view of the *Boko Haram* Sect. A reference to the Sayer was instrumental in accruing a world-renowned status of this label to the sect. In TRN21, the verbal process helped to project the newspaper's stream of thought in relation to the other abducted girls. The verbal process "can say" gave an impression of *Leadership*'s concern, agitation and sympathy for the release of the Chibok girls.

TRN22: Reports{SAYER} **said** {VERBAL PROCESS} that the pre-dawn raid of the area known as Church Village, Dagba in the Durumi Settlement of Abuja was carried out by soldiers and other security operatives{VERBIAGE}.

Daily Trust, Double Jeopardy of Fleeing Boko Haram Victims, 02.04. 2014

TRN23: In Nigeria, the private Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN) {SAYER} **said** {VERBAL PROCESS} that rustlers killed 322 herders and stole 60,000 cattle in 2013 in some states in the northern part of Nigeria{VERBIAGE}.

Daily Trust, Arresting the Menace of Cattle Rustling, 05.07.2014

The verbal options in the instances above were used to refer to the claims made in news reports. The verbal process "said" suggests that the *Daily Trust* based its judgments on what the news reports fed them with. Should there be imprecision in the claims; the choices of the verbal group would serve as a protection for the newspapers especially because they probably were not present at the scenes of the incidents. The *Sayers* were used to situate the realities of cattle rustlings and *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria.

7   Conclusion

This study has attempted an analysis of transitivity media perspectives on *Boko Haram* insurgency and herdsmen-farmers' clashes in Nigeria in news media editorials. The

newspapers, regardless of their different regions within the country, condemn the activities of the insurgents and herders. It was observed that the newspapers were unbiased in representing the security problems that emanated from other regions. All the Nigerian newspapers slanted their grammatical constructions to portray the *Boko Haram* insurgents and herdsmen as dangerous beings and positioned farmers and Nigerians as victims of their cruel activities. The findings of this study resonate Igwebuike/Taiwo's (2015) submission that newspapers actually slant the news to portray certain social participant in a certain way.

This study cannot be considered an exhaustive one. A similar study may be carried out on open issues in Nigeria such as corruption, xenophobic attacks on Nigerians, incessant strike actions by professional bodies in Nigeria, to ascertain if there are likely similarities or dissimilarities in the linguistic constructions used in the Nigerian newspaper editorials. Also, a comparative study may be carried out on the analysis of the three language metafunctions in Nigerian newspaper editorials and those of other countries also experiencing similar security challenges. Finally, a similar study can be conducted purely from the approach of Critical Discourse Analysis.

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