LASU JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY NIGERIAN STUDIES (LASUJMNS)

Vol 2(1) March 2026

ISSN (Print): 3121 9144

ISSN (Online): 3121-8407

Publications/Research Committee,

i/c Centre for General Nigerian Studies,

Lagos State University, P.M.B. 0001,

Ojo, Lagos State, Nigeria.

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ISSN (Print): 3121 9144

ISSN (Online): 3121-8407

A publication of
Lagos State University
P.M.B. 0001. LASU Post Office
Ojo Lagos State, Nigeria.

LASU JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY NIGERIAN STUDIES (LASUJMNS)

Vol 2(1) March 2026
ISSN: 3121 9144

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Vol 2(1) March 2026
ISSN: 3121 9144

Editorial Desk

It is my distinct honour to present Volume 2 of the Lagos State University Journal of Multidisciplinary Nigerian Studies (LASUJMNS), published in March 2026. This edition comprises twenty-one (21) rigorously researched and high-quality scholarly articles drawn from diverse disciplines, which all reflect the enduring commitment to interdisciplinary scholarship and academic excellence of the journal.

All submitted manuscripts underwent a thorough double-blind peer review process conducted by seasoned and highly respected scholars. In addition, stringent plagiarism screening procedures were implemented to ensure originality, credibility, and adherence to global best practices in scholarly publishing. These quality assurance measures were carried out in strict compliance with the directive of the Vice-Chancellor, Distinguished Professor Ibiyemi Ibilola Olatunji-Bello, mni, NPOM, GCGNS, whose unwavering commitment to academic integrity and excellence continues to guide the operations of the journal.

The successful publication of this volume further reinforces the reputation of Lagos State University as a hub of scholarly innovation and the dedication of the editorial board to maintaining high publication standards. LASUJMNS remains committed to providing a reputable platform for the dissemination of impactful research that addresses contemporary societal challenges and contributes meaningfully to knowledge production within Nigeria and beyond.

We are pleased to announce that the call for papers for Volume 3 is now open. The forthcoming edition is scheduled for publication before the third quarter of 2026. We encourage scholars, researchers, and practitioners to submit original and well-researched manuscripts for consideration.

Distinguished scholars, authors, and members of the academic community, we warmly invite you to continue supporting and subscribing to LASUJMNS as a credible outlet for quality research, enhanced visibility, and wider scholarly reach.

We appreciate your continued collaborations and contributions to contemporary academic discuss.

Prof. M. O. B. Mohammed, FNAEAP
Editor-in-Chief
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LASU JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY NIGERIAN STUDIES (LASUJMNS)

Vol 1(1) Dec. 2025
ISSN: 3121 9144

CONTENTS

Health Awareness and Socioeconomic Determinants of Food Consumption Among University Students: A Case Study of Lagos State University
Lawal-Arogundade, Samod Olayiwole; Salami, Lateef Olusegun; Mohammed, Abidat Oluwashola; Bashiru, Bilikis Omowunmi **1-16**

Representation of Solutions of Radial Schrodinger Equation for The Double An-Harmonic Oscillator via Transformation to Biconfluent Heunsequation
Bisiriyu Babatunde Awesu; Aderibigbe Anjorin;, Opeoluwa Joel Owodolu; & Oluwaseun Kunle Owodolu **17-22**

Climate Change Impact and Indigenous Adaptation Strategies of Selected Coastal Communities in Badagry Local Government Area of Lagos State
Agosu, Christopher Monday; Okafor, Chinenye Lilian; Adejobi, Mayowa John; Ahove, Michael Adetunji; & Olatunbosun Eyitayo **23-36**

Marketing Strategies, Student Engagement and Business Performance Among Student Entrepreneurs in University of Lagos
Bukola Amao-Taiwo; Oladimeji Odetunde; Cynthia Ada Chigioke **37-53**

Effects Of Sex Education On Gender Expression And Academic Performance Of Senior Secondary School Students in Education District V of Lagos State, Nigeria
Ogunsakin, Ayodele Augustine Barnes; Isaac-Philips, Modupe Margaret & Abari, Ayodeji Olasunkanmi **54-64**

Sociological Review of Moral Character Development and Social Interaction among Students
Onwuka, Martins Ikechukwu; Bello, Samaila & Lamus, Larai Usman **65-75**

Cultural Degeneration and The Lost Harmony: A View on The Erosion of Traditional Family Systems In Contemporary Nigeria
Olubode, Ojajuni & **Dairo, Taiwo Sunday** **76-87**

Deans' Administrative Leadership Styles and Organisational Performance of Lagos State-Owned Universities, Nigeria
Shittu, Taofeek Olawale; Fawole, Christiana Oluwatoyin & Mohammed, Mubashiru Olayiwola **88-95**

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Vol 2(1) March 2026
ISSN: 3121 9144

Teacher Recruitment Practices, Educational Quality, And Learning Poverty in Nigeria's Public Secondary Schools
Yahya, Lateefat Oludare; Adekoya, Babatunde Adebowale & Giwa, Yussuf Olaoye **96-102**

Conflict, Food Security, And Crisis Communication: South-West Nigeria Experience
Ajayi, Adewale; Okeowo, Taiwo Olatunde & Arisoyin, Olanrewaju Amos **103-118**

Influence Of Political Empowerment in Fostering Skills Acquisition in Ojokoro Local Council Development Area, Lagos State, Nigeria
Salam, Afusat Omolara; Mohammed, Mubasiru Olawale B.; Rufai, Musiliu Dada & Abudu, Abosede Mariam **119-126**

Use Of Cloud Collaborative Tools by Librarians in Academic Universities: The Lasu Library Experience
Ogungbo, Wakilu O.[1] & Amosun, Faith I. **127-140**

Reclaiming Traditional Nigerian Values: A Reflection on Widowhood and Family Systems
Olubode, Ojajuni & **Dairo, Taiwo Sunday** **141-147**

Influence of Employee Wellness Programs in Schools on Teacher Well-Being in Public Primary School in Southwestern Nigeria
Temisanren, Olawumi Esther & Aboki, Adamu Jibrin **148-157**

Servant Leadership Styles of Headteachers and Pupils' Academic Performance in Lagos State Public Primary School, Nigeria
Shittu, Taofeek Olawale; Shittu, Aramide Ayorinde & Mohammed, Mubashiru Olayiwola **158-164**

Effects of Monetary Policies on Stock Market Performance in Nigeria: Further Investigation
Bello, Hassan T.; Gbemisola, Olajide S. & Asimi, Fatai **165-177**

Libraries as Gardens: Cultivating Inclusivity and Growth in Nigerian School Education
Ladipo, Sunday Olusola (Ph.D)[1] & Adebosin, Walid Gbadebo **178-198**

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Vol 1(1) Dec. 2025
ISSN: 3121 9144

Impact of Building Information Modelling (BIM) on Stakeholder-Induced Scope Changes in Construction Projects in Urban Area of Lagos State
Adeodu, Adefemi Omowole; Itanola, Taiwo Azeez &
Daniyan, Ilesanmi Afolabi **199-209**

Institutional Quality and Sustainable Development: A Quantitative Analysis
Oyovwi, Dickson & Osho-Itsueli, Bomi **210-219**

A Review of The E-Medical Records Policy Implementation on Healthcare Service Delivery in Lagos State General Hospitals
Adu, Oluwatosin B.; Akinyinka, Modupeola R. &
Ibikunle, Busayo Qazeem **220-242**

Impacts of Personal Training Cost of Teachers on Job Quality and Productivity in Public Secondary Schools in Lagos State
Dairo, Taiwo Sunday; Beyioku, Joseph Bankole;
Ayeni, Oluwapamilerin Paul & Yahya, Lateefat Oludare **243-252**

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LASU JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY NIGERIAN STUDIES (LASUJMNS)

Vol 2(1) March 2026
ISSN: 3121 9144

CONFLICT, FOOD SECURITY, AND CRISIS COMMUNICATION: SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

The conflict between herders and farmers, often highlighted by violence, resulting in food scarcity and security is a longstanding issue in Nigeria. This study therefore examined conflict, food security, and crisis communication from the experience of southwest Nigeria. The objectives are to: find out the prominence of the coverage of the farmers and herdsmen crisis in the Punch, Tribune, and Daily Trust; identify the sources of news in reporting the crisis; investigate the extent to which Nigerian newspapers engaged in investigative journalism in coverage of the crises; find out the language used in the stories; assess the framing patterns adopted by the selected newspapers and identify are the factors that influenced the selected newspaper in framing the farmers and herdsmen crisis in the South-West. Framing and Gate-keeping theories are used for the study. The study adopted the content analysis method and key informant interviews. Coding and interview guides are used as research instruments. Three national newspapers: the Punch, Nigerian Tribune, and Daily Trust Newspapers are purposively selected from 2020 to 2021. This study established that reports on farmers-herdsmen conflicts are still largely framed in ethnic slants and such frames do not support peace and conflict-sensitive journalism. Based on the findings, this study recommends that Journalists always cover both sides of the farmers-herders conflict to ensure fairness while newspaper owners and stakeholders in the newspaper industry should intensify training programs for journalists on conflict reporting.

Keywords:
Conflict, Food Security, Insecurity, Crisis Communication, Experience, South-West

Citation:
Ajayi, A., Okeowo, T. O., & Arisoyin, O. A. (2026). Conflict, food security, and crisis communication: South-West Nigeria experience. *LASU Journal of Multidisciplinary Nigerian Studies (LASUJMNS)*, 2(1). 103-118

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Vol 2(1) March 2026
ISSN: 3121 9144

Introduction

The media's primary functions include the need to inform, educate, and entertain. These functions enable the media to serve as an indispensable tool to moderate the society, mobilise the public, and foster development of the nation's economy and democracy. Every edition of a newspaper has a good deal of information that the general public can use. Newspaper articles have an impact on readers' opinions because they convey news in an authoritative and occasionally advocacy-like manner. Newspaper editorials may analyse a scenario, event, or problem in-depth, outlining the advantages and disadvantages before arguing for or against a certain course of action (Daramola 2003, p. 61). This type of editorial tends to sway readers' opinions on the topics it raises. By drawing the public's attention to pressing issues, newspapers have also contributed to the implementation of reforms in the public sector and other domains.

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life," according to FAO (2003). The application of this idea to the family level, with the focus being on the persons living in homes, is known as household food security. When people lack sufficient physical, social, or financial access to food as previously mentioned, food insecurity occurs. The distinction made in the World Bank report "Poverty and Hunger" in 1986 between temporary and chronic food insecurity must be emphasized. While periods of increased strain brought on by shocks like natural catastrophes, economic collapse, or conflict are referred to as the latter, the former is linked to persistent or structural poverty and low earnings issues.

Previous research on conflict reporting (e.g., Arcan, 2013; Zia and Syedah, 2015; Savrum and Miller, 2015) discovered bias in newspaper framing of the conflicts and concentrated primarily on major terrorist attacks, ethnic conflicts, and the emergence of insurgencies around the globe. Research on conflicts in Nigeria (Asemah and Edegoh, 2012; Okoro and Odoemelam, 2013; Ngwu, Ekwu, and Chiaha, 2015; Nwankpa and Onyekosor, 2015; Jimoh, 2014), among other studies, have also concentrated more on newspaper coverage of the insurgency of Boko Haram, the Niger-Delta crisis, the Jos crisis, and the Chibok Girls crisis. A few studies have looked at how newspapers present the conflict in each of the nation's geopolitical zones, though. The mass media has frequently been held accountable for exacerbating crises, especially because of the way they report on them.

The government of Nigeria has attempted multiple times to address this issue in various regions of the nation because herdsmen have invaded the north-central, middle-belt, and southern states, the farmers-herdsmen crisis in Nigeria has persisted, resulting in a high degree of food insecurity.. Due to the devastation, some farmers and herdsmen have also seen a drop in the yield of their crops and animals (Nweze, 2005). Farmers are frequently seen as the most vulnerable due to the ongoing farmers-herders problem in Nigeria, which threatens national food security, livestock output, and poverty eradication (Dimelu, Salifu, Enwelu, and Igbokwe,

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Vol 2(1) March 2026
ISSN: 3121 9144

2017). For peace, food security, and sustainable development, the government and other reputable and concerned organizations must act quickly and effectively.

Statement of the Problem

The conflict between farmers and herders, often highlighted by violence, is a longstanding issue in Nigeria. It has been evolving in frequency and intensity, hence assuming new complexities in recent years. According to the 2015 Global Terrorism Index, pastoralists, regarded as "Fulani militants", were the fourth most deadly terrorist group in the world, only behind the Taliban, the Islamic State (also known as ISIS or ISIL), and Boko Haram (Institute of Economics and Peace, 2015). Herders are geographically dispersed as far as their nomadic movements, and so are their attacks. Although hostilities have concentrated more in the North-Central, there is an extension to Nigeria's South-East, South-South, North-West, North-East, and South-West geopolitical zones (SBM Intelligence, 2016). These regions have, in varying degrees, suffered the loss of lives and property as well as displacements due to attacks by the pastoralists. The broad scope of the conflict qualifies it as a national crisis. Despite this reality, the farmers-herders conflict has not been given adequate attention and exigency accorded to the Boko Haram insurgency (largely remote to the North-East) and the Niger Delta crisis (largely remote to the South-South).

Conceptual Review

The concept of food security is broad and encompasses many different aspects. It denotes having enough food available for a healthy lifestyle. According to the World Bank (1986), food security is the state in which everyone has access to enough food to lead healthy and productive lives. According to Pottier (1999), issues about agriculture, society, the environment, employment and income, marketing, health and nutrition, and public policy are interconnected and affect food security. Food security is also defined as a state in which all people always have physical, social, and economic access to enough food to meet their dietary needs for a productive and healthy life (USAID Bureau for Africa, 1986; cited in Eme, Onyishi Uche, and Uche, 2014). Food security has three concepts according to the World Bank (2007). These are food accessibility, affordability, and availability. Ensuring enough food is produced for the homes to ensure food availability. The definitions undoubtedly highlight two aspects of this intricate idea: a sufficient diet for long-term health and access to available food.

Conflict can be described as a disagreement among groups or individuals characterized by antagonism and hostility. This is usually fueled by the opposition of one party to another, in an attempt to reach an objective different from that of the other party. The elements involved in the conflict have varied principles and values, thus allowing such a conflict to arise. Crisis on the other hand is mostly used in the social sciences to mean stress, conflict, tension, panic, catastrophe, and disaster. The term is used synonymously with many situations that have generalized the meaning. Cengage (2018) states that because of its varied meanings the term crisis has not been useful in building systematic knowledge about social phenomena. He added that the term cover almost any situation and is not helpful in analysis that emphasis variables

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Vol 2(1) March 2026
ISSN: 3121 9144

and relationships among variables. However, the term crisis can be used in terms of substantive and procedural.

In the field of communication, a crisis is closely treated as an urgent condition or situation that needs immediate response. Skinner, Von Essen, Mersham, and Motau (2010) call the crisis a critical situation and turning point, that moment of drama when hostile forces are at the height of their opposition. They wrote, Crisis can be almost anything you perceive it to be. Citing Ajala (2001), Nwanne (2015) notes that a crisis is an unexpected development, which very often embarrasses an organization, frightens the public and puts company's credibility and decency under intense scrutiny. Ajala (2001) writes that to some worst instances, a crisis creates the threat of death and loss of property. She describes crisis as a period of heightened uncertainty that increases the need to plan, or a point in time which external or internal pressures change objectives and operational practices of an organisation. One of the prominent scholars of modern public relations Sam Black (1989) states that there are occasions when catastrophe, minor or major, demands immediate and effective action rather like a fire engine or a lifeboat responding to an SOS. In a simple expression, Ogedengbe, Ade-Inasa and Adesemoye (2019) wrote that a crisis is the case when things go abnormal or bad.

Okereke (2012) and Bello (2013) claim that most of the disputes in Nigeria, particularly those involving farmers and Fulani herders, are uncalled for because farmers are unable to continue farming in peace due to the presence of Fulani herdsmen. Christians and Muslims are at odds with one other because of this conflict between Fulani farmers and herdsmen. The number of attacks by Fulani herdsmen has increased recently; in February 2018, attacks took place in Benue, Taraba, and Nasarawa states, with a few additional areas reporting similar incidents. The massacres that have occurred recently as a result of conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and farmers have devastated most communities, forcing them to lose their main source of income and their farmlands. The Fulani herdsmen's insistence on getting their way and putting the farmers at their mercy is making this intolerable. Farmers view the herdsmen as a threat to their crops and agricultural output because they let their cows eat the farmers' crops, but the herders blame the conflict on religious disagreements that led to the death of their animals.

The factors that contributed to the conflict, crisis, and insecurity in Nigeria

Ofuoku and Isife (2009) and Adoji (2013) state that the primary cause of the crisis is climate change, which is brought on by insufficient rainfall, poor animal grazing land, and a lack of coping strategies on the part of the herdsmen. Still, additional factors and catalysts include:

a. Land disputes: One way to conceptualize conflicts between farmers and herders is as a matter of land access. The Middle Belt's pasturelands were lost to cultivation at the start of the twenty-first century as a result of an increase in the number of farmers. For instance, the Benue River agricultural region produces more than 20,000 tonnes of grain a year. Herdsmen can grow crops in this same region to feed their livestock. Therefore, farmlands around riverbank areas are primarily impacted by the flow of the herders, leading to several conflicts (Egbuta, 2018).

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Vol 2(1) March 2026
ISSN: 3121 9144

b. The Climate Crisis: A change in transhumance routes has been implemented by Fulani and herders from Northern Nigeria due to deteriorating environmental circumstances, desertification, and soil degradation. Herdsmen travelling from the country's north needed access to pastureland and watering spots in the Middle Belt. The weather has a significant impact on the work that farmers and herders do. There is little question that the existence of farmers' businesses and ranchers is negatively impacted by the changing climate, commonly known as global warming.

Additionally, the ranchers have been pitted against farmers and host towns as a result of their decision to alter transhumance routes southward in search of open acreage. The Farmer-Herder Crisis is one of the numerous worldwide issues that are currently affecting various parts of the world (Egbuta, 2018).

c. Growth in Population: This conflict has gotten worse due to population expansion. It has set up numerous farmers and towns in the south against the Fulani. One reason for this is the fact that there are currently 25 million cows in Nigeria, and by 2050, there should be 60 million cows (Fabiyi and Otunuga, 2016). Massive numbers of animals traveling across farmers' properties need a lot of food and water to be satisfied. The Fulani herders were accused by the farmers of mishandling their cattle and letting them ruin their crops. But farmers have also been accused of stealing sheep and livestock by the Fulani herdsmen (Fabiyi and Otunuga, 2016).

d. Factor of Resources: Conflict would be more likely if there was competition for a limited resource (Pruitt and Kim, 2014). One of the main reasons for the battle was the livestock herders' quest for resources and territory. Up to 70% of grassland has been consumed by deserts and droughts, and droughts are occurring more frequently. Due to the mutual interest of both local farmers and herders, disputes over the usage and distribution of resources, such as grazing areas, are fierce (Ismaila and Umar, 2015).

e. The dishonest stance of the government

The government has shown a dishonest approach in its timely response to the issue of herdsmen fights with farmers in different parts of Nigeria, whether on purpose or accidentally. The false attitude and methods with which the three levels of government address the crisis from the outset cause an unpleasant scenario in which the poverty rate in the troubled region climbs sharply. It is recognized that rural residents are subsistence farmers who rely on the sales of their produce. Their survival depends on the vegetables grown on their farm. Losing their harvests would have a significant impact on them.

Gate-Keeping Theory

Kurt Lewin was the first one to use the term “gatekeeping” which he used to describe a wife or mother as the person who decides which foods end up on the family dinner table (Lewin 1947). Although he applied it originally to the food chain, he then added that the gating process can include a news item winding through communication channels in a group. This is the point

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Vol 2(1) March 2026
ISSN: 3121 9144

from which most gate-keeping studies in communication are launched. White (1961) was the person who seized upon Lewins' comments and turned it solidly toward journalism.

In the 1970s, McCombs and Shaw took a different direction when they looked at the effects of gatekeeper's decisions. They found the audience learns how much importance to attach to news item from the emphasis the media place on it. McCombs and Shaw pointed out that the gate-keeping concept is related to the newer concept, of agenda-setting. (McCombs et al, 1976).

The gatekeeper decides which information will go forward, and which will not. In other words, a gatekeeper in a social system decides which of a certain commodity- materials, goods, and information- may enter the system. Important to realize is that gatekeepers can control the public knowledge of the actual events by letting some stories pass through the system but keeping others out. Gatekeepers can also be seen as institutions or organizations Media gatekeeping showed that decision-making is based on principles of news values, organizational routines, input structure, and common sense. Gatekeeping is vital in communication planning and almost all communication planning roles include some aspect of gatekeeping.

Media Framing Theory

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.

The media draws the public attention to certain topics, it decides what people think about, and the journalists select the topics. How the news is brought up, and the frame in which the news is presented is also a choice made by journalists. Thus, a frame refers to the way media and media gatekeepers organize and present the events and issues they cover, and the way audiences interpret what they are provided. Frames are abstract notions that serve to organize or structure social meanings. Frames influence the perception of the news of the audience, this form of agenda-setting not only tells what to think about but also how to think about it.

The research on journalistic news frames is contextualized by long research traditions in neighbouring disciplines. For communication science, the potential of the framing concept lies in its integrative nature (Reese, 2007). To realize this potential, it is important to stress that news framing is a process (de Vreese, 2005; Matthes, 2012; Scheufele, 1999). However, most studies tend to focus either on the analysis and presence of frames or on the effects of framing. In the expanding literature on how different issues are framed, there seems to be no limit to the number of operationalizations of frames (Hertog & McLeod, 2001) nor to the issues that are analysed. News framing helps to understand dynamic processes that involve frame building (how frames emerge), the presence and development of frames in the media, and frame setting (the interplay between frames and citizens). Entman (1993) noted that frames have several locations, including the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the surrounding culture. These locations emphasize framing as a process that consists of distinct stages: frame building, frame setting, and individual- and societal-level consequences of framing.

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Vol 2(1) March 2026
ISSN: 3121 9144

Empirical Review

Violent conflicts are a major global concern and, naturally, the causes and repercussions of these conflicts have prompted a plethora of research studies. Communication researchers, particularly, have sought to evaluate the role of the media within the context of varying conflict situations in different parts of the world. For instance, Zia and Syedah (2015) studied the print media coverage of the Kashmir conflict, a protracted feud between India and Pakistan. Their inquiry was, from the outset, premised on the potentiality of the media to influence conflict prevention and resolution. Adopting the quantitative content analysis approach, three newspapers were selected for the study, one from the two conflicting countries, and one from the United States of America "as a mediator" (p. 162). Editions of *The Times of India* (India newspaper), *Dawn* (Pakistan newspaper), and *The New York Times* (US newspaper) between October and December 2008 were analysed. The results of the study showed that the conflict was given maximum news coverage by *The Times of India* and closely followed by *Dawn*, whereas it only received slight coverage in *The New York Times*. The selected newspaper predominantly gave negative coverage to issues related to the conflict rather than positive coverage that could have engendered the resolution of the conflict. It was noted that the newspapers reflected the socio-political agenda of their respective countries in their coverage of the conflict. The researchers concluded that war journalism was the prevalent approach in the coverage of the three newspapers in that much salience was accorded to violence while peaceful alternatives were neither sufficiently presented nor emphasized.

Arcan (2013) studied the role played by the Turkish media in the ethnic conflict between the Kurds and the Turks. The coverage of two Turkish newspapers- Sözcü and Radikal newspapers- were examined. The two newspapers were deliberately chosen because of their differing ideological and political attachments. According to the author, Sözcü newspaper was known to be secularist, republican, and nationalist and supported the status quo against the peace process, while Radikal newspaper, known to be left-liberal, maintained a stance toward the peace process. The study covered editions of the selected newspapers published between April 3, 2013, and June 26, 2013, analysing the newspapers' coverage of activities of the Wise people Committee tasked by the Turkish government to facilitate a peace process to end the conflict. The findings of the study showed that news stories in Sözcü newspaper were mainly from a war/violence journalism perspective but Radikal newspaper dominantly adopted a peace journalism approach; somewhat reflecting the newspapers' respective ideological and political attachments. Portrayals of the activities of the committee in the two newspapers were also shown to be dissimilar. While Radikal newspaper used respectful and gender-sensitive expressions, Sözcü newspaper employed degrading and ridiculing expressions.

The study by Savrum and Miller (2015) was also within the context of an ethnic conflict. The study was based on the protracted ethnic conflict in Cyprus. Adopting the content-analysis research method, the news media from the Northern and Southern part of the country- the Greek Cypriot press and the Turkish Cypriot press- were comparatively studied to identify their reportage of news related to proposals to resolve the conflict. *Alithia*, *Haravghi*, *Phileleftheros*,

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Vol 2(1) March 2026
ISSN: 3121 9144

Politis, and *Simerini* newspapers were selected to represent the Greek Cypriot press, while *Volkan*, *Halkin Sesi*, *Afrika*, *Kibris* and *Yeni Düzen* newspapers represented the Turkish Cypriot press. 309 headlines were drawn from the Greek Cypriot newspapers and 444 headlines were drawn from the Turkish Cypriot newspapers for analysis. Results of the study showed that both sections of the press tended to be more neutral in their reportage.

Meanwhile, the Greek Cypriot press published more negative headlines compared to the Turkish Cypriot press. Despite the authors' conclusion that the overall findings support the hypothesis that "established media do frame issues, establishes impressions, sets agendas, plus has an impact that influences interethnic and interstate relations" (p. 7), the data presented in this study were quite too narrow to provide adequate validation to such a claim.

Methodology

The study thus adopts the mixed method. That is, content analysis, and interview. For the content analysis, the population of the study consists of all national newspapers in Nigeria. As of December 2022, fifty-eight functional national newspapers were operating across Nigeria while six were online-based newspapers according to the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ). The newspapers were chosen for the study because they were national newspapers with wide geographical spread and circulation. This is supported by key informant interviews with six journalists who covered the crisis beat for the three selected newspapers.

The study used a purposive sampling technique to select three national newspapers, including the Nigerian Tribune, the Daily Trust newspaper, and the Punch newspaper. The main criterion used for the selection of the Daily Trust and the Nigerian Tribune newspapers was regionalism. Both newspapers prioritize issues affecting their regions over other papers while the criterion used for selection of the Punch was its reputation as the widest circulating or most-read newspaper in Nigeria. Thus, 627 editions were generated from the newspapers, covering a period of one year, that is, from January 2020 to December 2021.

Six reporters (two from each newspaper organization) assigned to cover the farmers-herdsmen conflict in South-West Nigeria were selected for the key informant interview. The participants (interviewees) were selected using a purposive sampling technique. They were selected because of their experiences in reporting the conflict, food security, and crisis communication.

The research instrument is used to gather relevant data for a research study. For this study, a coding guide and coding sheet were used as research instruments for the content analysis while a key-informant interview guide and writing materials were used as instruments for collecting data for the key informant interviews.

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Vol 2(1) March 2026
ISSN: 3121 9144

Data Analysis by Research Questions

To what extent did the selected newspapers accord prominence to the coverage of the conflict, food security, and crisis communication?

Prominence of a story is measured by frequency of reportage and placement of the stories.

Table 1: Newspaper

Table 1 below shows that Punch newspaper gave the highest attention (40.2%) to the reportage of conflict, food security, and crisis communication, followed by Tribune newspaper (33.5%) while Daily Trust newspaper gave the least attention to the reportage with 26.3% coverage, which is around a quarter of the reports. In all, Southern newspapers gave more attention (73.7%) to the reportage of conflict, food security, and crisis communication than the only Northern-based newspaper. This may be attributed to the fact that the stories of the crisis occurred in Southern Nigeria.

Newspaper	Frequency	Percent
The Punch	252	40.2
Tribune	210	33.5
Daily Trust	165	26.3
Total	**627**	**100**

Field Study, 2025.

Table 2: Position of Story

Position	Frequency	Percentage
Inside Page	555	**88.5**
Main Lead (Front Page)	42	**6.7**
Others (Front Page)	25	**3.8**
Op-Ed Page	6	1
Total	627	100

Field Study, 2025.

Table 2 shows that most of the stories on conflict, food security, and crisis communication (88.5%) were placed on the inside pages of the selected newspapers while 10.5% of the stories made it to the front pages of the newspapers. Given the fact that newspapers needed to pay attention to other stories, it can be inferred that the conflict, food security, and crisis communication were given adequate prominence in terms of placement of the stories.

What are the sources of news in selected Nigerian newspapers in reporting conflict, food security, and crisis communication crisis in the South-west?

The second research question examines the sources of news in the selected Nigerian newspapers in the reportage of conflict, food security, and crisis communication

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Vol 2(1) March 2026
ISSN: 3121 9144

Table 3: Sources of News

Main Source of Story		
Source	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Reporter's Interview	459	73.2
Statement/Press Release	168	26.8
Total	**627**	**100**
Main Speaker in the Story		
Speaker	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Farmers/Farmers' Association	160	25.5
Government's Officials	145	23.1
Herders/Herders' Association	105	16.7
Victims	83	13.2
Security Operatives (Police, the Military, DSS, etc)	64	10.2
Traditional/Community Leaders	41	6.5
Eyes Witness/Members of the Public	24	3.8
Religious Leaders/Organizations	3	.5
Socio-Cultural Groups (Arewa, MASSOB, OPC)	2	.3
Total	**627**	**100**

Field Study, 2025

Table 3 shows that the dominant source of reports on conflict, food security, and crisis communication (73.2%) were reporters' interviews. This indicates a high level of credibility of the stories as reporters were on the ground to get first-hand views of the crisis. Results equally show that farmers and farmers' associations constituted at least a quarter (25.5%) of all the speakers in the stories, followed by government officials (23.1%) and then the herders/herders' associations (16.7%). The victims (10.2%) were also allowed to air their views while security operatives had 10.2% opportunity to express themselves on the crisis. In all, the main stakeholders in the crisis constituted more than half of the main speakers in the crisis (55.4%). What this implies is that key stakeholders were not just reported, they were allowed to express their grievances.

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Vol 2(1) March 2026
ISSN: 3121 9144

What were the framing patterns adopted by the selected newspapers in reporting the farmer and herdsmen crisis in the southwest?

Framing refers to the pattern of reportage adopted by the media in reporting an issue. The fifth research question examined the way reports on conflict, food security, and crisis communication in South-West Nigeria were framed by the selected newspapers.

Table 4: Framing

Frame	Frequency	Total
Ethnic Frame	348	55.5
Conflict Frame	122	19.5
Criminality Frame	64	10.2
Political Response Frame	43	6.9
Human Interest Frame	22	3.5
Economic Consequence Frame	22	3.5
Religious Frame	3	.5
Resolution Frame	3	.5
Total	**627**	**100**

Field Study, 2025.

Table 4 shows that more than half of the reports (55.5%) on food security, and crisis communication in the southwest were ethnically framed, followed by conflict (19.5%) and criminality frames (10.2%).

Discussion of Findings

The first research question was aimed at finding out the extent to which the selected newspapers accorded prominence to the coverage of conflict, food security, and crisis communication in South-West Nigeria. One of the determinants of news reportage is the nearness of the media house to the event or issue at stake. Thus, the fact that the headquarters of Punch Newspaper and Tribune are in South-West Nigeria may have given them more opportunity or leverage to cover the conflict, food security, and crisis communication in the South-West region. However, the physical distance of a media organization to an event should no longer be a tenable excuse for low reportage of issues, given the fact that media houses can easily get information through wired services also known as news agencies. Besides, most national newspapers have their correspondents and bureaus or offices across the nation and the world at large.

It may also be argued that the ideological stand of Daily Trust Newspaper to prioritize issues related to northern Nigeria may be responsible for the relatively low reportage of the conflict, food security, and crisis communication in South-West region. On the other hand, the silence of Daily Trust newspaper in some of the occurrences may be a deliberate attempt to downplay reports on the heinous activities of conflict, food security, and crisis communication in the South-West region and the nation at large.

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Vol 2(1) March 2026
ISSN: 3121 9144

Results of content analysis further revealed that most of the reports (53.1%) were published in 2021 while about half of the reports (46.1%) were published in 2020. This shows about 7% increase in the 2020 reportage. The increase in the report's points to the fact that the selected newspapers gave attention and more seriousness to the conflict, food security, and crisis communication. All the data indicate that conflict, food security, and crisis communication in Nigeria was adequately reported by the selected newspapers. If the total reports are shared on daily basis, it means there was one report on farmers-herdsmen' crisis for nearly each day in the entire 2020 and 2021. By implication, the media did not relent in its efforts report the conflict, food security, and crisis communication. More so, most of the stories on conflict, food security, and crisis communication (88.5%) were placed on the inside pages of the selected newspapers while 10.5% of the stories made it to the front pages of the newspapers. Given the fact that newspapers needed to pay attention to other stories, it can be inferred that the conflict, food security, and crisis communication was given adequate prominence in terms of placement of the stories.

The second research question examined the sources of news in the selected Nigerian newspapers in the reportage of conflict, food security, and crisis communication. Sources of news help determine news content, credibility, diversity, and how people understand and make sense of the information. Source selection is embedded in the norms and routines journalists follow to give voice and status to the individuals chosen. The dominant source of reports on conflict, food security, and crisis communication (73.2%) was reporters' interviews. This indicates a high level of commitment of the selected newspapers to reporting the conflict, food security, and crisis communication. When journalists directly interview sources or stakeholders in an event or occurrence, it fosters higher level of credibility of the stories than when they get the information from third parties.

Results equally showed that farmers and farmers' associations constituted at least a quarter (25.5%) of all the speakers in the stories, followed by government officials (23.1%) and then the herders/herders' associations (16.7%). The victims (10.2%) were also allowed to air their views while security operatives had 10.2% opportunity to express themselves on the crisis. In all, the main stakeholders in the crisis (farmers, herdsmen and the victims) constituted more than half of the main speakers in the crisis (55.4%). What this implies is that key stakeholders were not just reported, they were allowed to express their grievances. The finding did not agree with previous studies that that print media in most parts of the world use a much higher percentage of official or elite sources (Miller and Kurpius, 2010). Allowing multiple and divergent opinions in a story creates room for balancing and fairness. It also gives all parties a fair chance of being heard. In fact, most of the sources used by the selected newspapers in this study were unofficial sources. This is a radical departure from previous practice where use of official sources was so routinized that the political elites dominated the news space while alternative voices were either silent or insignificant. This agrees with the observation of Oso (2012, p.47) that "in Nigeria, the news is highly privileged and a highly contested space by both the political and corporate elite for its propaganda and publicity value". According to

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Vol 2(1) March 2026
ISSN: 3121 9144

him, news affords those with access, the power to define and frame public issues and thus not only set agendas but also provide interpretative and evaluative frameworks, thereby making news to be ideological. The sources of news used in the reportage of conflict, food security, and crisis communication as found in this study indicate the representation of non-elite voices on the crisis.

The framing patterns adopted by the selected newspapers in reporting the conflict, food security, and crisis communication in the southwest; Framing refers to the pattern of reportage adopted by the media in reporting an issue. More than half of the reports (55.5%) on the farmers-herdsmen crisis were ethnically framed, followed by conflict (19.5%) and criminality frames (10.2%). Like previous studies, the use of the phrase ‘‘Fulani herdsmen’’ was common in the stories. This implies that all herdsmen were of Fulani extraction and the majority of the principal perpetrators of violence (76.1%) in the farmers-herdsmen crisis reported in the selected newspapers were herders while other principal perpetrators of violence were not specified. Invariably, Fulani herdsmen were presented as the culprits in the stories while the farmers were presented as the victims. In other words, the crisis was framed as the ethnic crisis between the Fulanis of the North and the rest of the South. Such ethnic framing can worsen the conflict as readers are influenced to understand it from an ethnic perspective. The finding agrees with the submission of Savrum and Miller (2015) that “established media do frame issues, establishes impressions, sets agendas, plus has an impact that influences interethnic and interstate relations” (p. 7). The findings indicate that war journalism was the prevalent approach in the coverage of the three newspapers in that much salience was accorded to violence while peaceful alternatives were neither sufficiently presented nor emphasized. This means that the newspapers contributed more to the escalation of the conflict than its resolution. It was discovered that victims of the conflict, followed by government security forces and correspondents were the major sources of information for the newspapers, but information from herders was less featured in the coverage of the newspapers. As noted by Zia and Syedah (2015), the media have the potential to influence conflict prevention and resolution or aggravate it through the dominant frames adopted.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are hereby made based on the findings and conclusion of this study:

1. To ensure fairness, Journalists need to always cover both sides of the farmers-herders conflict.
2. To promote peace and conflict-sensitive journalism, Journalists should desist from ethnic profiling of herdsmen in their reports.
3. There is a need for Nigerian newspapers to collaborate in carrying out investigative reports on conflict, food security, and crisis communication given the fact that investigative reports are expensive to carry out
4. Newspapers should also increase the number of editorials, features, and opinions on solutions to conflict, food security, and crisis in the South-West and Nigeria at large

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Vol 2(1) March 2026
ISSN: 3121 9144

5. Newspaper owners and stakeholders in the newspaper industry should intensify training programs for journalists on peace and conflict-sensitive journalism

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Vol 2(1) March 2026
ISSN: 3121 9144

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