

## **Peace Journalism and Development: An Appraisal of *Boko Haram* Insurgency in the North-East of Nigeria**

Suleiman M. Yar'Adua and \*Aondover Eric Msughter

Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Communication, Bayero University, Kano, Kano State, Nigeria.

\*Corresponding Author's: E-mail Address : [aondover7@gmail.com](mailto:aondover7@gmail.com)

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Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defence of peace must be constructed. Considering the roles journalists play in development, peace journalism has become paramount, it is really impossible to talk about real development without peace. Peace can importantly be seen as the inevitable forerunner to development; when there is no peace, conflict then takes over. This research has substantially examined peace journalism and development within the context of Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast. Peace journalism is fundamental, like in any type of reporting. It facilitates reporters to disseminate information that would help attune to the development of a nation. Based on the available literature, the study discovered that the media have been variously blamed for their role in the exacerbation of different conflicts in complex and heterogeneous countries like Nigeria. The study uses cultural theory of conflict and diversity as its theoretical justification with a view to explain vividly the supposed role of journalists in an ideal situation. The findings of the study revealed that the media can instigate conflict when fairness and objectivity is missing in their reportage. Based on the findings, the study concludes that media houses should imbibe the appropriate way of reporting peace journalism and development in the country, especially in the Northeast of Nigeria where cases of ethnic, religious, political and other types of conflicts are more pronounced.

**Keywords:** Boko Haram, Conflict, Development, Journalism, Northeast and Peace.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The contemporary Nigeria is in dire need of peace especially in the Northeast; a spot that is said to have been ravaged by insecurity caused by *Boko Haram*, the fact is, write ups; headlines, news stories, feature stories, editorials, etc., that grace the pages of the national dailies in Nigeria could be used to serve as tools for peace journalism, that is, when journalists and editors are guided without compromise on the principles of journalism; objectivity, fairness and balance. Objective in journalism is measure at four levels: truthfulness, competence, dynamism and

relevance. Hence, any downward tilt on these principles could lead to either the conventional journalism or war journalism. Okoro (2005) established that when journalistic contents lack the principles of journalism; objectivity, fairness and balance then the media will end up being agents that escalate conflicts.

When Boko Haram became violence after the death of its leader; Mohammed Yusuf, this group stood up to fight for what they considered in addition to its ideologies as injustice. According to News

Agencies of Nigeria (NAN) out of the six million people affected, 4.5 million are in Nigeria. In the words of Amnesty International, *Boko Haram* militants have killed about 15,000 people and displaced more than 2.3 million in eleven-years (2009-2019), insurgency still launches deadly attacks despite having been pushed out of the territory they had controlled in 2019. Amnesty International also report that at least 1,600 people had been killed by the members of the *Boko Haram* sect, since the beginning of June 2015 when President Muhammadu Buhari was inaugurated as the President of Nigeria. That means twelve Nigerians have been killed every day by *Boko Haram* since President Buhari came into power.

The concept of peace journalism is still practically strange to most journalists in Nigeria, the principles that give this unique genre of journalism its identity is reporting records of peace and peace initiatives with objectivity, fairness and balance. Although these have been guiding principles for journalists in Nigeria for a long time, when it comes to the practical use of such principles, the problem then sets in. Peace journalism in Nigeria may be a simple concept but practising it, is still a tall dream to most journalists. The media should always be neutral when reporting events especially conflict or face the music of lack of professional reportage. On the attacks on media men and media houses by the *Boko Haram*, the spokesperson for the sect, Abdul Qaqa in an interview with *Premium Times* explained why the April 2012 attacks on *This Day* Abuja and *Kaduna Newspaper*, "we have repeatedly cautioned reporters and media houses to be professional and objective in their reports. This is a war between us and the Government of Nigeria; unfortunately, the media have not been objective and fair in their report of the on-going war, they choose to take side." Apparently, *Boko Haram* sect need the media the same way the government need the media, *Boko Haram* will not destroy the channels through which its voice could be heard, only if their voices are not heard. Going by the preceding observation, this study attempts to examine peace journalism and development within the context of *Boko Haram* insurgency in the North-East of Nigeria.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to examine peace journalism and development in the Northeast of Nigeria in the

midst of *Boko Haram* insurgency from 2015-2020. Thus, the following specific objectives are set:

- i. to assess the practice of peace journalism in the coverage of *Boko Haram* in the Northeast.
- ii. to ascertain the role of peace journalists in fostering development and peace in the Northeast
- iii. to examine journalistic practice in Nigeria, the place of peace journalism and its challenges

## Operational Definition of Terms

*Boko Haram*: this refers to an Islamic sect that believes western education is forbidden and politics in northern Nigeria has been seized by a group of corrupt, false Muslims.

*Conflict*: it is the struggle or disagreement among individuals or parties in a given geographical setting who have different perception of people.

*Development*: it is simply the transformation of a society from the primitive way of thinking to an advance level of operation.

*Journalism*: it is the practice that involves gathering of information and disseminating it using appropriate channels for the betterment of the Northeast.

## CONCEPTUALISING PEACE JOURNALISM

Peace journalism or what can simply be called PJ is a worldwide circulated reform movement as well as an emerging field in scholarly research. The reason behind numerous civil society initiatives has been an assumption that media, reporters and editors can change the content of news they create about conflict, if only they could be sensitive to peace perspectives, and assisted in developing critical self-awareness, through exposure to advocacy and training. In the words of Lynch (2015) peace journalism (PJ) was launched at a residential summer school in 1997, at Taplow Court, a Victoria country house in southern England that was, by then, the UK's Cultural Centre of a la Buddhist organization, the Soko Gakkai International.

The chief speaker was Johan Galtung who drew up a table to go into the delegates' packs: a single side of A4, divided into two columns, setting out the respective characteristics of war journalism and peace journalism. Most of those whom first discussed and came to grips with their implications were journalists in the early or middle stages of their careers. A worldwide distributed advocacy and

reform movement grew from the inception of PJ with its roles principally taking the form of exhortatory and instructional initiatives, targeted mainly at journalists. According to Jayakumar (2014) peace journalism is when editors and reporters make choices about what to report and how to report it, which creates opportunities for society at large to consider and to value non-violent response to conflict.

This could be the reason why Hanitzsch (2007), established that peace journalism was coined in the 1970s by the Norwegian peace researcher Johan Galtung who is a pioneer in the study of values. Paraphrasing his words, peace journalism inherits a normative impetus; it prioritized 'peace' as its central value and analytical starting point. Peace journalism, as a special kind of social responsible journalism, can be seen as a frame of journalistic reporting which contributes to the process of making and keeping peace respectively to the non-violent settlement of conflict (Hanitzsch, 2007).

Since *Boko Haram* became violent after the death of its leader till date, journalists have been reporting updates on the activities of the *Boko Haram*. These journalists are media gatekeepers, they decide which content should be reported and how. To report simply means to choose; 'as one has to report the facts', journalist will say, but 'the facts' is a set of practical infinite size. Being the 'gatekeepers' most times, journalists allow only some aspect of the reality into the hands of the public while some of the other aspect of the reality in the closet.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF PEACE JOURNALISM

Peace journalism is characterized by five main principles as stated by Bassil (2014) thus:

1. Exploration of the backgrounds and contexts of conflict formation of all the sides involved in the conflict and not just two sides as the mainstream media usually portrays.
2. Giving voice to the views of all rival parties from all levels; most of the reports on *Boko Haram* are one sided, the media mostly report the government and the casualties sides of the story without hearing the *Boko Haram* side of the story and that is why the *Boko Haram* debunks some attacks not being carried by them.
3. Offering creative ideas for conflict resolution, development, peace-making and peacekeeping. The media should in their reportage encourage peace resolution of the parties in conflict. They should be

able to analyse the conflict and know why *Boko Haram* does what it does before ruling it out.

4. Exposing lies, covering-up attempts and culprits on all sides and revealing excesses committed by and suffering inflicted on people of all parties. Most of the times, once one has been seen having ties with this sect, if not killed, then, one is lucky. *Boko Haram* actually became more violent after the execution of its leader by the Nigerian police. After the death of their leader, nothing was said of it. At least, the leader of *Boko Haram* should have been tried and when found guilty, he would have faced the law but the reverse was the answer. The war on *Boko Haram* would not have been a task if the leader of the group Mohammad Yusuf was alive.

5. Paying attention to peace stories and post-war development. This is why it takes good training to make a good journalist. Journalism practice in Nigeria is weak considering the facts that "anyone" could become a journalist.

## THE BENEFITS OF PEACE JOURNALISM

Nigerian media have the rights to report the *Boko Haram* conflict but the question is how are they reporting the conflict? Are they one-sided? Is it the "us-and-them" method of reporting? The simple answer to this question is peace journalism focuses on peace, quality of reportage during conflict which will ultimately result to peace among the parties involved and the community under the conflict. Peace journalism is not war journalism and that is why it stresses on reporting peace driven issues. When any violent incidence happen like in the case of the Northeast and media is reporting, are the both parties; *Boko Haram* and the government given equal opportunity to express their thoughts on the incidents? According to Abdul Qaqa report in 2012, as stated earlier, they target media houses and journalists because of lack of fairness and balance in their reportage. One sided story is not a complete story; when it comes to reporting the activities of *Boko Haram*, the Nigerian media has been imbalance; their reportage is always through the eyes of the government and the members affected excluding the sect. It should be noted that the more balance the reports, the more the peace into the area.

Rather than running from bombing to bombing, writing almost entire about sadness and destruction, peace journalism tells about the struggles and triumphs of a place. It tells a history, hopes and

happiness. Youngblood (2011), articulates that “I have seen first-hand how peace journalism principles brought together former adversaries in the Republic of Georgia and prevent media induced violence in Uganda”. The fact is peace journalism when practiced professionally has the power to convert conflict zone like the Northeast into a peaceful zone.

## THE BOKO HARAM SECT

*Boko Haram* which literary stands for *al-Wilayt al-Islamiyya Afriqiyyah* or the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) or *Jama'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihad* is an Islamic extremist group based in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria, precisely, Borno, Adamawa, Yola, Gombe and Bauchi. This group is also active in neighbouring countries such as Chad, Niger and Northern Cameroon. After the death of Mohammed Yusuf in 2009, the group was led by Abubakar Shekau until August 2016 and was succeeded by Abu Musab al-Barnawi. According to BBC report, the group had alleged links to al-Qaeda but in 2015, it announced its loyalty to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Since the beginning of the insurgency in 2009, this group has killed 20,000 and displaced 2.3 million from their homes and was ranked the world's deadliest terror group by the Global Terrorism Index in 2015.

The group which was founded in 2002, was formally called Yusuffiya before the death of its leader. The main ideologies of the group are to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria, it opposes the westernization of Nigerian society and the concentration of the wealth of the country among members of a small political elites.

## PEACE, CONFLICT AND DEVELOPMENT

Peace is the absence of conflict and conflict is the absence of peace, but both peace and conflict have their effects on development; positively or negatively. The concept “development” can be interpreted from various perspectives. While some perspectives focus on individual and personality variable such as self-reliance and achievement motivation, others concentrate on capacity development to effect a change and become adaptive to change situations. In the words of Okoro (2005), development is a widely participatory process of social change about social and material equality, freedom and other

valued qualities for majority of the people through their gaining greater control over their environment. Development may mean different things to different people. But in its simplicity, it means, a progressive change. Development may be seen as the sum total or the outcome of efforts made by the people to improve upon their condition of living. In this sense, development is seen as being synonymous with growth (Asemah, 2011). However, development must not be seen only in terms of material advancement. A country like Nigeria is said to be moving towards development when there is more freedom, more social justice and opportunities for the people to participate in taking decisions that affect them. This implies that people need to be educated, advancement in technology, provision of elements that can lead to a better life and above all have peace.

Considering the above discussions on development, it is imperative to say, the insurgency in the Northeast has reduced the development in that region given the statistic of those that have died and those whose properties have been raided down. With the situation in the Northeast occasioned by this sect and the government, peace is the only alternative route against conflict and a forerunner to development in the Northeast.

Msughter (2017), states that conflict emanated “when two or more values, perspectives and opinions are contradictory in nature, haven't been aligned or agreed about” this according to him, may include conflict within oneself as when one is not living in consonance with his values, or worldviews, when these values and worldviews are threatened by one another, like in the case of *Boko Haram* and the government or it might simply be a discomfort from lack of fulfilment. Koroma (2007), articulates that conflict is certainly an intrinsic and inevitable part of human existence. It is an upshot of the pursuit of incompatible interest and goals by different groups, culminating in a resort to use of force and violence in the pursuit of incompatible and particular interest and goals.

## Categories of Conflict

- a. Constructive conflict (positive)
- b. Destructive conflict (negative)

*Constructive Conflict*: which is also known as positive conflict can be used constructively to explore different solutions to a problem (for instance, lack of

infrastructure, which may be part of a shared interest in the community) and stimulate creativity by recognizing and sensitively exposing and bringing emotive and non-rational arguments into open, while destroying long standing tension. This was how *Boko Haram* started before running into destructive conflict.

*Destructive Conflict:* is also known as negative conflict. In situation where conflict is destructive, it can hinder progress in the community and encourage individuals to resort to unfriendly behaviours, it will encourage “win-by-all means-necessary” attitudes where emotions take precedence over reasons; which lead to the disintegration of groups and the scuttling of community development. The case of the *Boko Haram* sect and the government is no doubt a destructive conflict because thousands of people in the Northeast have died, properties worth millions of naira have been destroyed, thousands of people have been made homeless and their communities destroyed.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study espoused on the Cultural Theory of Conflict and Diversity as its theoretical justification with a view to explain vividly the supposed role of journalists in an ideal situation. This theory identifies social difference, particularly cultural, as the main factor that creates a social identity and social exclusion thereby creating “we” against “them” feeling which nurtures animosity, hatred and contemptuous relationship among people of divergent cultures leading to conflict, how the competing interest of groups tie conflict directly into the social, economic and political organizations of society as well as the nature and strength of social networks within and between community groups (Ademola, 2005).

The culturally induced conflict that this relationship cultivates as a result of creation of the enemy image which is learned from early stage of growth to adulthood and is passed on from generation to generation. An example is seen in the case of Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda. The theory believes that different forms of identities in various societies exist; however, the one that has ethnic origin is the most dangerous identity and the one that most explains violent conflicts. Psycho-cultural theory of conflict argues that conflict is avoidable when tolerance and understanding among people of different races,

culture, languages and history are established. The theory however becomes relevant as it addresses the feeling which nurtures animosity, hatred and contemptuous relationship among people of divergent cultures leading to conflict. Pate (2009), observed that diversity is a fact of life. Without it life would be boring, flat and hardly interesting. By simple understanding, diversity is heterogeneity, differences or dissimilarity in several respects. In the words of Albert in Pate (2009) diversity connotes heterogeneity or dissimilarity on the grounds of sex, cultural practice, ethnic origin, religious affiliation, ideological stance, political leaning, level of social development, place of habitation and so on. In a relative term, diversity connotes multiculturalism, pluralism and variety. For example, Nigeria is appropriately described as a diverse country comprising of over four hundred ethnic groups, more than 198.8 million people, pursuing different engagements, speaking different languages, adhering to different religious leanings and different political orientations and so on. Of course, it would be unrealistic for anyone to expect that all of us would think and behave in the same manner. Or, to assume that because we are all Nigerians, the various cultural groups and religions can fuse into one group for all our problems to “die away”. No wonder, therefore that the issue of diversity has remained very important in several countries like the United States and Nigeria, Duncan (in Pate 2009).

Furnham and Bochner cited in Pate (2009) this importance possibly is borne out of the realization that in a mix where “diverse people” meet, most especially as a result of social and geographical contacts, a culture shock is produced. Thus, the politicization or poor mediation of diversity could produce shocks that can explode into social conflict with devastating consequences.

## METHOD

This study is predominantly based on information derived from secondary sources such as relevant texts, journals, magazines, newspapers, official publications, historical documents and the Internet, which served as tangible sources for the study. However, the inquiry was strictly limited to recorded information about peace, development, *Boko Haram* and its insurgent activities that can be found in scholarly journals, books, internet and libraries. The method was use to evaluate findings with other

existing findings on the subject matter. Consequently, the study adopts content analysis as its method of analysis. The method here is to sift the findings in the works available for this research, check the consistency of the opinions of either the authors or the actors; evaluate such findings or opinions with other existing findings in the literature. Through these methods, the study draws the inferences on the data generated in the course of the study.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

As stated in the research objectives, the findings and discussions are purely based on the study objectives. Apparently, the following objectives in the study are discussed as follows:

### The Practice of Peace Journalism in The Coverage of *Boko Haram* in The Northeast

Journalism practice in Nigeria, like other professions has direct influence on the citizenry and the country at large. Media practitioners are demanded to be guided by the canons or what could simply be called journalistic code of ethics, which members are expected to follow without compromise and to be enforced by an acceptable body on all practitioners. Nonetheless, Adaja (2012) remarked that journalism practice in Nigeria has raised a lot of questions as to the property of referring to it as a profession or a trade? The loose definition of the criteria for membership has made the profession an all comers-affairs.

Also, the absence of a prescribed qualifying test has made it difficult to moderate the standard of journalism practice in Nigeria. These loopholes are affecting the true professionalism of journalism practice in Nigeria. This also go a long way in affecting peace journalism in the Northeast. The rage of *Boko Haram* came down on some media houses and journalists because the sect believed media's reportage is one way, which lacked the professionalism in reporting conflict.

For instance, in October 2011, gunmen suspected to be members of the sect shot dead Zakariyya Isa, a reporter with the *Nigerian Television Authority* in Maiduguri, in January 2012, Eneche Akogwu, the Kano State correspondent of *Channels Television* was killed after multiple bomb blasts at the farm centre police station Kano and in April 2012, the sect launched an attack on *This Day* offices in Abuja and

Kaduna. Also, in July 2015, *Boko Haram* sent a death threat email to Adeola Akinremi, the feature editor of *This Day* newspaper among others. Most of the attacks *Boko Haram* launched on media houses or journalists have been based on their reports. This could be the reason why Galtung (1965) established that the media report conflict but peace journalism shows backgrounds and contest of conflicts. He urged journalists to hear from all sides; explores hidden agendas; highlight peace idea and initiatives from anywhere at any time is fundamental.

Below are some excerpts from some Nigerian national dailies. These contents will be used to analyse both peace journalism and war journalism based on Jayakumar (2014) 'peace journalism and *Boko Haram*'.

A report from the *Nigerian Pilot* of Thursday, June 2, 2016:

### Lai Mohammed Blames *Boko Haram* for Tomato Scarcity

Minister of Information and culture, Lai Mohammed says degraded insurgent group, *Boko haram* are responsible for the on-going scarcity of tomato in the country. Speaking on *Channels Television*, the Minister said farmers have been forced to quit the Northeast due to the level of insecurity in the region. Mohammed's assertion contradicts that of Nigerian's agriculture minister, Chief Audu Ogbe who solely blamed the current tomato scarcity on '*Tuta Absoluta*', a pest so dangerous to the red crop that it earned the name 'tomato *ebola*'. According to Mohammed, "people talk about the price of tomato but they forget one thing; that the price of tomato today is a direct result of the fact that we have lost two years harvest to *Boko Haram* insurgency. "Most of the people you see riding okada (motorcycles) in Lagos are people who would have been in the farm to produce consumable items." Attributing the scarcity of tomatoes to insurgency, the Minister said, "do you farm where there is war? We have lost two seasons of harvest... (P. 5).

A report from *Daily Trust* of Saturday, December 12, 2015:

### *Boko Haram* Kills 7, Abducted Dozens in Borno Attack

At least seven people were killed and dozens of civilian abducted in a fresh attack by terrorists on a village in Borno State, a local vigilante said, Boko

Haram insurgents stormed a remote village of Kamuya in Biu local government area at about 11pm on Thursday while some of the villagers were asleep and abducted dozens of girls and seven others were killed. The insurgents burnt down the village completely, a local vigilante in Biu town, Bukar Dili, told *Daily Trust*. They came in two SUVs and some motorcycles and started shooting indiscriminately, killing at least 5 people, while dozens of young girls were forcefully taken away, their whereabouts yet to be known,” Dili Said. Another member of the Civilian JTF Muhammed Yamutta, said the militants killed seven people and abducted scores of villagers... (P. 8).

Thus, some empirical questions in the literature were attributed thus: is the Northeast the tomato food basket of Nigeria? Why is the scarcity just coming after more than five years of the conflict? Is the Minister not just trying to call Nigerians to see *Boko Haram* as the plight of Nigerian's misfortune? And from the second report, did *Daily Trust* contact the members of *Boko Haram* to find out the reason behind the attack? The report says the insurgents burnt down the village completely, will the same report say the militants killed seven people and abducted scores of villagers?

The above write ups will be analysed based on peace journalism in Nigeria or war journalism and how each approach and story affects the issues surrounding the *Boko Haram*. From the stories above and many other stories on the pages of Nigerian newspapers, when it comes to reporting *Boko Haram* insurgency, three things stand: propaganda, “us-and-them” and the conspicuous absence of peace efforts, the three factors can simply be considered as the three faithful servants of war journalism. War journalism is the fuel that sustains war; it is the frontrunner element that campaign for the prolonged business of violent conflict in the Northeast. According to Jayakumar (2014) war journalism refers to journalism that is focused on war and encourages the presentation that:

- a. It is heavily oriented towards violence and projecting the conflict arena in a two-party and one goal deal, confine itself to closed space and time and studies the cause and effect only in the arena.
- b. Concern itself only with the visible or tangible effects of violence, making the conflict opaque. The focus is on ‘us-and-them’ rhetoric while seeing the enemy, *Boko Haram* ‘them’ as the problem and dehumanising them.
- c. It is heavily reactive in that it waits for violence

to start before it does or says anything.

d. It is propaganda-oriented, seeking only to expose untruths while helping to cover up flaws.

e. It tends towards the elite, by focusing on ‘their’ violence and ‘our’ suffering calling ‘them’ evildoers and focusing only on the elites segment of society and spokespersons.

f. It is skewed toward victory; in that it considers peace and ceasefire as victory while concealing peace initiatives even before victory is at hand.

g. It gives up in a war once it is through not looking at the root of the issue that needs solving and returns only if the war flares up again.

Therefore, what war journalism does is to create an unnecessary hype while reporting, hype that gets everybody to say “not anymore” and use powerful sounding hostages but it stops with that. Once the conflict is resolved or becomes old news, there is a massive decline regarding concerns over the violence, yet little or nothing is done to comprehend the root of the violence. This leaves a kind of band-aid on an injury without much concern for averting the conflict from reoccurring.

Peace journalism on the contrary does not bother about the ‘winner-versus-looser phenomenon, rather runs into the root of the conflict. It presents conflict in a realistic angle and encourages the exploration of the rudiments and context of conflict formation. It presents the causes and opportunities to every party involved without introducing the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ phenomenon into play. Peace journalism serves the following purposes as summarised by Jayakumar (2014) thus:

- i. by being transparent in the representation of the causes, background and issues concerning a conflict in the Northeast.
- ii. by giving a voice to the rival parties, *Boko Haram* and their views.
- iii. by offering creative ideas that can culminate in conflict resolution and peacekeeping.
- iv. by exposing lies, covering-ups and attempts to cover-ups as well as culprits on all sides unequivocally.
- v. by revealing the sufferings inflicted on people of all parties; the *Boko Haram* members, the government and the ordinary citizens involved in the conflict.
- vi. by providing information on post-war development.

Peace journalism is all about translucent that relies on facts, objectivity, fairness, balance and explores the reality in the *Boko Haram* conflict in the

Northeast. Most of the reports don't have the description of *Boko Haram's* activities, its rationale or motivation if not recently on wiki.

## THE ROLE OF PEACE JOURNALISTS IN FOSTERING DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE IN THE NORTHEAST

Reading through the literature on the reportage of peace journalism and development in Northeast somewhat requires professionalism, there seems to be an interlock between journalists who play a crucial role in shaping public understanding by providing information about conflict as journalists bear a heavy responsibility for what they write and broadcast as well as emphasising a balanced reporting to increase awareness of the contending issues illuminates structural and cultural violence as it bears upon the lives of people (Pate, 2002). Therefore, the study went further in ascertaining the extent to which peace journalism can pave way to development. Thus, paraphrasing the words of Pate (2002) peace journalism connotes peace initiatives and potential solutions more visible equips people to distinguish between stated positions and real goals, when judging whether particular forms of intervention are necessary or desirable, multiplies and divides the parties, creating space for initiatives to be taken and progress measured, as a positive gain all round. Peace journalism is a kind of journalism and media ethics that attempt... to transform conflicts from their violent channels into constructive forms by conceptualizing news, empowering the voiceless and seeking common grounds that unify rather than divide human societies. Therefore, going by the above submission, it is clear that development can only be factored in a country where peace journalism has taken the lead.

## JOURNALISTIC PRACTICE IN NIGERIA, THE PLACE OF PEACE JOURNALISM AND IT CHALLENGES

In a democratic society, the media convey information and opinion that must be free from government control in order to present all significant ideas and opinions. On the other hand, they also have a responsibility to present minority as well as majority of views (Orhewere, 2012). Thus, the utilization of the mass media becomes a channel not only for cultural transmission but also for

developmental change. With each new medium has come a new opportunity for social learning, a new way to achieve common understanding that is usually designed to reach a large, heterogeneous and widely dispersed people.

The basic functions of mass media are not to inform, educate and entertain only but they are also veritable channel for wide range of development campaign. To Okunna (1999) the media can encourage and ginger people to achieve developmental goals of the society by promoting peace and demonstrating professionalism in their reportage in the media and stimulating the aspirations and activities of people towards achieving development goals. The media for example, have the power to reach a vast number of people almost at the same time, which mean they can help tremendously in promoting development plans of the government. Development is a change process that seeks to improve the life and environment of man. Nwabueze (2009) sees development as "the creation of opportunities for realisation of human potentials" Nwabueze, (2007) summarised what development connotes in the following words:

Development is a directed and widely participatory process of deep and accelerated socio-political change geared towards producing substantial changes in the economy, the technology, the ecology and the overall culture of the country so that the moral and material advancement of majority of its population can be obtained within conditions of generalised equity, dignity, justice and liberty (p.191).

## CHALLENGES OF PEACE JOURNALISM IN NIGERIA

When it comes to peace journalism in Nigeria, Nigeria is yet to get it right; a lot of challenges are really hampering professionalism in peace journalism in the Northeast. Below are some of them:

*Disclosing sources of information:* journalists are not government servants neither servants to *Boko Haram*, they are servants to the truth and balance. One problem facing reporting conflicts in the Northeast is disclosure of source of information. When Ahmad Salkida a journalist that covers *Boko Haram* was arrested by the DSSS (September 5, 2016 publication of the *Daily Trust* and *Vanguard* Newspapers) at Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport for having ties with *Boko Haram*, it clearly showed how the government want to use the journalist as GPS to track down *Boko Haram* members.



*Practical knowledge:* the simple question is; how many journalists really understand the operations of peace journalism? Some may be lucky to know the peripheral meaning of peace journalism, while many cannot really distinguish between peace journalism and conventional journalism. How then does one expect them to practice it when the practical knowledge is absent?

*Poor remuneration:* a journalist who does not receive good salary will not take his job very serious. He will not be willing to sacrifice the time needed to cover the conflict in the Northeast. When the conflict became very serious, many journalists left the Northeast and never returned. It is a pity to hear that most media houses are still holding salary arrears of journalists and one is expected not to accept any form gratification? The story modifier.

*Lack of professionalism:* this is one ultimate reason why *Boko Haram* attacks some journalists and media houses; they believe that the real concept of professionalism of practice by these media houses or journalist is lost. Unlike other professions, most journalists in Nigeria don't respect their code of conduct, don't have entry requirements etc. Anybody can wake up any day and say he is a journalist once he can write. This is why sensationalism is killing most of the papers in Nigeria, the anti-peace journalism. To restore credibility to journalism practice in Nigeria, the broken link between journalism practice and school curriculum must be bridged. A revisit to the already existing canons of practice to explicitly get rid of those stray bullet journalists off the profession becomes necessary. An acceptable salary package in line with other professions should also be put in place.

Peace building is a process that begins with knowledge; first and foremost, journalists need understanding of why *Boko Haram* act the way they do, journalists need to identify the kinds of solutions that are practicable given a particular framework concerning the parties involved. Lynch (2015) established that "when I was a reporter at the BBC, we all realised that a successful career could be based on the following formula: 'on the one hand... on the other hand... in the end, only time will tell'. To have 'balance', to 'hear both sides', is a reliable way to insulate oneself against complaints of one-sidedness, or bias".

## CONCLUSION

No one will dispute the role of journalists in covering

the *Boko Haram* conflict in the Northeast, since war begins in the mind, peace journalists are needed to help influence the minds of both the parties involved in the conflict, using professionalism towards peace building. Although the conflict by the *Boko Haram* sect in the Northeast has claimed so many lives and properties, the truth is the nature of reportage on this sect and their attacks could either escalate or deescalate conflict in the Northeast depending on the nature of practice used by journalists; peace journalism or war journalism. The best way to deescalate conflict and promote conflict resolution in the Northeast is through peace journalism.

Conclusively, three objectives where formulated to direct the course of this study, concept of importance to the topic of discussion were treated, peace journalism in Nigerian was analysed given relevant newspaper examples, the challenges and the ways to help peace journalism in Nigeria. If development could also mean the absence of war, then peace journalism is very crucial in tackling the *Boko Haram* conflict in the Northeast because peace journalism is more realistic, in the sagacity of fidelity to a reality that already exist, independence of one's knowledge or representation of it. To report violence without background or context is to misrepresent it, since any conflict is at root, a relationship of parties setting and pursuing incompatible goals.

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