

Ethical Issues in the Pictorial representation of the Boko Haram Insurgency by *Daily Trust* and *Thisday* Newspapers

Halima Hassan Ashemi¹

Department of Mass Communication
University of Maiduguri
halima.ashemi@gmail.com

Amina Abana Ph.D²

Department of Mass Communication^{1&2}
University of Maiduguri
mynat99@yahoo.com,
miiinat99@gmail.com

Abstract

The Boko Haram insurgency has been reported variously by the media using diverse methods and means of communication including the use of pictures. This study examines the observance of journalism code of ethics in the use of pictures in reporting the Boko Haram insurgency by Daily Trust and Thisday newspapers for the period of one year (March 2015 to February 2016) to find out the frequency, prominence and tone of pictorial presentations as they conform to journalism ethical standards. The study uses social responsibility theory as its theoretical framework and content analysis as its research method with coding sheets as instruments for recording data in the selected newspapers. A sample size of 96 newspaper editions was selected for the study, using a composite week sampling technique. Findings revealed that pictures of Boko Haram on 'projecting destruction of properties' recorded the highest number of frequency in Daily Trust and Thisday newspapers with 34.2% compared to other categories like projecting death, projecting badly injured, projecting children and minors, projecting government intervention, projecting Boko Haram terrorists and projecting distressed people. The Study further found that prominence were given to pictures that depicted the Boko Haram's destructive activities, which is a glorification of negativity that contravenes ethical provisions. Hence, this study concludes that there are a number of violations of journalism code of ethics (for example, pictorial presentation of children and minors as victims). The study recommends that the selected newspapers should employ ethical and appropriate means of using pictures in reporting Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

Keywords: ethical issues, reporting, pictures, Boko Haram, Daily Trust, Thisday

Introduction

Media play important roles in the information dissemination process in addition to their entertainment, education, enlightenment and surveillance functions. Media are known to shape public opinions by their manner of presentation of events and

interpretation of issues with likely effects and consequences to people and societies. They are recognised as channels used in communicating news and information, especially on topical societal issues, thus, creating awareness about happenings worldwide. These happenings are usually presented in forms of audio, audio-visual and text complimented by photographs, which increase their credibility and make them more authentic and reliable (Shehu, 2004).

Professional journalists play the role of gate-keepers by gathering, analysing and disseminating information about people, events and issues in societies through various media channels. The information could be in form of news, commentaries, editorials, advertorials, news analysis, profiles, columns, cartoons, pictures or features and are disseminated to a heterogeneous audience (Okonkwo, 1999).

The enormity and significance of these roles journalists carry out across the globe is guided by code of ethics, which suggest the need to be objective so as to uphold credibility, the integrity of the profession and its practitioners. Hence, there is need for adherence to professional ethics or codes of conducts by the journalists.

Ethics are a moral guide for practitioners to be truthful, objective and balanced (unbiased) in their practice to be able to positively affect the profession and society in which they practice. Observance of ethics generally requires and professionals to carry out their legitimate functions. It is through the adherence to ethical standards that the moral carnal of a society is appreciated conserved. As such, every professional organization is under the obligations to operate within the scope of certain prescribed ethics so as to be considered a genuine member of an organization while enjoying all its privileges.

Journalists in Nigeria are guided by code of ethics (unveiled 1979 by Nigerian Press Organization (NPO) and reviewed and unveiled (by NPO and Nigeria Press Council) as consensus code in 1989. The code provides a clearer benchmark for standard journalism practice, which include photojournalists in the country. Therefore, Photojournalism as a branch of journalism that entails news reporting through photographs is also guided by this Journalism code of ethics.

The code of journalism practice encapsulates the following:

- **Editorial Independence:** decision on content is the responsibility of professional journalists).
- **Accuracy and Fairness:** journalist must uphold factual, accurate, balanced and fair reporting so as to earn public trust and confidence.
- **Privacy:** respecting the privacy of individual is a general rule.
- **Privilege/Non-Disclosure:** Observe the universally accepted principle of confidentiality and should not disclose the source of information obtained in confidence.

- **Decency:** journalist must refrain from using offensive, abusive or vulgar language.
- **Discrimination:** refrain from making pejorative reference to a person's ethnic group, religion, sex or to any physical or mental illness or handicap.
- **Reward and Gratification:** journalist should neither solicit nor accept bribe, gratification or patronage to suppress or publish information.
- **Violence:** A journalist **should not** present or report acts of violence, armed robberies, terrorist activities or vulgar display of wealth in a manner that glorifies such acts in the eyes of the public.
- **Children and Minors:** journalist should not identify, either by name or picture, or interview children under the age of 16 who are involved in cases concerning sexual offences, crimes and rituals or witchcraft either as victims, witnesses or defendants.
- **Access to information:** journalist should strive to employ open and honest means in the gathering of information. Exceptional methods may be employed only when the public interest is at stake.
- **Public Interest:** a journalist should strive to enhance national unity and public good.
- **Social Responsibility:** a journalist should promote universal principles of human rights, democracy, justice, equity, peace and international understanding.
- **Plagiarism:** a journalist should not copy, wholesale or in part, other people's work without attribution and/or consent.
- **Copyright:** proper acknowledgement should be accorded to authors of works used.
- **Press freedom and responsibility** A journalist should strive at all-times to enhance press freedom and responsibility.

News media recognise the power of photographs and have increasingly made use of pictures in news, especially in reporting conflicts, disaster and terrorism to give news reports credibility and believability. Since September 11,2001, terrorism features prominently in media reports (Sigalla, 2017). Aloa and Uwom (2012) note that, terrorism is globally becoming a house hold war, as there is not a nation that is completely absolved from its effect and media are providing coverage as stories unfold. Nigeria as a nation has also recorded series of conflicts and crises including the present Boko Haram terrorism which has provided a wide range of media reports globally.

From 2009 when Boko Haram insurgents started open confrontation with the Nigerian state to date, the media: print and electronic have continued to report on the

crises using several pictorial representations of the unfolding events. Therefore, considering the importance of pictures in news reporting, their effects and likely consequences on audience's subconscious minds, Kim and Kelly (2010) note that photojournalists frequently face ethical dilemmas in choosing between acting as dispassionate to passionate observers when documenting human tragedy. In the pictorial representation of conflicts there are likely to be ethical violation of issues in respect of the types of photographs they present to their audiences, which might be exaggerated or manipulated pictures, chilling images etc (Ebum'sworld, 2016; National Public Radio, 2012). Hence this study examines ethical issues in the pictorial representation of the Boko Haram insurgency by two selected national dailies in Nigeria: *Daily Trust* and *Thisday* newspapers.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria has witnessed series of Boko Haram violent activities since it began its open confrontation with the state in 2009. It is hitherto noticeable that contents of news reports show that the Nigerian media have given pictorial representation of the conflict. There is hardly a report that is not supported by either a new or old picture of the conflict. In Nigeria photojournalists are guided by the journalism code of ethics stated earlier. Expectedly the representation of the conflict through pictures should ordinarily be guided by journalism code of ethics. However, there are times when ethical issues crop up in these pictorial representations, (Ebum's World, 2016; National Public Radio, 2012). This study looks at how *Daily Trust* and *Thisday* newspapers have provided pictorial representation within the purview of journalism code of ethics. In other words, the paper examines ethical issues in the pictorial representation of the Boko Haram insurgency in the selected newspapers from March 2015 to February 2016.

Objectives

The aim of the study is to examine ethical issues in the pictorial representation of the Boko Haram insurgency in the selected newspapers guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the frequency of the categories of pictorial representations by *Daily Trust* and *Thisday* newspapers that have ethical issues?
2. What level of prominence is given to these pictures that have ethical issues in *Daily Trust* and *Thisday* newspapers?
3. What is the tone of these pictures in reporting Boko Haram in *Daily Trust* and *Thisday* newspapers?

Literature Review

Media coverage of the Boko Haram Insurgency

The contemporary Nigerian society is engulfed with series of political, ethnic and religious conflicts; security threats and crises. Each of these threats has socio-economic and environmental dimensions. Each of these dimensions has greatly affected the nation's peace and stability and can be traced to ethnic and religious conflicts,

corruption, economic sabotage and environmental degradation (Ojo, 2011). However, the recent acts of terrorism perpetuated by the Boko Haram insurgents dominate all the conflicts experienced as it threatens the corporate existence of Nigeria.

Terrorism is the exercise of violence or acts of aggression against unarmed and or unsuspecting population to coerce it and meet the demand of the aggressors. Historically, terrorist attacks are out to draw attention to a cause, such as promoting a religious idea (e.g. the Taliban or Boko Haram) as readings into the literature revealed that modern terrorists seek access to the media by committing acts that closely fits news agencies definition of news being timely and unique, and affecting the lives of those being informed (Dowling, 1986). Therefore, catching people's attention (through the media) is an important mechanism to promote the terrorists goals. Cass (1997) noted that, hence, there is a strong relationship between media and terrorism. While the terrorist on one hand use the mass media as a means of propaganda to manipulate and heavily get involved in the orchestration of their activities, the media on the other hand, give coverage of terrorism stories to provide compelling news stories that can boost their audience figure. Therefore, media reports and coverage of terrorism serve to inform the public on unfolding events, issues previously unknown or denied, rallying public opinions and creating outrage against the government among others.

Hence, Boko Haram insurgency has become a staple of media reports as the media give widespread and persistent coverage of the insurgency using texts, videos, audios and pictures as means of communicating the unfolding issues across diverse and multiple platforms. Such acts include: bomb blasts, destructions of properties, mass abductions, mass killings and suicide attacks resulting in scores of human casualties and the destructions of both civilian and government properties among others.

Boko Haram's origin is shrouded in mystery as no one knows specifically the motive of the sect as well as the real identity of its members and sponsors. Some see it as a political issue while others believe it is religiously motivated. Commenting on the identity of Boko Haram, Schulze as cited in Alao (2012) posits that Boko Haram is ideologically isolated and lacks popular support from the population of Muslim leaders. Though this is contentious, she buttressed her position with the condemnation of the movement by Islamic bodies like the Nigerian umbrella body of Muslims, Jama'atul Nasrul Islam (JNI) that categorically dissociated Islam from the activities of the Boko Haram insurgents.

For others, the group is believed to have emerged in year 2002 but became popular in 2009 under the leadership of the late Muhammad Yusuf. The group has a large followership especially among youths. It is based on the doctrine that "western education is forbidden" hence its name: "Boko Haram" (Onouha, 2014). It is considered the deadliest terrorist group in the world by the Global Terrorism Index (GTI, 2015).

The menace of Boko Haram affects Nigeria and Nigerians, affecting the economy and leaving people helpless (Shehu, 2015). Boko Haram launched series of systematic and organised attacks on the country and its people, notably, in the northeast sub region of the country which drew the attention of the media to its activities.

Consequently, the media published reports using various images of the terrorists' acts but the coverage vary dramatically considering the ongoing media hype surrounding terrorism strikes by the Boko Haram organization operating in Nigeria (Campbell, 2014). Similarly, Hedge (2003) pointed out that the Nigerian press published various emotionally evocative images of the terrorist events that graphically presented/displayed the victims and the sufferings of the people. He added that, corpses in war time often deliver a message...tragically but war is sometimes the most powerful way in which a human society achieves meaning.

These reported images received reactions and counter reactions from both the government and the governed and caused widespread outcry in the international community. Images of terrified people in government settlements, corpses assembled, distressed people crying, burnt houses and settlements, bomb explosions and victims of kidnappings among others questioned the issues of ethics in media coverage. Clutterbuck (1981) & Miller (1982) observed that the media are expected to apply their professional self-regulated and self-imposed ethical policies in response to the acts of terrorism they report.

The Boko Haram insurgency attracted a number of researches and investigations by scholars and other stake holders. For instance, on the role of the media in de-escalating the Boko Haram insurgency, a study by Okali (2011) reveals that, the Nigerian media has not done well in discharging their surveillance role which has an adverse effect on the security of the nation. However, the study submits that of the forces that contribute to conflicts in Nigeria, media are one of thousands, as poverty is the first factor to address.

In a similar study on the Nigerian press, Forest (2012) finds among other things that though Nigerian media have not entirely done very badly but have left much to be desired in terms of objectivity in their coverage. This is owing to the various inhibitions that the media have allowed some forces to influence their professional performance which terrorism reporting is arguable one of them. Ademola and Okeke (2011) agreed with the submission of Forest and stated that Nigerian media have not been able to promote national security because of their biases in reporting crises in Nigeria.

Lawrence (2011) also reveals that the Nigerian media have been biased in their reportage of the Boko Haram insurgency. He further contends that their reportage of the insurgency have most often glorified the acts of terrorism. The idea of "when it bleeds, it sells more" has a lot to play here and that is why the media has been accused of this glorification. Reporting conflicts/terrorism therefore is a responsibility that the media must carry out, recording events objectively as they unfold (Jimoh and Danladi, 2012).

Similarly, Okpara (2010); Hamid & Baba (2014) and Ibrahim (2012) variously observed that the Nigeria media has suffered a lot from numerous ethno-religious crises since independence and that they are yet to effectively play their surveillance functions in their reportage of the insurgency. They contended that this led to unabated insurgent activities.

Many similar researches have been conducted with similar conclusions. And it is established in the literature that the media can incite people towards violence as it is on record that Adolf Hitler used the media to create hatred for Jews during the Second World War (Jimoh and Danladi, 2012).

However, these studies reviewed were not focussed on the use of pictures and adherence to professional code of ethical standards. This study therefore examined how two selected newspapers adhere to professional ethics in the use of pictures in reporting the Boko Haram insurgency.

Photography in News Reporting

Media serve as platforms through which events and issues are reported. The media comprises of newspapers and magazines, journals, radio, TV and films which are considered the typologies of the traditional mass media. The development and advancement of the information communication technologies and the advent of the internet have revolutionised the media landscape and introduced what is known as the new media. In news reporting, both the traditional and the new media use images and photographs to tell stories or complement news reports. Thus photographic images play very significant roles in our daily lives. It is also evident that photographic images are widely used as the main medium in visual presentation such as billboard advertisements, illustrated magazines, newspapers, television and also the Internet. Mustaffa (2011) explained that every image delivers its message with different purposes such as to inform, educate, promote, entertain and persuade. Images are extensively deployed and employed for a variety of purposes and intended effects in a wide range of communication and leisure industries.

Therefore, the significance of photography can to be considered within two main stands. The first is the nature of photography as realistic forms of representation, and the second is its representation that is similar to the linguistic analogy, with its own codes and conventions or as mirror of representation or interpretation (Mustaffa, 2011). In other words, the reproduction and copying of object or character appears in the photograph to represent reality and true experience.

Photography as the art of presenting visual news materials embedded with texts for publication or broadcast which enhances the story's effects on readers is further explained by Joffes (2008) where he stated that photographic images that are displayed in newspapers can influence the audience's emotions more effectively than the text materials that leave them in a more rational, logical and linear pathway of thought. In a related submission, Lester (2003) has his own view and he describes visual images as powerful forms of communication since they stimulate both intellectual and emotional responses.

Furthermore, Teryy (2006) added that photographic images can exert a positioning power on the viewer's imagination. Even without words, documentations of conflicts, for example between the oppressed and the oppressors as depicted in South Africa where racism was photographically portrayed to limit the black population in

certain fields found out that the white population restricted blacks in the work area and remote towns, photography was unethically used to portray blacks lower than the white population (Krantz (2008). Similarly, Jordan (1999) conducted a research which quantifies the volume, tone and type of images used by United States and concluded that a well-constructed photograph can make a creative and logical storytelling that grabs the viewer's attention and leaves long lasting memories.

Literature revealed a number of studies that have been conducted on the use of pictures in reporting issues as photography has been used variously in weeklies to portray the Iran hostage crisis. Photojournalism acted as a primary vehicle through which American public witnessed Iranian hostages, weeping families and powerless politicians. It was used as means of affecting human behaviour with its emotional tone.

According to a research by Sharif and Yousafzai (2015) on ethical standard of photography in the Pakistani Press, the study recorded over 68 % of ethical violations from the data generated. The research also found out that print media gave more space to unethical photography in its coverage of terrorism at 58 % compared to 42% ethical photographs. Similarly, the research findings also revealed that out of the 428 pictures examined, 131 photographs are related to 'crying people', 93 photographs are on 'destruction' and 45 to 'badly injured' categories. In 'crying people' category, 59% of photographs adhered to code of ethical standard while 41% are unethical. In the "destruction" pictures, 45% of the photographs were unethical while in the category of 'badly injured', 71% of the photographs were unethical.

Hence, the Boko Haram insurgency has been reported variously using images and pictures that are informative, educative and otherwise. From the literature, there is dearth of researches on adherence to ethical standards in reporting Boko Haram using pictures in Nigeria. This research is aimed at filling this gap. Thus this study examined the observance of journalism ethical standards in use of pictures by the two selected newspapers for a period one year.

Photojournalism and Ethics

Photojournalism is the branch of journalism that deals with pictorial representation of news reports. Ananny and Strohecker (2002) described photojournalism as a dilemmatic practice as a whole story cannot be told with just a single image. This incomplete imagery offers a unique kind of understanding for different communities of people with different ages, literacy level and backgrounds.

Lester (2003) produced several writings on photojournalism, according to him, shocking images, manipulation of photographs and visuals with negative stereotyping violate the ethics of photojournalism. These images evoke immediate emotional responses from the viewers. For example, after seeing an image of a dead body or victim of a disastrous event, viewers usually get offended. "If it bleeds, it leads" is popular in American journalism. But ideally according to Lester, if journalists feel the need to tell the story using violent images, then there is need to cite reasons for using such visuals.

Long (1999) added by saying that, “the use of photographs that have the potentials to offend or harm should be carefully discussed before publication”.

However, according to Black, Steele and Barney (1995), some media professionals do not welcome the idea that if a photograph has been manipulated, the audience should be informed of the fact. Similarly, Fosdick and Fahmy (2003) conducted a qualitative study of leading magazine editors and found that the editors saw little need to change or make more apparent the way readers were informed of the level of digital enhancement: there was no support for the idea of ‘photation marks”, which would function in the same way as quotation marks by indicating that a photo was a direct representation of reality.

The unsettled nature of manipulating pictures has been driven home by a wide variety of decisions made by editors when they publish potentially disturbing issues in the traditional media from events of war, conflicts, terrorists’ attacks and shootings. Some media scholars explain that ethical boundaries of war and conflict reporting are not clear-cut (Hulteng, 1995). However, Berserk (2006) believes that like editors and writers, photojournalists have to adhere to the standard of ethical codes. Photographic publications must be governed by truthful and faithful representations. Prescribed ethical standards include how photographers should take pictures, what can and cannot be photographed and when or how an image is altered for publication.

In Nigeria, the code of ethical standards for professional journalists is also applicable to photo journalists. It is based on the above premise that the study investigated the observance of ethical standard in use of pictures in reporting Boko Haram insurgency by content analysing two Nigerian newspapers: *Daily Trust* and *Thisday* Newspapers for one year.

Theoretical Framework

This study espoused on the Social responsibility theory as its theoretical framework. Social responsibility media theory was propounded by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1963). Scholars like McQuail (1987) cited in Ojobor also contributed to the development of the theory.

The theory maintains that media should accept and fulfill certain obligations to the society. Through discharge of professional responsibility of information dissemination, the observance of truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance should be upheld at all times. The media should regulate itself within the framework of law and established institutions to be able to carry out its responsibilities. The theory maintains that whatever might lead to crime, violence, civil disorder or offence to minority groups, should be avoided by the media. The media should also reflect its society’s plurality, giving access to various points of views and granting all the rights to reply. Based on the tenets of the theory, the society has the right to expect high standards of performance from the media. Intervention can only be justified to secure public good, accountability of employers and the market.

Basically the major premise of the social responsibility theory is that, the freedom of the press to carry out social responsibilities should be within the limit of public interest and trust. The theory is applicable in the study because it advocated some obligations on the part of the media to the society similar to those contained in the code of ethics of journalism profession. Ethical issues in the pictorial representation of *Boko Haram* by Daily trust and Thisday newspapers fits into this theory because insurgency is a situation which brings about several gory pictures that may not appeal to the audience and the media are expected to comply with their professional code of ethics in using pictures to report such.

Method

This study used content analysis as its method of data collection. Content analysis is adopted in this study on the pictorial representation of Boko Haram insurgency because of its relevance as an established social science method that focuses on examining the contents of recorded information such as newspapers, pictures, videos and audio among others which produces valid and reliable data devoid of researcher's influence. Though content analysis cannot make statements about media effects on an audience, it is however an approach used in social sciences to examine the manifest content of media messages as it is a method of studying and analysing communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables (Kerlinger, 2000).

The study population is 310 newspapers operating in Nigeria based on the estimation of the Nigerian Press Commission (NPC, 2018). The study purposively selected two widely read and popular newspapers of northern and southern origin from March 2015 to February 2016. This period was chosen because it has been described as the period of major intensification of terrorist's threats in Nigeria. The country recorded the highest increase in terrorism deaths ever witnessed by any country (increase by over 300 percent) with 7,512 fatalities as a result of Boko Haram operations which made Boko Haram the deadliest terrorist group in the world (Global Terrorism Index, GTI, 2015).

The study adopts the probability sampling method by employing the composite week sampling technique. The composite week sampling technique is an approach where one day is drawn every week of every month throughout the sampling period. Therefore, a total of forty eight (48) editions for each newspaper were selected and when multiplied by the 2 selected newspapers, it amounts to ninety six (96) editions in the one year study period. Thus, the sample size for this study is 96 editions of the two selected newspapers.

This study analysed only pictures as its unit of analysis and content categories were adopted from similar studies (example Sharif & Yousafzai, 2011) using the deductive approach and reviewed after conducting a pilot study. Ethical issues in this study refers to issues that violates ethical provisions some of these violations could be

using pictures or minors, projecting acts of violence, terrorist activities in a manner that glorifies such acts in the eyes of the public.

. The content categories for this study therefore are: pictures that glorify or project: death, badly injured, children and minors, destruction of properties, Boko Haram terrorists, vulnerable and distressed persons while the 'others' category was included to take care of pictures that fall within multiple categories to ensure the principles of mutual exclusivity and exhaustivity.

Inter-coder reliability test was conducted with the 10% of the study's population using Holsti's co-efficiency of reliability thus: $CE = \frac{3M}{N1+N2+N3}$. Two independent coders, after training on the use of the coding sheet with the researcher conducted the test which yielded 96% of co-efficient of reliability.

Manual data coding and analysis was employed and data was presented on tables using simple statistics of item counts and simple percentages.

Findings and discussion

Data was analysed through the creation of a coding scheme with a sample of 96 editions of two newspapers. Findings are presented by answering the research questions of this study. A total of 155 pictures were recorded and research findings are presented below.

Table1: Frequency of Categories of Pictorial Representation by *Daily Trust* and *Thisday* that have ethical issues

Categories	Daily Trust	Thisday	Total	Percentage %
Projecting Deaths	12	13	25	16.1
Projecting Badly injured	11	15	26	16.8
Projecting Children and minors	5	6	11	7.1
Projecting Destruction of properties	24	29	53	34.2
Projecting Boko Haram terrorists	7	6	13	8.4
Projection of vulnerable Distressed people	4	3	7	4.5
Others	9	11	20	12.9
Total	72	83	155	100

Table 1 shows the categories, frequencies and percentages of pictures reported in *Daily Trust* and *Thisday* newspapers for the period under study. The two newspapers used pictures in reporting Boko Haram activities ranging from projecting death recording 25(16.1%), projecting badly injured with 26 (16.8%), projecting children and minors 11 (7.1%), projecting destruction 53(34.2%), projecting Boko Haram terrorists 13 (8.4%), projecting vulnerable and distressed people 7 (5.5%) while others category has

recorded 20 (12.9%). Data shows that pictures on destruction have recorded the highest number of frequency in *Daily Trust* and *Thisday* newspapers within the period under study as compared to other categories like death, badly injured, children and minor, government intervention, Boko Haram terrorists and distressed people.

This means that usage of pictures in reporting Boko Haram were more on destruction than any other category. Moreover, judging that no other report except those on destructions, badly injured and other related issues were recorded, this affirmed the position of Lawrence (2011) that the Nigerian media have been biased in their reportage of the Boko Haram insurgency, noting that that the coverage often projects or glorifies the acts of terrorism rather than de-escalating it. For instance, the picture below as carried by the *Thisday* newspaper of February 1, 2016 shows destruction of houses which was caused by a Boko Haram attack.

Figure 1: Picture of a site destruction by Boko Haram



Source: *Thisday* (2016)

That may be the reason why the media has been accused of this glorification of Boko Haram related terrorism activities since 2009. Similarly, Popoola (2012) stated that the government sees the media men as unpatriotic and uncommitted to the national interest, peace and stability of the country. The belief of the government is that, journalists' surveillance of society should be comprehensive and that they should, therefore, have information that shows government efforts, or those that could lead to the arrest of all the members of Boko Haram.

Table 2: Prominence given to pictures in reporting *Boko Haram* in *Daily Trust* and *Thisday* newspapers

Categories	Daily Trust		Thisday		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Front Page	23	31.9	14	16.9	37	23.9
Inside Page	49	68.0	69	83.1	118	76.1
Back Page	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	72	100	83	100	155	100

Table 2 shows that 23 pictures on Boko Haram were reported on the front pages of *Daily Trust* which is equivalent to 31.9% of pictures reported while the remaining pictures were buried in the inside pages recording 49 (68%); and nothing was recorded at the back page. On the other hand, *Thisday* reported 14 pictures of Boko Haram on its front page with 16.9% and 69 in the inside page an equivalence of 83.1% while no single picture on Boko Haram was published on the back page. On the whole, this means that most of the pictures on Boko Haram were reported in the inside pages of *Daily Trust* and *Thisday* newspapers. And *Daily Trust* gave more prominence to pictures of Boko Haram than *Thisday* newspaper. Additionally, none was recorded on back pages, probably due to assigning back pages to established columnists.

Prominence in this study means the placement of the pictures of Boko Haram on the front pages or the back pages of *Daily Trust* and *Thisday* newspapers which translates to the level of importance accorded to the pictures recorded. By this findings, it means that though, 37 (23.9%) of pictures were placed on the front pages as against 118 (76.1%) reported in the inside pages, one can safely say that the selected newspapers gave prominence to the pictures Boko Haram reports. When one takes into consideration the number of issues examined (96), the amount of space pictures take, limited space on the front page (one page) with competing stories seeking prominence, while the inside pages are many and other equally important reports seeking prominence, then, it's fair to state that prominence was given to pictures in reporting the Boko Haram issue.

This also means that newspapers consumers get to see pictures of Boko Haram insurgency easily as prominence is accorded to them. These may not appeal to them and may offend their sensibilities since the study recorded highest number of pictures that were presented in a negative tone (see table 3 below for details).

For example, the front page of *Daily Trust* newspapers of July 15th 2015 carried a picture of children paraded as victims of Boko Haram attacks as can be seen from the picture below:

Figure 2: Picture of children affected by Boko Haram attacks



Source: *Daily Trust*, (2015)

The above picture was a front page report showing children displayed as victims of Boko Haram insurgency. The above picture was placed on the front page of one of the selected papers. This violates ethical provisions under the Nigerian code of ethics as it contravenes section 9 of the code of ethics for Nigerian journalists which states that: “a journalist should not identify, either by name or picture, or interview children under the age of 16 who are involved in cases concerning sexual offences, crimes and rituals or witchcraft either as victims, witnesses or defendants”. However, the above picture displayed children as victims of Boko Haram which is unethical.

Another example of prominence given to reporting Boko Haram, using pictures is a front page report by the *DailyTrust* of February 1, 2016 below:

Figure 1: Front page report on destruction by Boko Haram
Attack on Maiduguri villages... 85 corpses recovered



Source: *Daily Trust* (2016)

Similarly, it is noticeable that there are daily news stories about the activities of this sect on the media. Sometimes, one wonders, it is as if they enjoy more publicity than the government.

Table 3: Tones of pictorial representation of Boko Haram insurgency by *Daily Trust* and *Thisday* newspapers

Categories	Daily Trust		Thisday		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Direction						
Positive	26	36.1	20	24.1	47	29.7
Neutral	0	0	0	0	0	0
Negative	46	63.9	63	75.9	109	70.3
Total	72	100	83	100	155	100

Table 3 shows that *Daily Trust* reported 26 pictures of Boko Haram which are in a positive tone, an equivalence of 36.1%, 46 pictures corresponding to 63.9% of picture usage were reported in a negative tone while no picture presented in a neutral tone was recorded. Similarly, *Thisday* reported 20 pictures of Boko Haram in a positive tone with 24.1% while 63 pictures were reported in a negative tone with 75.9%. On the whole, 47 (29.7%) pictures were positively toned while 109 (70.3%) were in negative tones.

Although the pictures had ethical issues (violation) some of the pictures had positive disposition. In this study, negative toned pictures means photographs which glorify Boko Haram acts in *Daily Trust* and *Thisday* newspapers, positive toned pictures means photographs that do not glorify Boko Haram acts in *Daily Trust* and *Thisday* newspapers while neutral toned pictures are photographs on Boko Haram with a balanced or mixed presentation as published by the two selected Nigerian newspapers (*Daily Trust* and *Thisday*) between March 2015 to February 2016.

From the data presented on table 3 therefore, findings revealed that most of the pictures of Boko Haram insurgency were reported in a negative tone by the two selected newspapers. Even though, *Thisday* newspapers reported more pictures in a negative tone while *Daily Trust* on the other hand reported more on positive tone than *Thisday* newspaper. The picture below shows a victim of bomb blast which is an example of a picture displayed in a negative tone.

4 A picture of a victim of Boko Haram attack



■ A victim of a suicide bomb attack lies in a hospital, after four bombers blew themselves up in Maiduguri on Thursday night.

Based on the findings of this study, most of the pictures of Boko Haram insurgency were reported in a negative tone thus glorifying the Boko Haram acts by the two newspapers under study which went against the provision of the code of journalism ethical standard that states “A journalist should not present lurid details either in words or pictures of violence, sexual acts, abhorrent or horrid scenes”.

Similarly, findings of this study revealed that most of the representations violated the ethics of the journalism profession. The picture below showing Boko Haram leader celebrating victory is unethical. This is justified by Article 8 of the journalistic code of ethics which states that “a journalist should not present or report acts of violence, armed robberies, terrorist activities or vulgar display of wealth in a manner that glorifies such acts in the eyes of the public”.



Surveillance has been one of the core responsibilities of the media. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the media to report without inflaming violence and disrupting tranquillity in the state. This is achievable by strict adherence to professional ethics. In this regard, this study agrees with other researches that have shown that Nigerian media have not done well in this area. For example, Okpara (2010) reveals that the Nigerian media are yet to effectively play surveillance function in their reportage of conflicts. He concludes that this has led to the emergence of unabated conflicts in Nigeria.

Similarly, the findings of the study are not at significant variance with the findings of the previous studies in the area. Hamid and Baba (2014) observed that the Nigerian media are yet to effectively play the surveillance function of the media in their reportage of insurgency. He contended that this led to the series of related insurgent activities in Nigeria. The Nigerian media have not done well in discharging their surveillance role, particularly in the Boko-Haram crisis.

This confirmed the relevance of social responsibility theory which is important in explaining the responsibility of the media in the dissemination of credible news to diverse audiences, while protecting their sensibilities. This includes photography as it relates to those in the photographs and viewers of the photographs. Thus, the media is expected to follow certain laid down ethical standards that will ensure that pictures are used effectively to avert either backlash or stigmatization. Furthermore, if the media fails to carry out such a responsibility, it may be relevant to have a regulatory instance to sanction it or enforce its compliance.

The theory is applicable in the study because it advocated some obligations on the part of the media in the society. The use of photography in the coverage of Boko Haram insurgency fits into this theory because insurgency is a situation which brings about several gory pictures that may not appeal to the audience.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings of this research, the study concludes that pictures of Boko Haram projecting destruction recorded the highest number of frequency in *Daily Trust* and *Thisday* newspapers within the period under study with 34.2% compared to other categories like death, badly injured, children and minors, Government intervention, Boko Haram terrorists and distressed people. Similarly, it is the conclusion of this study that prominence was given to pictures of Boko Haram, though, about 24% were placed on the front pages of the newspapers, they are still considered high owing to the limited space on the front pages, the number of issues examined and other equally competent reports seeking prominence.

The study further concludes that most of the pictures of Boko Haram insurgency were reported on negative grounds in the two newspapers under investigation with 70.3% and also this study concludes that there are ethical violations in the of pictorial representation of Boko Haram insurgency which go against Nigerian code of ethics of journalism profession which states that: “journalism entails a high degree of public trust. To earn and maintain this trust, it is morally imperative for every journalist and every

news medium to observe the highest professional and ethical standards. In the exercise of these duties, a journalist should always have a healthy regard for the public interest...”

Based on the conclusion of this study, it is therefore recommended that the selected newspapers should limit the number of pictures used in reporting Boko Haram as it may escalate crises, prominence should not be given to Boko Haram pictures as this may suggest glorification of the acts which is not in compliance with the ethical standard of journalism profession and appropriate means of pictorial representation of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria should be employed especially on issues concerning children and minors as well as violence which is not in conformity with the code of ethical standard of journalism profession.

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Authors

Halima Hassan Ashemi is a lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication University of Maiduguri, Nigeria.

Amina Abana Ph.D is a lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication University of Maiduguri, Nigeria.