All Talk, Little Impact: Media Frames and Discursive Strategies of Out-of-School Children in Nigeria

Muhyideen Imam[1], Umar Ajetunmobi[2], Abdulmalik Salman[3]

[1]Department of English, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

[2]Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

[3]Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Corresponding Author: Muhyideen Imam; Email: lakanmiimam@gmail.com

A B S T R A C T

Statistics show that Nigeria has 10.5 million out-of-school children (OOSC), the highest figure in the globe. This study investigated the media frames and framing strategies of OOSC in Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust Newspapers. Using qualitative content analysis, the study adopted van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) alongside the thematic and episodic positions of Framing Theory. Analysis showed five media frames and six framing strategies for OOSC. For media frames, OOSC were represented as vulnerable and poor victims; silenced voices; children sprouting from state and policy failure; children sprouting from non-state actors' failure, as well as children in crisis and need of collaborative responses. For framing strategies, we found source avoidance as a means of masking negativity, authoritativeness as a framing strategy, positive self-presentation, and negative other-presentation, apportioning blame, and foregrounding, alongside direct and implied metaphors. Journalists used these representations to frame opinions and influence people's perceptions of the OOSC menace. The study recommends that media houses always explore ways of actualizing the truth efficacy of news reportage, and write stories about OOSC more thematically.

INTRODUCTION

As of 2021 when the global population of out-of-school primary school children rose to 787 million, Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for the highest (33.8 million) [Roser, 2021]. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, precisely in 2018, the world had 258.4 million out-of-school children, adolescents, and youth, with senior secondary, junior secondary, and primary schools carrying 137.8 million, 61.5 million and 59.1 million students respectively (UNESCO, 2019). Out of this figure, Nigeria accounted for 10.5 million children (UNICEF, 2022). By geography, the figure is spread across Nigeria's six geo-political zones. For instance, Akinpelu (2018) citing the available data from the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) [2018] reported that Kano State recorded the highest number of out-of-school children (age 6-11) [989,234] in North-West while Akwa-Ibom led

(581,800) in the South-South. In the North-East, Taraba had the highest (499,923) followed by Oyo (418,900) in the South-West. Imo and Niger States led in the South-East and the North-Central with 275,890 and 292,700 children respectively. In terms of gender, the population of male out-of-school children (OOSC) doubles that of females (UBEC, 2018), contrary to the prominent narrative that Nigeria has more out-of-school females than males.

Several factors have been identified as reasons for this huge figure from Nigeria. Some children forgo schooling because of poverty, parental exposure to education, the children's health condition, and peer influence (Okoh, Emenike, Doma & Akinsola, 2020). Some others come from poor backgrounds, are unable to meet financial responsibilities, and live far away from school locations, while some experience unimpressive teacher-student relationships (Zira & Zumo, 2020).

In some other places in Nigeria, children, especially girls, are out of school because of certain cultural ideologies about early marriage and pregnancy, gender-based violence in school, abduction, and gender-based domestic labor together with societal stereotypes of girl child education (Jacob, 2022). Insecurity and serial abduction, especially in Northern Nigeria, are equally essential factors adding to the figure of OOSC in the region (Sanni, 2015; Owonikoko, 2021).

Placing some causes of out-of-school menace in Nigeria (e.g., child marriage, parental exploration of children for child labor, etc.) within the ambit of the Child Rights Act 2003, one observes disparity between the legal provision and its practical reality, considering the incremental level of OOSC in all the geopolitical regions in the country. Not all Nigerian states have even domesticated the Act (Baiyewu, 2022). According to the Act, "a child (is) to be given protection and care necessary for his wellbeing" and the child has the "right to parental care, protection, and maintenance" (p.1). The provision also illegalizes child marriage and betrothal, the use of children for exploitative labor such as begging and prostitution. Section 15 of the Act specifically states that "every child has the right to free, compulsory and universal basic education and it shall be the duty of the Government in Nigeria to provide such education". The Section equally mandates parents or guardians to educate their children/wards up to secondary school or empower the children with vocational skills if they are unable to proceed to secondary school. When a parent/guardian fails to do so, the provision says such individuals: Commit an offense liable (a) on a first conviction to be reprimanded and ordered to undertake community service; (b) on a second conviction to a fine of two thousand nairas or imprisonment for a term not exceeding one month or to both such fine and imprisonment; and (c) on any subsequent conviction to a fine not exceeding five thousand nairas or imprisonment for a term not exceeding two months or to both such fine and imprisonment.

Reasons for the ineffectiveness of this policy, therefore, remain a question beyond the scope of this study. However, it is significant to state that the out-of-school figure released by UNICEF is the first motivation for this study. Another motivation is that existing empirical studies are yet to investigate how the Nigerian media represent(ed) the OOSC in news reportage. Researchers have not also evaluated the framing strategies that Nigerian newspapers adopt while framing OOSC-related news stories. Instead, available studies investigated the voices of OOSC in Pakistan (Nazir & Hameed, 2019), how interactive television instructions could be used to improve critical thinking among OOSC in Nigeria (Gever, Tunca, Boluwatife, Nwogbo, Chinweobo-Onuoha, Ugwuoke & Talabi, 2021) and patterns, types and predictors of contraceptive use among female in and out-of-school adolescents in Nigeria (Adogu, Udigwe, Udigwe, Nwabueze & Onwasigwe, 2014). Other out-of-school-related studies examined the sexual behavior of female out-of-school adolescents (Odeyemi, Onajole & Ogunowo, 2009), investigated tobacco use among out-of-school adolescents (Adebiyi, Faseru, Sangowawa & Owoaje, 2010), compared school attendance and child labor between children in school and those out of school and working (Omokhodion, 2014), all within the Nigerian context. Therefore, this study: i. investigates the media frames of OOSC in selected news stories of Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust Newspapers, and ii. discusses the framing and discourse strategies adopted by the newspapers to represent OOSC.

METHODS

This study adopted qualitative content analysis and van Dijk's framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Using purposive and available sampling techniques, we selected 44 news stories on OOSC from the online versions of three widely-circulated newspapers in Nigeria: Punch, Vanguard, and Daily Trust. We selected the three newspapers to represent the Southwest (Punch), the North (Daily Trust), and the East (Vanguard). In gathering the news stories, we used the search feature of Google News, as it is believed that news headlines with good Search Engine Optimization (SEO) would be detected and aggregated by Google News (Giomelakis, Karypidou & Veglis, 2019). This is the approach that produced the 44 selected news stories (available sampling). For recency, we limited the data to news stories published from 2021 to 2022 (one year).

Each headline was copied in a Code Book using Microsoft Excel Sheet while headlines and

their stories were copied in a Microsoft Document and numbered serially. We then used an inductive approach to extract content categories from the data. This approach produced eight categories and twenty-five sub-categories. Headlines and their stories represented our units of analysis. Two of the authors validated the categories and the subcategories using face validity. During data coding, we used the 6 steps of thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2013). We then thematized the data analysis and discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the present study, we have relied on corpus-driven research as well as on the methodological framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Within this broad multidisciplinary research framework, we have utilized van Dijk's model of CDA and applied news framing theory. As corpus-driven research, it provides the analysts with a large-scale systematization of choices of patterns and with the tool for highlighting frames. Corpus methodologies prove interesting approaches when it comes to describing linguistic forms in context, as well as deep interpretations lexemes are weaved to indicate. The potential of corpus studies is to uncover how language is employed, often in subtle ways to reveal underlying discourses. At the very heart of CDA lies an interest in uncovering ideological assumptions and hypothetical forms of bias, all of which start from the problematization of the discourse practice under study, a concept made salient by Schultz's typification and framing theory.

In the subsequent headings, news items on OOSC are discussed under CDA and framing theory-induced categorizations. We first discuss the media frames identified in the news stories before discussing the framing strategies. For the media frames, we identified five representations: OOSC as vulnerable and poor victims, OOSC as silenced voices, OOSC sprouting from state and policy failure, OOSC sprouting from non-state actors' failure, and OOSC, as a crisis in need of collaborative responses. For framing strategies, we found six strategies: source avoidance as a means of masking negativity, authoritativeness as a framing strategy, positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation, apportioning blame and foregrounding, alongside direct and implied metaphors dominating the selected news stories. These formations are used to analyze the intricacies of how news reports about OOSC were framed:

OOSC and Framing Strategies

Source avoidance as a means of masking negativity

News Item 4: Ministry, research body disagree on 12.3million out-of-school children (Punch, 5 March 2022); News Item 10: Out-of-school children now 10.3 million says FG (Punch, 2 April 2021).

In news item 4, the statement contains an implication that there is misappropriation in the numbers of OOSC as reported by the research body on one hand and as accepted by the Federal Government of Nigeria on the other. This is an indirect way of de-emphasizing the protracted scourge of OOSC. The government, who regulates and indirectly controls the media, seems to divert the perception of the populace from her ineffectiveness. She wants news readers to believe she is working to posit that 12.3million is probably a hype of the number of OOSC in Nigeria. With this kind of episodic frame, the disagreement in numbers tends to paint the pictures of calumny directed towards the research body. In other words, the frame manifests a cognitive discourse to establish that the research body is being spurred or sponsored to jeopardize the efforts of the government to reduce the number of OOSC.

News item 10 presupposes that the FG is really working to reduce the number of OOSC. What calls for the restatement that 10.3million is now the new number; this contains an insinuation, suspicion, and a negative undertone that the FG is seemingly happy that 10.3million is a good number. This item establishes Dijk's triangulation of discourse, cognition, and society. The item is framed to divert news readers' attention from the government's high-handedness. Why will a government see over ten million OOSC safe for the nation? The statement undermines the necessity for the government to brace up for its duties. It is coined in a rhetorical style to conceal the inadequacies of government policies on OOSC. We can therefore conclude that the journalist framed the news item to avoid the source of the problem and to mask negative values.

Authoritativeness as a framing strategy

News Item 14: Insurgency: over 5000 of out-of-school children supported in Borno, says

UNICEF (Punch, 20 January 2022); News Item 16: Nigeria's education crisis majorly affects girls, children with disabilities – UNICEF (Punch, 24 January 2022).

Reliance on officials (Khafaga, 2019) and authority (Lecheler, Keer, Schuck & Hänggli, 2015) as sources of information is tied to the media's dependence on the status quo to keep their ownership and continue their profitability. Following Khafaga (2019), the consequence of this is a predominantly established view of the world, manifested textually in ways in which speech reporting is treated. UNICEF is a world body that carries the emphasis, authority, and power of an authoritative source. The body has the authority to know the set of individuals mainly affected by a nation's educational crisis. The body also has the research aptitude to know what a state government does regarding educational policies. However, in news item 16, the journalist framed the statement to undermine male children and create strict fidelity to feminism, and supposedly solidarize with children with disabilities. These formatives connect to the discourse construction in which ideologies, social inequality and domination are structured. For undermining the male children, what gender forms the bulk of Almajiri children in Northern Nigeria? What gender forms the bulk of children hawkers on the streets of southwestern Nigeria? What gender forms the bulk of individuals recruited into children-cults and political thuggery? Also, the exemplification of girl child of out-of-school determinism subscribes to the cultural inclinations of a part of Nigeria where it is believed that girls are deprived of western education seemingly because of conceptions of early child marriage and religious indoctrination (Tyoakaa et al., 2014; Mohammed et al., 2021; Jacob, 2022).

Furthermore, framing through authoritativeness is manifested through the research wherewithal of such institutions as UNICEF. Though Borno State might have supported over 5000 OOSC, whose responsibility is it in the first place? The ascription to UNICEF is also employed in the news items to intensify the truthfulness of the statement UNICEF will not falsify facts. Is it not possible for journalists to frame the news item as it is to argue for a cognitive complement of macrostructures, even when the Borno government has not done so? Who will believe what UNICEF

has claimed a question to determine the perception of news readers and tame their attention towards accepting what UNICEF had claimed? This follows the fact that the media are involved in choosing the source of information, for example, who gets to be heard or quoted in news. According to Khafaga (2019), "One striking feature of news production is the overwhelming reliance of journalists on a tightly limited set of officials and otherwise legitimized sources which are systematically drawn upon, through a network of contacts and procedures, and sources of facts and to substantiate other 'facts'."

Positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation

News item 12: FG decries rate of out-of-school children (Punch, 27 January 2022); News item 13: Out-of-school children: FG not responsible, says Osinbajo (Punch, 1 September 2022).

In the above headlines, we have used of a strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. This strategy, following van Dijk (2015), is typical in a biased account of the facts in favor of the speaker's or writer's own interests while blaming negative situations and events on opponents or others. In news item 12, FG de-emphasizes her responsibility for the rate of OOSC. The verb "decries" is used to show that the government lends some level of positivity to the scourge. It also diverts the attention of news readers to other institutions, apart from the FG, who are portrayed to be responsible for the rate. Why should you decry what you have failed to eliminate? Why should you decry a scourge your failure caused? This positive self-presentation is utilized to frame the problem as something the FG is concerned about.

There is an extension to the meanings in the first news item in 13. The Vice President of Nigeria who is one of the most important members of the FG explicitly claims that FG is not responsible for the OOSC scourge. If the FG is not responsible, then who is? This means the strategy is framed as it is to introduce the negative other (not mentioned in the headline) who is responsible for the OOSC scourge. This kind of framing strategy also poses the out-of-school problem as a non-issue as there is a re-introduction of non-committing conception on the part of the FG to the cognitive perception of news readers to underplay the need to attend to the out-of-school children issue. The interpretation of

the strategy can also be extended to the fact that OOSC children, who are poor kids from poor parents, are not seen as essential to society; it is a proclamation of the elitist movement.

Moreover, the news items and their interpretations manifest the triangular relationship among Dijk's discourse, cognition, and society. McGregor (2003) lends a voice to this when he notes that our words are used to convey a broad sense of meanings, and the meanings we convey with those words are identified by our immediate social, political, and historical conditions.

Apportioning blame

News Item 9: Insecurity will make out-of-school reduction impossible Niger governor (Punch, 1 February 2022); News Item 17: Kidnapping, religion, poverty, fueling out-of-school syndrome (Punch, 13 August 2022).

This strategy, according to van Dijk (2015) is an ideological construct that has been created and propagated by politicians and the media to blame all ills of society on others. Here, there is the use of macro-rules to reduce information and delete the details considered not relevant to the text. In this news item, the journalist frames the proposition to bring insecurity to the fore as a determinant of the impossibility of OOSC reduction. This is framed to turn the perception of news readers away from the imperfections of the government as insecurity in some states would make the program unachievable. Are we going to talk about schools to the victims who are fighting for their lives? In the extension of the item, the Minister of State for Education called on philanthropists to join hands with the Federal and State Governments to reduce the number. This is fashioned to establish that the government has been overwhelmed in her efforts to curb the menace. In addition, the blame-framing strategy is employed properly in item 17. Unfortunately, the framing is flawed. Whose policies and inadequacies breed kidnapping? Whose responsibility is it to curb poverty in the land? Are these not the jobs of a dutiful government? The inclusion of religion is a smokescreen to control news readers' perceptions as it will be said that: "is the government also in control of religion?" Rather, the government is a key determinant in religious intolerance and violence. This strategy is utilized in news item 5: *Kaduna archbishop urges northern leaders to invest in education* (Punch, 5 March 2022).

There is a super-structure proposition embedded in the choice of lexemes here. The word 'urges' pulls the cognition of the news readers to the fact that the OOSC scourge is a northern problem. Also, the urger seen to be an archbishop propels the discussion to be more pronounced in another religion different from his. In addition, news items such as these are framed to be considered holistic on their own as readers are not allowed to look outside the text to the society to see through interpretations. This is against van Dijk's model of CDA, and it follows from Bateson's (2000) assertion that these frames are ordered to organize the perception of the viewer saying: "attend to what is within and do not attend to what is outside". The framing formatives have been seen to be clear in the news items as NGOs now take up the task of pleading with the government to curb the OOSC scourge. It is also discovered that journalists used unverified promises to frame the OOSC narrative. Consider the following items:

News Item 6: Lagos to educate out-of-school children (Punch, 20 January 2022); News Item 11: Kwara set to enroll out-of-school children (Punch, 11 March 2022); News Item 7: Boko Haram has ready tools from today's 14 million out-of-school children – Obasanjo (Punch, 26 September 2021).

The items above give room for some questioning: When exactly will Lagos educate OOSC? Is it not initially their responsibility? If Kwara is set, why are they not doing it pronto? Is Obasanjo's affirmation not a deviation from his own responsibilities? These lexical strategies are employed to tame the perceptions of news readers about OOSC reportage. This follows McQuail's (2013) observation that elites are both key sources and subjects of news. News reports often state what prominent people, especially political actors, say about events rather than the events themselves, and what such people say may constitute an event in itself.

Foregrounding

News Item 28: FG enrolls 924,590 out-of-school children in Nigeria (Vanguard 18 March 2021); News Item 29: FG adopts multi-pronged approach in tackling socio-economic obstacles of out-of-school children (Vanguard 1 February 2022); News Item 34: Out-of-school children drops from 10 million to 6 million in 2020 – FG (Vanguard 21 January 2021).

The choice of words, Pan (2002) states, is crucial in presenting the intended information about news events to the audience and is an indication of the ideological stances on the part of the media. In news item 28, the verb 'enrolls' is employed to exemplify the macro-structure of responsiveness, a notion that the government is assiduously working to minimize the scourge of OOSC. Another verb that is less evocative, say 'educates', might have been chosen. Rather, 'enrolls' conveys a strong meaning and a message about the job done by the government. FG's adoption of a multi-pronged approach is another case of foregrounding in news item 29. The verb phrase 'adopts multi-pronged approach' manifests a cognitive framing of readers' perception. It gives an insight into a novel style of tackling OOSC's socio-economic obstacles.

This form of discourse strategy portrays the government as diligent as she downplays the essentiality of OOSC as being taken care of. In the news content, the FG stated that developmental issues and challenges are interrelated; this has spurred her to adopt the multi-pronged fashion by not only providing educational opportunities to OOSC, but also simultaneously providing them buffers against challenges that impede their ability to access education. The socio-cognitive discourse manifestation in the news interpretation suggests that the government did not see tackling socio-economic obstacles as her responsibility in the first place. The news writer's framing strategy is defective as it admits connective negativities of the society and at the same time submits discursively that the government has failed in ensuring OOSC's wellbeing. Though these interpretations might not have been conceived by the writer, the discursive framing strategies have exposed such meanings.

News item 34 is a foregrounding formative that echoes the voice of the FG saying "we have successfully reduced the number of out-of-school children from 10 million to 6 million". As McGregor (2003) puts it, one key principle of CDA is that the way we write, and what we say is not arbitrary but purposeful. Note that the use of the verb 'drops' is to lessen the seriousness of the OOSC scourge, and probably to impress the citizenry who are disturbed about the societal menace. However, the ideological assumptions in the news item suggest a deleterious undertone that 6 million is not harmful to a number. These frames accentuate ideological cum discourse intricacies attached to issues of significant importance.

Direct and implied metaphors

News Item 40: Out-of-school children: Why we need private sector's involvement – Presidency (Daily Trust 24 January 2022); News Item 41: Obasanjo: Boko Haram's next recruits will come from 14 million out-of-school children (Daily Trust 25 September 2021).

Metaphors involve the mapping of one domain of meaning unto a different one. Metaphors are a major discourse and framing strategy (John & John, 2018) that writers explore to achieve figurative meaning. In news item 40, we discover a breach in the flow of discourse. A government that has foregrounded, in another news item, that she is capable of, and has been enrolling, and reducing OOSC now posits that she needs the private sector's involvement. The verb 'need' is a macro-structure utilized to establish the inefficacy and uninteresting posture of the government. For news item 41, Obasanjo's statement tilts towards a cognitive process to evoke the image of a concrete action of insurgents. The recurrent pronouncement of linking insecurity to OOSC narrative by Former President Obasanjo is another framing strategy. It is a form of comparing the Boko Haram insurgency to the OOSC scourge. Would it be safe to express that Former President Obasanjo knows better about the recruitment process of Boko Haram insurgents? Also, there is the seeming politicization of discursive strategies as exemplified in Obasanjo's statements. One would notice that the FG seems to beat the number of OOSC down while Obasanjo's accounts seem like hype. Here is another example from the Vanguard Newspaper:

News Item 21: Nigeria must address 15 million out-of-school children to tackle insecurity Obasanjo (Vanguard 21 February 2022).

The ideological stance here remains that an individual or bodies that belong to the incumbent government administration frame the OOSC narrative by understating numbers while political and non-political actors who do not belong to the caucus of the government overstate statistics. It is either the case of falsifying the facts or manifesting the false. The structure of Obasanjo's statement gives a cognitive picture as it serves as imagery to characterize Nigerian leaders and systems. Thus, the metaphor which draws upon the audience's

knowledge of the Nigerian political system and security architecture reinforces the ideology and implies that Nigerian leaders' priorities are exposed through framing a case of the OOSC narrative.

Emerging media frames: more episodic, less thematic

This section analyses and discusses the episodic and thematic frames identified in the 44 selected OOSC-related news stories related to the OOSC. Five different frames were established four episodic, and one thematic, as discussed below:

OOSC as Vulnerable and Poor Victims

About half of the 44 stories described OSSC as vulnerable victims whose vulnerability is easily exploited by politicians, religious extremists as well as their parents and guardians. If they are not exploited as *Al-Majiris*, they would be exploited as street beggars and hawkers by their parents and guardians. Their vulnerability, according to the stories, also subjects them to being victims of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, and exclusion as found by Stella et al. (2018). Aside from these, they were equally described as potential perpetrators of crimes who grow up as street urchins. Some of them were framed as vulnerable because they have lost their parents to insecurity due to violent conflicts, mostly occurring in Northern Nigeria, while many of them come from a poor background who either cannot afford schooling or who have to hawk several hours before they could attend schools as earlier established by Okoh et al., 2020; Zira & Zumo, 2020; Olanrewaju, 2021; Mohammed et al., 2021).

OOSC as Silenced Voices

None of the 44 news stories represented a single direct statement (voice) of the OOSC. Instead, we only heard the voices of political actors such as the governments (Federal, State, and their ministries), lawmakers, and politicians alongside non-political actors such as non-governmental organizations, local and foreign organizations dominate the sources of news about the causes of the out-of-school menace as well as how it could be curbed. These political and non-political actors were the ones blaming the governments and their failed educational policies as well as the OOSC's parents, and at the same highlighting causes of the out-of-school phenomenon, and proffering solutions. None of the three newspapers saw the need to tell the stories of out-of-school causes and

solutions from the perspectives of OOSC and their parents/guardians. This made their (the OOSC and their parents/guardians) voices muted in all the 44 stories analyzed, an indication of the power imbalance between the reporters and the reporters.

OOSC Sprouting from State and Policy Failure

Blaming the Government and its ineffective policies on education was one of the episodic frames identified in the news stories. For example, a Punch news story of 1 September 2021, reported Vice President Yemi Osinbajo to have disclosed that the Federal Government (FG) is not responsible for the increasing number of OOSC in the country. According to him, the FG only controls Government Colleges, while the State Governments control other public secondary schools places where most OOSC come from. This frame indirectly blames the State Governments for the failure of responsibility for OOSC. Another instance framed ineffective government policies on OOSC as a reason for increasing OOSC in Nigeria. As reported by Vanguard on November 15, 2021, despite "that the Federal Ministry of Education has done a lot in the area of improving access and retention in schools, …a large number of girls and boys are still out of school." Similarly, the *Al-Majiri* system of education as presently practiced in the North was framed as a catalyst for the OOSC menace, as the system is "characterized by child neglect, abuse, social exclusion, and chronic poverty thus churning out young people with little or no formal education and lacking employable skills" (Vanguard 22 June 2021). An earlier study (Mohammed et al., 2021) also blamed ineffective government policies on education as a reason why children are out of school.

OOSC Sprouting from Non-State Actors' Failure

Prominent among the non-state actors identified in the news stories were the OOSC's parents, though a story (Punch, 5 March 2022) blamed Northern leaders who are "only concerned about political power" instead of investing in massive education of the region. Framing the parents as one of the actors responsible for the OOSC increasing figure, the political newsmaker that one of the newspapers used as a source wanted the "defaulting parents or guardians" arrested for neglecting the future of their children (Punch, 18 March 2022), while another called for child policing

so that "parents send their wards to school" (Punch, 25 February 2022).

These views of the newsmakers align with the provisions of the Child Act 2003 and Okoh et al.'s (2020) suggestion. In fact, one story wanted the return of "*all almajiris* from all the states to their parents" (Punch, 19 September 2021). From the Vanguard's story of 11 September 2021, "parents' failure in the rural areas to enroll their children" is another factor increasing the figure of OOSC in Nigeria. Another political newsmaker wanted the children's parents to be "carried along in designing methods of education that would suit their (children's) needs" (Punch, 11 March 2022). These frames further resonate with Mohammed et al.'s (2021) suggestion that further strategic actions are needed to significantly mitigate the threat of out-of-school in Nigeria.

OOSC: a Crisis in Need of Collaborative Responses

Despite that some news stories were episodic in framing the OOSC menace in Nigeria by blaming governments, their ineffective educational policies as well as OOSC's parents, the three papers described sincere collaboration among both political and non-political educational stakeholders as some practical solutions to reducing the number of OOSC in the country. Such collaborative responses include cooperative and sincere efforts among Ministries of Education, legislative houses, government and non-governmental bodies, philanthropists, communities, and their leaders as well as parents. Such collaborative responses, according to the stories, should be aimed primarily at returning the children to school and solving the socio-economic bottlenecks sending them out of school in the first place. This thematic frame had also been called for by Olarenwaju (2021) when he recommended the introduction of social security programs aimed at reducing the OOSC's parents' economic hardships. It also aligns with Okoh et al.'s (2020) call for poverty reduction techniques in the formulation of relevant policies that would improve poor parents' living standards.

CONCLUSION

Many messages are communicated through the structure of news reports which create meanings. Our analysis has shown the relevance of framing theory and CDA in interpreting news discourses and in analyzing to find hidden meanings. It is revealed in this study that media frames and discourse strategies are used by journalists to frame opinions and influence people's perceptions. The insight and awareness gained through the utilization of CDA in analyzing OOSC discourses make us discover, comprehend and appreciate frames in news reports. Government responsibilities (on out-of-school children issues) have been supposedly turned into that of NGOs and international organizations. Therefore, we recommend that media houses always explore ways of actualizing the truth efficacy of news reportage, and write stories about OOSC more thematically so that audience could hold the government responsible. The media should also avoid money-induced journalism that would motivate them to misrepresent facts and frame sensitive national issues to cause chaos and the populace's misinformation.

This study implies that out-of-school children and other conflict-induced narratives are not reported objectively and thematically. This stance makes framing theory essential as the OOSC narrative had been regionalized and politicized. Reporting formatives like this will only worsen the situations of conflict-affected victims and engender religious cum ideological intolerance.

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